

**THE HOUSE OF THULARE :THE PROBLEM OF
SUCCESSION AND THE SPLIT OF THE BAPEDI NATION,**

1824-1884

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Thesis is the product of my own research and has been written by me. It has not been presented for higher degree in any other University. All quotations have been acknowledged and distinguished by footnotes and quotation marks.

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M.C. RAMUSHU

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my late father, Adam Puleng Ramushu, and my late brother Dr. Mokgopu Paul Barney Ramushu.

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M.C. Ramushu

PREFACE

One of the most important and controversial themes in the historiography of South Africa is centred on the problem of royal succession disputes and the split of the Bapedi nation. There has not been any scientific and comprehensive historical analysis of the various aspects of this problem by professional historians. This is so despite the obvious fact that this problem set in motion a series of events and issues which continue to impact on the current political developments in the area.

This yawning gap in the historiography of South Africa indeed implies the absence of a clearly worked out theoretical and methodological framework for the study of such problems. So apart focusing on an important aspect of South Africa's historiography, part of the purpose of this study is to provide a proper theoretical and methodological framework for the study of similar African problems.

Central to the approach adopted in this study is the position that the only way to clearly understand African problems is to locate them in the cultural values and ideals of the people who are the subject of investigation. In line with this position, the Afrocentric paradigm has been deployed to investigate the problem of succession disputes and split of the Bapedi nation. As a social theory Afrocentricity insists that Africans must be viewed as agents in their own history and cultural experiences rather than as objects at the periphery of other peoples' history and cultural experiences. Thus, the central category in any Afrocentric investigation and analysis is culture. Culture and the world outlook which informs it are critical and central to a proper and adequate understanding of a peoples' thought and behaviour.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is mainly introductory and aims at providing the theoretical framework which informs the study. The second chapter deals with three major events that shaped the Bapedi nation. The first is their break away from the Bakgatla mainstream. The second event is the rise of the Bapedi from a small group to nationhood status. The third event is Thulare's rise to power which according to our respondents, was illegitimate. In the third chapter we focus on the precarious circumstances that surrounded the succession in the Bapedi nation after the death of Thulare, which was immediately followed by that of his son, Malekutu.

The fourth chapter tackles events before the burial of Sekwati, who was also the son of Thulare, and how Sekhukhune the son of Sekwati forced his way to play the leading role in the burial of regent father. Apart from this, the chapter also focuses on the circumstances that led to the eventual usurpation of the throne, his relationship with the Berlin missionaries and the eventual ejection of the latter and their converts out of Bopedi in 1864. The chapter closes with a discussion of the relationship between Sekhukhune and the South African Republic. The fifth chapter focuses on the conflict between Mampuru and Sekhukhune. In the sixth chapter the split of the Bapedi nation is analysed. The final chapter unpacks the findings of the study. A general conclusion to the study is then provided.

ABSTRACT

Although the Bapedi nation had evolved and constructed distinct cultural practices relating to royal succession, the changing complex political, socio-cultural and economic forces confronting the nation created conditions which influenced some members of the ruling house to challenge the validity and efficacy of the customs and traditions governing the royal succession. Among the most critical conditions were the disruptive activities of the German Christian missionaries, the Boers and British imperialists, European capitalists traders and miners who were, *inter alia*, interested in the acquisition of land. These foreign elements brought with them strange cultural practices and values which were fundamentally at odds with indigenous practices and values. This created an environment of political insecurity and instability which demanded a re-vision of the entire political system in order to resolve this problem. It was in this context that the traditional practice of succession whereby the first male child of the principal royal wife/woman rightfully ascended the throne was challenged by those ambitious members of the royal family who took the position that courage and bravery should also be considered as legitimate factors in royal succession. These complex political contestations were at the root of the succession disputes and the eventual split of the Bapedi nation.

the sons of Thulare. The subordinate polities started to clamour for independence from the problem-riddled Maroteng paramount royal house.

The death of Thulare in 1824 gave way to a succession dispute over the throne of the Bapedi nation, which was to be worsened by the outbreak of the Mfecane battles in Bopedi¹¹⁶). Thulare had a number of sons from his numerous wives. In the first family it was Malekutu, who was a born warrior. He led numerous successful raids and conquests during the reign of his father – Thulare. According to Bapedi tradition he was the rightful successor to Thulare, and indeed he succeeded him though he died in the same year as his father – 1824, from alleged poisoning. Later it was alleged that the poisoning was masterminded and administered by Matsebe¹¹⁷).

Matsebe was the senior son in the second royal family and had Ramphelane as his younger brother¹¹⁸). He took advantage of Malekutu's long absence from home, on far away raids and conquest missions to plan and prepare his elimination, in order to pave his way to the throne. The death of Malekutu left the Bapedi nation without a "kgoši".

116. Ibid.

117. J.C. Otto : 'Die Voorgeskiedenis en Opkoms van die Bapedi-Stam'. **Historical Studies**, vol. 6,no 2, 1945, p.74; Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi of Sekhukhuneland 1877-1879'. **Archives Year Book for South African History**, vol. 30, pt. 2, 1967, p. 1; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

118. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', pp. 284-285; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

After the death of Malekutu, Phetedi, the senior son from the third royal house, and Motodi, the younger brother to Thulare, confronted Matsebe who fled to Mmafefe¹¹⁹). Phetedi pursued him and defeated him after fierce fighting. Matsebe later died from wounds sustained in the fighting.

Having defeated Matsebe, Phetedi returned to Mokororoane (Tubatse) where, together with Motodi, took the responsibilities of daily royal administration. It was during this period that arrangements to marry Kgomomakatane from the Magakala chiefdom, as the principal royal woman got under way¹²⁰). Kgomomakatane was to be married to the dead Malekutu and her main responsibility was to bear an heir to the Bapedi nation.

3.3 The Bapedi and the Mfecane/Difaqane.

Just before the marriage arrangements could be finalized, the Matebele of Mzilikazi appeared in Bopedi, in around 1825 or 1826¹²¹). They found disunity, mistrust and uncooperativeness among the sons of Thulare at its best. Phetedi and Motodi could not receive the much needed co-operation from the other sons of Thulare who wished for demise of the nation that

119. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 285; Mönnig : **The Pedi**, p. 22; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

120. Ibid.

121. Van Rooyen : 'Die Verhoudinge', p. 126; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

could enable them to get share of the splits, with subjects and establish their own independent polities¹²²⁾.

The Bapedi heard about the near extermination of the Bakone and the Makopole following by the Matebele in the regions of the Hlumuhlumu Mountains in time¹²³⁾. After they defeated the Makopole following the Matebele headed for the Bopedi heartland. Under the leadership of Phetedi and Motodi efforts to prepare and put in place the defense mechanisms were made, but disunity, mistrust and uncooperativeness among the sons of Thulare weakened the nation.

The first Matebele attacks on the Bapedi were successfully repulsed, but when the former launched a full blast attack at Mokororoane), the latter could not answer¹²⁴⁾. All the sons of Thulare, save Sekwati were killed in the ensued battles.

The Mfecane devastations made the precarious problem of succession worse and complicated. Both the remnants of the Bapedi, who remained in Bopedi, and those in exile, had started to cherish and later adopted the

122. Ibid.

123. T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 285; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

124. J.A. Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’. **South African Journal of Science**, vol. 9, 1912, p. 329; A.P. van der Merwe :‘**Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**’ . (M.A. verhandeling, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1975), p. 15; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

ideology that was also nurtured in Sekhukhune¹²⁵). It appeared to them that the Bapedi needed a more militarily orientated leader to steer them through the militarily threatening situation. That thinking was later adopted by Sekhukhune, and it led to royal dispute, which led to his assassination by Mampuru, who traditionally was the rightful successor.

3.4 Sekwati in Exile

At the time of the Mfecane battles Sekwati, the younger brother to Seraki and born in the fourth royal house, proved to be the man of the moment. He coupled diplomacy and military prowess. Sekwati and his regiment had, after realizing the military strength of the impis, in comparison to theirs; retired from the battle field and took refuge in the cave of Mamathamageng, on the Honoko mountain¹²⁶).

From Mamathamageng cave Sekwati and his handful of followers sneaked out of Bopedi into exile. The fugitives crossed the Lepelle River into the Mphahlele chiefdom, then deeper into the far north. They later camped at Moselangope and Mononono, on the banks of the Dwaars

125. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Moramoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

126. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Van der Merwe :**Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**, p.15; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 286.

Chapter 1

The History of the Bapedi: Major Historiographical and Theoretical Issues

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is basically introductory. It involves a critical discussion of the dominant trends in the writing of the history of the Bapedi nation in particular, and South African history in general. It exposes and critically analyses the major weaknesses of these schools. This critique is done in order to articulate an approach, which would provide a deeper insight into the problem under study. In addition to this, the chapter also formulates the questions under investigation and articulates the aim and objectives which guide the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

This study has been motivated by the concern with the perennial disputes and quarrels for succession in the 'bogoši' of the Bapedi. It tackles a succession dispute between Mampuru and Sekhukhune which has raised a heated political controversy among the Bapedi nation. The problem of succession has gripped the Bapedi polity ever since the last quarter of the eighteenth century when Thulare wrested the throne from the rightful and legitimate heir – Dikotope. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Sekhukhune wrested the throne from Mampuru, and today Ryan and

Kgagudi are at loggerheads over the throne at Mhlaletsí¹⁾.

The problem of succession has been so persistent that in the 1980's Nelson Ramodike, the former Prime Minister of the Lebowa Bantustan intervened but in vain²⁾. After 1994, Ngoako Ramahlodi, the former Premier of the Limpopo Province appointed a Commission of Inquiry under the Chairmanship of Professor Ralushai, (a Social anthropologist from the University of Venda), to investigate the problem and recommend a resolution³⁾. The said commission also came out with limited findings. In 2005 Thabo Mbeki, the President of the Republic of South Africa Republic appointed another commission of Inquiry under the Chairmanship of Dr. Nhlapo⁴⁾.

1.3 Significance of the study

The study produces historical knowledge, which will hopefully contribute towards the clarification and resolution of some of the problems that are involved in the succession among the Bapedi and other African peoples of Southern Africa. These problems are potentially explosive and may lead to instability if not properly handled. Hence the significance of the study.

1. Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mhlaletsí, 07/10/2005; Selatole Tseke, Mhlaletsí, 07/10/2005; Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005.

2. Ibid.

3. Press Statement on the Ralushai Commission's Report 11 November 2004. Issued by the Ministry for Provincial and Local Government.

4. Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mhlaletsí, 07/10/2005; Selatole Tseke, Mhlaletsí, 07/10/2005; Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005.

The Bapedi nation reached the zenith of its political power and geographical influence in the middle of nineteenth century. After the death of Thulare in 1824 the power of the nation took a nose-diving decline and eventually disintegrated. The disintegration is manifested in the presence of many independent splinter polities, which rendered the nation non-existent.

1.4 Statement of the Research Problem and Research Questions

The problem under investigation in this study is that of the succession disputes between Matsebe and Malekutu, and later between Mampuru and Sekhukhune and the split within the Bapedi nation during the period of 1824 to 1884. After the death of Thulare in 1824, Motodi and Phetedi tried to rule the Nation but were later disrupted by the Mfecane. And after four years once the Matebele had left, Sekwati took over the reins of “bogoši” as regent.

Although the Bapedi have laws, customs and principles pertaining to succession, the problem has been perennial and it cosequently led to the appointment of the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry after 1994. Therefore, this study hopes to investigate the root cause(s) of this problem.

The study also tackles the following basic questions:

- What roles did the various contestants play in the problem of succession and the split of the Bapedi nation?
- What role did the Swazi nation, the Boers and the Boer Republic, British and the Berlin Missionary Society missionaries play in the

problem of succession and the eventual split within the Bapedi nation?

- Was there anything in the indigenous knowledge systems and culture of the Bapedi that could have contributed to the problem of succession and split under investigation?

1.5 Aim and Objectives

1.5.1 Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate the problem of succession in the history of the Bapedi polity which led to the split within the Bapedi nation during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The appointment of the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry after 1994 (whose findings have recently been made public) testifies to the gravity of this problem. This study provides a critical historical perspective on the problem of succession in the Bapedi nation.

1.5.2 Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To identify and analyse various roles that various contestants played in the succession dispute during the period 1824 to 1884.
- To identify and analyse the political factors.
- To identify and examine the economic factors of the period under study.

1.6 Review and Critique of Dominant Trends in the History of South Africa.

The dominant schools in South African history today are the Afrikaner Nationalist, Liberal and African Nationalist schools. The other three schools; the Imperialist and Settler, and the Radical or Marxist schools have somehow failed to develop into powerful schools. The Imperialist and the Settler schools have been assimilated by one or another of the above-mentioned three. The Marxist school has, despite the existence of the Communist Party in South Africa, failed to make any headway. Repression and persecution of its practitioners under the Apartheid government are responsible for its precarious existence in the margins of academic historical practice in South Africa.

1.6.1 The Afrikaner School

The school originated in the nineteenth century, in around 1842 with the loss of Natal to the British authorities of the Cape Colony⁵⁾. It started as a record keeping and chronicling of events by mostly Afrikaner individuals and Afrikaner sympathizers who were not necessarily trained historians⁶⁾. It reached maturity and was nurtured by the Broederbond during the interwar period. It attained the status of being the “official” school of South African historiography in 1948 after the National Party won the

5. F.A. van Jaarsveld :**Omstrede Suid-Afrikaanse verlede :Geskiedenisideologie en die historisee skuldvraagstuk**, p. 9.

6. F.A. van Jaarsveld :**Die Afrikaner en sy Geskiedenis**, p. 92.

general elections⁷⁾.

The guiding ideology of the Afrikaner nationalist school is Christian nationalism based on Calvinist nationalism. The Afrikaners' understanding of the Calvinist nationalism was that black and white nations in South Africa have different destinies, which could be fulfilled if the two are kept separated geographically and otherwise. They regarded this as a Godly arrangement⁸⁾. Afrikaner historians regarded the Afrikaner past as something divine and described it in Biblical terms⁹⁾.

They regarded the appearance of the Afrikaner nation in South Africa as being sanctioned by God. They argued that "He has called the Afrikaner nation, planted them in South Africa, and tasked them to spread Christianity and Western Civilisation among the indigenous peoples in the interior"¹⁰⁾.

Afrikaner historians compared the Afrikaners to the Biblical Israelites, who walked out of Egypt (which was regarded as the house of slavery), went through hardships and sufferings in the desert, and eventually landed in Canaan (which was regarded as the land of the heathens) where they fought heavily and eventually triumphed¹¹⁾.

7. K.W. Smith :**The Changing Past :Trends in South African Historical Writing**, pp. 183-184.

8. A.T. Moleah :**South Africa :Colonialism, Apartheid and African dispossession**, pp. 317-320.

9. Van Jaarsveld :**Omstrede Suid Afrikaanse verlede**, p. 24.

10. Van Jaarsveld :**Die Afrikaner en sy Geskiedenis**, p. 116.

11. Ibid.

Similarly, the Afrikaners walked out of the British controlled Cape Colony, which they viewed as a house of slavery, during the Great Trek. They went through the hardships and sufferings in the jungle of the interior, and eventually met the natives (whom they regarded as being heathens and “uncivilized”) in their chiefdoms and settlements. They also fought heavily against the natives and eventually triumphed ¹²⁾.

Afrikaner historians viewed the history of South Africa as the history of the European (white man) only. They could not accept that the indigenous peoples of South Africa have their own histories. According to their view key events of South African history were those in which Europeans were involved; the indigenous people were only mentioned when their activities thwarted the white man’s aspirations for abundant supply of cheap labour, or hindered the progress of Western Civilization. African polities were further portrayed as military threats, cattle thieves, vagrants and hewers of wood and drawers of water, and more positively – as potential converts ¹³⁾. In fact, Afrikaner historians did not regard the history of the African people, such as the Bapedi, as worthy of reconstruction. There therefore a general neglect of the history of the African people.

Muller did not include the history of the indigenous people in his writings. He relegated it to the Appendix, where it was very sketchy and

12. Ibid.

13. Moleah :**South Africa :Colonialism, Apartheid and African Disposition.**

brief to an extent that it was more of a chronicle than history¹⁴⁾.

Theal refers to the San as a race of dwarfish savages who are on the lowest level of civilization, and inferior to the modern European man. He insists that the indigenous people knew nothing about God, and worshipped charms, fetishes and engaged in other strange practices¹⁵⁾.

The British and British Imperialism are central to the themes of Afrikaner history. The relations between the British and the Afrikaners over the years deteriorated, to an extent that the Afrikaner developed a well crystallized anti-British sentiment and made Britain as the national enemy¹⁶⁾. In their writings the Afrikaner historians portrayed the British as the aggressors and opponents of the Afrikaner nation¹⁷⁾.

They presented the history of South Africa as a list of grievances against Britain. The grievances are systematically arranged and narrated in a religious, coloured and emotional manner¹⁸⁾.

Their history is biased against the British in the sense that it presented a charge sheet and a conviction verdict at the same time, without giving the accused a fair hearing¹⁹⁾. The core of the matter is freedom versus

14. C.F.J. Muller (ed.) :**Five Hundred Years A History of South Africa**, pp. 492-493.

15. M. Theal :**Maskew Miller :History of South Africa and its People**.

16. Van Jaarsveld :**Omstrede Suid Afrikaanse verlede**, pp. 14-15.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

oppression, right versus wrong, and the British are guilty of inhumane treatment of the Afrikaners' forefathers²⁰⁾.

