

Shoshong

a short history

Jacob Knight

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This book is dedicated to my son Letsopa, who I hope will long continue to enjoy visiting his home village and walking in the river valley.



Traditional dancers from Shoshong Junior Secondary School performing in 2012 (photo Amelia Plant)

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Introduction

"A nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul"
Sir Seretse Khama (1921-1980)

Shoshong is in the Central District of Botswana, just north of the Tropic of Capricorn. A visitor to the sleepy village today would find it difficult to believe that just 150 years ago it was the largest village for thousands of kilometres.

I do not pretend to be an authority on Shoshong's history, but fell in love with the village on my first visit in 2008 with my future wife who was born and brought up there. This book grew out of a desire for a simple account of the history for our son Letsopa, and the apparent lack of any existing books on the subject despite the importance of Shoshong in Botswana's history.

The book builds on whatever information was readily available, and the records from missionaries form the primary source, although I have tried to get information from as wide a range of sources as possible.

The people living in Shoshong originate from a mix of historical tribes, but have lived together in harmony for most of their history and this book aims to celebrate that shared past rather than sow divisions.

If any readers can contribute more information or wish to correct any inaccuracies, please contact me at:
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Jacob Knight
May 2014

Please note: when quoting from historical texts (in italics), I have kept the spelling as the original text, hence the variety of different spelling of names etc.

Map of Africa from 1885; Shoshong, Kanye and Tunobis are the only places noted in what is today Botswana. Tunobis near the modern Namibia border was the easternmost point reached by an expedition in 1850.

Previous page; view of Bokaa ward with Shoshong Primary School in the foreground.





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Longitude East 40 of Greenwich

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Prehistory

It is likely that people have been living in the Shoshong hills for over a million years, long before other continents were inhabited. Modern humans (*homo sapiens*) are thought to have originated in East Africa about 200,000 years ago.¹

Around 40,000 years ago, as the first modern humans began to reach Europe, groups of San people (sometimes called Basarwa in Botswana) were living in small scattered groups, collecting wild fruits and insects and

hunting animals with spears. At some point they were joined by the Khoe (sometimes called Bakgothu by Batswana) who herded sheep and cattle. Rock paintings and other traces of these early people can be found at Tsodilo Hills, and their modern descendants are thought to be genetically the oldest population of humans in the world.

A large lake called the Makgadikgadi Superlake occupied an area to the north of Shoshong until geological changes diverted



the rivers which fed it, and it eventually dried out in stages about 10,000 years ago, leaving the smaller salt pans which we see today.²

Bantu people arrived from the North in around 500 AD bringing knowledge of metal working and probably crop agriculture.

They traded and intermarried with the Late Stone Age people they found in Botswana.³

Iron was mined in many areas including the Tswapong Hills, specularite at Pilikwe (near Palapye) and gold and copper further afield, and traded for ivory and other goods. Traces of iron working can be found in the Shoshong hills.⁴





Toutswe

Around 800 – 1250 AD a rich chieftainship developed occupying large villages set on hilltops. The ruling families lived in three main villages; Toutswe, Bosutswe and Sung, which was just north west of Shoshong near what is now Sung ward. The residents on the hills owned many cattle, wore dyed cotton robes and may have had servants. Some Batswana customs such as paying bogadi (bride price) in cows are thought to date from this time. ¹

Peasant farmers lived on the plains, but some probably also owned their own cattle.

There is also evidence of a prehistoric settlement on Pitsane Hill, around 15km north west of Shoshong.

Great Zimbabwe

To the east of Toutswe, another chieftainship known as the Mapungubwe developed. They established great trading networks through modern day Mozambique to the Indian Ocean.²

These people may have later moved further east to modern day Masvingo in Zimbabwe where in around 1200 AD the Zimbabwe state was established. Zimbabwe took control over the trade routes and become rich. The large town of Great Zimbabwe was built soon after 1250 and by 1350 had 11,000 inhabitants or more. At its peak, the state covered a huge area larger than modern Botswana, probably extending as far as the Shoshong hills.



THE ROUND TOWER IN THE CIRCULAR RUIN.

The decline of Zimbabwe started around 1420, and Great Zimbabwe had been abandoned by 1500. Around this time, the State of Butua was established which lasted until 1840. The Butua are the ancestors of the Kalanga people in modern day Botswana. It is likely that Kalanga people occupied the Shoshong area.³

There are traces of stone walls and cairns on the hills above Shoshong. As John Mackenzie observed in 1864:

*On their summits I have noticed the small stone enclosures of ancient dwellings. Situated at a distance from fountain and garden, and in the most inaccessible heights, these dilapidated fences teach us at least that their builders lived the insecure and distrustful life of all rude and warlike clans. I never heard [Batswana] speak with affection of the open country. Perhaps the reason was that good garden ground, and grazing and hunting stations, could be readily obtained. But I have often heard them speak fondly of the mountains which they inhabit, and which form their refuge in times of war.*⁴

Origins of Batswana



The early history of the Tswana people was not written down but passed orally from generation to generation.

Many Batswana believe the Matsieng creation story; at a time when rocks were soft, Matsieng came from the underworld through a hole in the ground, bringing with him his people and wild and domestic animals, and leaving his one-legged footprints in the soft rock.

Apart from the Basarwa and Kalanga, most of the tribes in Botswana are descended from two groups, the Batswana and Bakgalagadi groups who were living in the Magaliesberg Mountains area in South Africa at the time of the Zimbabwe state.¹ Over time groups of people broke off from their parent tribe and moved to new land, creating new tribes and absorbing or subjugating the people they found. In this way the people evolved into the numerous Tswana tribes which exist today in Botswana, Lesotho and parts of South Africa.

One of the earliest known Batswana tribes is the Barolong, said to have taken their name from Morolong who lived about 1300. At some stage the Bakwena and Bakhurutshe split from the Barolong. A group of Bakhurutshe travelled north to Shoshong.²

The Bakaa split from the Barolong around 1450, and originally stayed near modern day Molepolole. The name Bakaa is thought to come from “Ba ka ya” meaning “They can depart”.

At about the same time the Bakwatheng broke away from the Barolong, also settling near Molepolole.³ (Other sources suggest the Bakwatheng are from the Bakgalagadi

group).⁴ At some later point the Baphaleng split from the Bakwatheng and moved north to settle near Shoshong.

Having migrated to several places, around the early 1700's a group of Bakaa under Kgosi Mmopane settled near the Shoshong hills. After paying tribute to the dominant Bakhurutshe tribe for three years, they rose up and subdued them.⁵ The Bakaa became the dominant tribe in the area, but the Bakaa and Baphaleng have had a long history of peaceful coexistence, dating from before they were in Shoshong.

Facing Page: Matsieng's Footprints, north of Gaborone., inset painting by Olemogeng M Q Moses.

This page: Mountain Sanctuary, Magaliesberg.

[1,2,3] Tlou, Campbell (1997) [4] Ramsey - Sunday Standard 2011-07-25. [5] Parsons(1973a)

Difaqane

The period from around 1700 until the 1840's was a period of upheaval and turbulence for people in Southern Africa, culminating in the Difaqane or "Times of Trouble". There were numerous causes including the Zulu warlords and later the arrival of white farmers from South Africa, but the net result was great instability and people being forced to move gradually northwards.¹

Having split from the Bakwena group about four generations earlier, the Bangwato tribe came to the Shoshong area in around 1770 as refugees from the southern wars and settled at Mamutlhe. *"The Bamangwato with their chief Mathibi fled to the north and took up their abode in the hills of Leshosho, better known today as Shoshong."*² The Bangwato may have been invited to Shoshong by the Baphaleng who fought alongside them against the Mashona a few years earlier.³



Kgosi Mathiba married a Mokwena woman and had a son Tawana before marrying his chief wife with whom he had a son Khama. Khama later attacked his half brother Tawana, who fled with his father and established the Batawana near to Lake Ngami (not far from modern day Maun). In the 1790's Khama (I) became the kgosi of the Bangwato.

The Bangwato tribe moved frequently, and under the next kgosi, Kgari, they lived in Mabele-a-pudi, north of Serowe, for a period. Around 1826 a group of Kololo passed through the Shoshong area expelling the Bangwato, before carrying on northwards

to the Boteti River and settling around the Chobe River in about 1835.

In 1832 Khama II became kgosi of the Bangwato, followed by Sekgoma who became kgosi in around 1835 shortly before the birth of his son Khama, in Mosu (near the Makgadikgadi pans). Around 1840 they moved to Pitsane Hill near Shoshong again fleeing attacks by the Matabele (Ndebele).

One of the first white travellers to reach the Shoshong area was David Hume who visited in 1832 and again in 1835, opening the way for more traders and hunters.⁴

Tribal Structure

The structure of all the Tswana tribes was similar: the kgosi was leader of the people, and inherited his position, but was usually installed and able to exercise authority only after his succession was approved by his subjects.⁵ The people under his authority were the morafe. Important decisions in the village were taken in the kgotla. The kgosi would be assisted by doctors/diviners (dingaka) for spiritual leadership, providing rain, and preventing the influx of pests and plagues. The kgosi typically had several wives. Bogadi (bride wealth) was paid in cows (typically four to ten) which were given by the groom's father and uncles to the family of the bride.

Conquered people and in particular the Basarwa were often badly treated, and used as servants.



Voortrekkers

From around 1836 Afrikaner Voortrekkers or Boers started moving northwards into the Transvaal and southern and eastern parts of what is today Botswana. Some slave trading took place, though not as much as in other areas of Africa. Enterprising Batswana were able to trade and purchase guns, which had a significant effect in being able to resist would-be attackers over the next hundred years.



Facing page: Bechuana Reed Dance, by Moonlight - David Livingstone (1857).

This page: illustration from John Mackenzie's *Day Dawn in Dark Places* (1883).

[1] Tlou, Campbell (1997) [2] Parsons (1973a) - quoting from J.T Brown giving a Kvena viewpoint!

[3] Parsons (1972) [4] Campbell & Main (2003), Sillery (1965) [5] Morton (2008)

Bakaa

In 1842 the Bakaa were inhabiting Shoshong and it had around 250 houses and a population of perhaps 1,500.¹ The Bangwato capital was on nearby Pitsane Hill and had increased to around 600 houses and included various other chiefdoms including Baphaleng and Batalaote.²

All the people were forced into defensive locations by the Matebele tribesmen who regularly raided for cattle and servants.

The geography of Shoshong with its narrow valley makes it a superbly protectable site. Many people think the name "Shoshong" comes from the setswana "Swasweng" meaning "place of the Leswaswa tree". However, the Rev Hepburn suggested in 1895 that the name derives from the water source "Leshosho" which flows into the valley.³

As a young boy Khama remembers the raids by the Matebele in around 1842/3:

"We were more like game than men in those days, for though I tell you where we lived the fact is that we were always changing. We settled down somewhere and then someone attacked us; and then we moved off somewhere else. And so it went on."

*Khama says the whole of the Bakaa hid in a single cave, and the Matebele could not kill a single one of them. Khama still remembers the cave in which he hid with his mother, though he does not think he could find it again. And he has not forgot how they rushed their goats into caves at sound of warning leaving them to be herded together by older hands while they fled to the caves where their mothers were. Of course there were always spies about watching for the Matebele night and day.*⁴



Photos: Aerial view of modern Shoshong. Facing page: view from the hills, cattle watering in the upper part of the valley. The hills are largely heavily fractured ironstone - when freshly broken it is grey in colour, but the surface gradually turns to the rusty brown colour when exposed to air. There are also some intrusions of an attractive pink granite. [1] Parsons (1982) [2] Morion (1993) [3] Hepburn (1895) [4] Parsons (1972)

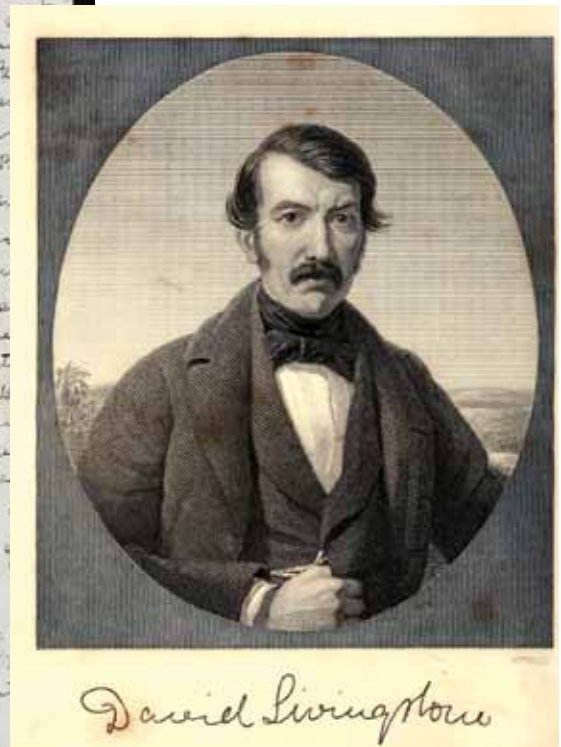
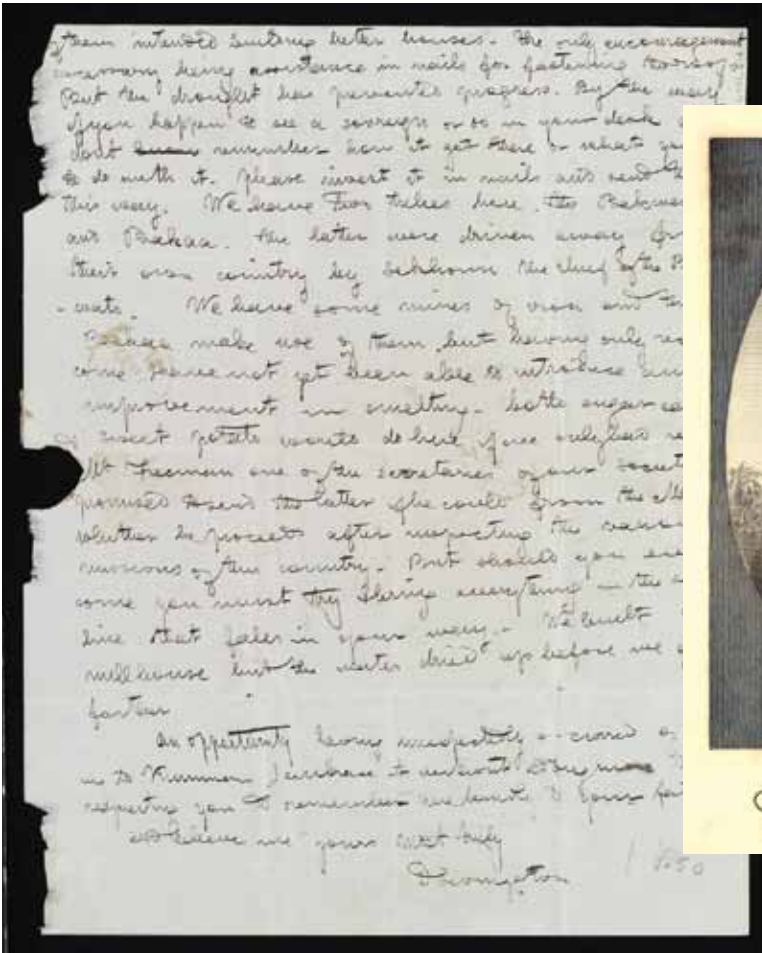
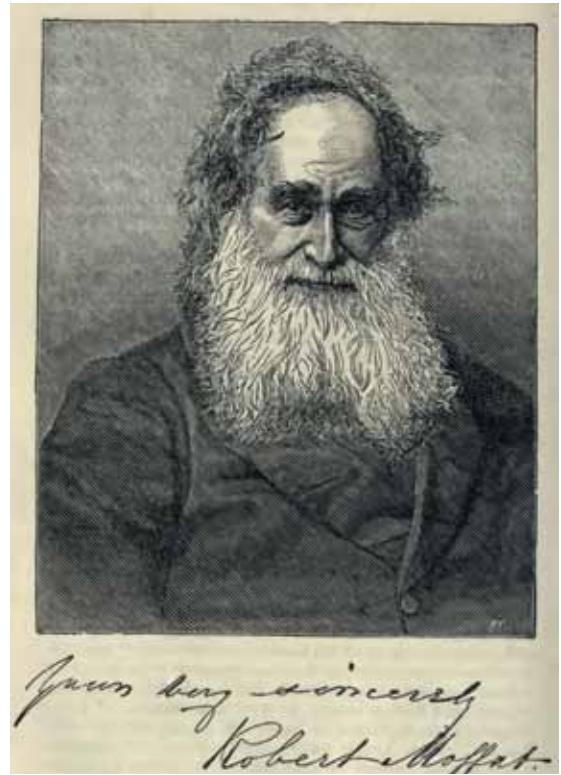


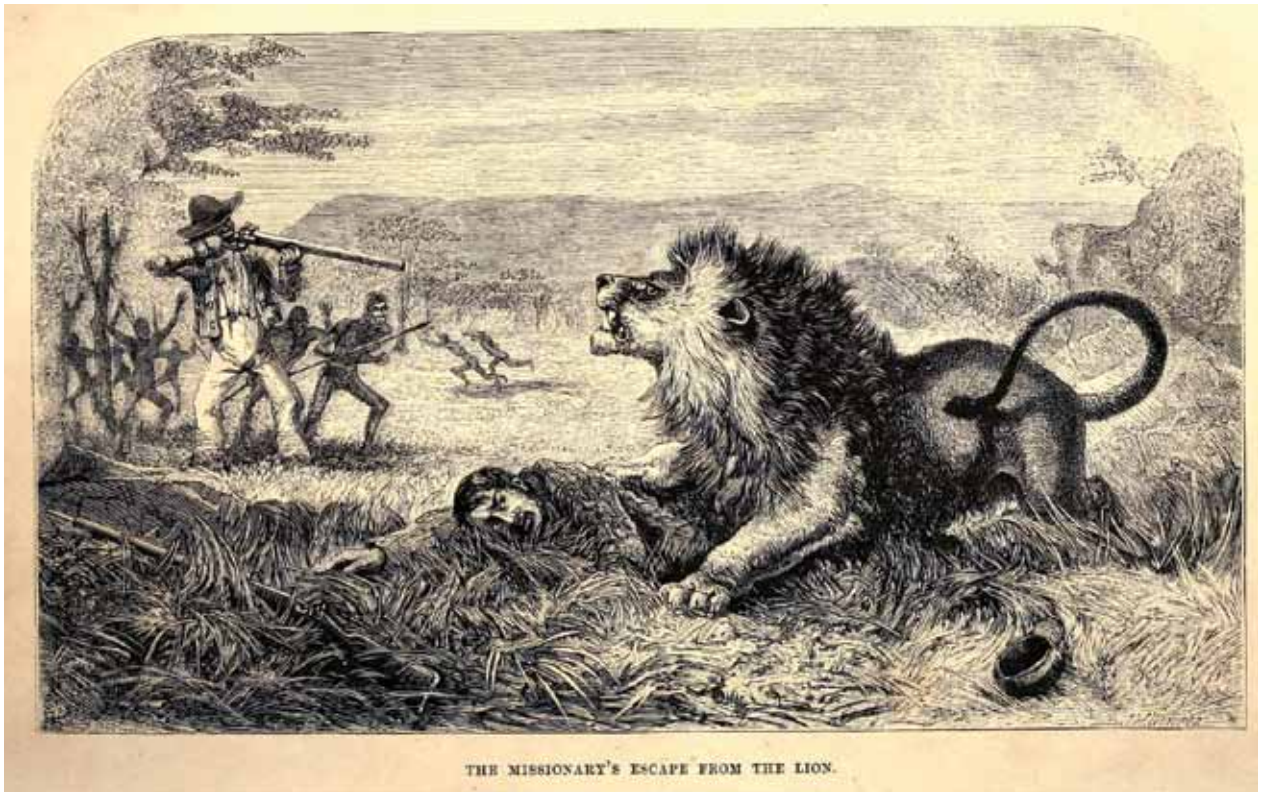
Moffat & Livingstone

In 1841 David Livingstone arrived in Cape Town and stayed at the Kuruman mission with Robert Moffat who was busy translating the Bible into Setswana. A year later Livingstone visited the Bangwato and spent two weeks on the hill top at Pitsane. He then walked to the Bakaa tribe with some trepidation since they had recently murdered four white traders.

An early white trader R. Gordon Cumming (also from Scotland) came in 1844 and returned several times over the next 5 years. Livingstone started a mission with Kgosi Sechele and the Bakwena at their capital Kolobeng (near modern day Thamaga) in 1847, and in 1849 he journeyed north again with Mr Oswald and Murray and "discovered" Lake Ngami.^{1 2}

Moffat will have passed through Shoshong several times on his way to visit the Matebele.



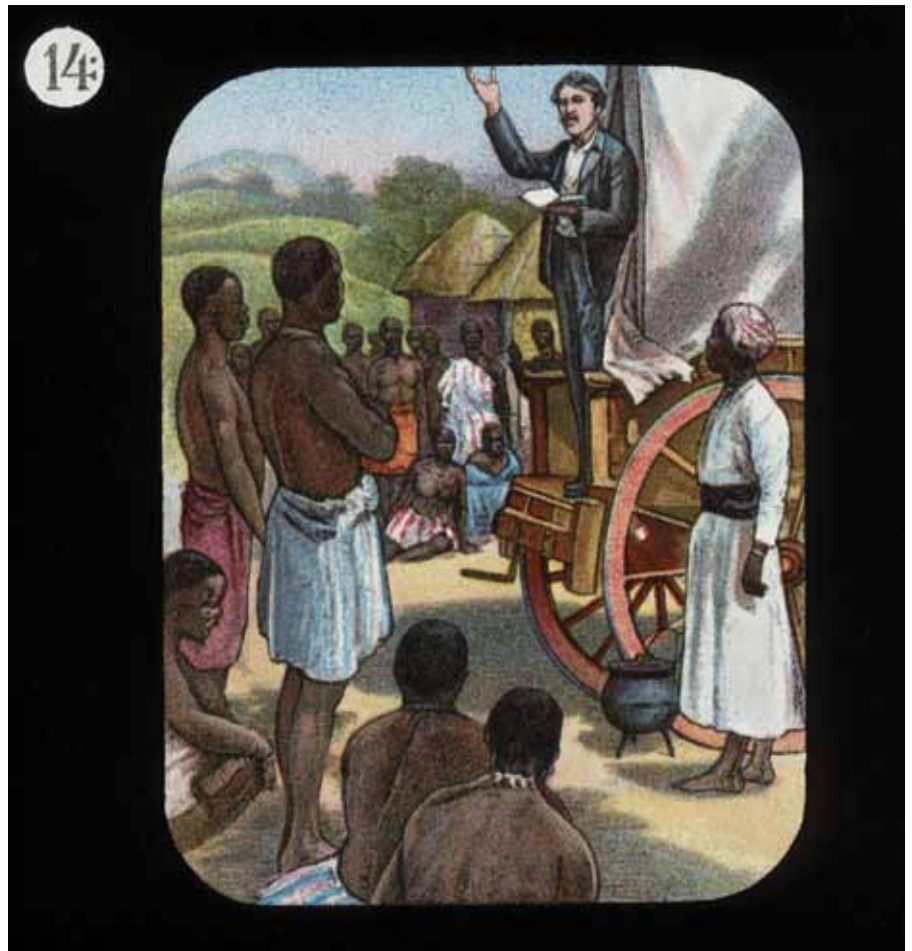


THE MISSIONARY'S ESCAPE FROM THE LION.

Facing page: David Livingstone portrait and lion illustration from Livingstone (1857). Livingstone was mauled by a lion near Mabotsa in 1844. Letter from Livingstone to Rev Methuen in 1850 mentioning the Bakaa being driven out by Sekgoma.

This page: illustration for a "magic lantern" slide show of Livingstone preaching.