Their most common and popular themes include their political leaders the Slagtersnek Rebellion, Piet Retief and other Great Trek leaders; the annexations of: Natal Transgriep; Basutoland; Diamond Fields, South African Republic and the Anglo-Boer War. After 1874, they started to write exclusively Afrikaans history without the British kings, queens and generals but a history with men such as; Bezuidenhout, Piet Retief, Andries Potgieter and others, that is, history of their own leaders and heroes²¹⁾.

1.6.2 The Liberal School

In South Africa the Liberal school of history emerged in the 1920's, and was part of the wider liberal community with the liberal assumptions of the fundamental rights of the individual irrespective of race or creed.

During the interwar period the English universities in South Africa increasingly trained liberal historians to increase and muster the liberal opposition to the racist Union government²²⁾,

The liberal historians in South Africa were concerned with race relations since 1800 between the African, the Afrikaner and the Briton²³⁾.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. H.M. Wright: **The Burden of the Present Liberal-Radical Controversy over Southern African History.**

23. Ibid., p. 8.

They were committed to the abolition of the discriminatory political system of Apartheid, and replacing it with a non-racial parliamentary democracy based on the British model ²⁴⁾. They rejected the Afrikaner historians' claim that the meeting of the African and the European on the frontier was characterized by a clash between civilized and uncivilized, Christian and heathen, but insisted it was a clash between pastoralists over pastures and cattle ²⁵⁾.

The liberals criticised the Afrikaner historians for over-emphasizing the conflict at the frontier, at the expense of considerable mutual economic co-operation between the Africans and the Europeans. They indicated that the two racial groups traded together, and that the European settlers depended on the native labour ²⁶⁾.

The liberals are criticized for their outspoken idolization of Britain and the British Imperialism. De Kiewiet accused Theal of bias against the British involvement in Southern Africa. He maintained that despite all hiccups and failures Britain had always acted with high motives and worthy ends ²⁷⁾.

Another section of liberals are the so-called mission-inspired liberals who were mostly blacks, educated in European institutions and had accepted the Christian Western lifestyle. Their writings were politically moderate with racial tolerance, and advocated for qualified franchise and equal

24. Ibid., pp. 4-6.

25. Smith :**The Changing Past**, p. 111.

26. Ibid., p. 120.

27. Ibid., p. 114.

rights for all “civilized” men in the country²⁸⁾. They portrayed the natives as being backward and primitive as compared to the “civilized” Europeans. They viewed the role of Britain in a positive light – protecting the natives against the racist Afrikaners²⁹⁾.

They wrote for fellow blacks, mobilizing them towards a sense of identity that should lead to the attainment of political equality with the Europeans in a non-racial unitary state³⁰⁾. They employed constitutional means; calling public meetings, staging protests, organizing demonstrations, passing resolutions and sending deputations to the European rulers³¹⁾.

Further, the liberals employed multidiscipline approach whereby information from other disciplines is used in their writings of history. The weakness in this respect is that the aim is to serve contemporary liberal ends, which in most cases is non-historical³²⁾.

The liberals also had a negative perspective of the native culture and past, which they viewed as being non-liberal, and in their opinion, it had to be destroyed or transformed along the British value systems model³³⁾.

Furthermore, they believed that it shall take the African many years to become capable of independent political thought, and as such he should

28. Ibid., p. 113.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 134.

32. Wright: **The Burden of the Present**, p. 55.

33. Ibid.

always remain under the British tutelage³⁴⁾. They used the European framework, which to them was the finite and perfect (universal) to analyze the African past.

Though they studied the African they did very little on the African pre-colonial experience, since they did not study them in their own right. They had always treated the European past as being superior to the African's³⁵⁾.

1.6.3 The African Nationalist School

The origin of the African nationalist school of history can be dated to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with Antony William Amoo. He defended African dignity, pride and integrity against the European prejudices he encountered in the European institutions. The school however, gained momentum after 1945, with the process of decolonisation of Africa. Initially its practitioners were the black elite, educated in Western universities, who wanted to take over the reigns of political power from the foreign European colonial rulers³⁶⁾.

Racist scholars such as Hegel, Johnston and Trevor Rooper had portrayed Africa as a dark continent without history. Thus the African nationalist historians concentrated on destroying myths, falsehoods and prejudices.

34. Smith :**The Changing Past**, p. 104.

35. Ibid., p. 115.

36. A.J. Temu and B. Swai :**Historians and Africanist History, A Critique. Post-Colonial Historiography Examined.**

They reclaimed Egypt and Pharaonic Egyptian Civilization for Africa and as the cradle of all human civilizations. They uncovered the evidence that established that the Egyptians were dark-skinned and African as opposed to the racist Eurocentric view that claimed that Egypt was part of Europe and that the Egyptians were therefore, Europeans. They uncovered evidence to prove that the Greek Civilization is born out of the Pharaonic Egyptian Civilization and that most of the distinguished Greek scholars learnt their skills and trades in Egypt under Egyptian mentors³⁷⁾.

They quoted the African Empires of Ghana, Songhai and Mali as examples of African initiatives, rationality and wisdom, which also prove that Africans had democratic governance long before the arrival of the European colonizers³⁸⁾.

The African nationalist historians constructed their historical accounts from oral traditions and oral histories, which they argued were as scientific as any other history constructed from different methods. They also employed a multi-disciplinary approach whereby information from other disciplines was utilized³⁹⁾.

Ngcongco wrote of the Mfecane as the prelude to the state formations in Southern Africa. To Ngcongco the Mfecane shaped various chiefdoms and kingdoms of Southern Africa. They started as small and sort of fragmented independent political identities, which evolved into one,

37. Ibid., p. 20.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

bigger, united and centralized political state⁴⁰⁾. That was described and portrayed as resembling the state formation in Europe.

David Chanaiwa wrote on racial segregation in Southern Africa. He compared the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini and their Aryan supremacy and genocidal policies in Europe in 1945 with the victory for white supremacy in South Africa⁴¹⁾.

The major weakness of the nationalist school was that it used the European framework to analyze the African past.

This study however, does not locate itself in any of the schools discussed above. Instead, it locates itself in the Afrocentric School initiated by Diop and Obenga⁴²⁾. The current champion of Afrocentricity in the study of the African past is Asante, an African-American scholar⁴³⁾. According to him, Afrocentricity is “the relocation, the repositioning of the African in a place of agency where instead of being a spectator to others, African

40. L.N. Ngcongco : ‘The Mfecane and the rise of new African states’ J.F. Ade Ajayi (ed.) **General History of Africa** vol. VI, [Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880’s] UNESCO.

41. D. Chanaiwa : ‘Southern Africa since 1945’, Ali A. Mazui (ed.) [Assistant ed. :C. Wondji :**General History of Africa**, vol. VIII, [Africa since 1935] UNESCO.

42. M.K. Asante :**The Painful Demise of Eurocentricism, A Reply to Critics.**

43. Ibid.

voices are heard in the full meaning of history”⁴⁴⁾. Afrocentricity draws its concepts from and bases itself on the culture of the African and the totality of African experience on the continent and the diaspora⁴⁵⁾. Afrocentricity also avoids binary oppositions such as primitive/civilized, traditional/modern, emotion/reason that have characterized the European analysis of human experience and reality⁴⁶⁾. It must be noted that it is such binarisms, which are largely responsible for the devaluation, and denigration of African culture and activity. Instead, Afrocentricity holds that reality is made up of the complementary dualities⁴⁷⁾.

Afrocentricity has developed into a mature paradigm with its own specific methodology and theories. According to Asante (1999) it is distinguished by five characteristics:

- An intense interest in psychological location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals and signs;
- A commitment to the subject place of Africans in any social, political, economic or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender, and class;
- A defense of African cultural elements as historically valid in the

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

context of art, music, and literature and defence of pan-African cultural connection based on broad responses to conditions, environments and situations over time;

- A celebration of 'centredness' and agency and a commitment to lexical refinement that eliminates pejoratives, including sexual and gender pejoratives, about Africans and other people; and
- A powerful imperative from historical sources to revise the collective text of African people as one in a constant and consistent search for liberation and Maat⁴⁸⁾.

The investigation of the history of the Bapedi is, in this study, therefore located and framed within the context of African values and ideals. The implication of this is that all the interpretation of data acquired in the study is rooted in the African world-outlook. It must be remembered that the Afrocentric perspective on data is one among many perspectives, but a perspective that is germane to African culture. The objective of Afrocentricity is the development of the collective consciousness of the African people for their complete liberation from western European domination.

48. Ibid.

Chapter 2

The Origin and the Formation of the Bapedi Nation.

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the various frameworks that exist in the writing of South African history. This chapter deals with three major events which shaped the Bapedi nation. The first is their break away from the Bokgatla mainstream. The circumstances surrounding the break away involved Mmathobela and her son, Lellelateng. An attempt has been made to tackle the event from an African perspective. The second event is the rise of the Bapedi from a small group to nationhood status which was achieved on the battlefield. The Bapedi warriors, under the leadership of Mampuru usurped the paramountcy from the Mongatane polity under the house of Mashabela⁴⁹⁾. And to sustain the paramount status meant that the Bapedi had to remain militarily superior, which implied that they needed a strong and brave leadership. That necessity was to convince some members of the royal house, for generations to come, that military capabilities and bravery had to replace the traditional principle of succession which held that the first son should remain an heir to the throne.

49. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; H.O. Mönnig :**The Pedi**, pp. 19-20; D. R. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi' **Bantu Studies**, vol. 5, no. 4, 1939, pp. 278-279.

The third event which is closely interwoven with the second event is Thulare's rise to power which according to some respondents was illegitimate⁵⁰). Thulare usurped the throne from Dikotope who was the legitimate heir to the throne of the Bapedi polity. According to the tradition and custom of the Bapedi only the first son of the principal royal woman could succeed to the throne. This had become the established principle of succession. Through his bravery and courage, Thulare built the Bapedi into a very big nation⁵¹). That usurpation created a precedent whereby the traditional principle of succession was to be plagued by contests that led to breakaways and splits which weakened the polity.

2.2 The Break Away from Bakgatla

The Bapedi nation came into being as a result of the break away from the Bakgatla mainstream⁵²). The Bakgatla were at that time settled at the present-day Skilpadfontein, near Pretoria. They were part of the Sotho group who had the Barolong (renowned metal workers) as their ancestors. Their original totem was 'kgabo' (monkey).

50. Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004; Legadimane Sekhukhune, Praktiseer, 10/10/2005; Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005.

51. Phetedi Mampuru; Mamone; 07/10/2005; Mashalane Mabule; 07/10/2005; Johannes Komane; Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

52. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Mashalane Mabule Mamone, 07/10/2005; Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhoudinge tussen die Boere, Engelse en Naturelle in die Geskiedenis van Oo-Transvaal tot 1882' (**Archives Year Book for South African History**, vol. XXXX, pt. 1, 1951), pp. 89-90.

The Bapedi's historical links with the Bakgatla are more pronounced in their names, especially, the royal ones⁵³). Their royal house is often referred to as Maroteng, from Marota, whom together with Mmakau had Modishe of the Bakgatla as their ancestor. The name Morwamodishe, which is more common among the Bapedi, is used to refer to the Bapedi royal descendants who could claim their historical origin from Modishe.

The royal Pedi name Morwamoche, which is historically supposed to be written as Morwamotsha, is intended to mean the son of Motsha⁵⁴). Motsha was the son of Diale, the female ruler who led the Bakgatla after the death of Tabane. The Bapedi regard Lellelateng as their ancestor, whom they link to Modishe in their praise poems.

Their break away from Bokgatla under the leadership of Thobela took place somewhere in the middle of the seventeenth century. Though it was peaceful in the sense that no blood was shed, it was, according to our respondents, a pathetic and pitiful episode emanating from "boloi" allegations and accusations, against Motsha's youngest, favourite and expectant woman called Mmathobela⁵⁵). A group of royal women claimed that they had heard her unborn baby crying in her womb.

53. Ngwanankwane Seloane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; C.V. :Bothma, 'The Political Structure of the Pedi of Sekhukhueland'. **African Studies**, vol. 135, pt. 3-4, 1976, pp. 180-182.

54. Ibid.

55. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Hunt, 'An Account of the Bapedi', p.275.

According to the Bakgatla tradition, such a strange event could only take place under “boloi” conditions. As a result, thereof, Mmathobela was associated with “boloi”. Some people started to claim that she was bewitched, while others claimed she was actually the practitioner of “boloi”⁵⁶⁾.

In the African tradition there is a way of viewing and interpreting the everyday world and events⁵⁸⁾. They used “ditaola” which its operators, the African medicine men and women are able to interpret. The African medicine men or women more often used their skills in ‘ditaola’, with the help of their knowledge of the herbs found in the immediate and faraway hills, valleys and jungle, to cure some diseases. They were also able to link one with his or her ancestors⁵⁹⁾. However, there are those African medicine men and women who use their skills to inflict pain and anguish to others⁶⁰⁾. That is labeled ‘boloi’, and Mmathobela was put in this category.

The Bakgatla royal women spread the news of Mmathobela’s “boloi” practices throughout the community⁶¹⁾. They started to sing mocking and

56. Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

57. Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Moshiane Ntwampe, 03/10/2004; Seroba Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

58. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

ridiculing songs about Mmathobela and her crying embryo, and increasingly demanded her immediate expulsion or execution to avoid future mishaps.

However, through the intervention of Diale the life of Mmathobela was spared⁶²). She later delivered her son normally, and according to custom named him Moimane⁶³). The rival royal women nicknamed him Lellelateng (the one who cries from the abdomen), probably to keep the allegations and accusations alive.

Motsha the reigning leader of the Bakgatla (then) called both his son; Thobela and his wife Mmathobela, and advised them to take their following and leave Bokgatla⁶⁴). They moved in an easterly direction until they found a safe and secure place to settle, away from their Bakgatla rivals who could not accept and accommodate Mmathobela and her son Lellelateng.

During their flight the Thobela and his group camped at various places, until they reached a place on top of the Leolo Mountain range called Mohlake⁶⁵). It was and is still a difficult place to reach. At the nearby

62. Ibid.

63. Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 14; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky in die Geskiedenis van die Suid Afrikaanse Republiek 1859-1882**. M.A. verhandeling Universiteit van Pretoria, 1954, p. 125; Van Rooyen :'Die Verhoudinge', p. 91.

64. Ibid.

65. Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004; Motubtse Lepota, Mamone, 21/09/2005.

Honoko hill there are caves which proved beneficial in times of wars and military crises. Mohlake is in fact a natural impregnable fort.

Mohlake was for years to come to be regarded as their home, and it is still quoted more often in their praise poems⁶⁶). There the Thobela group made significant changes to their traditional cultural heritage, in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the Bakgatla, and confuse their enemies⁶⁷). They changed their traditional totem “kgabo” to “noko” (porcupine) when a quill was found embedded in an ant heap at the place known as Seolomathebo.

From Mohlake the Thobela group settled at various places around the eastern slopes of the Leolo Mountain range, at places such as; Mokororoane, which is also known as Tubatse (near the present-day Steelpoort railway station); on the foothills of Morole Mountain, which is today wrongly called Morone (today’s Burgersfort); and Bogwasha, the area that is presently occupied by the Motodi polity, the branch of the Bapedi Paramountcy from the Mohlaletsi capital village, which broke away from the Bapedi area that is presently mainstream, as a result of conflict of Marentjere and Makhuduthamaga in 1958⁶⁸).

66. Ngwanankana Seloane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Seroba Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

67. Kgabe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Mankotane Molabe, Mroko, 04/10/2004.

68. Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi, 07/09/2005; Selatole Tseke, Mohlaletsi, 07/09/2005.

The Thobela group is said to have adopted the name Bapedi, after their arrival at Mohlake, from the area then known as Bopedi, which at one stage ranged between the Tubatse (Steelpoort) River in the south and south eastern and the present-day town of Polokwane, in the north⁶⁹.

There are however, various arguments about the origin of the name Bapedi. There are those who argue that the name was derived from the Venda clan of blacksmiths called Vhambedzi, whom the Thobela recruited and encouraged to settle amongst them in order to help them revive their craft of iron smelting which they were increasingly forgetting as a result of nomadic life that did not provide enough time for the practice⁷⁰. After they had mastered the craft they called themselves Bapedi implying that, like the Vhambedzi, they were masters of the craft⁷¹. Some argue that the Thobela group found the Vhambedzi clan in the area, and drove them away. Consequently in order to appease the ancestral spirits of the area they adopted the name of the area and called themselves Bapedi⁷². Other scholars maintain that the name originates from their ancestral leader, Mopeli, back in the Bokgatla days⁷³.

69. Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi, 07/09/2005; Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, pp. 91-92; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 125; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p.17; Hunt, :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 276.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi, 07/09/2005; Ngwanankana Seloane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

73. Ibid.

On the other hand oral tradition suggests that the Bapedi had, on their arrival in Bopedi, joined other chiefdoms such as the Batau, Bakoni and Baroka, as the subordinate of the Mongatane chiefdom, who were the first to arrive in the area. The Mongatane people are an offshoot of the Sotho group, and are said to have crossed the Lepelle (Olifants) River at Tilu, from the north-western direction⁷⁴). At Tilu they found a crocodile, and changed their totem to “kwena” (crocodile) to confuse their enemies. As the subordinates, the Bapedi were subjected to the Mongatane chiefdom, which exercised paramount status over them.

At their new place of abode Thobela was succeeded by Kabu who had two sons; Thobela and Thobejane. Thobela, the elder of the two is said to have fled in the northern direction after he had, contrary to the cultural tradition, ‘flirted’ with the royal women before he was circumcised⁷⁵). That made it possible for Thobejane to succeed Kabu, his father, as the ‘kgoši’. He did not rule as the regent because Thobela’s move was regarded as voluntary abdication, therefore not fit to rule as “kgoši”.

Thobejane was succeeded by Moukangoe who is said to have ruled for a long period and outlived his son and heir Leseilane. Oral tradition maintains that it was during the reign of Moukangoe that the Bapedi population increased in proportion to its wealth, a condition that was to contribute to the introduction of the traditional practice of surrendering

74. Ibid.

75. Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 277.

“sebebo” and “lehlakori” to the royal house⁷⁶). The practice that is still in practice in certain parts of Bapedi is that when an individual household has a feast at which alcohol was prepared and a beast is slaughtered, a prescribed amount of the alcohol and prescribed parts of the meat were surrendered to the royal house. The intention is to inform and share with the royal house.

The practice usually helps the host in the event of the eruption of troubles which necessitate the intervention of the royal house, maybe for arbitration, because the latter would have been duly informed⁷⁷). Failure to comply with the practice may result in unpleasant consequences, because it is viewed as contempt of the traditional leadership.

On the other hand, prosperity conditions also led to conflict between the Bapedi and the Boer neighbours. Increase in the Bapedi population and wealth enhanced its military power, which threatened the balance of political power in the area. That is, a big population meant more warriors and more wealth to afford more battles for longer periods⁷⁸). The increased population, in humans and livestock, led to overcrowding conditions and strain on game and shrinking hunting grounds and crop produce.

76. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Morohe, 04/10/2004.

77. Ibid.

78. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005.

After the death of Leseilane Moukangoe's other son, Mohube, had to relieve his ageing and blind father as the regent whilst the royal house was to arrange and organise the marriage of the principal royal woman to the dead Leseilane⁷⁹⁾.

2.3 The Rise of the Bapedi Polity to Nationhood and the Practice of Succession.

It was during the regency of Mohube that the first serious violent clash with their neighbours, a Bakoni clan of Bakomane, started and eventually led to the rise of the Bapedi polity to the paramount status. There are two main arguments concerning the cause of the clash. Some people argue that the Bapedi herdsmen had, deliberately, let their herds into the Bakoni croplands that trampled and destroyed their succulent crops⁸⁰⁾. Others hold that the two parties clashed over hunting grounds. However the military skirmish that took place took the lives of some of the Bapedi men, including Mohube⁸¹⁾.

Another version, which is also suggested by oral tradition, is that the Bapedi invited the Mongatane polity men for a hunting expedition on the Leolo Mountain range, and indicated to them that they needed not bring their arms along as the activity was to be done for fun with the sole aim

79. Magdeline Thobejane, Tjate, 12/12/2005; Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 278.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

of exercising⁸²⁾. The latter accepted the invitation in good faith and left their arms at home. The Bapedi men who had hidden their arms in the bush took the Mongatane men by surprise and attacked and massacred them. As a result of the massacre, the Mongatane polity offered no resistance when the Bapedi claimed the paramountcy status, and thereafter, demanded tribute in the form of “sebego” and “lehlakori”, and not “sebete” (liver) as it was the case with the Mongatane polity⁸³⁾.

After death of Mohube the two polities are reported to have taken their quarrel to the Mongatane polity for arbitration⁸⁴⁾. The paramount ruled in favour of the Bakomane, partly because they had arrived before the Bapedi in the area, and chiefly because the growing Bapedi chiefdom was posing a deadlier threat to the political balance of power in the region⁸⁵⁾. The Mongatane polity then dispatched a regiment to discipline the quarrelsome Bapedi. That started the fighting between the Bapedi polity, on one side and the Mongatane and the Bakomani polities on the other⁸⁶⁾. Under the leadership of Mampuru, also son of Moukangoe, the Bapedi warriors defeated the Mongatane-Bakoni alliance.

82. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

83. Ibid.

84. Hunt : ‘An Account of the Bapedi’, pp. 278-279; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mönnig : **The Pedi**, pp. 19-20.

85. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

86. Hunt : ‘An Account of the Bapedi’, pp. 278-279; Mönnig : **The Pedi**, pp. 19-20.

In response to their defeat, the Mongatane chiefdom then sent their heir, Mogoshi as hostage to the Bapedi chiefdom as peace offering⁸⁷⁾. Instead of keeping him as a hostage Mampuru gave him his daughter, Nthane, as principal royal woman and returned the couple to the Mongatane polity⁸⁸⁾.

The “marriage” implied that the next Mongatane ‘kgoši’ would have the Maroteng blood flowing in his veins, a condition that was to foster friendlier relations between the two polities. That was a diplomatic rather than a vengeful political move.

It was during its paramount status era that the Bapedi started to experience their first serious internal royal dispute over the throne⁸⁹⁾. That situation weakened it and eventually led to its disintegration.

The Bapedi had over the years evolved a traditional custom that was designed to root out royal disputes on succession. By the time they toppled the Mongatane polity that custom was already in practice⁹⁰⁾. The reigning ‘kgoši’ could marry as many women as he could afford, but was obliged to marry the principal royal woman. The ‘lobola’ (dowry) thereof was contributed by the whole polity or nation.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

90. Ibid.

The principal royal woman is the most senior woman and her first male child is an heir who rules as the 'kgoši'⁹¹). The tradition maintains that even if the 'kgoši' died before the marriage, the polity or the nation could still marry her, and appoint one of the closest 'bakgoma' to cohabit with her and raise the seed of the dead 'kgoši'⁹²).

In case the heir is not yet born or is still young to rule, a regent is appointed to rule temporarily⁹³). However, there were some elements who for certain reasons did not accept the traditional customs⁹⁴). That was to pave way for future royal disputes which led to problems of succession. This weakened the nation and made it vulnerable to splits and external infringements and attacks.

After the death of Mohube, Mampuru the son of Moukangoe, succeeded Mohube as the regent to the Bapedi throne⁹⁵). However he later became reluctant to hand over the reins of 'bogoši' to Morwamoche, the son of the dead Leseilane, and the rightful heir who by then was ready to rule. That led to royal disputes whereby Morwamoche and his regiment took up arms against Mampuru.

Mampuru was defeated, wounded and captured, but later released partly because of his contribution in the building of the Bapedi polity into a formidable force, and chiefly in compliance with the Bapedi tradition

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

which maintains that the royal blood should not be spilled⁹⁶). Together with his followers, Mampuru was allowed to settle at Saul, (the present-day Maandagshoek), near H.F Boschoff Memorial Hospital. Later this group broke away from the Bapedi mainstream and formed the Magakala polity, which initially acknowledged allegiance to the Maroteng polity⁹⁷).

Morwamoche had three sons: Dikotope, the heir, Thulare and Motodi. On his death, Dikotope ascended the throne of the Bapedi polity⁹⁸). From the onset his relations with his younger brother, Thulare were strained. The latter wanted the throne of the Bapedi polity, irrespective of Dikotope's legitimacy. To Thulare the polity needed a strong leadership to make it survive anticipated attacks from the neighbours, especially the Bakomane and Mongatane polities⁹⁹). Due to strained relations between the two brothers, Dikotope moved the capital seat and the bulk of the Bapedi to Bogwasha, whilst Thulare remained with his regiment and the other followers at Mokororoane.

Dikotope wanted to avoid open conflict and shared the Bapedi with his younger brother, a situation whereby Thulare was to have some following to rule but subordinate to Dikotope¹⁰⁰). However, it later emerged that

96. Magdeline Thobejane, Tjate, 12/12/2005; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004.

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

Thulare was not satisfied with the smaller and subordinate portion of the Bapedi, but wanted the reins of the Bapedi polity.

2.4 The Usurpation of Power by Thulare

After the death of Morwamoche, Mampuru instigated Thulare to usurp the throne from Dikotope, who had, after the death of his father, moved the capital seat from Mokororoane or Tubatse to Bogwasha¹⁰¹⁾. Thulare remained at Mokororoane, and with the support of Mampuru attacked, defeated and took the throne from Dikotope, who was supported by the Bakoni and the Mongatane polities¹⁰²⁾. During the battles the warriors of Mampuru are said to have staged an exceptionally superb fighting, to earn themselves the name Magakala 'ba gaketše'(exceptional performance)¹⁰³⁾.

The usurpation of the throne by Thulare had three important consequences; firstly it became the starting point of the rapid growth of the Bapedi Nation; secondly, it introduced and created an off-shoot in the form of the Magakala chieftdom in the history of the Bapedi; thirdly, it created a precedent that despite the traditional customs on succession the throne can be contested on the battlefield and be won.¹⁰⁴⁾

With Mokororoane or Tubatse as the capital village, Thulare ruled the

101. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

Bapedi for a long period, from around 1780 to 1824¹⁰⁵⁾. He built the huge nation that was to rule over the better part of what was later to be called the Transvaal. He started by subjecting the neighbouring African communities of Batau, Bakoni, Baroka, Matebele of Moletlane, and other small African communities, and later raided and conquered the far-away African groups. Most of these raids and conquests were led by his son and heir, Malekutu¹⁰⁶⁾. The conquered chiefdoms were turned into subordinate vassal states. They were the first line of defense against the enemies of the Bapedi nation¹⁰⁷⁾. That drive of protecting the nation and the capital village, swelled the borders of the Bapedi nation to an extent that it covered the better part of the then Transvaal.

The Bapedi nation occupied a strategic trading position, linking the African communities and smaller groups with the Portuguese traders at Delagoa Bay¹⁰⁸⁾. Thalare had personally sent his favourite son, Makgeru, on numerous trading missions, including those to Delagoa Bay¹⁰⁹⁾. The Bapedi nation also linked the communities in the eastern coast with those in the western coast. Furthermore it became the important trading post for the traders from the south using the Traders Route that run along the

105. P. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us, The Pedi polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Transvaal**, pp. 15-17; Van Rooyen : 'Die Verhoudinge', vol. 40, pt. 1, 1951, p. 93.

106. Ibid.

107. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

108. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 15-17

109. Ibid.

Kwazulu Natal into the African communities in the north of the Limpopo River¹¹⁰⁾.

The formal break away of the Magakala group under Mampuru took place during the reign of Thulare¹¹¹⁾. Firstly he encouraged the break-off because the latter had supported the former during the usurpation, and secondly because he superbly came to the rescue of the Bapedi chiefdom against the Mongatane and Bakomane chiefdoms. However, the Magakala Polity was made to be the subordinate of the Bapedi mainstream.

Though Thulare had built the Bapedi Nation into a powerful chiefdom to be reckoned with, he however set the precedent that it is not only inheritance that counts, even bravery and courage could earn one the royal throne. That thinking was to emerge in 1861 with the death of the regent Sekwati. Sekhukhune, the son of Sekwati usurped the throne from Mampuru, the rightful and legitimate heir. And in contrast to Thulare's move, Sekhukhune's move sped up the disintegration process of the paramountcy.

2.5 Conclusion.

The origin and the formation of the Bapedi nation are tied up with the dynamics of the African culture. Over the years they evolved cultural

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid.

principles to regulate succession. However, the changing political, economic and socio-cultural situation led to problems of succession because the royal descendants continued to contest for succession. The contestants used the security and survival of the polity or nation to justify their moves.

Chapter 3

Sekwati, The Reconstitution of the Bapedi Nation and The Problem of Succession.

3.1 Introduction.

The previous chapter dealt with the origin and formation of the Bapedi nation. This chapter continues from the previous one, with the history of the Bapedi nation as built by Thulare, and its rapid disintegration. It tackles the precarious circumstances that surrounded the succession in the Bapedi nation after the death of Thulare, which was immediately followed by that of his son, Malekutu¹¹²). That condition put the traditional principle of succession on the balance. Some of the sons of Thulare, despite their full knowledge of the rightful successor, toyed with the idea of wresting the throne, a move that could have been viewed as an imitation of their father's.

The chapter further exposes the disunity, mistrust and the uncooperative relations that were prevalent among the sons of Thulare. That condition weakened the royal house, and eventually the nation became militarily vulnerable, as it was the case with the appearance of the Matebele of Mzilikazi (Mfecane)¹¹³). It was against this background that the thought

112. Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, 04/10/2004.

113. Ibid.

that bravery and courage should supersede the traditional principle of succession, started to gain more ground.

When Sekwati fled into exile he wanted to create a peaceful situation that would nurture the resurrection of the Bapedi polity, and it unconsciously enhanced Sekhukhune's desire to usurp the throne of the Bapedi nation¹¹⁴).

The chapter outlines Sekwati's ideology when he decided to accommodate the Voortrekker community in the eastern frontier of Bopedi. The move that was aimed at creating the eastern military buffer against enemies turned out to be a military menace, which put a heavy strain in upholding the traditional principle of succession.

It will end up with Sekwati's strategy and acceptance of the European missionaries in Bopedi, and the reasons behind it. Immediately after the arrival of the European missionaries in Bopedi, Sekwati died.

3.2 Internal Royal Disputes and In-fighting.

Thulare had usurped the throne of the Bapedi polity around 1780¹¹⁵). That move also created a precedent for both the sons of Thulare, and within the smaller royal houses of the subordinate polities. It created a situation that occasioned conflicting envy to the throne, mistrust and disunity among

114. Ibid.

115. Dibate Thobejane, *Praktiseer*, 05/10/2005; Mokgatla Mabogoane, *Mohlaletsi*, 07/10/2005.

the sons of Thulare. The subordinate polities started to clamour for independence from the problem-riddled Maroteng paramount royal house.

The death of Thulare in 1824 gave way to a succession dispute over the throne of the Bapedi nation, which was to be worsened by the outbreak of the Mfecane battles in Bopedi¹¹⁶). Thulare had a number of sons from his numerous wives. In the first family it was Malekutu, who was a born warrior. He led numerous successful raids and conquests during the reign of his father – Thulare. According to Bapedi tradition he was the rightful successor to Thulare, and indeed he succeeded him though he died in the same year as his father – 1824, from alleged poisoning. Later it was alleged that the poisoning was masterminded and administered by Matsebe¹¹⁷).

Matsebe was the senior son in the second royal family and had Ramphelane as his younger brother¹¹⁸). He took advantage of Malekutu's long absence from home, on far away raids and conquest missions to plan and prepare his elimination, in order to pave his way to the throne. The death of Malekutu left the Bapedi nation without a "kgoši".

116. Ibid.

117. J.C. Otto : 'Die Voorgeskiedenis en Opkoms van die Bapedi-Stam'. **Historical Studies**, vol. 6,no 2, 1945, p.74; Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi of Sekhukhuneland 1877-1879'. **Archives Year Book for South African History**, vol. 30, pt. 2, 1967, p. 1; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

118. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', pp. 284-285; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

After the death of Malekutu, Phetedi, the senior son from the third royal house, and Motodi, the younger brother to Thulare, confronted Matsebe who fled to Mmafefe¹¹⁹⁾. Phetedi pursued him and defeated him after fierce fighting. Matsebe later died from wounds sustained in the fighting.

Having defeated Matsebe, Phetedi returned to Mokororoane (Tubatse) where, together with Motodi, took the responsibilities of daily royal administration. It was during this period that arrangements to marry Kgomomakatane from the Magakala chiefdom, as the principal royal woman got under way¹²⁰⁾. Kgomomakatane was to be married to the dead Malekutu and her main responsibility was to bear an heir to the Bapedi nation.

3.3 The Bapedi and the Mfecane/Difaqane.

Just before the marriage arrangements could be finalized, the Matebele of Mzilikazi appeared in Bopedi, in around 1825 or 1826¹²¹⁾. They found disunity, mistrust and uncooperativeness among the sons of Thulare at its best. Phetedi and Motodi could not receive the much needed co-operation from the other sons of Thulare who wished for demise of the nation that

119. Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 285; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 22; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

120. Ibid.

121. Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, p. 126; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

could enable them to get share of the splits, with subjects and establish their own independent polities¹²²⁾.

The Bapedi heard about the near extermination of the Bakone and the Makopole following by the Matebele in the regions of the Hlumuhlumu Mountains in time¹²³⁾. After they defeated the Makopole following the Matebele headed for the Bopedi heartland. Under the leadership of Phetedi and Motodi efforts to prepare and put in place the defense mechanisms were made, but disunity, mistrust and uncooperativeness among the sons of Thulare weakened the nation.

The first Matebele attacks on the Bapedi were successfully repulsed, but when the former launched a full blast attack at Mokororoane), the latter could not answer¹²⁴⁾. All the sons of Thulare, save Sekwati were killed in the ensued battles.

The Mfecane devastations made the precarious problem of succession worse and complicated. Both the remnants of the Bapedi, who remained in Bopedi, and those in exile, had started to cherish and later adopted the

122. Ibid.

123. T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 285; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

124. J.A. Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’. **South African Journal of Science**, vol. 9, 1912, p. 329; A.P. van der Merwe :‘**Die Voorgesiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**’ . (M.A. verhandeling, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1975), p. 15; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

ideology that was also nurtured in Sekhukhune¹²⁵). It appeared to them that the Bapedi needed a more militarily orientated leader to steer them through the militarily threatening situation. That thinking was later adopted by Sekhukhune, and it led to royal dispute, which led to his assassination by Mampuru, who traditionally was the rightful successor.

3.4 Sekwati in Exile

At the time of the Mfecane battles Sekwati, the younger brother to Seraki and born in the fourth royal house, proved to be the man of the moment. He coupled diplomacy and military prowess. Sekwati and his regiment had, after realizing the military strength of the impis, in comparison to theirs; retired from the battle field and took refuge in the cave of Mamathamageng, on the Honoko mountain¹²⁶).

From Mamathamageng cave Sekwati and his handful of followers sneaked out of Bopedi into exile. The fugitives crossed the Lepelle River into the Mphahlele chiefdom, then deeper into the far north. They later camped at Moselangope and Mononono, on the banks of the Dwaars

125. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Moramoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

126. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Van der Merwe :**Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**, p.15; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 286.