- [1] Livingstone (1857)
- [2] Mackenzie R (1993)



Defeat of the Bakaa

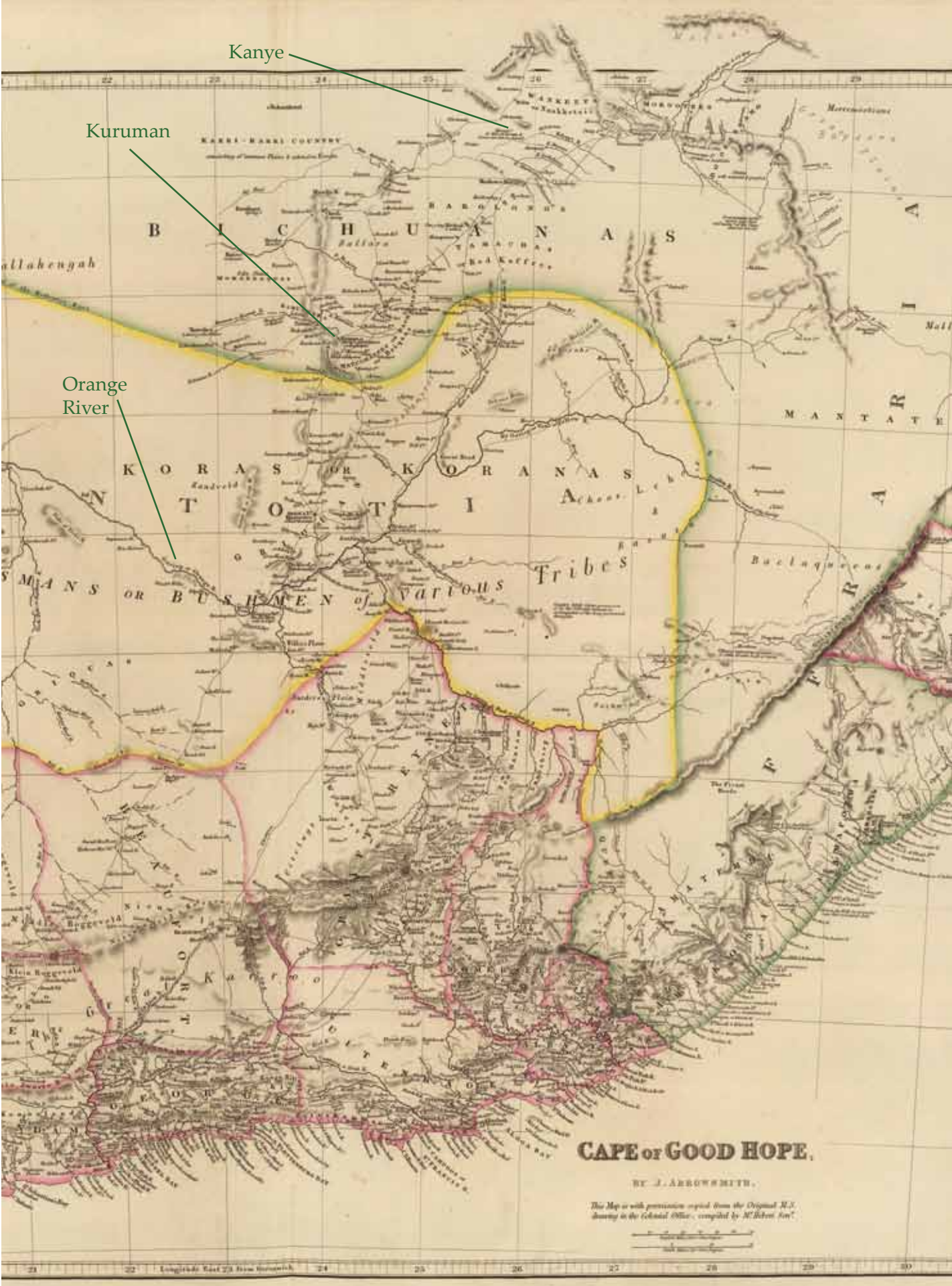
In 1849 Sekgoma of the Bangwato attacked the Bakaa, around 1,200 of whom fled to join the Bakwena at Kolobeng. Livingstone described the Bakaa as being “persecuted by the Bangwato who had guns and were terrorising the area.”¹

When passing through Shoshong in June 1849, Moffat noted:

It being hopeless at the present time to get either Sekhomi or his people to listen to instruction, we left in the afternoon, and ... halted at the end of the mountains where the Bakaa tribe formerly lived, and where, though the owners of the country, they were terribly harassed by the Bamanguato ... Sekhomi did everything in his power to annoy the Bakaas, who were always reported to be a peaceable people. They at last abandoned their native hills, and, encouraged by Sechele, fled to the Bakuanas, where they now live in comparative peace.²

Some see the motivation for Sekgoma’s attack as a “divide and rule” tactic to split the powerful alliance between the Bakaa and Baphaleng. Others see it as revenge for the Bakaa’s defeat of the Bakhurutshe, or simply because Sekgoma wanted to set his capital in the Shoshong valley.

Two years later, when Livingstone returned after more travels to visit Kgosi Sebituane north of the Chobe River (he had passed through the Shoshong area and was given a guide by Sekgoma), he found that the Bakwena and Bakaa had left Kolobeng for nearby Dimawe. In 1852 the Boers attacked Dimawe, and while neither side was able to declare it a victory, the Boers were made to realise that they would face severe resistance and they did not attempt further penetration into the area. In their frustration the Boers destroyed Livingstone’s mission in Kolobeng in the belief that he had taught the Batswana to fight with guns.



Kanye

Kuruman

Orange River

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

BY J. ARROWSMITH.

The Map is with permission copied from the Original N.S. Survey in the Colonial Office, compiled by N. B. Kent.



Sekgoma

Meanwhile, Sekgoma established the Bangwato capital on the site of modern Shoshong in 1850. In 1851 there were about 900 huts.¹ Sekgoma attacked and incorporated other tribes such as the Babirwa and Balete during this period, joining the Baphaleng, Batalaote, Basarwa and others including the Makalaka (a term for those dispossessed by the Matebele).² By 1852 there were about 3,000 huts, with people all seeking refuge from the Matebele raiders.

James Chapman, a trader, passed through Shoshong in 1852 and noted;

The following day we got permission to leave, and being visited by the eldest son of Sekomi, a lad of about sixteen, of very prepossessing appearance, I dressed him out in a suit of my own, and presented him with a nice grey pony, to the delight of the natives generally. I thus

*established myself, quite unintentionally, in the position of mate, or bosom friend, to Sekomi's heir ...and I was known only as "Chapman Kala", or "Khama" ... which name I have retained ever since in these regions.*³

Livingstone passed through the Shoshong area for the last time in 1853 on his first major expedition to Luanda in Angola. He returned by foot and "discovered" the Victoria Falls in 1855 before going on to explore the Zambezi and Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika until his death at Ujiji, Tanzania in 1873.

In 1857 Sechele orchestrated the replacement of Sekgoma as kgosi by his half brother Macheng (see later) but he was deposed and Sekgoma returned to power just two years later.⁴



Ruins of Old Shoshong in 2013. Facing page aerial photograph showing location of Old Shoshong.

[1] Morion B (1993) [2,5] Mackenzie (1871) [3] Parsons (1971a) [4] Parsons (1973b)

Mission station

In 1859, Rev Heinrich Schulenburg, a German Lutheran missionary from the British colony of Natal, opened a school in the village. He educated Khama, his brother Kgamane and Khama's future wife Mogatsa Motswasele (Mma Bessie). In 1860 Khama was baptised, and in 1862 he was married. Then in 1862 John Mackenzie and his wife, and Roger and Elizabeth Price of the London Missionary Society (LMS) came to Shoshong and after a period of working with the Lutherans, by mutual consent the Lutherans left in 1863.

In his book "Ten years North of the Orange River", John Mackenzie gives this description:

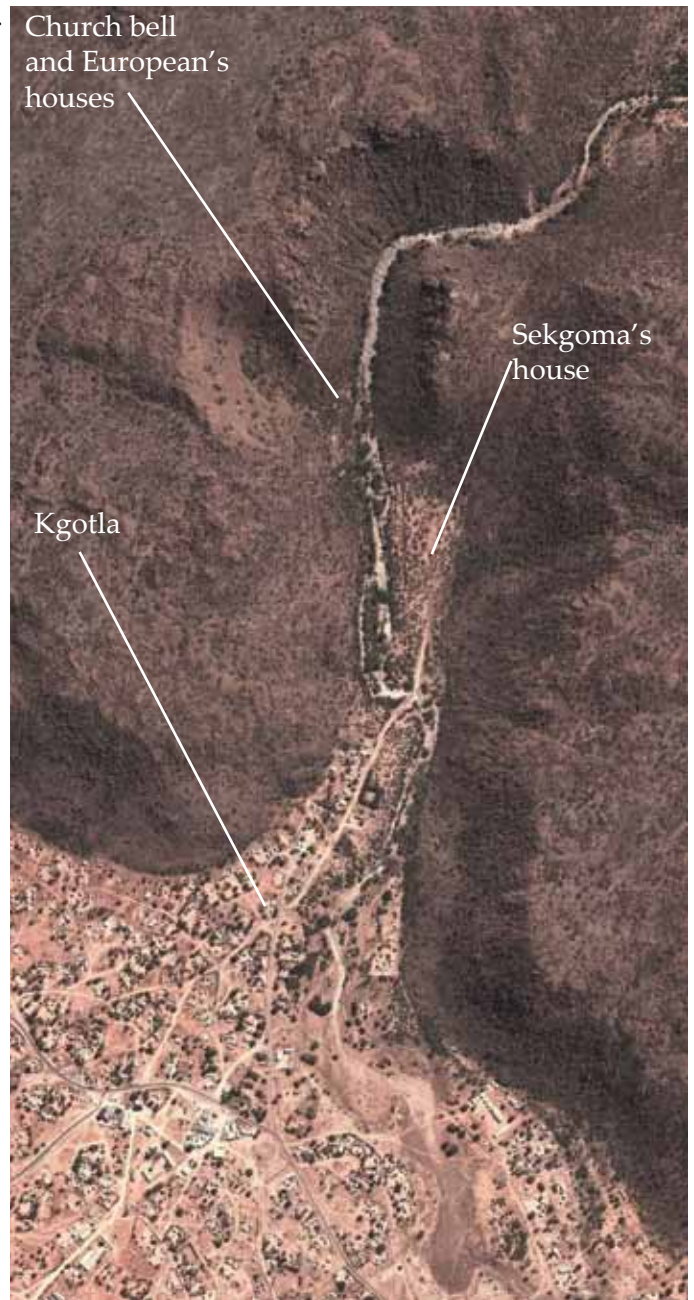
Shoshong, the town of the Bamangwato, contains a population of some 30,000. It is situated at the foot of a mountain range of primary rock stretching from east to west for more than a dozen miles. About three miles to the south of this range there is another basaltic mountain called Marutlwe...

The ground lying between the hills is occupied by the gardens of the Bamangwato. The main town spreads along the foot of the mountain, and some distance along the gorge in the mountain range, where the stream flows which supplies the town with water. There are also five divisions of the town in a beautifully sheltered position among the mountains.

Again, there are small towns along the range to the west to the distance of some six miles, all being under one chief, whose decision in every case is final. The most distant villages are those of Makalaka refugees, who fled recently from the enormities of the Matebele sway. They chose to remain at a distance from the large town for the sake of their gardens, for it takes some of the Bamangwato who reside in the large town more than an hour to reach their cultivated fields...

*Lions have twice attacked live stock at the town of Shoshong during my residence there; and once my own cattle-post was attacked by two lions, and four oxen were killed. A letshulo is ordered out on such occasions; the lion is surrounded and put to death.*⁵

The Europeans lived in a separate part of the village on the west side of the riverbed, while Sekgoma lived on the east side. Some ruins of the houses can still be seen, the area now being known as "Old Shoshong".



Matebele Raids

In March 1862 Matebele raiders were seen approaching Shoshong, and Kgosi Sekgoma ordered women and children into the mountains.¹ Khama and Kgamane led around 200 men, the majority with guns and about eight on horseback, to repel the attackers. The Matebele were armed with spears and shields, and initially it went with Khama, but a group of Matebele crept round unseen and ambushed Khama from behind. The Bangwato fled back to Shoshong leaving about 20 dead, the Matebele losses being much greater. Later that night the Matebele attacked Shoshong from the south side, but after taking some goats and

destroying outlying crops they retreated. In response Sekgoma sent out a party to raid the Matebele cattle posts.



Matebele Soldiers.

Illustration from John Mackenzie (1883) and (facing) the initiation ceremonies by Holub (1881). Inset John Mackenzie.
 [1] Mackenzie (1871) [2] Willoughby (1905) [3] Holub (1881) [4] Lloyd (1895)

Initiation

A very important part of tribal life was the initiation schools which marked the passage of boys and girls to adulthood. The schools ("bogwera" for boys and "bojale" for girls) typically took place in February/March every four years, or when a kgosi's son or nephew had reached a suitable age of around 9-16 years.

Until they have undergone this process no youth was considered a man and no woman was considered of marriageable age. As part of the preparation for bogwera boys and girls were smeared with white chalk. The girls wore nothing but belts made of pieces of reed or aprons of genets' tails, their breasts and faces also whitened with chalk. The solemnisation of the rite took place outside the town, dingaka and old men acting as operators with the boys and old women with the girls.

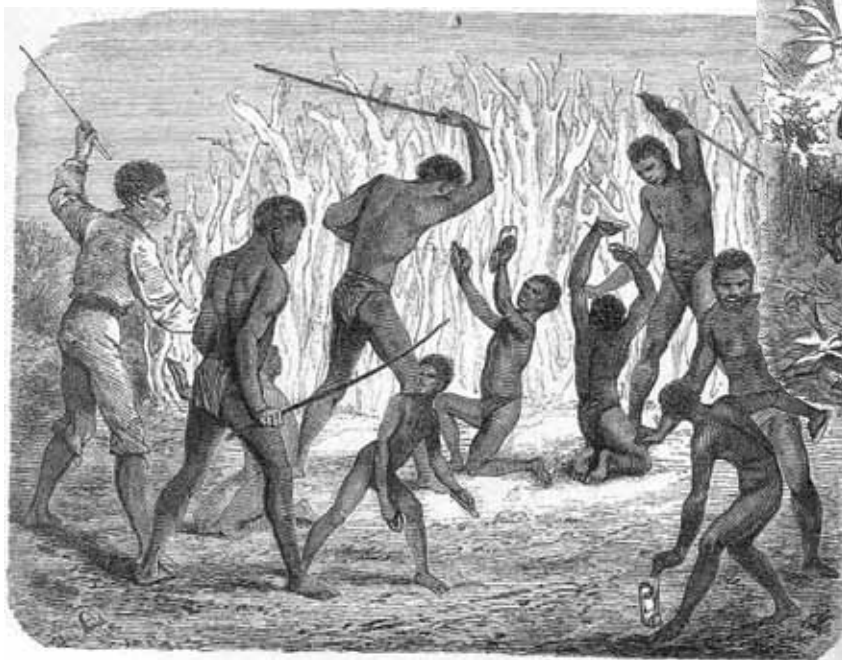
*Singing as they go, the young people of both sexes, accompanied by the [dingaka], would proceed beyond the town to the appointed spot, where the boys are put through a drill in manly exercises, and the girls are formally initiated into domestic duties, such as carrying wood and fetching water.*²

The European explorer Holub also observed the boys being marched off in detachments to the kgotla, where:

*Bare of all clothing, except their little girdle and their sandals, which they are permitted to hold in their hands, they are placed in two rows, back to back, and made to kneel down whilst a man, generally their next-of-kin, stands in front of each and proceeds to deliver his lashes, which the lads parry as best they can by the dexterous manipulation of the sandals; they are required to keep on singing, and to raise each foot alternately, marking the measure of the chant.*³

The rite also included circumcision and hunting excursions and lasted around three months. It was not unusual for boys to die during the process.⁴

The group of initiates then became a regiment (mephato) who would work and fight together for the rest of their lives. A man would describe his age according to which regiment he belonged to.



While some missionaries were curious and respectful of Setswana customs, all were against polygamy and put pressure on converts to abandon some old customs such as the initiation ceremonies.

Khama went through the initiation process before the missionaries arrived in Shoshong, but after his conversion was against the custom and this became a cause of argument with his father Segkoma, when Khama's brothers did not attend the initiation because they were at school.

At school, they were taught by Elizabeth Lees Price who noted in her memoirs that in 1863 her classes were so popular that "some students write on broken boxes and planks and others generally sit on the floor. Khama always does." ¹

By 1865, the Prices and Mackenzies were conducting three schools in Shoshong with eight Africans as assistants, six of whom were Segkoma's sons. John Mackenzie

records that he requested permission from "the chief of the Mapaleng" before teaching children "in his town" showing that the various tribes still had some autonomy. ²

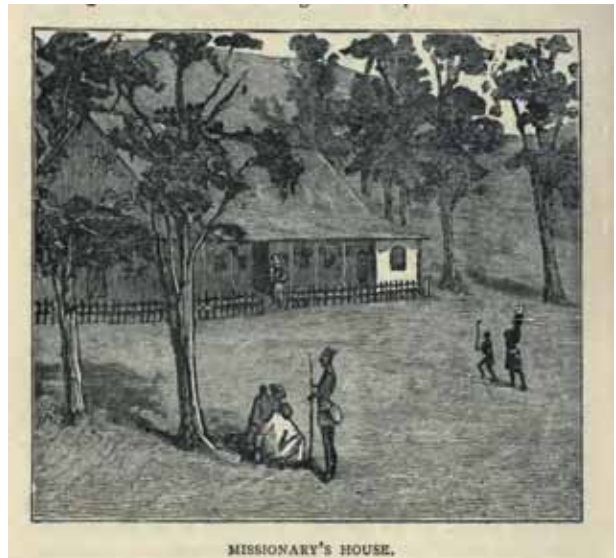
Elizabeth Price wrote of the smallpox epidemic in the early 1860's when many died despite attempts by John Mackenzie to inoculate people.

Many horrible things do we hear in that valley at home, about wolves [hyenas] and their ravages. The smallpox and measles have raged lately, many and many a dead body was dragged out and left unburied without the town or up the sides of the hills and the wolves are ravenous thereabouts for human flesh so that women and children are ever and anon being carried off. ³



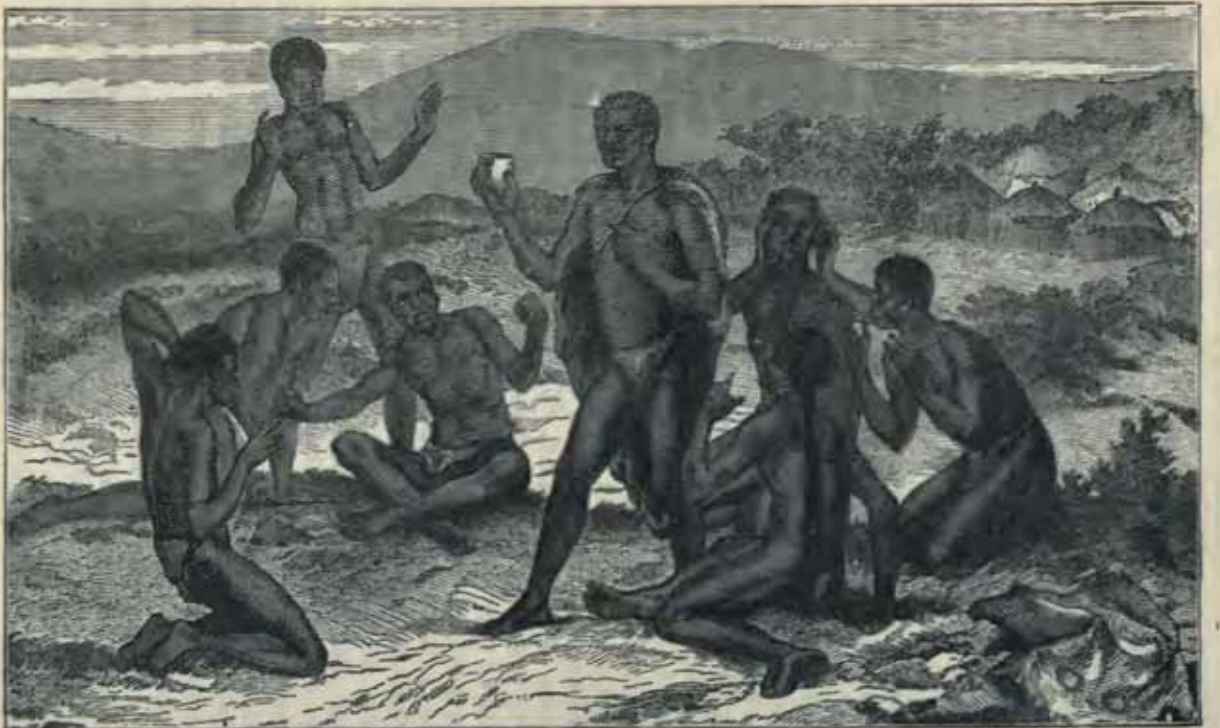
Illustration from John Mackenzie (1883) and by Holub (1881). Very similar illustrations appear in the books suggesting the publishers may have borrowed from Holub's work.

[1,3] Price (1956) [2] Mackenzie (1871)





HUTS AT SHOSHONG.



SEKHOME AND HIS COUNCIL.

Macheng

An early photographer Gustav Theodor Fritsch came as far north as Shoshong in around 1864, and was able to capture both Sekgoma and his son Khama in the same photograph (main photo below).¹



According to John Mackenzie's reports, the arguments between Sekgoma and his sons Khama and Kgamane reached a point where he tried to kill them, they fled into the hills, and only after a few weeks was a truce called.² Around 1865, Macheng again came to Shoshong at Sekgoma's invitation. Macheng was half brother to Sekgoma but had been captured and lived with the Matebele for 15 years, before being "rescued" by Sechele and Robert Moffat in 1857. Macheng was first in line to the chieftainship, and Sekgoma deferred to him, but after some time it became impossible for both dikgosi to live in Shoshong and Sekgoma left.



Photographs of Khama (top) by Gustav Theodor Fritsch. Main photo: Sekgoma (wearing traditional dress), McCabe jnr, (son of Joseph McCabe) seated in the front with hat and light suit, Khama standing behind McCabe (wearing a hat); hunter Edward George Chapman (standing to right of Khama and obscured). Map showing Gustav's route which loosely follows the Missionary Road (Stellenbosch University).

[1] Dietrich K and Bank A (2008) [2] Mackenzie (1871) [3] Holub (1881b)

Shoshong had become a very important trading centre. The Missionaries' Road became a key artery from South Africa to the North, linking the LMS mission stations in Griquatown and Kuruman (in modern day South Africa) to Kanye, Molepolole and Shoshong. From Shoshong, routes developed to Ngamiland (around Maun), the Zambezi (Victoria Falls) and to Bulawayo.