River, in the present Batlokwa domain. There he allied with Kgoadi, chief of the Batlokwa people¹²⁷⁾.

Sekwati and his followers did not stay long in Botlokwa. They were not comfortable with the Mzilikazi impis who made regular visitations to collect tribute from Bapedi and other neighbouring African groups¹²⁸⁾. Annual tribute was often taken to mean voluntary submission or an acknowledgement of socio-political supremacy of the receiver by the sender, and usually it was accompanied by the expectation of military protection by the former to the latter. However, to avoid further visitations by the Matebele impis Sekwati retreated deeper into the north, and settled among the Ramapulana community with whom he was related through Thobela (elder brother to Thobejane)¹²⁹⁾.

Sekwati led his followers into a tough and rough kind of life, employing the strategies that ensured the regeneration of the Bapedi polity. Such strategies were guided by the principle of avoiding, at all costs, engaging in futile military expeditions against bigger and stronger chiefdoms, with

127. Bothma :‘The Political Structure of the Pedi, p. 183;

Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’, p. 329; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, pp. 286-287; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

128. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 287.

129. Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’, p. 329; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Mönnig :The Pedi, p. 23; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 287.

whom he forged friendlier relations and concluded alliances, which ensured military assistance in times of need¹³⁰). He destroyed and absorbed the smaller and weaker African groups. Some groups were wholly absorbed into the Bapedi refugees, and displaced men from such groups were given women and livestock to make a restart in life, as naturalized members of the Bapedi community and polity. Such endeavours ensured an increase in population, and existing military regiments, which were regularly engaged in hunting activities with the aim of preparing them for defense.

The tough and rough life that the Bapedi under Sekwati led in exile had great influence in the future life and thinking of Sekhukhune¹³¹). Sekhukhune was the eldest son in the marriage between Sekwati and his favourite woman, Thorometjane.

Just as Sekwati was a popular leader in exile and back home, so was Sekhukhune to members of his regiment and other members of the royal house, especially his mother, who even thought of him as the successor of Sekwati¹³²). When Sekwati was regenerating the Bapedi polity, preparing it to take its rightful place back home at Bopedi, Sekhukhune who was

130. P. Maylam :**A History of African People of South Africa from the Early Iron Age to 1970's**, p. 60; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

131. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

132. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

influenced by the view that bravery and courage should supersede the traditional principle on succession, was gradually preparing himself to contest for the throne of the Bapedi nation in the event of the death of his regent father. That thinking was to dominate Sekhukhune and his supporters for years to come, and created a situation that was to occasion the outbreak of the royal dispute on the death of Sekwati in 1861¹³³).

3.5 The Return of Sekwati and the reestablishment of the Bapedi Nation

3.5.1 Sekwati and Neighbouring African Nations

Mzilikazi and the Matebele stayed in Bopedi for a period of one year, before they left for the western region of the then Transvaal Marico region, where they were later defeated by the combined army of the Voortrekker under Potgieter and the Zulu under Dingane¹³⁴). Though they stayed in the area for only a year, the Matebele cleaned it of crops and livestock. They actually left it in a semi-desert state, in an attempt to bar the Zulu from pursuing them. The starvation became rife when the natural resources of the area could not meet the needs of the occupants¹³⁵).

133. Ibid.

134. Otto : 'Die Voorgeskiedenis en Opkoms', p. 74.

135. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005; Van Rooyen : **Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 126.

After the Matebele left Bopedi, Sekwati spent two more years in exile before returning to his native land – Bopedi. Oral tradition suggests that the delay was due to the fact that he still wanted to acquire “pheko” which was to work against his military rivals and enemies¹³⁶). The said “pheko” is claimed to have been acquired from one powerful African medicine man in the area of the present Moletji, near Polokwane.

After four years in exile, in around 1828, Sekwati with his much increased following reestablished the Bapedi nation under the Maroteng ascendancy, reestablished the succession institution, and rebuilt the nation to the level of the Thulare era, the days before the appearance of the Matebele impis¹³⁷).

Before he crossed the Lepelle River, he camped at a place to be later known as “Molapo wa Sekwati” at Sepitsi hill¹³⁸). The Sepitsi hill is adjacent to the Sepitsana hill in the west, and both hills are in the northern

136. Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Moramoukangoe Thobejane Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

137. Van der Merwe :‘**Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**’, pp. 15-16; Maylam :**A History of African People**, pp. 60-61; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Moramoukangoe Thobejane Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

138. Sepitle Leshilo, Tooseng, 15/04/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Winter :‘**The History of Sekwati**’, p. 330.

banks of the Lepelle River, which separated the Mphahlele and the Masemola polities. It was only after some time, a year or so, that Sekwati and his followers crossed over. Oral tradition suggests that when they arrived at Lepelle River which it is maintained they found flooded, they discovered that one of the royal women was pregnant. According to Bapedi tradition a pregnant woman was not supposed to cross a river¹³⁹⁾.

Once the river's water level had gone down, and the pregnant royal woman had delivered, Sekwati and his followers crossed the river and relocated at the hill of Pshiring¹⁴⁰⁾. Their new settlement got its name from its initial occupants, the Puane group which has "phiri" (hyena) as their totem. It was initially called Phiring, but later with semantic change and contamination it changed to Pshiring¹⁴¹⁾.

On his return to Bopedi Sekwati found the political, social and economic conditions in the area in pathetic confusion, a condition which was worsened by the power vacuum that was left by the Matebele¹⁴²⁾. There were a number of independent African fragments without central authority. Those fragments were clustered together by a common enemy

139. Sepitle Leshilo, Tooseng, 15/04/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004.

140. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Motšitširipe Masemola, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005.

141. Ibid.

142. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Mönnig, :**The Pedi**, 23.

who changed from time to time, a condition that was to become a source or ingredient for regular military conflicts and skirmishes¹⁴³⁾.

The area was overcrowded with people and livestock, and as a result thereof it was denuded of flora and could no longer maintain the fauna. The practice of agriculture was dismal as the soil fertility also deteriorated¹⁴⁴⁾. Trade with the European travellers and neighbouring African groups also deteriorated as there was no central economic and political regulation¹⁴⁵⁾.

Out of such a confusing and chaotic situation a warrior called Marangrang emerged welding supreme political power. Marangrang was a Mokoni, brilliant warrior and commoner, but rose to the rank of a ruler through his military capabilities and magical sword¹⁴⁶⁾.

Sekwati gained courage from the fact that a significant number of surviving polities, especially those in the Lepelle River region, welcomed his return and viewed him as a saviour and valuable ally against

143. Ibid.

144. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005

145. Ibid.

146. Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’, p. 330; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005.

Marangrang¹⁴⁷). He also viewed Marangrang as an obstacle to peace, security and stability, which were the necessary factors to enhance the reestablishment of Bapedi power in the region¹⁴⁸). Instead of confronting Marangrang in the battlefield Sekwati opted for a different approach – the African magic approach¹⁴⁹).

Upon his return from exile Sekwati acknowledged and submitted to the political supremacy of Marangrang¹⁵⁰). That was done with the intention of buying time to prepare himself (Sekwati) for total onslaught on Marangrang. The submission to Marangrang implied that Sekwati had to pay tribute in return for political and military protection.

When Sekwati decided to eliminate Marangrang from the scene forever, he sent the latter tribute in the form of a young woman called Selaiwana. Selaiwana was firstly “doctored” and thereafter given the assignment to bring back home, to Sekwati, “ditsekaudu” (ingredients for muti, from Marangrang, in the form of hairs from the head and ‘madibaneng’, and parts of the stools plugged with bare or naked fingers)¹⁵¹). Selaiwana was clearly told that the assignment was a patriotic mission in the sense that it

147. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Moramoukangoe Thobejane Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 26.

148. Ibid.

149. Ibid.

150. Ibid.

151. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Moramoukangoe Thobejane Mohlake, 21/09/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004.

involved the survival and the regeneration of the Bapedi. She went to Marangrang's capital village, and after a few days she accomplished the mission. Thereafter she obtained the permission to visit her parents at Pshiring, with the sole covert intention of delivering "ditsekaudu"¹⁵².

Oral tradition suggests that the "ditsekaudu" ingredients which were mixed with the "pheko" obtained from the Moletji area were meant to weaken Marangrang's physical strength and military magical power¹⁵³. A few days thereafter Marangrang met his death at the hands of the Mphahlele "bodikana" initiates, on his way to conquer the Mphahlele polity. Oral tradition held that Mmutle, kgoši of the Mphahlele polity and nephew to Sekwati, had initially warned his initiates not to fight Marangrang, but later changed his stance after Sekwati had assured him that Marangrang was weak, and could be killed¹⁵⁴.

The Mphahlele initiates fought Marangrang and his entourage for the better part of the day, and defeated him later in the afternoon¹⁵⁵. Marangrang was killed at Mogodi, in the north eastern side of the present Lebowakgomo Township.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

155. Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004.

With the death of Marangrang, Sekwati then attacked the Bakoni, destroyed their polity and absorbed them in the Bapedi mainstream¹⁵⁶). Thereafter, Sekwati absorbed the Bapedi branch of Bakabu. The Bakabu group was named after their leader Kabu, who was the son of Makgeru and grandson of Thulare¹⁵⁷). He later absorbed the Phaahla group whose polity is the present Ga-Phaahla¹⁵⁸).

After the death of Marangrang the Magakala and Mphahlele polities welcomed the supremacy of Sekwati¹⁵⁹). The social, economic and political conditions were such that he was on the right track of establishing the Maroteng paramountcy along the lines of Thulare's era¹⁶⁰).

Sekwati then negotiated with other small incorporated African groups in the area, and by 1837 when the Trichardt group of voortrekkers passed Bopedi on their way to the far north, they had no difficulties in identifying and acknowledging Sekwati as the paramount ruler in the region¹⁶¹).

156. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004; Van der Merwe: **'Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**, p. 16.

157. Winter : 'The History of Sekwati', p. 331; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004.

158. Ibid.

159. Winter : 'The History of Sekwati', p. 330; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

160. Ibid.

161. Van Rooyen : **'Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 126.

After he had reestablished the Bapedi paramountcy under the Maroteng ascendancy, Sekwati looked forward to attend to the issue of succession as prescribed by the Bapedi traditional custom. To him the implementation of the traditional principle of succession was of paramount importance to the rapidly growing thinking of an individual's bravery and courage¹⁶²). He formally finalized traditional procedures and rituals of marriage to Kgomomakatane, from the Magakala polity, to the dead Malekutu as the principal royal woman with the main purpose of bearing a heir¹⁶³). However his attention was divided by the military threat from the eastern direction.

The Zulu and the Swazi from the southeastern direction made several efforts over the years to subjugate the Bapedi, but without success. Between 1830 and 1851 the Zulu impis of Mpande attacked, with the intention of conquering the Bapedi, but on both occasions they could not capture the capital – Pshiring¹⁶⁴). In 1838 and 1840, ten years or so, after his (Sekwati) return from exile, Swazi of Somcuba attacked Pshiring, and once more the capital seat of the Bapedi nation proved to be impregnable¹⁶⁵).

162. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Motubatse Lepota, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

163. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 87; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

164. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 30; Otto :‘Die Voorgeskiedenis en Opkoms’, p. 75; Maylam :**A History of African People**, p. 128; Mankotane Molabe, Mroko, 04/10/2004.

165. Ibid.

Despite the fact that the Bapedi were never defeated in all the Zulu and Swazi attacks, Sekwati employed an appeasement policy in relation to his attackers, who were later labeled national enemies of the Bapedi¹⁶⁶). He often sent the Zulu and Swazi rulers presents in the form of ivory, ostrich feathers, wild animal skins and other trading commodities, and at times even women. That was done with the specific aim of creating friendlier relations with the Bapedi national enemies in order to buy time for the Bapedi's regeneration, fortification and acquisition of rifles. However, the Swazi interpreted the appeasement policy of Sekwati differently.

They interpreted it to mean the acknowledgement of Swazi political supremacy over the Bapedi, an interpretation that Sekwati and later Sekhukhune rejected throughout their reigns¹⁶⁷).

The Zulu and Swazi attacks further reinforced the thinking that the Bapedi nation needed a brave and courageous leader. That was later to create a problem of succession and dispute between Mampuru and Sekhukhune.

166. Delius : **The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 30; K.W. Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi of the North Eastern Transvaal', **Journal of African History**, vol. 10, pt. 2, 1967, p. 237; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort; 14/09/2004.

167. Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi', pp.238-239; Winter : 'The History of Sekwati', p. 332.

Economically, the Bapedi kept livestock and tilled crop fields. The newly absorbed groups were allocated residence and crop fields. To those displaced the royal family intervened to enable them to make a restart in life¹⁶⁸). The sound economic standing enabled Sekwati to carry his armament policy, and maintain his foreign policy of appeasing stronger polities, like the Swazi of Somcuba, to avoid confrontations with them¹⁶⁹).

3.5.2 Sekwati and the Europeans (1845-1861)

On 05 July 1845 a group of the Voortrekkers under the leadership of Andries Hendrik Potgieter appeared in Bopedi from the Waterberg direction. Sekwati and his entourage met them at Molahlegi¹⁷⁰). The first meeting between the two parties was characterized by harmony and friendliness. The Bapedi paramount brought them presents in the form of ivory, animal skins and livestock¹⁷¹). In short Sekwati afforded them the best of the traditional etiquette, or what presently others call “ubuntu”.

168. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Mogalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005.

169. Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 237; Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005.

170. Winter :‘The History of Sekwati’, p. 331; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 288; Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 237; A.P. van der Merwe :**Beskawing Kom na Oos-Transvaal. Lydenburgse Eeufeegedenkboek**, p. 25. Van der Merwe :**Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**, p. 21; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 126.

171. Ibid.

This was again, later misinterpreted by the Boers to mean voluntary submission to the South African Republic.

Few weeks after meeting Sekwati and Potgieter concluded a 'vredestractaat', a document that was to be lost forever, and became a source of contention in the conflict between the Bapedi and the Voortrekker community¹⁷²⁾. The document is however, said to have provided for harmonious and peaceful staying together as neighbours. Potgieter and his followers were granted settlement rights in exchange for the protection of the nation against the anticipated Zulu and Swazi attacks¹⁷³⁾. Maybe that is why the Ohrigstad, the first Voortrekker settlement in the North-eastern Transvaal, is situated in the eastern side of the Bapedi heartland, to serve that purpose. That implied that despite Sekwati's diplomacy the military threat from the eastern direction was never dispelled.

The two leaders had, seemingly, interpreted the document differently. To Sekwati, the Boers were only given the settlement rights, not the rights to own the land¹⁷⁴⁾. On the other side, Potgieter and his followers interpreted it to mean the acquisition of legal rights to the land. The Boers based their

172. Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi', p. 237; Otto : 'Die Voorgeskiedenis en Opkoms', pp.75-76; Van Rooyen : **Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 126.

173. Van der Merwe : **Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg**, p. 22; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

174. Maylam : **A History of African People**, p. 128.

claim on the land on the 1846 land deal they made with the Swazi under Umswazi, the son of Sobhuza¹⁷⁵). From the land deal premise, the Boers regarded the Bapedi who were the original owners and by then occupants of the land as their subjects.

The first few months after the arrival of the Boers at Andries Ohrigstad was characterized by a harmonious and peaceful relationship between the two parties. They participated in joint hunting; raids and other military expeditions¹⁷⁶).

The Bapedi and the Boers of Andries-Ohrigstad locked horns for the first time after the joint military raid against the Moletji chiefdom in 1847¹⁷⁷).

After the said raid Kadishe/Buys, Sekwati's former ally in exile, informed the Boers that that Bapedi had taken more than their fair share of the loot¹⁷⁸). The allegations were viewed by the Boers as a sign of

175. Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhoudinge', pp. 5 & 74-75; Winchmann, 'Die Wordingsgeskiedenis', van die Zuid-Afrikaan Republiek 1838-1860', :**'Archives Year Book for South African History'**, vol. 4, pt. 2, 1968, p. 51; Agar-Hamilton, :**The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers**, pp. 60-61; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Smith :**'The Campaigns against the Bapedi'**, p. 2.

176. Delius, **The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 37; Winter :**'The History of Sekwati'**, pp. 331-332.

177. Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhoudinge', pp.97-98; Smith :**'The Campaigns against the Bapedi'**, p. 2; ; Hunt :**'An Account of the Bapedi'**, p. 289; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

178. Ibid.

disobedience on the part of the Bapedi.

In 1847, after the raid campaign the Boers resolved to raise a commando to go and teach Sekwati a lesson or two on obedience. The Boer commando, supported by the the Matebele of Moletlane and and some Barolong, besieged Pshiring with the intention of capturing it and subduing Sekwati¹⁷⁹⁾. However, the stronghold proved impregnable. The commando, after realizing that they could not capture the stronghold withdrew, and consoled themselves with the capturing of 8000 cattle and 6000 in small livestock, and calico (cotton cloth) bought from the Portuguese traders¹⁸⁰⁾. The capture of livestock angered Sekwati who in response allowed the Bapedi armed forces to stage sporadic cross-border raids for retrieval. In the meantime the paramount embarked on intensive armament and the fortification of Pshiring, in preparation for another anticipated siege from the Boers¹⁸¹⁾. In 1852 Potgieter organized a Boer commando of about 320 men to return to Pshiring and try to disarm Sekwati and the Bapedi in general¹⁸²⁾.

Pshiring was besieged, and cut off from the water supply. The commando

179. Delius, **The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 38; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 289; 177. Van Rooyen, ‘Die Verhoudinge’, p. 98.

180. Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 289; Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 238; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 128; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 24.

181. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

182. Ibid.

sealed the western and north-western side of the capital village and blocked any access to the Ngwaritsi and Lepelle Rivers. The situation became so bad for the Bapedi to an extent that they drank the foul liquid from the abdomen of slaughtered animals to survive¹⁸³). It was under such trying conditions that Mojalodi and Sekhukhune, the young and warrior-like royal men, who, through their stay in the north honed their military thinking and abilities, asked Sekwati if they could try to break the siege head-on and bring water for the Bapedi¹⁸⁴).

In the light of the dangers pertaining to the suggested military exercise, Sekwati refused. However, Sekhukhune secretly called his regiment of Matuba, organized females of their age group whom they escorted from the capital seat to the Lepelle River and brought back water for the Bapedi¹⁸⁵). The success of Sekhukhune in bringing in water proved his military abilities and increased the uneasiness within the royal family over succession. It appeared that should the opportunity present itself Sekhukhune would not hesitate to usurp the throne.

Immediately, thereafter, the Boer commando abandoned the siege, capturing about 5000 cattle and 6000 small livestock. Both the European

183. Winter : 'The History of Sekwati', p. 332; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

184. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 289; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

185. Mashalane Mabule, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

evidence and the oral tradition agreed that Andries Hendrik Potgieter, the organizer and the leader of the commando got sick, and as a result, the siege was abandoned¹⁸⁶⁾.

After the 1852 siege Sekwati moved the Bapedi seat from Pshiring to Thaba-Mosego. The new capital seat was situated in the eastern slope of the Leolo Mountain range, in the west of Ohrigstad and north-eastern side of Pshiring. The move was necessitated by the perfect ease with which the enemies were able to cut them off from the water supply¹⁸⁷⁾.

Sekwati had always wanted peace with the Voortrekker community of Ohrigstad. He feared that initiating war against them would throw them in the hands of the Swazi. The Boer-Swazi alliance would be too formidable for the Bapedi. That is why he had tried to prevent and discourage the Bapedi from molesting the Boers¹⁸⁸⁾. That suggests that Sekwati was not afraid of the Boers who were known to be not so good fighters, even when armed with rifles, especially on the terrains that were foreign to them, but the Swazi if given enough arms and ammunition could have been a bit more powerful to the Bapedi. He went to an extent of sending

186. Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 289; Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, p. 98; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 128; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mashalane Mabule, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

187. Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, pp. 289-290; Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

188. Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 130; Delius, **The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 39-40.

the Voortrekker leadership presents, which they mistook to mean voluntary submission¹⁸⁹⁾. However, the relations between the Bapedi and the Voortrekker community remained precarious.

In 1857 the Bapedi and the Voortrekker community leaderships signed a peace treaty. In the Bapedi delegation Mampuru was roped in during the discussion of the provisions or terms, in a way to groom and prepare him for his role as the future paramount kgoši of the Bapedi nation¹⁹⁰⁾. That was an attempt to ensure sustenance of friendlier and cordial relations. The relationship between the Bapedi and the Voortrekkers had instead of dispelling the anticipated attacks from the eastern direction become a source of military menace. That condition worsened the problem of succession in Maroteng. It reinforced Sekhukhune's thinking that bravery and courage should supersede the traditional custom on succession.

3.5.3 Sekwati and the Berlin Missionary Society (1860-1861)

In 1860, a year before his death, Sekwati accepted the German Berlin Missionary Society. Some scholars argue that Sekwati needed the European missionaries for the mediation and communication roles¹⁹¹⁾.

189. Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Motubatse Lepota, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

190. Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon, Die Mapogo Oorlog 1882-1883' **Historical Studies**, vol. 3, nos. 3-4, 1942, p. 100.

191. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004.

between the two parties beyond Sekwati's reign. The essence of the peace treaty was aimed at creating peaceful and friendliness between the two parties. The Bapedi nation was to communicate with the neighbouring Boer republic, and a variety of European nationals who came to Bopedi on trade missions and labour recruiting agencies.

Other scholars maintain that Sekwati wanted the missionaries for their Western medical and surgical skills. During the second part of the 1850's, Sekwati's ageing days were dominated by ill-health, and the Bapedi migrant labourers and the European travellers and traders must have brought him the information about the European missionaries' Western medical knowledge which it was hoped it would improve his ailing condition¹⁹²⁾.

Oral tradition also insists that Sekwati was prompted to invite the European missionaries by the need for the European arms and ammunition. That is, the decision was made after military and defense considerations. The military confrontations of the 1840's and 1850's between the Boers and the Bapedi at Pshiring; the boers and the African group of Segeli in the western Transvaal, near the present town of Rustenburg, the Boers and the Matebele of Mokopane, made the need for rifles and ammunition a matter of urgency¹⁹³⁾.

192. Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 27; Van : 'Die Verhoudinge', p.176.

193. Winchmann, 'Die Wordingsgeskiedenis', p. 124; Kirstner :**The Anti-Slavery Agitations**, p. 220.

It is against this background that the proponents of this school of thought maintain that Sekwati wanted military assistance from the missionaries, and not their Christian gospel¹⁹⁴).

In 1860, Sekwati granted Alexander Merensky permission to build a mission station in Bopedi, after the latter's unsuccessful mission in Swaziland¹⁹⁵). On the 22 September 1861 Merensky had the first sermon in the first church in Bopedi at Kgalatlou mission station and on the same day Sekwati died¹⁹⁶).

3.6 Conclusion

The appearance of the Matebele of Mzilikazi found the Bapedi royal house in a terrible political situation. The sons of Thulare, Malekutu and Matsebe had just been involved in disputes over succession, and both of them were dead. In the ensuing battles all of the sons of Thulare, save Sekwati, were also killed.

Sekwati took a handful of the Bapedi individuals into exile with a clear intention of sustaining the political structure of the Bapedi nation, and the traditional cultural heritage for generations to come. He did not take the advantage of the post-Mfecane shattered situation, and make himself the actual chief but he ruled as a regent. He is regarded as having selflessly

194. Ibid.

195. D.W. van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal 1860-1900**. (M.A. verhandeling, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1975), pp. 26-30.

196. Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 25.

wanted and tried to restore the Bapedi traditional culture and custom pertaining to succession. That he had trained, prepared, and groomed Mampuru as an heir is a common knowledge among the Bapedi and their subordinate African groups.

Sekwati's foreign policy was determined by the need to avoid conflict with the stronger neighbours. Since his return from exile, he was disturbed by the anticipated attacks from the eastern direction. The accommodation of the Voortrekker community in what was later to be called Ohrigstad was aimed at defusing that eastern danger.

When the Voortrekkers themselves became a military danger, he invited the European missionaries. From the missionaries he hoped to access arms and ammunition, and the reparation and service skills thereof, to strengthen the nation militarily so that he could have a smooth implementation of the traditional customs of succession.

Chapter 4

Sekhukhune, the Missionaries and the South African Republic, 1861 - 1876

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the political scenario on the death of Sekwati. This chapter tackles events before the burial of Sekwati, and how Sekhukhune forced his way to play the leading role in the burial of the dead regent - Sekwati.

The chapter also focuses on the circumstances that led to the eventual usurpation of the throne by Sekhukhune and his attempts to have Mampuru accept the new arrangement. It further unfolds the relationship between Sekhukhune and the Berlin missionaries, the factors and the events that eventually led to the expulsion of the latter and the Bapedi Christian converts out of Bopedi in 1864.

Finally, the relationship between Sekhukhune and the South African Republic, the factors, causes and events that led to tension, and eventually the outbreak of war between the two parties in 1876, and the consequences thereof, are examined.

4.2 Sekhukhune and the Bapedi Throne

During his sick days Sekwati, was nursed by his wife and mother to Sekhukhune – Thorometjane¹⁹⁷⁾. At that time the relations between Sekwati and his son, Sekhukhune, were strained. The former was angered by the latter's intention of succeeding him as the "kgoši" of the Bapedi¹⁹⁸⁾. Sekhukhune fled from his father's wrath and took refuge at Manganeng with his aunt, Lekgoloane.

At Manganeng Thorometjane had regularly updated her son, on the deteriorating condition of his father¹⁹⁹⁾. That was done in order for Sekhukhune to ready himself for the usurpation of the throne, in the event of the death of his father Sekwati. This suggests that Thorometjane supported Sekhukhune's design of wresting the throne from Mampuru.

On the death of Sekwati, Thorometjane immediately communicated the news to Sekhukhune, even before he could inform the other high-ranking "bakgoma" and "bakgomana" and Mampuru²⁰⁰⁾. That was a deviation from the traditional protocol intended to give Sekhukhune an advantageous opportunity to implement his usurpation plans.

197. Legadimane Sekhukhune, *Praktiseer*, 10/10/2005; Lepota Mabule, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Ngwanankwana Seloane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

198. *Ibid.*

199. *Ibid.*

200. *Ibid.*

On hearing the news of the death of his father, Sekhukhune together with his regiment, Matuba, rushed to the capital, (Thaba Mosego), to begin the implementation of the usurpation plan²⁰¹⁾.

Oral tradition maintains that when Sekwati died, Mampuru was also out of the capital on a visit to the neighbouring Ndzundza Ndebele community as the presumed successor to the ailing Sekwati²⁰²⁾. That was part of the orientation and training of the successor, aimed at sustenance and continuity of inter-national relations between the Bapedi and the Ndzundza Ndebele.

Upon his arrival at Thaba Mosego Sekhukhune tried to gain access to the hut where Sekwati was lying in state, but failed²⁰³⁾. After several attempts he acceded to the advice of the “bakgoma” and “bakgomana” to send for Mampuru, who was able to gain access to the hut of Sekwati’s body, who rendered the traditional ritual before releasing the corpse for burial²⁰⁴⁾.

At the graveyard it is alleged that Sekhukhune insisted on choosing the site of his father’s grave and turning the sod, a responsibility and

201. Van Coller :‘Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon’, p. 100; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 293; Mokgatla Mabogoane, Mohlaletsi 07/10/2005.

202. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

203. Ibid.

204. Ibid.

prerogative, which belonged to the heir²⁰⁵). Once more, he failed to get to the right spot; every spot he tried to turn the sod was found to be rocky. After several attempts, Mampuru was given a chance and he managed to identify the right spot on the first attempt, and the grave was successfully dug, and the regent was laid to rest²⁰⁶).

This information may be regarded as part of the myths of the Bapedi. Myth is not necessarily false or a fantastic reflection of reality. Myth points to the existence of complex problems which exist in society and the need to resolve them. In this particular case the above myth relating to difficulties relating to the burial of Sekwati attempts to resolve the problems of succession by justifying Mampuru's claim to the throne as established in the traditional principles of succession.

Sekhukhune is reported to have forcefully presided over the burial rituals, which were also the exclusive prerogative of the heir²⁰⁷). It then became apparent that Sekhukhune wanted to usurp the throne, a situation that threatened to plunge the Nation, especially the royal house, into bloody turmoil.

Mampuru was not prepared to lose what he regarded as traditionally his. It is reported that after the burial of Sekwati Sekhukhune demanded from

205 Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

206 Ibid.

207. Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

Mampuru the royal 'pheta' and 'sefoka', which were always in possession of the 'kgoši', but Mampuru refused²⁰⁸⁾. However, Sekhukhune decided to use force to succeed Sekwati as the paramount ruler of the Bapedi nation.

For some time Mampuru kept a low profile, not openly contesting Sekhukhune's usurpation of the throne. Some people attribute this to the fact that he was caught unprepared²⁰⁹⁾. He did not mobilize and organize his regiment - Matuba and the succeeding regiments for the task. Some argue that his reaction was as a result of the ancestral advice communicated to him through the African medicine men and women²¹⁰⁾. However, Sekhukhune was worried by Mampuru's behaviour. He started to persuade, soothe and appease him to accept the new arrangement²¹¹⁾. He firstly offered Mampuru the better part of the royal livestock, in an attempt to appease him, but the latter could not accept anything less than what regarded as his traditionally rightful place within the Bapedi nation²¹²⁾.

4.3 Sekhukhune and the European Missionaries

Sekhukhune, like his predecessor, expected the Berlin missionaries to

208. Ibid.

209. Ibid.

210. Ibid.

211. Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, pp.89-90.

212. Ibid.

provide the Bapedi with arms and ammunition, and help with the training of the Bapedi men in servicing and repairing guns²¹³). They were also to help with interpreting and communicating roles with the European visitors, traders and travelers, and maybe provide surgical and medical expertise²¹⁴). That was basically his intention of keeping them in Bopedi.

He (Sekhukhune) had accordingly informed the European missionaries, Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Grutzner, about his newly acquired position, and assured them of his support and protection²¹⁵). The missionaries accepted Sekhukhune as the new paramount “kgoši”, despite the fact that Sekwati had introduced Mampuru as his successor.

Sekhukhune was annoyed by what he called noise from the converts, who recited Psalms from the Bible and sung hymns²¹⁶). The paramount claimed that the noise denied him tranquility, and ordered a stop to all the Christian activities such as preaching and singing at the capital.

213. Dibate Thobejane, *Praktiseer*, 05/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

214. H.T. Wangemann :**Maleo en Sekoekoeni** (vertaal uit Duits deur Dr. J.P.W. Grosskopf en G.P.J. Trumpelmann), p.41.; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 27.

215. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 70.

216. Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 72.

Sekhukhune was also angered by the conversion of Dinkwanyane, a member of the royal house, and two royal women; Modikishing and Tlakale²¹⁷). He tried to persuade Dinkwanyane to renounce Christianity but in vain²¹⁸).

Sekhukhune viewed the division of the royal house as a serious political threat, which he feared might divide the polity, a condition that could lead to instability. Sekhukhune believed this situation could make the Bapedi nation vulnerable to outside infringements, and seriously threaten his paramount status and lead to the nation's inevitable disintegration and eventually to his overthrow.

He differed vehemently with the European missionaries over the control of the converts²¹⁹). The Bapedi converts did not participate in the national rituals, which they claimed were against their Christian religion. To Sekhukhune the Bapedi converts were guilty of abandoning their traditional culture in favour of the recently acquired European one²²⁰).

He accused the missionaries of taking the Bapedi converts away from

217. Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 72; Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, pp. 149-150.

218. Ibid.

219. Van Rooyen :Die Verhoudinge, p. 150; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 295; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 27; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 115; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004.

220. Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004.

him²²¹). He feared that the converts might be spying for the European missionaries whom he accused of working for the Boers against the Bapedi²²²). To the Bapedi, in general, the converts' behaviour had angered the ancestors, and some sporadic mishaps, drought and the dying of cattle under mysterious circumstances were attributed to ancestral anger.

Once Sekhukhune decided to expel the Bapedi converts out of Sekhukhuneland. He banned all Christian activities at the capital and throughout Bopedi, and started with their persecution²²³).

Sekhukhune's anger is alleged to have been fuelled by the English travelers and traders who told the paramount that the two German missionaries; Merensky and Grutzner were criminals expelled from their home country²²⁴). Furthermore, they told him that the two missionaries were siding with the Boers and were planning to sell the Bapedi land to the Boers²²⁵).

221. Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004.

222. **Delius :The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 117; Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004; Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 77.

223. Van Rooyen :'Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky', p. 138; Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 74; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Morohe, 04/10/2004.

224. Van Rooyen :'Die Verhoudinge', p. 153.

225. *Ibid.*

Eventually, in 1864, due to the severity of the persecutions, the German missionaries and their converts left Bopedi to what was later to be called Botshabelo, in the north western side of the present town of Middelburg²²⁶⁾. The move added the missionaries to the list of the national enemies. This made Sekhukhune to feel more insecure and the nation became more vulnerable, and the thought of a brave and courageous leader resurfaced. That dispelled any hope to the resolution of the problem in the near future.

Dinkwanyane was disappointed by the way the missionaries and the Boers exploited the converts²²⁷⁾. The Bapedi converts were made to render free labour services to the mission station and in the neighbouring Boer farms, pay tax to the Boer republic, and worse, Dinkwanyane felt that the missionaries were undermining his leadership.

4.4 Sekhukhune and the South African Republic Boers

After the burial of Sekwati Sekhukhune met with South African Republic leaders and introduced himself as the successor of Sekwati²²⁸⁾. He indicated to them that he would adhere to all the agreements that his predecessor entered into with them²²⁹⁾. Among others, it was the

226. Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 77.

227. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 170-173; Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, p. 177.

228. T.A. LL1 Merensky to Landdros 21/10/1861; Mernsky to Landdros 25/09/ 1861.

229. Ibid.

acknowledgement of the Tubatse River as the boundary of the residential areas of the Bapedi in the west, and the European Voortrekker group in the east. (The clause that was interpreted differently by the two parties); the return of the alleged stolen cattle by the Bapedi men to the Boers; and the return of the fleeing apprentices to their Boer masters. In return Sekhukhune requested the South African authorities, who agreed, to protect the nation against the attacks from the eastern direction (by either Swazi or Zulu or both)²³⁰). That was, the reaffirmation of the treaties and agreements the Boers entered into with his predecessor.

The colonists were ready to accept and recognize whoever claimed “bogoši” as long as he was willing and ready to agree to their conditions. They did not hesitate to change the acceptance and recognition if the reigning renegade from the initial agreement.

The Boers’ acceptance and acknowledgement of Sekhukhune as the successor of Sekwati is questionable, and indicates to an extent that they fuelled the Bapedi royal dispute for their own interests. In the 1850’s, Sekwati had introduced Mampuru as his successor, and even made him (Mampuru) to co-sign the agreement the regent entered into with the Boer authorities²³¹). It also showed how little value they attached to the Bapedi traditional culture and custom. However, it was not long before Sekhukhune and the Boers clashed, basically over the land, which the

230. T.A. L13 Agreement between Sekwati and Lydenburg Republic 17/11/1861; Otto :‘Die Voorgekiedenis en Opkoms’, pp. 76-77.