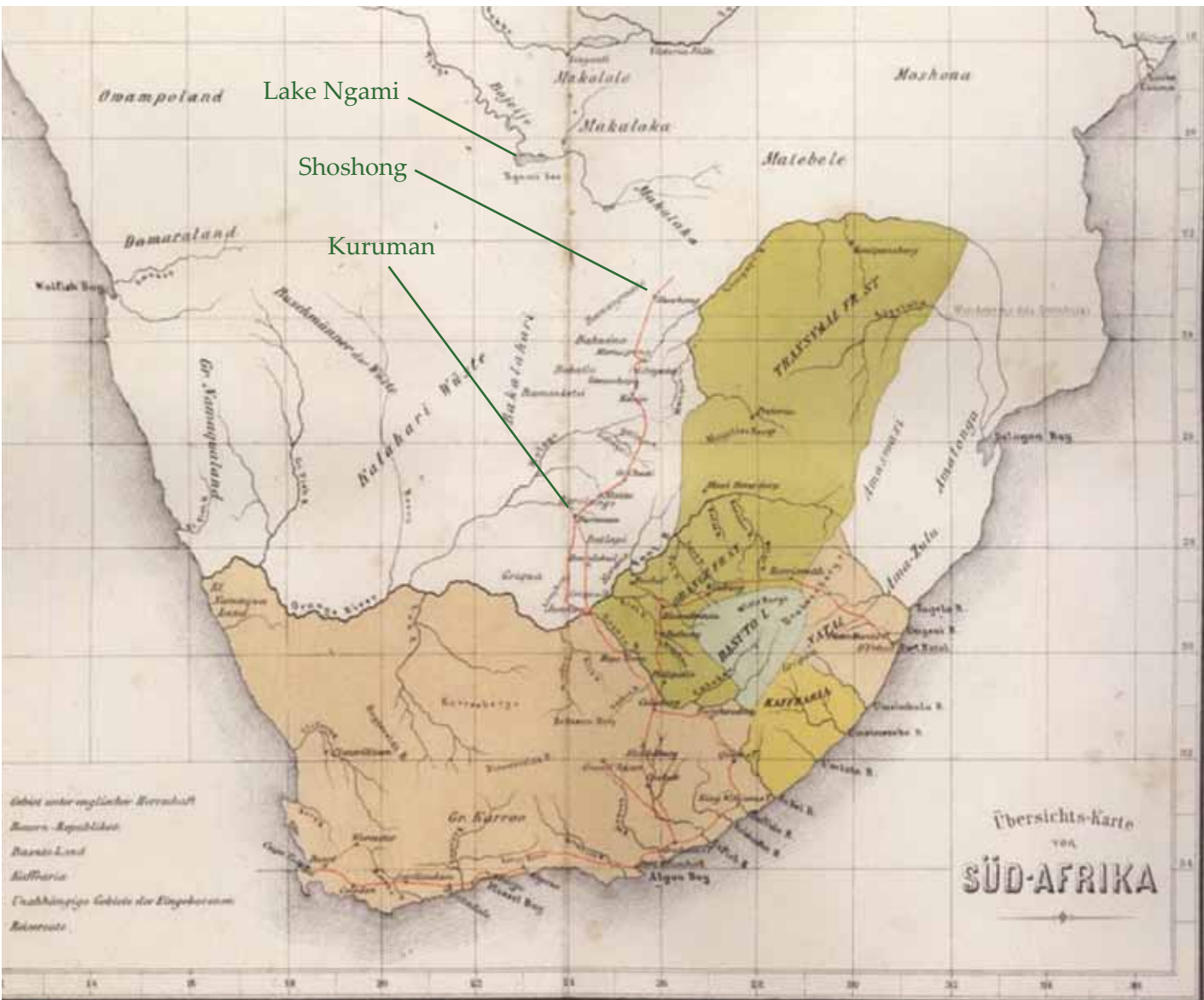
Shoshong became a stop over for people travelling north, but also people found it convenient to buy goods at higher prices in Shoshong rather than make the six-month journey to the Cape.

In 1866 the total population was estimated at around 30,000, with a white population

of 42 men, 6 women and 13 children. By comparison, the population in Cape Town in 1875 was 33,239, although obviously Cape Town was very different in character. Estimating the population was difficult since people would stay at their fields and cattle posts for long periods.

Shoshong was "undoubtedly the most important town in any of the independent native kingdoms in the interior of South Africa" according to a visitor, and the biggest town for thousands of kilometres.³

1867 saw the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and the need for workers in the mines, and in later years many Batswana men travelled to South Africa for this work.



LMS Church

In 1867 John Mackenzie started construction of the LMS church in Old Shoshong, which was finished in 1868.

When the church was finished, I resolved to celebrate its opening in a manner which would give me at once the opportunity of publicly thanking Macheng for his assistance in procuring both wood and grass, and also of addressing the old men of the town, who, as a class, gave least attention to the preaching of the gospel...

Early on Tuesday morning the people began to assemble at the church. Each division of the town came headed by its chief. Heathen men with hoary heads, toothless and tottering with old age, came leaning on their staffs. Full grown men – the haughty, the cunning, the fierce – came with those younger in years, of brighter eye and more hopeful mien.

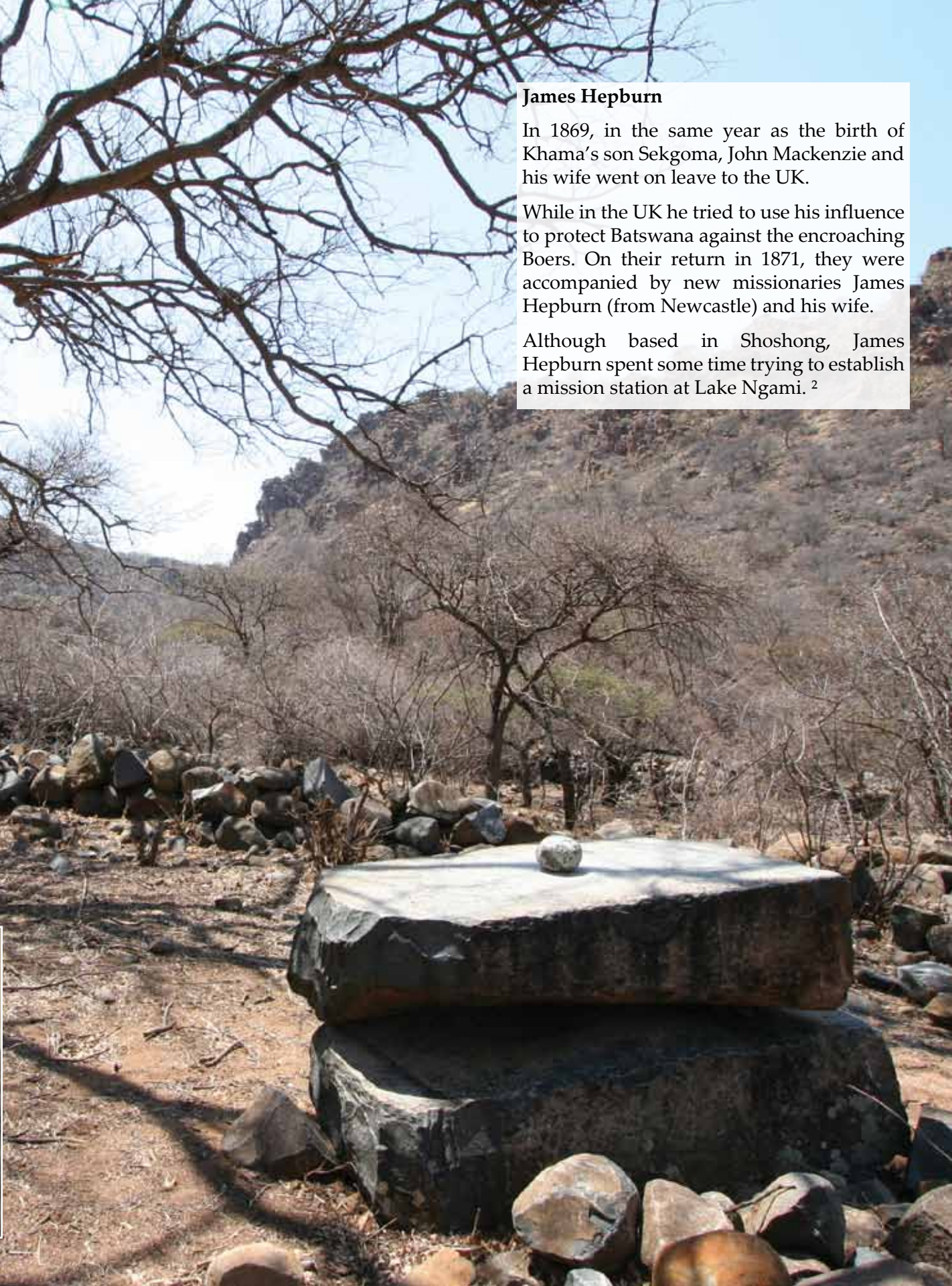
As to their clothing, the heathen dress admits of little variety. But many appeared dressed partly or wholly in European attire, and here there was variety enough. We had the usual members of the congregation, some of whom were neatly dressed. But sticklers for “the proprieties” would have been shocked to see a man moving in the crowd who considered himself well dressed, although wearing a shirt only; another with trousers only; a third with a black “swallow-tail”, closely buttoned to the chin, the only piece of European clothing which the man wore...

I concluded my part of the engagements of the morning by solemn prayer. We then adjourned to the vicinity of the kitchen, where Mrs Mackenzie and the servants had had a busy time cooking the ox... A considerable quantity of sour milk, and a few camp-kettles full of tea completed the fare for this Bechuana breakfast-party...¹

Photograph of the site in 2013, showing the “Livingstone Bell” rock which is rung using a second stone. It seems unlikely that Livingstone actually rang the bell. Inset photograph of the abandoned church in 1895 by Willoughby (see also photo on page 51), which suggests the church was some way downstream of where the plaque is located.

[1] Mackenzie (1871) [2] Hepburn (1895)





James Hepburn

In 1869, in the same year as the birth of Khama's son Sekgoma, John Mackenzie and his wife went on leave to the UK.

While in the UK he tried to use his influence to protect Batswana against the encroaching Boers. On their return in 1871, they were accompanied by new missionaries James Hepburn (from Newcastle) and his wife.

Although based in Shoshong, James Hepburn spent some time trying to establish a mission station at Lake Ngami. ²

Start of Khama's Rule

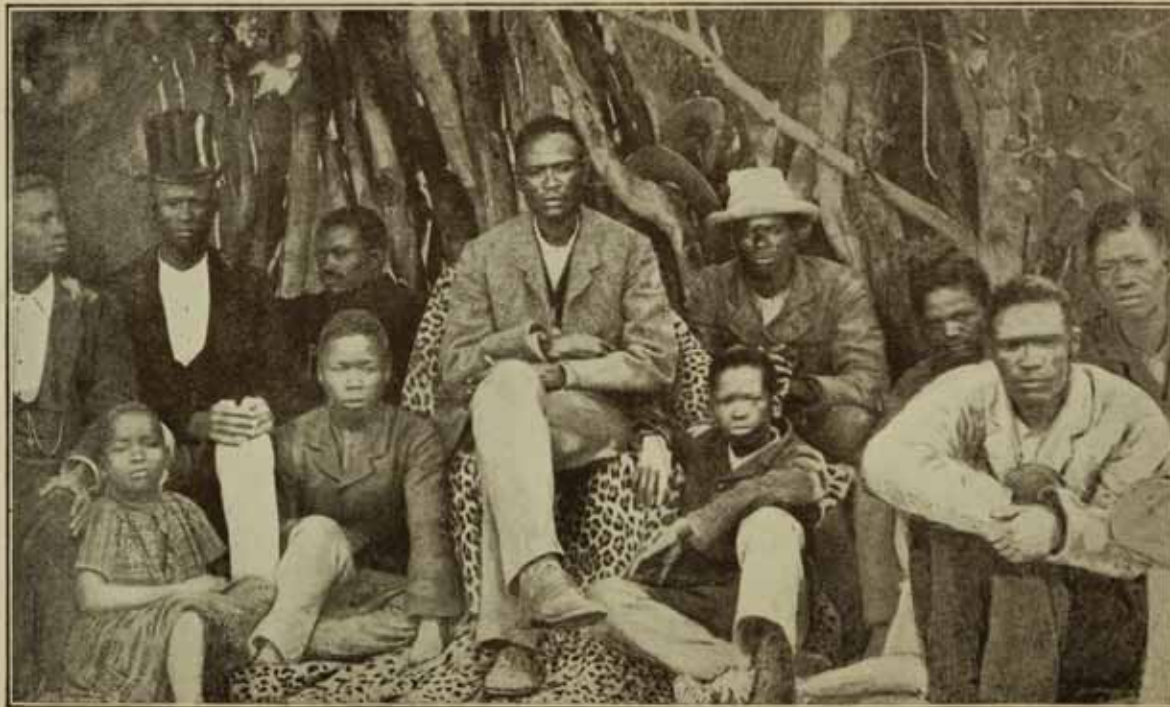
In 1872 Khama expelled Macheng from Shoshong with support from Sechele, but then decided to recall his father Sekgoma from exile and reinstate him as kgosi.

Khama and his brother Kgamane had been very close, but during this period there were bitter arguments as Khama believed his father was favouring his brother Kgamane. Unable to live with them, Khama left to stay near modern day Serowe and later Moteti, where he was followed by many of the Bangwato people, and in 1874 the population of Shoshong dropped as low as 4,000. ¹

Eventually Sekgoma sent Kgamane to beg his brother Khama to return.

... he went with Mr Mackenzie and Mr Hepburn, and entreated Khama not to separate from them. With flashing eyes and infinite sternness, Khama replied to his brother Khamane: "When I lived with you my face was pain to your eyes. You treated me just like a dog in my own lolwapa (house-front), and before my own people; therefore, I refuse to be in the same town with you and Sekhoma. I have had enough of that; let us separate. Do you take your road, and I shall take mine. Those who prefer to remain with you, let them remain; and those who wish to come unto me, let them come." Khamane and the missionaries then returned to Shoshong. ²

In 1875 Khama returned and took over the chieftainship with force, and Sekgoma and Kgamane were again forced to flee.