231. Van Coller :‘Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon’, p. 100; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 88.

latter had persistently claimed was theirs.

Firstly, they argued that Sekwati gave them that land²³²). Secondly, they argued that the land was initially owned and controlled by the Matebele under Mzilikazi, and their defeat of the latter in 1837, entitled them to the land by inheritance²³³). Lastly, they based their argument on the land transactions they had with the Swazi in 1846 and 1855²³⁴).

The Bapedi interpretation of the 1845 agreement on accommodation had always been that the Boers were only granted residential rights, and not land ownership²³⁵). That implied that they were politically subordinates of the Bapedi, and tasked to prevent military attacks from the eastern direction²³⁶). On the other side, the Boers interpreted the clause to mean the transference of the ownership of land from the Bapedi to their control²³⁷).

232. Maylam :**A History of the African People**, p. 128.

233. Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, 188; Kirstner :**The Anti-Slavery Agitation**, p. 210; Davenport :**South Africa A Modern History**, p. 21.

234. Van Rooyen :Die Verhoudinge, p. 74-75; K..W. Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 238; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 128; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 130.

235. Dibate Thobejane, *Praktiseer*, 05/10/2005; Kalantsho Ramushu, *Ga-Masemola*, 17/11/2005.

236. Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, pp. 285-286.

237. Dibate Thobejane, *Praktiseer*, 05/10/2005; Lehlagare Maserumule, *Phokoane*, 26/12/2005; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 127.

The argument that Sekwati granted them the ownership of the land is unfounded. According to the Bapedi tradition the land does not belong to an individual, not even the royal house, but to the whole community²³⁸). As a result no one but the community could make a unilateral transaction over it. On the other hand the Europeans catered for individual ownership of the land (property)²³⁹).

The fact that the Boers claimed they inherited the land after the defeat of Mzilikazi did not carry much weight because even in Ndebele custom the land belonged to the community. When the Boers arrived in Bopedi in 1845 there was no trace of the Matebele. They had also approached Sekwati, as the independent paramount ruler in the area, and requested accommodation.

In addition, the Swazi had no right to sell the land of the Bapedi, and the South African Boers knew it. They had, on several occasions, attacked the Bapedi and had failed to conquer them. That led to political stalemate between the Bapedi and the Boers of the South African Republic, and a military threat to the former by the latter. Once more, the Bapedi nation added another enemy to her list, a condition that was to make her insecure, and hence the resolution of the succession problem more remote.

238. Wangemann :Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 35; Agar-Hamilton :**The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers**, p. 136.

239. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 127; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005.

Another source of conflict between the Bapedi under Sekhukhune and the neighbouring Boer community was “inboekselings” or apprentices (semi-slavery)²⁴⁰). The tradition of “inboekselings” was transplanted from the Cape Colony into the interior²⁴¹). These were the native children retained in the Boer households and farms for a specific period for labour purposes. After the period had expired, 21 years for girls and 25 years for boys, they were supposed to be released to return to their parents at their original homes or join the neighbouring native communities.

The Boers disliked the situation whereby freed “inboekselings” settled amongst the Bapedi or other native communities for they would lose the civilization acquired from the Europeans²⁴²). To make it difficult for them to return to their homes or desert to the neighbouring African communities the “inboekselings” were bought from the faraway places, i.e. those from Natal colony were settled in Ohrigstad and those from Ohrigstad were sent to Natal colony²⁴³). Secondly, the Africans were taken for “inboekselings” at an early age²⁴⁴).

However, due to the ill-treatment meted out to them, and the Boers’ reluctance to release them after the specified period, the “inboekselings”

240. Kirstner :**The Anti-Slavery Agitation**, pp. 226-228; Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004.

241. Ibid.

242. T.A. L12., Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 13/10/1859; L4, Uitvoerende Raad besluit, 25/10/1859.

243. Agar-Hamilton :**The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers**, p. 174.

244. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 142.

fled into the Bapedi domain, and Sekhukhune refused to return them to the Boer masters, as initially agreed²⁴⁵). Sekhukhune's refusal was influenced by the changed attitude and behaviour of the Boers, they did not view themselves as subordinates of the Bapedi, but their masters²⁴⁶).

The "inboekselings" were helpful to the Bapedi in the sense that they rendered the services of the scribes and interpreters, supplied security (intelligence information of the Boers and swelled the Bapedi nation and army²⁴⁷).

Another source of conflict emanated from the small African groups who lived on the peripheral areas of the Bapedi domain and the eastern Boer settlement²⁴⁸). These groups were initially subjects of the Boer authorities; paid tax and rendered labour services in the neighbouring Boer farms. By 1870 when they became dissatisfied and tired of the Boer taxation, and Sekhukhune mobilized them against Boer taxation, they stopped complying and trekked deeper into Bapedi domain for protection against Boer cohesion²⁴⁹). That move left the Boers in the farms without labour and the authorities without income.

245. Ibid., pp. 143-144.

246. Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

247. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 144.

248. Van Rooyen : 'Die Verhoudinge', p. 227.

249. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 153.

When the South African Republic demanded their return Sekhukhune refused, because these refugees provided the Bapedi paramount with intelligence information about the South African Republic, and expanded the Bapedi army.

The Boers had persistently insisted that the Bapedi men were stealing their cattle. On the other side the Bapedi maintained that it was the Boers who stole their cattle, and they were only retrieving that which belonged to them²⁵⁰). The Bapedi held that the Boers wanted to starve them so that they are forced to sell the labour in the Boer households and farms, and this would result in the eventual subjugation of the Bapedi Nation. Under such claim ad counter-claim situation there developed a source of conflict that saw the two parties cross swords in 1876²⁵¹).

4.5 The Bapedi-Boer War (1876)

The Bapedi-Boers War was fought as a result of political tension between the two parties. The situation made the resolution of the succession problem more remote. To Sekhukhune and his supporters the Bapedi nation, more than ever before, needed a brave and courageous leader, and to them Mampuru was not one of those²⁵²).

250. Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004.

251. Ibid.

252. Ibid.

4.6 The Consequences of the War

Instead of complete withdrawal the Boers decided to built Fort Burgers, named after the President, on the junction of Tubatse and Spekboom Rivers²⁵³). Later there developed the present town of Burgersfort. Von Schlickman, the former Prussian officer, was instructed to raise a group of volunteers to man the fort.

The volunteers were given orders to starve the Bapedi; by preventing them from sowing and harvesting their crops, and capturing the Bapedi cattle²⁵⁴). Indeed in October 1876, Sekhukhune under pressure sued for peace. The South African Republic dictated the peace terms, which among others provided for:

- (a) Sekhukhune had to agree to become the South African Republic subject.
- (b) Sekhukhune agreed to pay the fine of 2000 cattle as war damages.
- (c) Sekhukhune had to acknowledge the boundaries of the territories²⁵⁵)

4.7 Conclusion

Sekhukhune had wrested the throne of the Bapedi nation with the pretext

253. Selatole Tseke, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 207-210.

254. Ibid.

255. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 211; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, pp. 162-163; Van Rooyen :‘Die Verhoudinge’, p. 288.

of steering the nation through the difficult political conditions in the area. However, immediately after the death of Sekwati he clearly indicated that he was to usurp the throne; Mampuru was never given a chance to prove his worth. Even if Mampuru lacked that capacity, the supporters of Mampuru maintain, it was the responsibility of Sekhukhune to support him.

Hence, there is a school of thought that maintains that the move emanated from sheer greediness to the material benefits associated with the institution of “bogoši”.

Sekhukhune felt threatened by the Bapedi converts who together with their European missionaries he suspected of spying for the Boers of the South African Republic. He was further angered by the conversion of the members of the royal house. He viewed their move as deliberate division of the royal house aimed at his toppling and the eventual demise of the Bapedi nation. That reinforced his insistence to keep the throne to himself.

Sekhukhune’s relationship with the Boers did not only have adverse effects on the nation, it also intensified the problem of succession. Failure of the Boers to subdue Sekhukhune made him, and his supporters to believe that he was the right man to lead the Bapedi.

The insistence of Sekhukhune keep the throne to himself plunged the nation deeper into political confusion which made the resolution of succession more remote.

Chapter 5

The Conflict between Mampuru and Sekhukhune (1861-1879)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 exposed the problems and challenges that Sekhukhune faced in order to steer the Bapedi nation towards a secured political and economic future. As continuation this chapter focuses on the relationship between Mampuru and Sekhukhune after the burial of Sekwati, and the eventual fleeing of the former into exile. The chapter also analyses the institution of 'bogoši' among the Bapedi, in search of the root causes of succession disputes. In particular, the factors that led to the royal dispute between Mampuru and Sekhukhune over the throne of the Bapedi nation are being scrutinised.

5.2 Mampuru and Sekhukhune (1861-1879)

The Bapedi traditional custom on succession was clear – the first male in the first royal house became an heir to the throne²⁵⁶. The principle stood irrespective of how young he was to the first males in other houses or families. In case an heir was in one way or another incapacitated, a regent

256. Legadimane Skhukhune, *Praktiseer*, 10/10/2005; Selatole Tseke, *Mohlaletsi*, 07/10/2005; Khurishi Mphahlele, *Ga-Mphahlele*, 30/09/2004.

257. *Ibid.*

who could be his uncle, cousin or mother would take over until such time that he was in a position to ascend the throne²⁵⁷).

Mampuru's mother was Kgomomakatane. She was married from the Magakala polity for the dead Malekutu, as the principal royal woman²⁵⁸). This meant that her first male child was to become an heir of the Bapedi nation. However, the opponents of Mampuru and supporters of Sekhukhune to the throne argued that Kgomomakatane was not married to Malekutu but to Sekwati as "mosadi wa direthe", and under no circumstances could she bear an heir. Bapedi tradition provided for the "kgoši", and any man to marry as many women as he could afford²⁵⁹). However, the "kgoši" was obliged to marry the principal royal woman whose lobola (dowry) was contributed by the whole polity or nation²⁶⁰).

The principal royal woman would bear an heir to the polity or nation. The opponents of Mampuru argued that Sekwati had unilaterally raised the lobola (dowry) livestock, which was supposed to be done by the whole nation, a condition which could have legitimised Kgomomakatane as the principal royal woman and Mampuru as an heir and his claim to the throne²⁶¹). According to our informants this argument is unfounded and a deliberate fabrication meant to advantage Sekhukhune. When Kgomomakatane came to the house of Maroteng she came as the wife of

258. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

259. Ibid.

260. Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

261. Ibid.

the dead Malekutu, and the principal royal woman²⁶²). The Bapedi traditional custom provided for that arrangement.

Another argument against Mampuru was that he could not be an heir because he was fathered by Kopjane, a subordinate induna within the Bapedi nation, instead of Sekwati²⁶³). As a result thereof, it was concluded that he was not of royal blood and therefore, could not ascend the throne of the Bapedi nation.

As has been observed above, these arguments are weak in the sense that they are unfounded and misleading. That Kgomomakatane was formally married to Malekutu, before the outbreak of the Mfecane battles, was common knowledge to the Bapedi²⁶⁴). Sekwati had immediately after his return from exile sent “kgomo ya go hlabiša”, not unilaterally but with the consent of the other royal “bakgoma” and “bakgomana”, from the royal house of Thulare. The reason for this was related to the fact that the Bapedi nation was going through economic decline and could not afford contributing livestock (lobola), towards the marriage of the principal royal woman²⁶⁵). Instead, the royal house was organizing food, distributing it among the Bapedi. Some “dikgoro” which were hard hit by the famine were given livestock to make a restart in life²⁶⁶). Under such

262. Ibid.

263. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Hunt : ‘An Account of the Bapedi’, pp. 293-294.

264. Ibid.

265. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

266. Ibid.

conditions the royal house's contribution was tantamount to the contribution of the whole nation.

The allegation that Mampuru was biologically fathered by Kopjane instead of Sekwati was traditionally no argument. There are sayings in Sepedi which culturally clarify such matters; “ngwana ke wa dikgomo”, and that “kgoši e tswalwa ke mosadi”²⁶⁷). The first saying implies that irrespective of his biological father, Mampuru was regarded as the son of the dead Malekutu, by virtue of being mothered by Kgomomakatane (the wife to Malekutu and the principal royal woman of the Maroteng Nation). The second saying implies that an heir is not necessarily to be fathered by a “kgoši”.²⁶⁸

The supporters of Sekhukhune claimed that the nation at that time needed a brave and courageous leader to steer it through the then militarily threatening conditions. And they argued that Sekhukhune was more appropriate than Mampuru²⁶⁹).

5.3 The Institution of “Bogoši”

Our informants are of the view that the problem of succession amongst the Bapedi, and most of the African communities in South Africa, was

267. Selatole Tseke, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005; Mashalane Mabule; Mamone, 07/10/2005; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

268. Ibid.

269. Ibid.

fuelled by colonial intrusions in their settlements²⁷⁰). Colonialism robbed the Bapedi of their vast areas of land, made inroads into their cultural fibre which led to differences and disputes. The Europeans despised African culture and everything African, and made other Africans to do the same. Our informants however, insist that there are other material factors attached to the institution of “bogoši” among the Bapedi that were used by supporters of Mampuru to discredit Sekhukhune. To a great extent these factors are still responsible for the present royal disputes in our country.

According to tradition, the “kgoši” was the first citizen of the polity or nation he was leading²⁷¹). Though a servant of his people he/she was the most catered for individual. His or her social standing was above that of all others. He or she had the capacity to marry more spouses than most men or women in the community. To the traditional Bapedi, a man’s wealth was measured in terms of the number wives he had²⁷²). Many wives implied many crop fields, and possibly many daughters who would bring him more cattle on their marriages.

The royal crop fields were, according to the Bapedi traditional custom, the first to be tilled by all members of the community at no cost incurred

270. Ibid.

271. Selatole Tseke, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005; C.L. Harries :**Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs**, pp.35-36; C.L. Harries :**The Laws and Customs of the Bapedi and Cognate Tribes of the Transvaal**, pp. 80-81.

272. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 50; Selatole Tseke, Mohlaletsi, 07/10/2005.

by the royal house, except food and beer drinks which more often were brought by others to the royal house usually in the form of “sebego” and “lehlakori”²⁷³). No one could start harvesting before the harvest ritual was held and presided by the “kgoši”²⁷⁴). In times of good harvest people took part of the harvest to the royal house to be consumed by either members of the royal house or other people engaged in royal routines or visits, or for storage, or consumed by the “kgoši” and his households, or distributed among the subjects in times of famine²⁷⁵).

He/she controlled the royal livestock, which were more often constituted the largest herd, and kept on increasing with arrival of newcomers who surrendered some in exchange for absorption²⁷⁶). Some livestock came to the royal house in the form of tribute from the subordinate groups, and those that were paid as “lobola” (dowry) to many royal young women, and also the fines that were paid in cases tried at the capital seat and subordinate polities²⁷⁷).

The economic prosperity of the “kgoši” also increased through gifts received in the form of livestock, harvests and trading articles such as

273. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

274. Harries :**Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs**, pp.35-36; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

275. Ibid.

276. Ibid.

277. Ibid.

hoes, cloths, etc. from his people and subordinate groups²⁷⁸). Part of this wealth was used by the royal house to relieve the subordinate polities and subjects in times of economic depression. The livestock was either distributed among the subjects, or bartered for other needed items from outside polities²⁷⁹).

Even though the “kgoši” did not participate in all the trials and prosecutions of individuals, sentences and fines imposed were either first brought to him/her for approval or he/she was given feedback²⁸⁰). From the fines imposed there were more often portions meant for the royal house, either to keep or give to the attendants and visitors for consumption²⁸¹). The “kgoši” presided over the final court of appeal of the traditional judiciary²⁸²).

The traditional Bapedi ‘kgoši occupied a position that most of the royal members envied, and more often decided to usurp despite clear traditional customs on succession. This usually led to problems of succession and

278. Kalantsho Ramushu, Ga-Masemola, 17/11/2005; Mgalatjane Mphahlele, Lebowakgomo, 16/11/2005; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

279. Ibid.

280. Harries :**Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs**, p. 54; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

281.; Harries :**Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs**, p. 55; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

282. Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Maylam :**A History of African People**, pp. 127-128; Winter : ‘A History of Sekwati’, p. 372;

splinter splits.

5.4 Mampuru in Exile

Open conflict between the two cousins, which threatened to erupt into violence, emanated from the youngest royal woman called Tlakale²⁸³). Tlakale came to the capital during the reign of Sekwati, from a subordinate group of the Bapedi Nation, led by Morewane, as one of the royal women²⁸⁴). The practice was common among the Bapedi and their cognate polities. It was aimed at improving and entrenching the cordial relations among the polities within the nation and the subordinate groups.

On her arrival Sekwati assigned Mampuru, as an heir who would inherit Tlakale and other royal possessions when he becomes the paramount “kgoši” of the Bapedi nation, to cohabit with her²⁸⁵). The arrangement did not go down well with Sekhukhune who later had to run away from the capital due to strained relations that developed between him and his father-Sekwati²⁸⁶).

283. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 90; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

284. Ibid.

285. Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005.

286. Ibid.

After the death of Sekwati, Sekhukhune instructed Tlakale to cohabit with another royal male of his choice²⁸⁷). Sekhukhune issued the instruction with the understanding that he was the successor of Sekwati, and the ruler of the Bapedi nation.

Tlakale did not heed the instruction. Our informants maintain that older and senior royal women, who sided with Mampuru and disapproved of Sekhukhune's plans and his mother's support thereof, influenced her²⁸⁸). However, Tlakale's move angered Sekhukhune who rapidly developed hostility against Mampuru.

As the new paramount 'kgoši', Sekhukhune expected Tlakale to submit to his instruction. However, her refusal was interpreted to be a deliberate disrespect influenced by Mampuru, who was then seen as a deadlier threat to his new status.

The relations between the two cousins soon deteriorated to an extent that Mampuru was left with no option but to save his life from Sekhukhune's threatening assegai. Together with a handful of his guards he took refuge in the Mashupe cave²⁸⁹). His supporters and followers who were to join him en route out of Bopedi were ambushed through Sekhukhune's orders. From the Mashupe cave Mampuru fled to Kgalatlou mission station, established during the reign of Sekwati, where Merensky, the German

287. Ibid.

288. Ibid.

289. Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', p. 101; Mashalane Mabule, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

Lutheran missionary, successfully pleaded for his life from Sekhukhune's men who were in hot pursuit²⁹⁰).

In June 1862 Mampuru sneaked out Kgalatlou mission station to Manganeng where he took refuge with his aunt Lekgolane²⁹¹). Lekgolane was the same woman who accommodated Sekhukhune from the wrath of his father - Sekwati. On hearing that Mampuru was at Manganeng, Sekhukhune personally went there with the intention of killing him, but Lekgolane pleaded with the latter to spare the life of the former²⁹²). Lekgolane is said to have cautioned Sekhukhune against spilling blood, especially the royal blood, which was contrary to the African culture²⁹³). Though his life was spared, Mampuru still felt unsafe. He once again sneaked out of Manganeng and fled to Magakala polity, north of the Lepelle River, at the present-day Mmafefe settlement²⁹⁴). The Magakala polity was the branch of the Bapedi of Maroteng who were led by Mampuru during the reign of Morwamoche, and later supported by

290. Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', p. 102; Delius : **The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 90-91; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

291. Delius : **The Land Belongs to Us**, pp. 90-91; Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 293; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

292. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004.

293. Ibid.

294. Delius : **The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 90; Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', pp. 101-102; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Mmakau Segokodi, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

Thulare to establish a pseudo-independent polity under Maroteng nation. It was the original birthplace of Kgomomakatane, the mother of Mampuru.

At Magakala Mampuru felt much safer, and was able to think deeply and seriously about the throne of the Bapedi. It was during his stay at Magakala that he vowed to devote his life to recover what he believed was traditionally his-the throne of the Bapedi Nation. That decision was to influence his wandering lifestyle that spanned a period of about two decades (circa 1862-1879).

In 1869 Mampuru and his handful of supporters trekked to Botshabelo mission station, near the present-day town of Middelburg²⁹⁵). Botshabelo was the mission station established by the Berlin missionaries (Merensky and Grutzner) to accommodate the Bapedi converts after Sekhukhune had ejected them out of Bopedi heartland in 1864, for violating African culture²⁹⁶). Mampuru went to Botshabelo hoping to gain the support of the converts whom he assumed were still bitter about their ill- treatment under the rule of Sekhukhune²⁹⁷). The missionaries had access to arms and ammunition, weapons he so desperately needed to overthrow

295. Dibate Thobejane, *Praktiseer*, 05/10/2005; Moshiane Ntwampe, *Morapaneng*, 03/10/2004; Hunt : ‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 295; Van Coller : ‘Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon’, p. 102.

296. *Ibid.*

297. Moshiane Ntwampe, *Morapaneng*, 03/10/2004; Johannes Komane, *Burgersfort*, 14/09/2004; Kgolane Thobejane, *Mohlake*, 21/09/2004.

Sekhukhune. From the Bapedi converts Mampuru hoped to get military allies and from the European missionaries he hoped to access arms and ammunition²⁹⁸). The allies, arms and ammunition were necessary to defeat Sekhukhune and recover the throne.

He was accepted and accommodated at the mission station (Botshabelo). However, in 1870 he was expelled by the missionaries for failing to adhere to the rules and regulations of the station²⁹⁹). The main charge was that he was caught throwing “ditaola”, to divine the prospects for the recovery of the throne, a cultural belief and practice which was unacceptable to the missionaries³⁰⁰).

The Botshabelo episode did not work in Mampuru’s favour. He thought he would mobilise the converts, who by then recognised Dinkwanyane as their traditional leader, against Sekhukhune. Instead it brought the two parties to the brink of reconciliation. From Botshabelo Mampuru and his followers headed to the neighbouring Ndzundza Ndebele polity, under Nyabela³⁰¹). The Ndzundza Ndebele, at that time, were struggling to clinch their independence from the Maroteng hegemony. That condition made them potential allies for Mampuru against Sekhukhune.

298. Ibid.

299. Ibid.

300. Ibid.

301. Ibid.

Immediately, after his arrival there Sekhukhune started to send gifts regularly to the the Ndzundza Ndebele leader with the sole aim of getting his support. The latter then sensed danger from the Bapedi regular visits and towards the end of 1870 he sneaked out and fled to Swaziland, and settled amongst the Swazi who were viewed by the Maroteng as national enemies³⁰²⁾.

In Swaziland he eventually got allies who also wanted to destroy the Bapedi nation. A strong Bapedi nation had always been a threat to the neighbouring Swazi kingdom. In 1876 when the Bapedi went to war with the Boers, Mampuru was leading and escorting the Swazi warriors, who fought on the side of the Boers³⁰³⁾.

5.5 The Bapedi-Boer Peace Terms

The Bapedi-Boer war (1876) had a negative impact on the problem of succession of the Bapedi nation. Though the Boers did not capture Thaba Mosego, the capital seat, it inflicted pain, suffering and a serious shortage of food. The killing of Dinkwanyane at Mafolofolo, who was by then reconciled with Sekhukhune, and that Mampuru and his followers escorted the enemy left bitter memories and experiences to Sekhukhune

302. Ibid.

303. B.V. Lombard :‘Bydraers tot Bronne Johannes Dinkanyane’. **Historia**, vol. 10, no. 1, March 1965, p.8; Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 29; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

and his supporters³⁰⁴). That situation classified Mampuru with the enemies and made the resolution of the problem of succession more remote.

After the Swazi had withdrawn from the campaign against the Bapedi, the Boers on their own, could not confront Sekhukhune militarily. The capital seat of the Bapedi was foreign and difficult for them to penetrate³⁰⁵). They were fewer than the Bapedi warriors most of whom were armed with rifles. Many of the Boers started to think about their crops which were due for harvesting and became home-sick. As a result of low morale the campaign was withdrawn.

After the 1876 war Sekhukhune and the South African Republic authorities signed the peace treaty whereby the former was made to acknowledge the supremacy of the latter³⁰⁶).

304. Mashalane Mabule, Mamone, 07/10/2005, Mönnig :**The Pedi**, p. 29; Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Lombaard : 'Bydraers tot Bronne Johannes Dinkanyane', p. 8.

305. T.V. Bulpin :**Lost Trails of the Transvaal**, p. 167; Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi', pp. 6-7; D.J. Pieterse : 'Die Geskiedenis van die Mynindustrie in Transvaal 1836-1886'. **Archives Year Book for South African History**, vol. 6, 1943, p.162; Davenport :**South Africa A Modern History**, p. 159.

306. Smith :*The Fall of the Bapedi*, p. 242; Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi', p. 8; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

President Burgers, of the South African Republic was keen to have the peace treaty with the Bapedi under Sekhukhune. His aim was to frustrate Shepstone's mission of annexing the Transvaal to the British. However, the South African republic did not withdraw completely. Instead, they erected forts around the Bopedi domain, and manned them with European volunteers who prevented the Bapedi from sowing and harvesting their crops and captured their livestock³⁰⁷). The aim was to starve Sekhukhune to submission.

On the other hand, Sekhukhune tried to play the British against the Boers. He communicated to Shepstone that he had signed the peace treaty with the understanding that he was not surrendering his independence to the Boers³⁰⁸). He (Sekhukhune) established friendlier relations with the British with the hope of avoiding the payment of 2000 cattle to the Boers³⁰⁹).

After the annexation of the Transvaal the British authorities informed Sekhukhune that the Bapedi were henceforth the British subjects, and that the peace terms agreed on with the Boer republic authorities were still binding³¹⁰).

307. Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 242; Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, pp. 7-8; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

308. Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 243; Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p. 9.

309. Ibid.

310. Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005.

The change of political hands in the Transvaal did not bring any solution to the problem of succession, instead it brought in a stronger colonial power that eventually defeated the Bapedi and led to the demise of the nation.

The failure of the Boers to capture Thaba Mosego made Mampuru's ambition to retrieve the throne of the Bapedi nation more remote, but beefed up his determination³¹¹). On the other hand it gave Sekhukhune more support, and the supporters gave reference to the war to justify the succession dispute and an argument to maintain the status quo.

The period between 1876 and 1879 was characterized by political tension between the Bapedi and the European nationals (Boers and British). It convinced the supporters of Sekhukhune to believe that Sekhukhune was the right man of the moment, irrespective of the traditional principle on succession³¹²).

5.6 The Bapedi-British War (1879)

After the British annexation of the Transvaal, Sekhukhune pledged to live peacefully with the British authorities. In 1879 the two parties went into a war. They clashed over land, labour and tax³¹³). Basically the British were

311. Ibid.

312. Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

313. Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 217; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005, Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2005.

imposing colonialism on the Bapedi whilst at the same time the Bapedi were resisting it. It was that type of political relationship that made the supporters of Sekhukhune to maintain that Sekhukhune was the right leader (“kgoši”) to deal with it, and that made the possibility of peaceful resolution to the problem of succession more remote and difficult.

Before the outbreak of the war the British presented to Sekhukhune and the Bapedi a list of peace terms that if accepted were to be tantamount to the surrendering of the Bapedi independence and their subjection to the British rule (colonialism), and its fragmentation into splinter splits³¹⁴). After consultation with the Bapedi ruling council Sekhukhune rejected the terms and pledged to fight.

In the ensued war, Sekhukhune and the Bapedi were defeated³¹⁵). Together with his royal entourage, they were taken to prison in Pretoria. That gave way to Mampuru to ascend the throne of the Bapedi nation³¹⁶). And for time being, it appeared as if the problem of succession had been resolved.

314. Mbuzani Nkosi, Mkhontweni, 28/09/2004; Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p.42; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 240.

315. Smith : ‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p. 55; Van der Merwe :**Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap**, p. 252; Delius :**The Land Belongs to Us**, p. 245.

316. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Van Rooyen :**Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky**, p. 164, Van Rooyen :‘**Die Verhoudinge**’, p.331.

In 1881, through the Pretoria Convention the Transvaal was returned to the Boers³¹⁷⁾. It also provided for the release of Sekhukhune from prison³¹⁸⁾.

He went to stay at Manoge, west of the Leolo mountain range, and was given portion of the Bapedi to rule as their “kgoši”³¹⁹⁾. The arrangement did not go down well with Mampuru who disliked the division of the Bapedi nation³²⁰⁾.

Sekhukhune was made to believe that he was imprisoned by the British and released by the Boers³²¹⁾. On 13/08/1882 he lent about 100 men to the Boer authorities to help with the collection of tax among the Marishane people³²²⁾. In the night Mampuru and his men went to Manoge and stabbed him to death³²³⁾.

317. Smith :‘The Fall of the Bapedi’, p. 252; Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 302; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005. ; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p. 60.

318. Ibid.

319. Ibid.

320. Ibid.

321. Van Coller : ‘Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon’, p. 105; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14 September 2004.

322. Hunt :‘An Account of the Bapedi’, p. 303; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

323. Ibid.

5.7 Conclusion

The Bapedi traditional custom on succession favoured Mampuru than Sekhukhune. The opponents of Mampuru had deliberately fabricated misleading arguments for their own ends/gains. Nowhere in the history of the Bapedi were bravery and courage made determinants for succession. Instead oral tradition suggests that in case an heir is physically or mentally incapacitated, he is assisted by the royal “bakgoma” and “bakgomana”.

The militarily and politically threatening colonial intrusions had greatly influenced the divisive conditions that convinced Sekhukhune and his supporters that a brave and courageous leader was a necessity.

The Christian religion hardened Sekhukhune and he viewed it as a means to divide and weaken the Bapedi nation and hand it over the Boers to subjugate.

The institution of ‘bogoši’ is attached to material gains, and boasts his or her socio-political status. That led to envy and temptations that were to contradict the traditional customs of succession. Hence there is a school of thought that maintains that the move emanated from sheer greediness encouraged these material benefits.

Mampuru had fled after realizing that his relation with Sekhukhune has reached dangerous proportions. The aim was to save his life and get allies to topple Sekhukhune. The defeat of Sekhukhune by the British forces in 1879, afforded Mampuru to ascend the throne of the Bapedi

Paramountcy. And in no time he was in conflict with British authorities over the latter's imperialist interests.

Chapter 6

The Split of the Bapedi Nation.

6.1 Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter the relationship between Mampuru and Sekhukhune was irreconcilable. This chapter examines the breakaway of Mampuru's group from the Bapedi mainstream to form the Mamone polity. It looks into the circumstances that led to the royal dispute which eventually occasioned the split of the Matlala polity into Maserumule and Phokwane polities. It also scrutinizes the British peace terms to the Bapedi leadership (indunas and headmen), and their newly acquired status. It concludes with a discussion of the split of the Bapedi nation after the death of Mampuru in 1883.

6.2 The Magakala Polity.

The split within the Bapedi nation is as old as the nation itself, but for this study it will be traced back to the reign of Thulare when Mampuru broke away to establish the Magakala polity, that eventually settled at the place known as Mmafefe, on the banks of the Mohlapetsi River. That break away, unlike others, was peaceful and without bloodshed³²⁴). Thulare sanctioned it with the aim of thanking Mampuru, partly for his military role in the ascension of the Bapedi polity to the paramount status, and chiefly for his advice of wresting the throne from Dikotope. The split was significant in the sense that in future the Bapedi nation was to marry their principal royal woman from the Magakala polity. The mother to Mampuru and wife to Malekutu, Kgomomakatane's birthplace (original

home) was Magakala. Today the reigning principal royal woman at Mamone is also married from the Magakala polity³²⁵). However, it was diplomatic in the sense that it formed the basis of Thulare's foreign policy/diplomacy in relation to his subordinate polities. He conquered the other African polities and communities, throughout the better part of the then Transvaal, to form vassal states encircling the capital.

To Thulare the Magakala polity was to become a pseudo-independent polity and act as a line of defense against the enemies of the nation. The harmonious break away involved mutual agreement between Thulare and Mampuru³²⁶).

Malekutu, the son of Thulare married his principal royal woman, Kgomomakatane, from the Magakala polity³²⁷). There is a view that insists that the arrangement was influenced by Thulare's wish that heirs to the Bapedi nation should be mothered by women from brave and courageous polities (families), in order to produce such leaders.

324. Mankotane Molabe, Moroke, 04/10/2004; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Ngwanankwana Seloane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

325. Ibid.

326. Ibid.

327. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Morwamoukangoe Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004; Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004.

That split had, however, set precedents for future splits which did not necessarily emanate from diplomatic considerations, but from political pressures that were accompanied by colonial intrusions and at times from sheer material envy. The Magakala polity was later to split into the Magakala'a Mmafefe and Magakala'a Ntwampe polities. Oral tradition suggests that the quarrel between the two cousins; Morwamakoti and Legadimane stemmed from a clash of interest over the leadership of the polity³²⁸). It is maintained that though Legadimane was younger in terms of age, he was the rightful heir, and Morwamakoti, who later was known to be a brilliant warrior and called Mmafefe was mothered by a lesser royal woman³²⁹). Mmafefe wanted to overthrow the throne from Ntwampe, the move that was to occasion tension and hostility, and eventually the break away of the Magakala'a Ntwampe and their settlement at the present-day Morohe.

Just when the two cousins were about to cross swords, oral tradition maintains that one old royal woman interfered. She warned the two not to do that because that would have led to "ntwa e mpe" (a terrible war)³³⁰). That is how the Legadimane group got the name Ntwampe. The war was avoided.

6.3 The Split of the Matlala Polity

The Matlala polity which was situated at Phatametsane, in the south-west

328. Moshiane Ntwampe, Morapaneng, 03/10/2004; Mankotane Molabe, Morohe, 04/10/2004; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004.

329. Ibid.

330. Ibid.

of the Thaba Mosego, was the subordinate of the Bapedi nation and married their principal royal woman, Lekgoloane, from Maroteng³³¹).

When Maserumule (Kotole), then reigning “kgoši” died, Lekgoloane acted as the regent for her young son and heir, Shikoane. It is permissible, customarily, to have the principal royal woman act as the regent for her young son. That arrangement was subject to the approval of the royal council, and the ruling style of the female regent. Phokoane, the young brother to Maserumule disputed the arrangement and wanted to take over³³²). Lekgoloane had the support of Sekhukhune in resisting Phokoane’s intention³³³). Phokoane had the support of the British authorities. He eventually broke away and established the Phokoane polity in the southern side of the old settlement³³⁴).

Angered by Lekgoloane’s loyalty to Sekhukhune, Captain Clarke of the British authorities declared that Lekgoloane was deposed³³⁵). The argument he presented was that she was a strange woman outside the Matlala polity and that her strange position was not supported by the African custom³³⁶).

331. Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005; Seroba Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

332. Ibid.

333. Ibid.

334. Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005; Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, pp. 13-14.

335. Ibid.

336. Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005.

Captain Clarke was a European and was not conversant with the African custom. The principal royal woman is not precluded from being married within the polity, but is more often married from another polity outside royal house³³⁷). As a result, the claim that Lekgoloane was married outside the Matlala polity, and could not act as the regent of the Matlala polity was based on ignorance.