Khama and his head-men (about the year 1882)

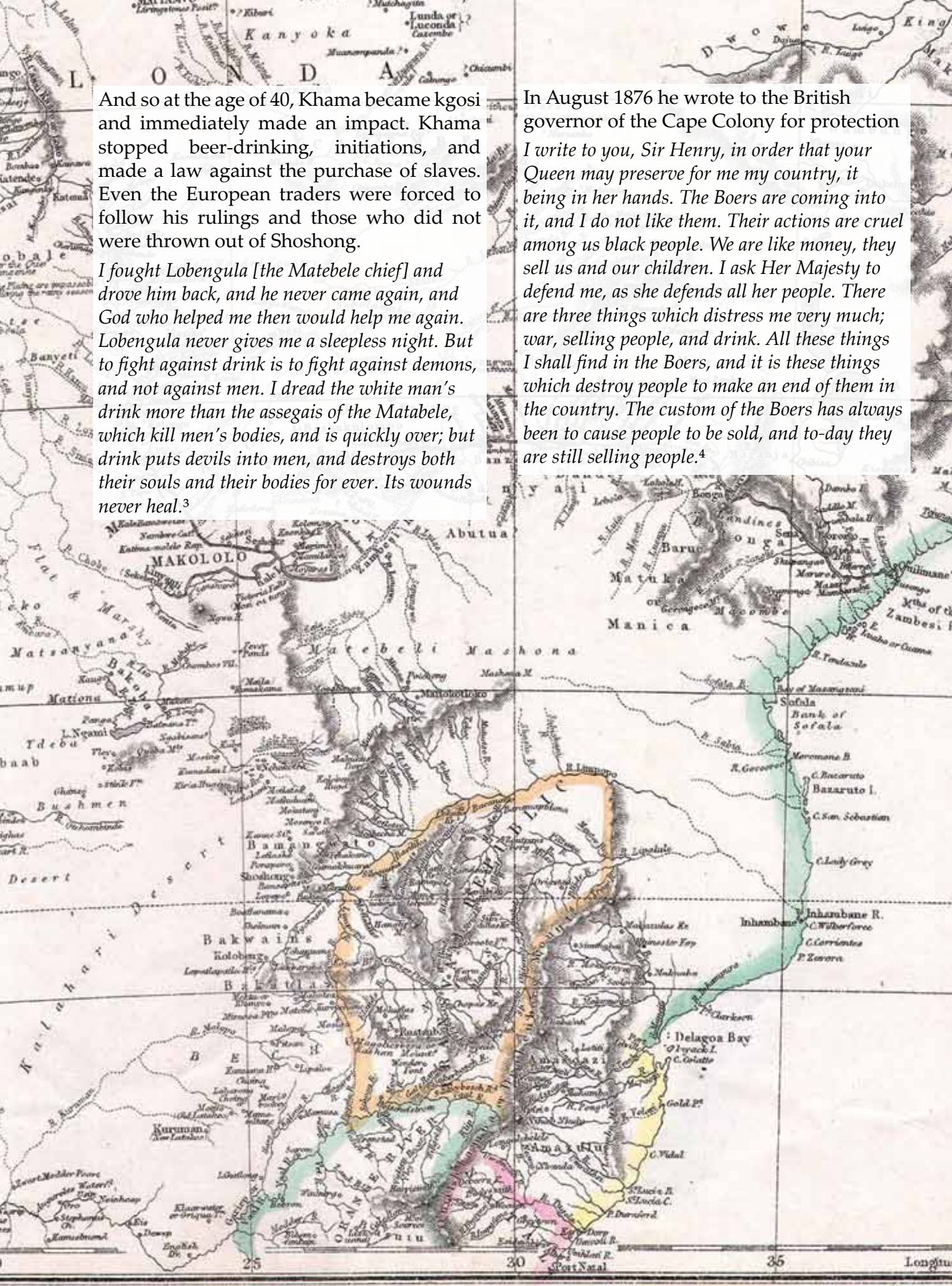
Photograph of Khama with his son Sekgoma on his left hand side, Ratshosa is wearing the top hat - photo probably by Francois Coillard - appears in Harris (1922). Map of South Central Africa dated 1868 by Edward Weller, which builds heavily on Livingstone's recordings. The Limpopo through modern Botswana is now broadly correct, although it is wrongly shown discharging into the Indian Ocean at Inhambane.

[1] Parsons (1982) [2] Lloyd (1895) [3] Knight-Bruce W (Mrs) (1893) [4] <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/bechuanaland.htm>

And so at the age of 40, Khama became kgosi and immediately made an impact. Khama stopped beer-drinking, initiations, and made a law against the purchase of slaves. Even the European traders were forced to follow his rulings and those who did not were thrown out of Shoshong.

I fought Lobengula [the Matebele chief] and drove him back, and he never came again, and God who helped me then would help me again. Lobengula never gives me a sleepless night. But to fight against drink is to fight against demons, and not against men. I dread the white man's drink more than the assegais of the Matabele, which kill men's bodies, and is quickly over; but drink puts devils into men, and destroys both their souls and their bodies for ever. Its wounds never heal.³

In August 1876 he wrote to the British governor of the Cape Colony for protection *I write to you, Sir Henry, in order that your Queen may preserve for me my country, it being in her hands. The Boers are coming into it, and I do not like them. Their actions are cruel among us black people. We are like money, they sell us and our children. I ask Her Majesty to defend me, as she defends all her people. There are three things which distress me very much; war, selling people, and drink. All these things I shall find in the Boers, and it is these things which destroy people to make an end of them in the country. The custom of the Boers has always been to cause people to be sold, and to-day they are still selling people.⁴*



Rainmakers

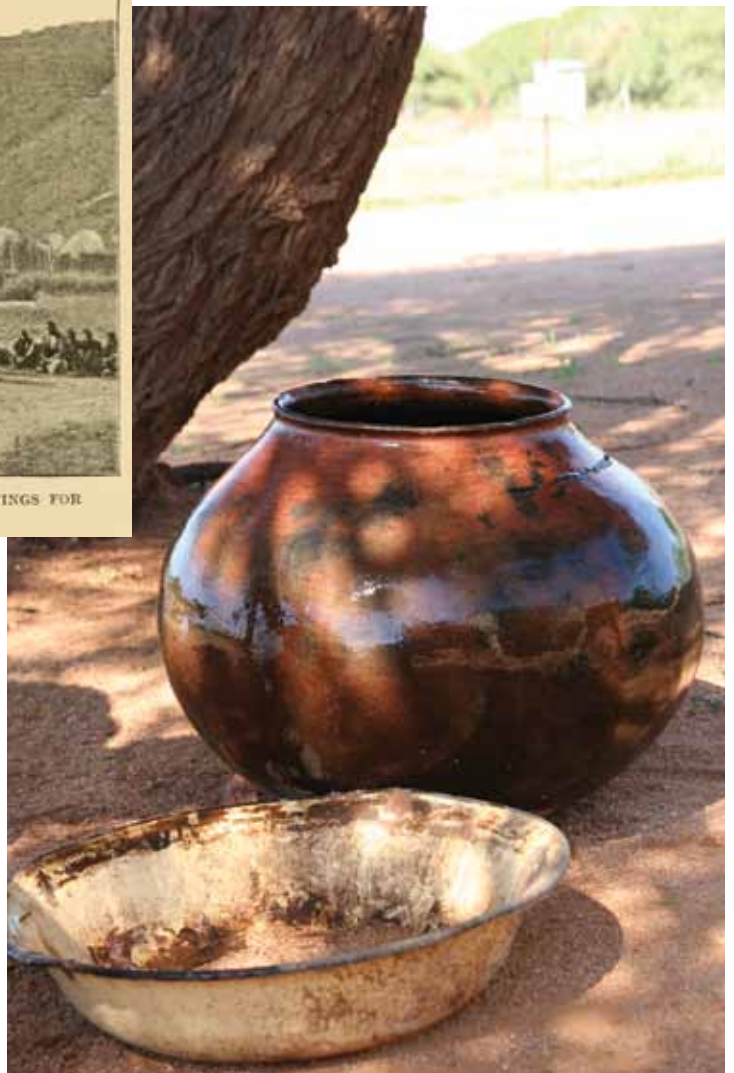
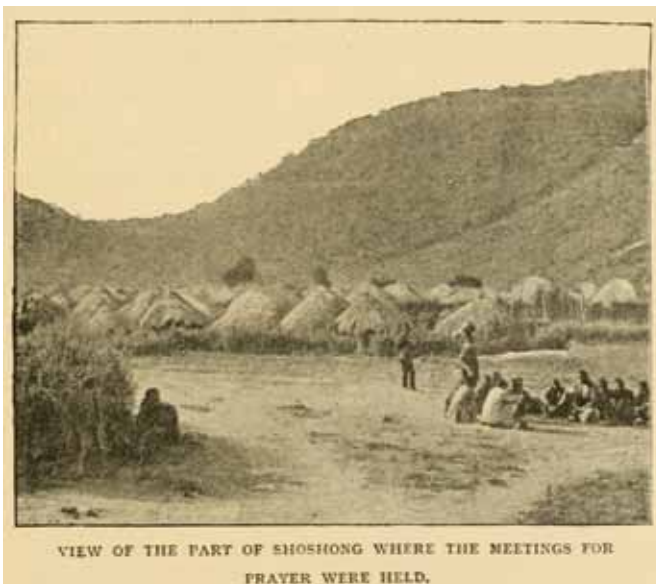
In 1876 there was a famine, the harvest failed and corn reached a price of £20 for a bag.¹ The traditional rain-makers claimed that Christian's prayers were stopping the rain, but according to Hepburn, that night there were good rains, and the missionaries were able to "prove" that their God was more powerful. To this day rains play a tremendously important role in peoples' lives and prayers for rain are still very much part of life.

Water

During the dry season, people relied on water from the river valley, where wells can still be found.

[On Sundays, Khama] himself always went up early to the springs in the mountain kloof, where the women gathered in hundreds, each with her red or yellow calabash or water-pot to take back the day's supply. Khama gave them his kindly greeting and a few friendly words as they passed, "Good morning, my friend," or "my child." ²





Facing Page: Thunderstorm over the Shoshong hills, and photographs of Shoshong in Nov 2013 and Jan 2014 showing the effect of rainfall. This page: water carriers in Palapye by Rev Willoughby (c1895). Illustration in Hepburn's book (1895). Photos of a water jar and a well in the Shoshong valley (2012).
 [1] Hepburn (1895) [2] Knight-Bruce W (Mrs) (1893)

Explorers

The 1870's saw a number of European explorers pass through Shoshong on their way north. One was Frank Oates who passed through Shoshong in 1873, but died of fever (malaria) in 1875 shortly after seeing the Victoria Falls.¹ Although people knew that

quinine was effective in fighting malaria, the disease was not properly understood and was a major hazard for Europeans heading north of Shoshong. Explorers and missionaries travelled in ox drawn carts, usually with extra oxen to replace those which died en route.



Photograph of oxen pulling waggon at Lofoaana in 1894 by Rev Willoughby. Images of explorers by Holub, and map of Holub's travels by W.J.Turner. [1] Oates (1881) [2] Holub (1975) [3] de Serpa Pinto (1879)

Emil Holub, a Czech doctor and adventurer, recounts how overjoyed he was to return to Shoshong after a particularly difficult journey from Kazungula during the rainy season:

*At that time it was the northernmost station of European civilisation in Central Africa. Our hearts rejoiced as we approached the isolated southern African trading post. Finally we could say to ourselves: the kingdoms of the barbarians now are really behind us, the sphere of white civilisation has been reached and we are closer to our home country. What a difference there is looking at Schoschong from Vienna than looking at it from Maschukulumbe (Ila) country.*²

Major Serpa Pinto passed through on a coast-to-coast expedition in 1877, and various big game hunters including Frederick Selous broke their journeys at Shoshong.³

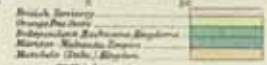
Map of the
CENTRAL PORTION
OF
SOUTH AFRICA

illustrating Dr. Holub's journeys
1873-9

constructed from his original drawings
collated with the routes of other travellers
and the most recent material

by W. J. Turner

ENGLISH MILES



Trade continued to grow and, as Sekgoma had done before him, Khama made sure that he retained control and that all waggons came through Shoshong. In 1878, 75 tons of ivory from 12,000 elephants was exported via Shoshong and the following year, its total export of ivory was £30,000. Shoshong was the largest, most prosperous and best defended Tswana town, with an army of 3,000 men.¹

There were nine trading stores in Shoshong, usually taking cattle, sheep and goats in exchange for their wares.

Alfred Musson, a Shoshong trader, commented in the 1870s that:

The old trade in ivory, feathers and pelts, in exchange for beads and brass wire, was declining. Instead in accordance with their changing tastes and demands, we stocked roughly-made clothing such as shirts, trousers, guns and ammunition, ploughs and their spare parts (the plough trade soon developed into one of considerable importance) and assorted groceries'.²



Image of the Victoria Falls by Livingstone. Image of Shoshong in 1873 by Oates. Cattle in the Shoshong valley 2013, and inset: James Hepburn.

[1] Ramsay (1996) [2] Musson (apx 1933) [3] Hepburn (1895) [4] Rutherford (2009)

In 1880 Hepburn wrote in his 'trumpet call to the Home Churches' in the UK:

*I know no other Interior Chief who has even attempted the half that Khama has accomplished in the advancing of his people towards the goal of civilisation ... His people are living in peace, his fields are laden with corn, the white man's home is as sacred as in his own country, and a purer morality is growing up from day to day.*³

By 1880 in addition to the main postal service via Zeerust to Shoshong there was a regular fortnightly mail service by runner from Shoshong via Tati to Bulawayo. It is estimated some seven to eight thousand letters a year passed through Hepburn's hands.⁴



Protectorate

In 1882, John Mackenzie left Kuruman station and returned to England where he tried to influence opinion in favour of British protection to Bechuanaland. This was the time of the "Scramble for Africa" when England, France, Belgium and Germany were dividing up Africa and seeking to exploit its mineral and other wealth.

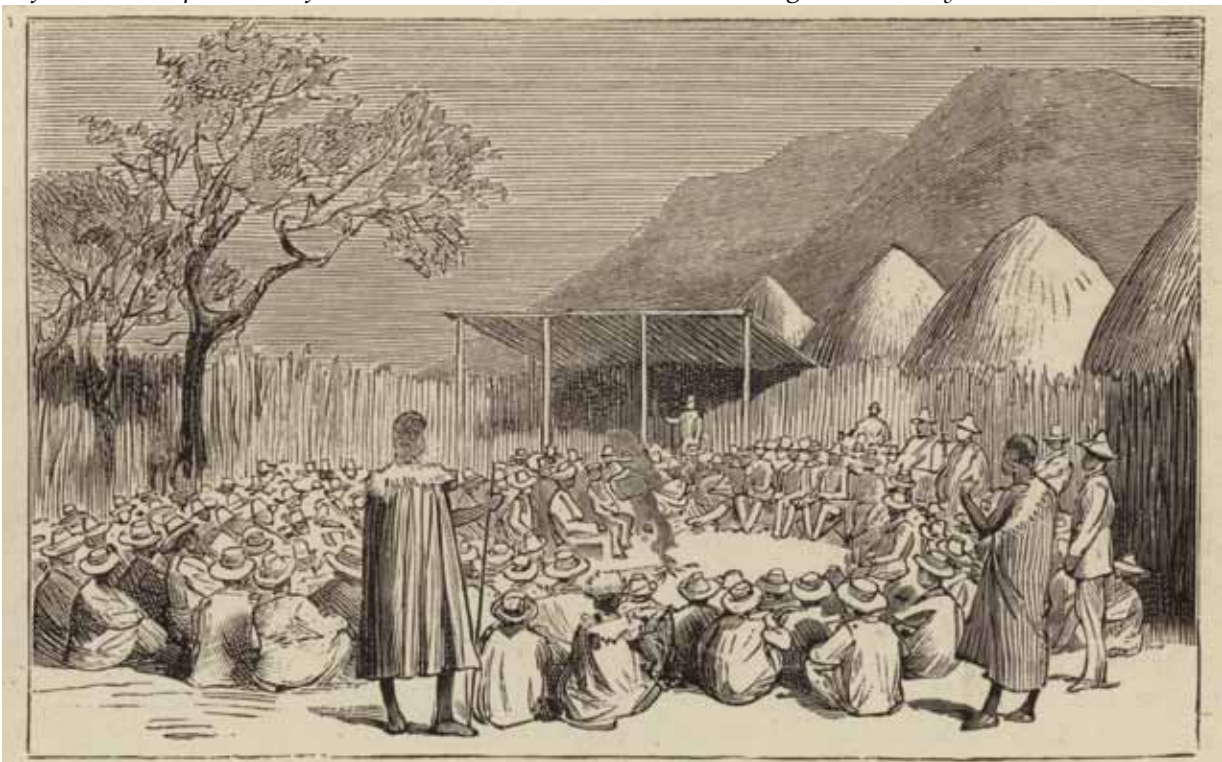
Cecil Rhodes of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) was a major player in this, and saw the Missionaries' Road as a "Suez Canal" from the British Cape Colony up to Central Africa – a British wedge between German South West Africa and the Transvaal Republic.

In 1884 Cecil Rhodes declared:
Bechuanaland is the neck of the bottle and commands the route to the Zambesi. We must secure it, unless we are prepared to see the whole of the North pass out of our hands, .. I do not

*want to part with the key of the interior, leaving us settled on this small peninsula.*¹

In May 1885 Sir Charles Warren and Sir George Baden Powell accompanied by John Mackenzie and 70 troopers arrived in Shoshong to announce that Britain was making the Bechuanaland a protectorate. Khama welcomed this move, although some other kgosi were less sure.

I, Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, with my younger brothers and heads of my town, express my gratitude at the coming of the messenger of the Queen of England, and for the announcement to me of the Protectorate, which has been established by the desire of the Queen, and which has come to help the land of the Bamangwato also. I give thanks for the word of the Queen ... and I accept the friendship and protection of the Government of England within the Bamangwato country...



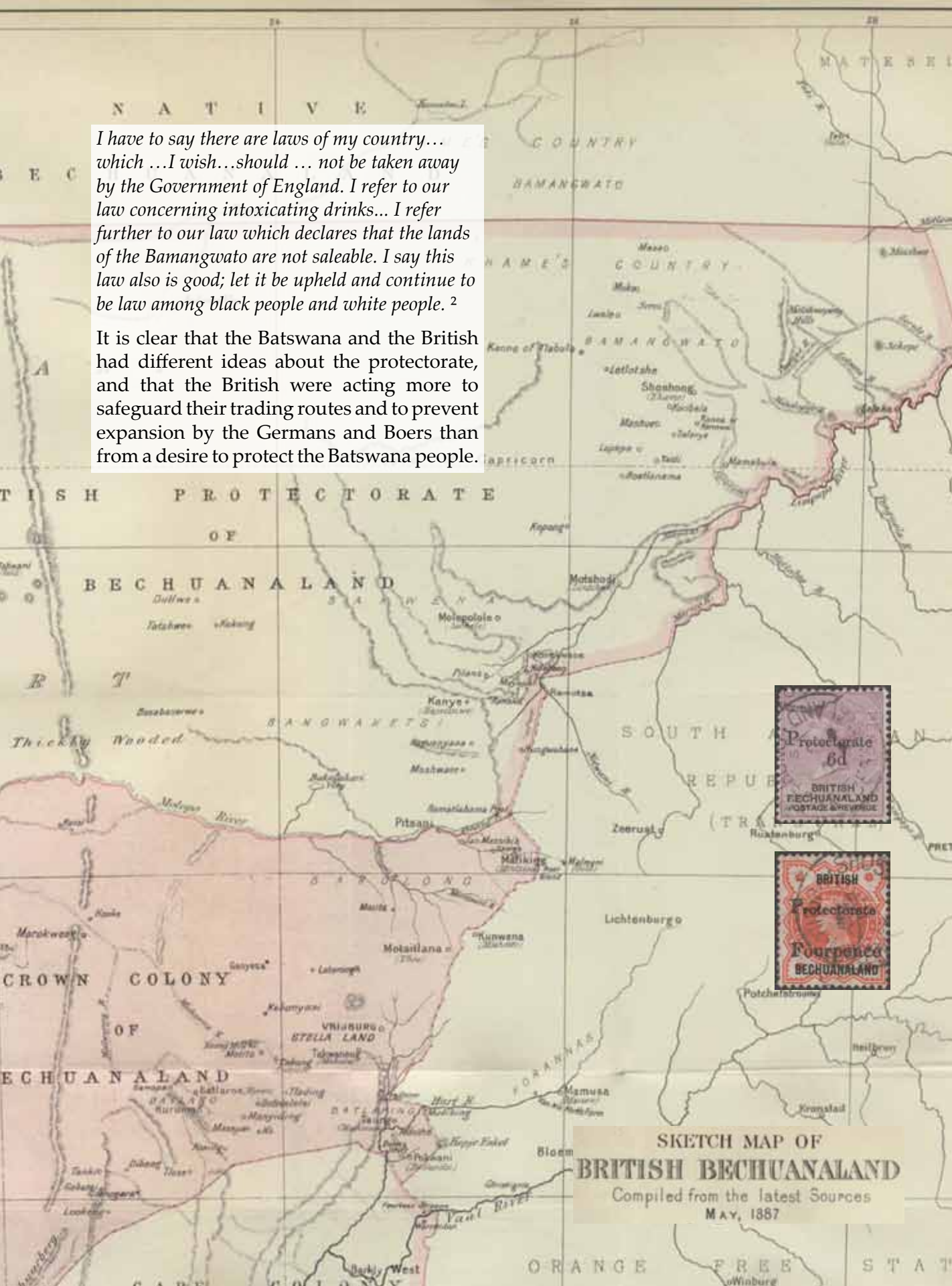
Engraving of General Sir Charles Warren as he informs the Bangwato in Shoshong about the Protectorate (appeared in *The Graphic*, 25 July 1885). Facing page: map of the Protectorate which originally stopped at 22° latitude but was soon extended further north to the current Botswana border (from Mackenzie (1887)).

Inset: stamps from the period.

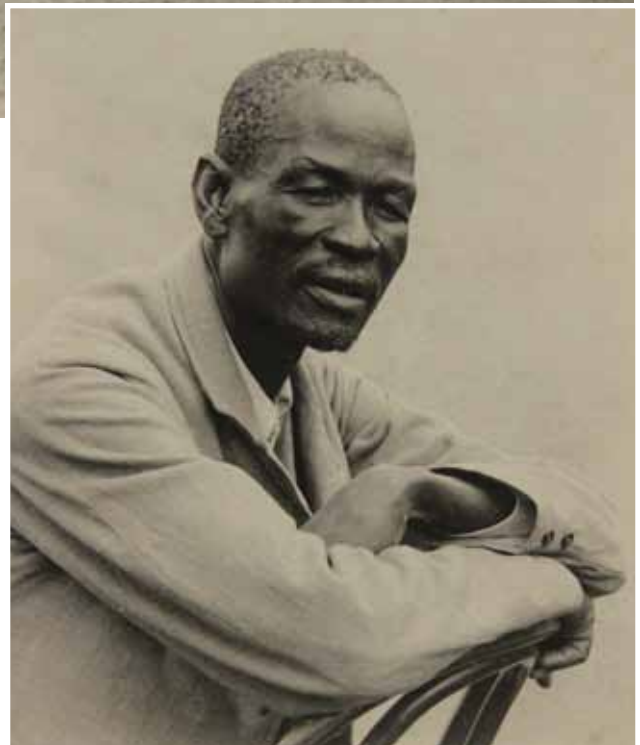
[1] Zins (1997) [2] Mackenzie (1887)

I have to say there are laws of my country... which ...I wish...should ... not be taken away by the Government of England. I refer to our law concerning intoxicating drinks... I refer further to our law which declares that the lands of the Bamangwato are not saleable. I say this law also is good; let it be upheld and continue to be law among black people and white people. ²

It is clear that the Batswana and the British had different ideas about the protectorate, and that the British were acting more to safeguard their trading routes and to prevent expansion by the Germans and Boers than from a desire to protect the Batswana people.