It is also permissible for the principal royal woman to act as the regent for her young son who is an heir. However, that decision is usually taken by the royal council. It helps to avoid disputes and conflict among the brothers, cousins and uncles of the deceased “kgoši”, especially when there are signs and threats of jockeying for the throne.

Captain Clarke’s arguments were weak and misleading. However, the main motive for deposing Lekgoloane was to destroy the might of the Bapedi nation and to fragment it into smaller independent polities, which could be easily manipulated by the British authorities. And because of such imperial interests, he eventually deposed Lekgoloane, and in her place he appointed three headmen³³⁸). That was an ingredient for future splits.

337. Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p. 14; Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005.

338. Smith :‘The Campaigns against the Bapedi’, p.42; Lehlagare Maserumule, Phokoane, 26/12/2005.

6.4 The Split after 1879 (peace provisions)

After the defeat of the Bapedi under Sekhukhune in 1879, the British authorities imposed the peace provisions which were aimed at destroying the Bapedi nation, fragmenting it into numerous splinter splits that could be subdued³³⁹). The peace provisions provided among others;

- all the Bapedi headmen and indunas were British subjects; they were independent of the Maroteng,
- and that no successor to the jailed Sekhukhune should be appointed;
- all the headmen and indunas had to carry the instructions from the British magistrate;
- they all had to implement the European legal system;
- they had to disarm their subjects.

6.5 The Split of the Bapedi Nation after 1883

After the war Mampuru ascended the throne of the Bapedi nation. Together with the bulk of the royal house and his supporters he settled at Kgono, in the Middelburg district³⁴⁰). He was made the joint ruler of the

339. Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi', p. 58; Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi', p. 251; Van Rooyen : 'Die Verhoudinge', p.332.

340. Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', p. 104; Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 302.

341. Ibid.

Bapedi with Ramoroko, son of Sekhukhune with the junior wife. Ramoroko and the remnants of the Bapedi remained at the present Sekhukhuneland³⁴¹⁾. The joint leadership did not worry Mampuru because Ramoroko had been his supporter, and did not contest Mampuru's paramount status.

Though assisted by the British to retrieve the throne, Mampuru still regarded himself and the Bapedi nation as independent of the British rule³⁴²⁾. After his ascension to the throne he refused to hoist the British flag at his capital, which he regarded as a sign of acknowledging the British subjectivity.

Mampuru is said to have killed Sekhukhune with the aim of unifying the Bapedi Nation, only to facilitate its split³⁴³⁾. In 1881 Sekhukhune was released from prison and reinstated as the "kgoši" and given a portion of the Bapedi that was initially led by Ramoroko³⁴⁴⁾. The arrangement was such that the group under Sekhukhune was independent and did not recognize Mampuru's paramount status. The arrangement split the Bapedi Nation and did not augur well for Mampuru³⁴⁵⁾. Matters became

342. Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Nkwane Nkahloleng, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Kgolane Thobejane, Mohlake, 21/09/2004.

343. Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi', p. 252; T.V. Bulpin : **The Golden Republic, the story of the South African Republic from its foundation until 1883**, pp. 211-212; Smith : 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi', p. 60; Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', p. 302.

344. Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

345. Ibid.

worse when Kgoloko who initially stayed at Kgono, with Mampuru, trekked with his followers and joined Sekhukhune at Manoge³⁴⁶).

It dawned on Mampuru that Sekhukhune would soon become the paramount ruler of the Bapedi with the better part of the members of the royal family and the Bapedi in general. That led to the assassination of Sekhukhune in 1882³⁴⁷).

The colonial intrusions and their interference in the indigenous people's politics and administration led to their further weakening and split. Mampuru had always believed that he had done what his tradition accepted; to eliminate Sekhukhune to stabilize the Bapedi national politics, and the traditional principles and customs on succession, in particular³⁴⁸).

The South African Republic sent out a commando to arrest Mampuru who ignored the summons to appear before the Boer landdrost. Mampuru was later arrested after fierce fighting with the Boers of the South African Republic³⁴⁹). He was tried and found guilty and sentenced to death, by the

346. T.V. Bulpin :**The Golden Republic**, p.212; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005.

347. Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004.

348. Ibid.

349. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', pp. 304-305; Dibate Thobejane, Praktiseer, 05/10/2005; Bulpin :**The Golden Republic**, 212.

European court applying European laws. He was hanged in Pretoria on 22 November 1883³⁵⁰⁾.

Mampuru had always maintained that he was innocent. He objected to the application/use of the European law, and held that the traditional judiciary would have proved his innocence³⁵¹⁾.

6.6 Conclusion

The break away of the Magakala polity was a diplomatic move that was to usher in a transformed foreign policy that changed the socio-political set-up of what was later to be called Sekhukhuneland. It eventually led to the territorial expansion of the Bapedi nation under the leadership of Thulare.

It also led to introduction of a social system whereby subordinate polities had to marry their principal royal women from Maroteng. The system led to social-political relationships among the polities and between the polities and the nation. That condition fostered cordial interaction and mutual cooperation Maroteng and the subordinate royal houses.

350. Hunt : 'An Account of the Bapedi', pp. 304-305; Smith : 'The Fall of the Bapedi', p. 252; Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', pp. 135-136.

351. Phetedi Mampuru, Mamone, 07/10/2005; Johannes Komane, Burgersfort, 14/09/2004; Khurishi Mphahlele, Ga-Mphahlele, 30/09/2004; Van Coller : 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi Troon', p. 104.

The Matlala polity split was the result of colonial intrusions. The British imperialists who supported Phokoane in order to destabilise the Matlala polity, a condition that would have negative effects on the Bapedi nation, fanned the royal dispute. The Matlala polity under Lekgoloane supported Sekhukhune. That was not in the best interest of the British imperialists who wanted to see the demise of the nation which would facilitate the consolidation of white racist colonial rule.

The peace terms the British authorities presented to the Bapedi indunas and headmen aimed at destroying the political structure of their nation, and replacing it with a European magistrate who was expected to enforce European law and value systems. It further gave all the registered indunas and headmen political independence from the nation. This was a divide and rule strategy.

In 1881 the decision to release Sekhukhune from prison and reinstate him as the “kgoši” of his Bapedi followers was made with the aim of further dividing the house of Thulare in order to break its military power. When Mampuru killed Sekhukhune he was trying to counter-act that move. However, the Boer authorities used that as the pretext to eliminate Mampuru who resisted colonialism and the division of the house of Thulare.

Chapter 7

Findings and General Conclusion.

This study started by looking at the writing of history in South Africa, in particular, the major historiographical schools; the Afrikaner; the Liberal and the African Nationalist schools. However, the above-mentioned schools were found to have approached South African history from a Eurocentric perspective. The main weaknesses of the Afrikaner and Liberal schools are that they deny the agency of the indigenous African people. African values, ideals, knowledge systems, actions and activities do not appear in these histories. Where these activities are mentioned, the purpose is to denigrate them or portray them as actions which posed stumbling blocks to the inevitable triumph of European civilization. In the final analysis these two schools may be regarded as an extension on African soil of European history. The Afrikaner and Liberal schools may be regarded as branches of European history and not African history.

This can however not be said about the African Nationalist school. While this school recognized African agency, that recognition is unfortunately coloured by alien European values. The reason for this is that most historians of this school were trained in European colonial schools and had been dislocated from African culture. Their nationalist ideology tended to mimic European nationalism. On the whole, therefore, the dominant schools were found to be inappropriate as frameworks for the type of study we were conducting.

The framework that makes sense, and is employed in this study is the Afrocentric perspective, as initiated by Diop, Obenga and Asante.

Afrocentricity is the relocation or repositioning of the African in a place of agency, instead of being spectators to others. African voices are heard in the full meaning of history.

Afrocentricity avoids binary oppositions such as; primitive/civilized, traditional/modern etc., which are responsible for the devaluation and denigration of African culture and activity. It holds that reality is made up of complementary dualities.

The Afrocentric framework provided deep insight into the indigenous values and ideals which underpinned the actions, activities and purposes of the African people in our study area. Even when we had to explain the actions and activities of the alien Christian missionaries, traders and colonial officials, it was through the stand point of the Africans that conclusions were made.

It is our view that future research on the past of the Africans must be tackled from an Afrocentric perspective because this is the only way that the yawning gaps which currently exist in South African history can be filled.

The Bapedi polity originated in Bokgatla as a small group that was forced to leave their ancestral land for ever. Their departure was a result of discord in social interaction among the royal women and their eventual settlement in the present-day Sekhukhuneland.

At their new place of abode they started as a subordinate of the Mongatane polity, but later toppled them and became the paramount polity, which later developed into a bigger Bapedi nation.

The Bapedi nation consisted of a number of subordinate polities that pledged their allegiance to Maroteng. To strengthen their links, the polities were made to marry their principal royal women who should bear their respective heirs from Maroteng. That in way fostered cordial relations between Maroteng and subordinate polities.

By 1824 the Bapedi nation was well established with clear borders and membership of subordinate polities. It had over the years evolved customs that were designed to rid the polity and later the nation of royal disputes over succession. The first male child born by the principal royal woman was to succeed as 'kgoši'. In case the 'kgoši' died before he could marry the principal royal woman, the polity could still organize one and appoint one of the closest 'bakgoma' or 'bakgomana' to raise the seed of the dead 'kgoši'.

Despite this it appeared that some members of the royal house and the nation were not satisfied with the traditional customs on succession as a result of the changing socio-political conditions within the nation. Some people started to think that bravery and courageous leadership should supersede traditional customs on succession.

After the death of Mohube, Mampuru tried to usurp the throne from Morwamoche, but he was defeated. In around 1780 Thulare usurped the throne from Dikotope. These were a result of the military confrontations the Bapedi polity had with the Bakomane and the Mogatane polities, which despite Bapedi having defeated both polities, made the safety and security of the Bapedi uncertain.

The Mfecane devastations which befell the Bapedi nation in around 1825 almost destroyed the Bapedi nation. All the sons of Thulare, save Sekwati, were killed in the ensuing battles. Sekwati was mothered by a junior royal woman, and after the Mfecane wars he took over the reins of leadership of the Bapedi polity as regent.

Sekwati fled with a handful of supporters into exile, where he employed the policies and strategies that ensured the survival and regeneration of his following. Life in exile prepared Sekhukhune militarily, a condition that was to make him contest for the throne of the Bapedi nation, on the death of his regent father.

Sekhukhune and his supporters adopted the view that the survival of the Bapedi nation depended on a brave and courageous leadership, rather than on the traditional customs on succession. That thinking was initially influenced by the devastations of the Mfecane wars, the persistent fear of attacks from the Zulu and Swazi, and the military confrontations with the Voortrekkers of Ohrigstad in 1847 and 1852.

In 1852 Sekhukhune showed his prowess when he led his regiment which escorted their female counterparts, that broke the Boer siege at Pshiring and fetched water for the Bapedi from the nearby Lepelle River. That event was to convince his supporters that he was the brave and courageous leader to lead the Bapedi nation through the precarious socio-political conditions prevalent in the region.

According to the Bapedi traditional custom on succession, Mampuru, son of Malekutu, was supposed to succeed Sekwati who ruled as a regent. However, in 1861 when Sekwati died, Sekhukhune usurped the throne of

the Bapedi nation from him. This led to the development of hostile relations between the two cousins.

Fearing for his life Mampuru fled the capital seat and went into exile. He moved from one place to another looking for allies to help him retrieve the throne of the Bapedi nation from his cousin Sekhukhune. In 1876 when the Boers attacked Thaba Mosego, Mampuru and his supporters were seen among the Swazi who were Boer allies.

The arrival of the German missionaries, Merensky and Grutzner in Bopedi in 1860, also aggravated the problem of succession. Sekhukhune started to have problems with them when the Bapedi converts refrained from participating in national rituals and practices. That was to be worsened by the conversion to Christianity of other members of the royal house. Sekhukhune accused the missionaries of taking the control of the Bapedi from him.

He viewed the conversions as a deliberate intention of the missionaries to divide the Bapedi nation and then hand it over to the Boers to subdue. This made him more determined to cling onto the throne with the belief that he was the right man to lead and protect the Bapedi nation against the fast changing socio-political conditions in the region. In 1864 he banned Christianity and expelled the missionaries and the Bapedi converts from Bopedi.

According to the Bapedi traditional custom on succession Mampuru was the rightful successor to Sekwati who ruled as the regent. Sekwati had before his death in 1861, prepared and groomed him to that effect.

However, when he died there were two contestants to the throne of the Bapedi Nation, Mampuru and Sekhukhune.

The supporters of Sekhukhune argued that the Bapedi nation needed a brave and courageous leader who could steer it through the troubled socio-political conditions. They deliberately contested the validity of Mampuru's claim to the throne on the grounds that his mother was not customarily married to the nation as the principal royal woman. Others argued that he was fathered by a lesser ruler in the name of Kopjane.

The supporters of Mampuru could not accept these arguments which he dismissed as mere fabrications resulting from sheer greediness on the material benefits associated with the traditional institution of 'bogoši'. On the whole, because of the socio-political dynamism in the region there were people in the polities and the nation's royal houses that started to question the validity of the traditional customs on succession.

In 1876 the Bapedi-Boers War broke out, and the Boers failed to defeat and subdue Sekhukhune and the Bapedi. That was to reinforce the view that the Bapedi nation needed a brave and courageous leadership that could successfully repulse the Boers attacks like Sekhukhune had just done. The people who held this view believed that Mampuru lacked those qualities. That was to make the resolution of the problem of succession more remote.

In 1879 British troops defeated Sekhukhune and took him to prison. This gave Mampuru a chance to ascend the throne of the Bapedi nation. Temporarily, it appeared that the problem of succession has been laid to rest. In 1881 the British returned the then Transvaal to the Boers, and

Sekhukhune was released from prison, and given part of the Bapedi nation to rule.

However, Mampuru did not accept either to be the British subject or the division of the Bapedi between himself and Sekhukhune. Hence, the latter was eventually murdered. After the death of Sekhukhune the Boers arrested Mampuru, tried and found him guilty of murder, and sentenced him to death by hanging.

The European colonists were interested in breaking the Bapedi nation into fragments that could be easily governed. The Boers wanted to destroy the power of the Bapedi nation so that they access their land and cheap labour. The British were interested in furthering their imperialist intentions while the German missionaries wanted the destruction of the Bapedi nation to open the area for the spread of Gospel. All these were, in the view of Sekhukhune and his supporters, threatening the survival of the Bapedi nation.

The Magakala polity which was the support base of Maroteng experienced royal disputes over succession. It eventually split into Magakala 'a Ntwampe and Magakala 'a Mmafefe polities. That weakened the Magakala polity and its support to Maroteng.

The determined British imperialists pressurised the Matlala polity to break away from Maroteng. The Matlala polity itself later fragmented into the Lekgolane and the Phokoane polities. The Matlala polity was also one of the main supporters and ally to the Maroteng, and its split had negative effects on the security and survival of the Bapedi nation.

The splits of the House of Thulare support bases weakened the bases and eventually the nation itself. The Bapedi nation split into Mamone, Mohlaletsi and Madibong polities, all independent from each other. That eventually gave way to colonialism and the spread of Christianity.

The following factors were responsible for the disputes that eventually led to the split of the Bapedi Nation:

- The impression and thinking among the Bapedi, and members of the royal house, in particular, that bravery and courage should supersede traditional customs on succession. Bravery had been catapulted to the forefront of the politics of the Bapedi Nation because of the need to mobilise the whole society to defend itself from foreign aggression. The imperialist aggression of the British and the Afrikaners was so grave that it became necessary to have a leadership which was not only astute but brave. This critical issue has been thoroughly highlighted in those sections of the study where the activities of the British and the Transvaal Boer Republic were examined.
- The activities of the Berlin Missionary Society undermined African ideals and values. It must be remembered that the Berlin missionaries were located and rooted in European values and ideals. Individualism, competitive struggle for wealth and resources, the capitalist ethos and such similar values were inimical to the indigenous values and ethos which were based on communalism and collective responsibility. The imposition of alien European values tended to dislocate Africans from their own cultural ideals.

Africans, to accommodate these alien values, tended to revise their own ideals leading to cultural confusion.

- The South African Republic Boers' intention to destroy the Bapedi Nation and subdue them under their foreign European rule. The Boers, as has been demonstrated in the study, were colonisers. They wanted land, labour and the mineral wealth of the Bapedi. The study has shown that the appropriation of land belonging to the Bapedi undermined the power and economic viability of the nation. In fact, it weakened the nation to the extent that by 1884 the Bapedi were no longer in a position to offer effective resistance to foreign invaders.
- British Imperialism was not interested in solving the problem of succession in Bopedi, but in colonizing the area. British imperialist activity, like Afrikaner colonialist activity undermined the economic, political, and socio-cultural integrity of the Bapedi Nation. These forces together with the complementary activities of the missionaries led, eventually, to the provocation of succession disputes and the split of the nation of the Bapedi.
- The study suggests that the current problems of succession in the nation of the Bapedi must be traced to historical developments in the nineteenth century. Failure to do this leads to a partial and distorted view of the complex problem.

Glossary

Ditsekaudu the mixture of muti to make a kind of 'pheko'.

Bakgoma highest-ranking royal councils.

Bakgomana high-ranking councils.

Sebego part of the alcohol consumed at a feast surrendered to the royal house.

Lehlakori part of the meat consumed at a feast surrendered to the royal house.

Bogoši the traditional institution of rulership.

Kgoši the traditional ruler or chief.

Madibaneng pubic

Pheko the traditional muti that is designed with a specific purpose to the holder

Noko porcupine

Kgabo monkey

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