SKETCH MAP OF
BRITISH BECHUANALAND
Compiled from the latest Sources
MAY, 1887



In 1882-3, shortly after the death of Sekgoma and while Khama was away at Boteti, Kgamane, who had been left as governor of Shoshong, lifted the alcohol ban and ordered the revival of the initiation schools in a bid for power. However, he failed and fled in 1883 when Khama returned.¹

A new missionary, Edwin Lloyd, arrived in 1887, and records that members of the Bakaa were again living in the village.² The total population was estimated at around 15,000. One of the impacts of the protectorate status was a boundary commission which ruled on a dispute about some wells used for watering cattle at Lephepe (70 km SW of Shoshong) which were claimed by both the Bakwena and Bangwato people. The ruling was that the wells should be shared.³

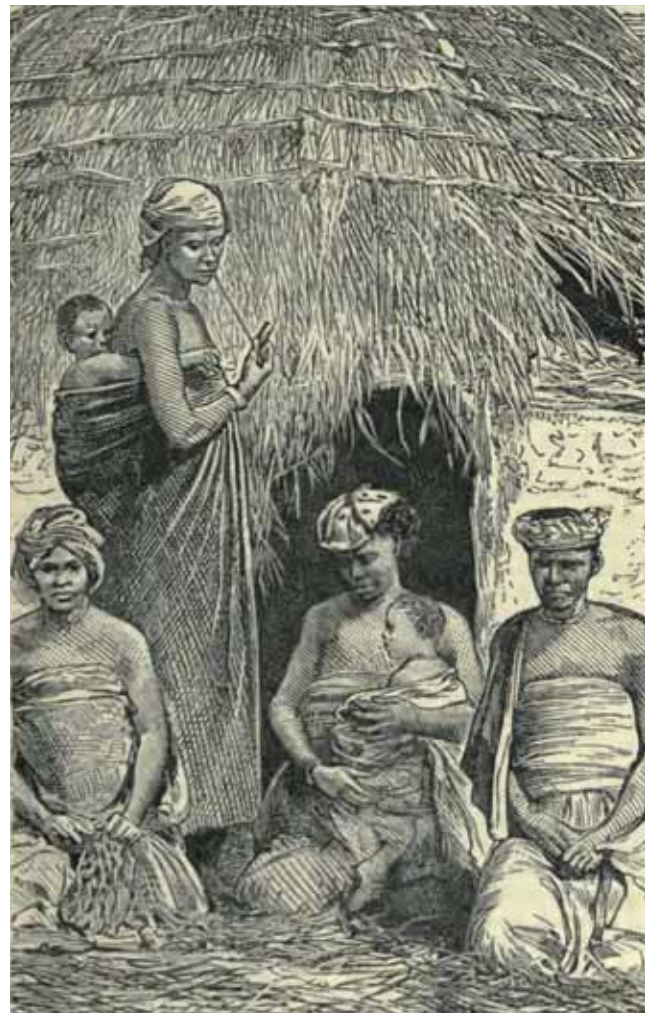
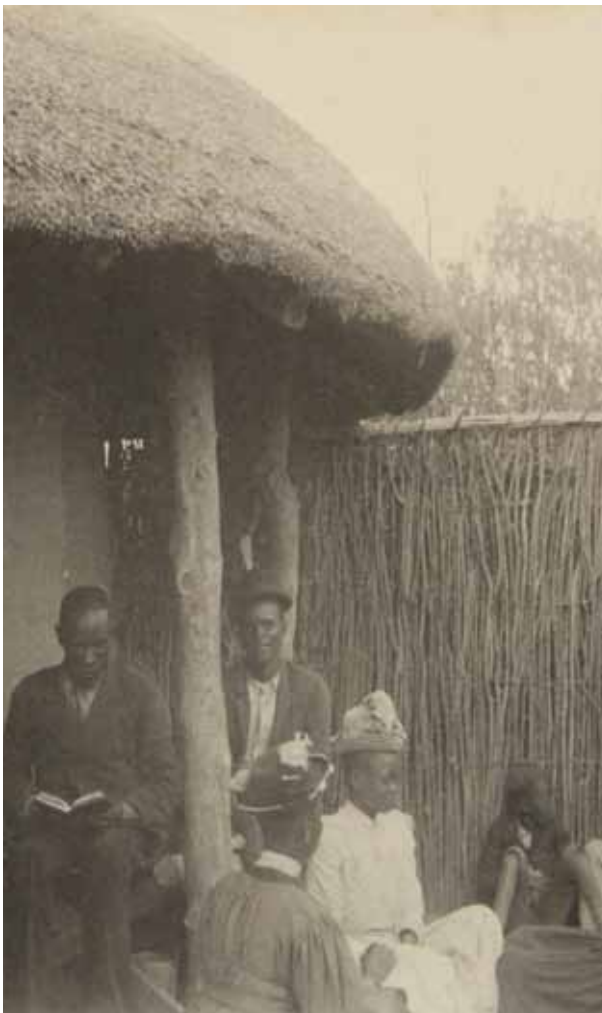
Khama had clearly been considering the need to move to a new capital, and indeed having stayed in one place for nearly forty years was highly unusual. The formation

of the protectorate gave confidence that the Matebele raids were no longer such a threat, and this together with the fact that the water supply was poor in Shoshong and people were living in insanitary conditions probably led to his decision to move.⁴

The sun was setting as we sat with them in their spotlessly clean court, the lights and shadows falling through the loop-holed mud walls round. The whole scene stays with one as a picture not to be forgotten: the large brown hut, its walls stencilled, the broad eaves covering raised step that made a shaded verandah; the fire outside, with three little brown maidens, half cooking, half playing; the graceful figures of girls carrying corn who crossed the court at intervals; Khama's son a bright, nice boy, sitting

with Mabisa [Mma Bessie] under the eaves; the daughters beside her; the little grandchildren at play; and among them all the man who had won, through suffering and danger, the purity of that almost unique home among African chiefs.

Since then, Shoshong itself has passed away, and only a few ruins are left of all its crowded life. The springs in the kloof dried up more and more, and after the English alliance it was less necessary to cling to the mountains as a fortress in Matabele raids...⁵



Photographs by Rev Willoughby (Botswana National Archives) Facing page: threshing corn at Mocwaedi's Palapye (c1895) and portrait of Khama (1896). This page Bible Reading in Palapye and illustration from John Mackenzie (1883). [1] Parsons (1973b) [2,3] Lloyd (1895) [4] The phrase "indescribable filth" is used by several modern writers, but I have not been able to find it in a contemporary source, although Lloyd (1895) notes that Khama "left his old town partly for sanitary reasons". [5] Knight-Bruce W (Mrs) (1893).

Move to Palapye

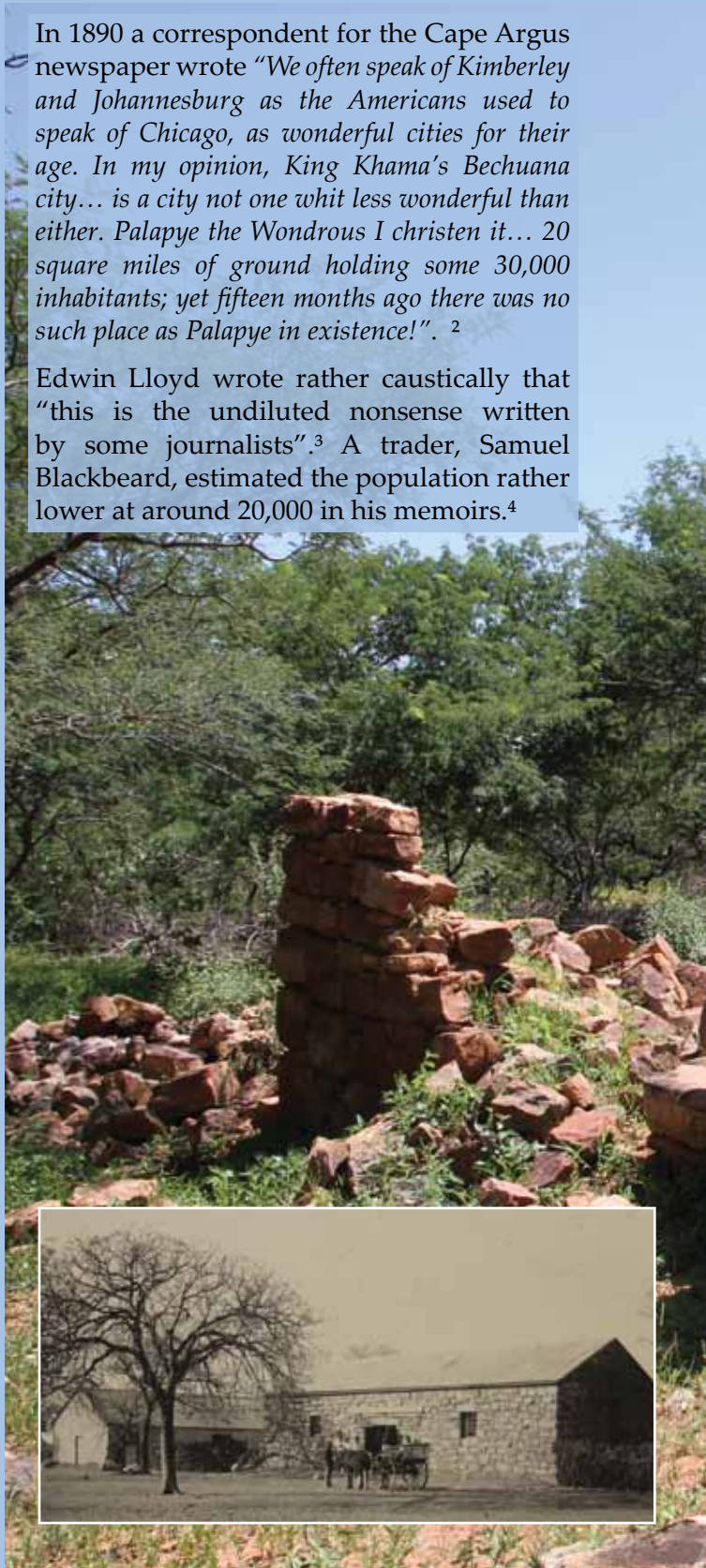
In 1889 Khama and his council decided to move to Phalatswe, which was simplified to "Palapye" by the Europeans. The place is now known as "Old Palapye" to differentiate it from the modern Palapye. The move also affected the other tribes living in Shoshong with the Bangwato such as the Baphaleng, Makalaka, Bakaa, Bakhurutshe, and Mashapatane.

They chose a site sixty miles to the north-west with a lovely range of rocky wooded hills, ample water supply, and fertile soil. Here an allotment of ground was marked out for each man and his family; the big central square and the wide avenues were carefully planned, and the best position of all was set apart for church and missionaries. Then, with hardly a warning, Khama gave the order to move. The well-to-do were instructed to lend waggons, oxen, and horses, every one was to help his neighbour, and the big population obediently set out. With its order and disorder, its children, its stuff, and its herds, it must have been a curious picture of a more famous exodus.

On reaching Palapwe the new capital, each man began to build on his appointed ground, till in less than a year there were streets of huts and their enclosures, shaded by trees and in regular order, that covered twenty square miles, and contained a population numbering about 30,000... there are stores for the European traders, blacksmiths' shops for waggon mending, and a little galvanised iron house, that holds the telegraph office.¹

In 1890 a correspondent for the Cape Argus newspaper wrote "We often speak of Kimberley and Johannesburg as the Americans used to speak of Chicago, as wonderful cities for their age. In my opinion, King Khama's Bechuana city... is a city not one whit less wonderful than either. Palapye the Wondrous I christen it... 20 square miles of ground holding some 30,000 inhabitants; yet fifteen months ago there was no such place as Palapye in existence!".²

Edwin Lloyd wrote rather caustically that "this is the undiluted nonsense written by some journalists".³ A trader, Samuel Blackbeard, estimated the population rather lower at around 20,000 in his memoirs.⁴





Main photograph of Old Palapye - ruins of Bechuanaland Trading Association store in 2013. Inset photographs by Willoughby (c1895) (Botswana National Archives). Facing page: Blackbeard's Store, Bechuanaland Trading Assoc Store. This page: Blackbeard's Store, Telegraph and post office.
[1,2] Knight-Bruce W (Mrs) (1893) [2] Cape Argus 23rd October 1890 [3] Lloyd 1895 [4] Blackbeard S (1930).

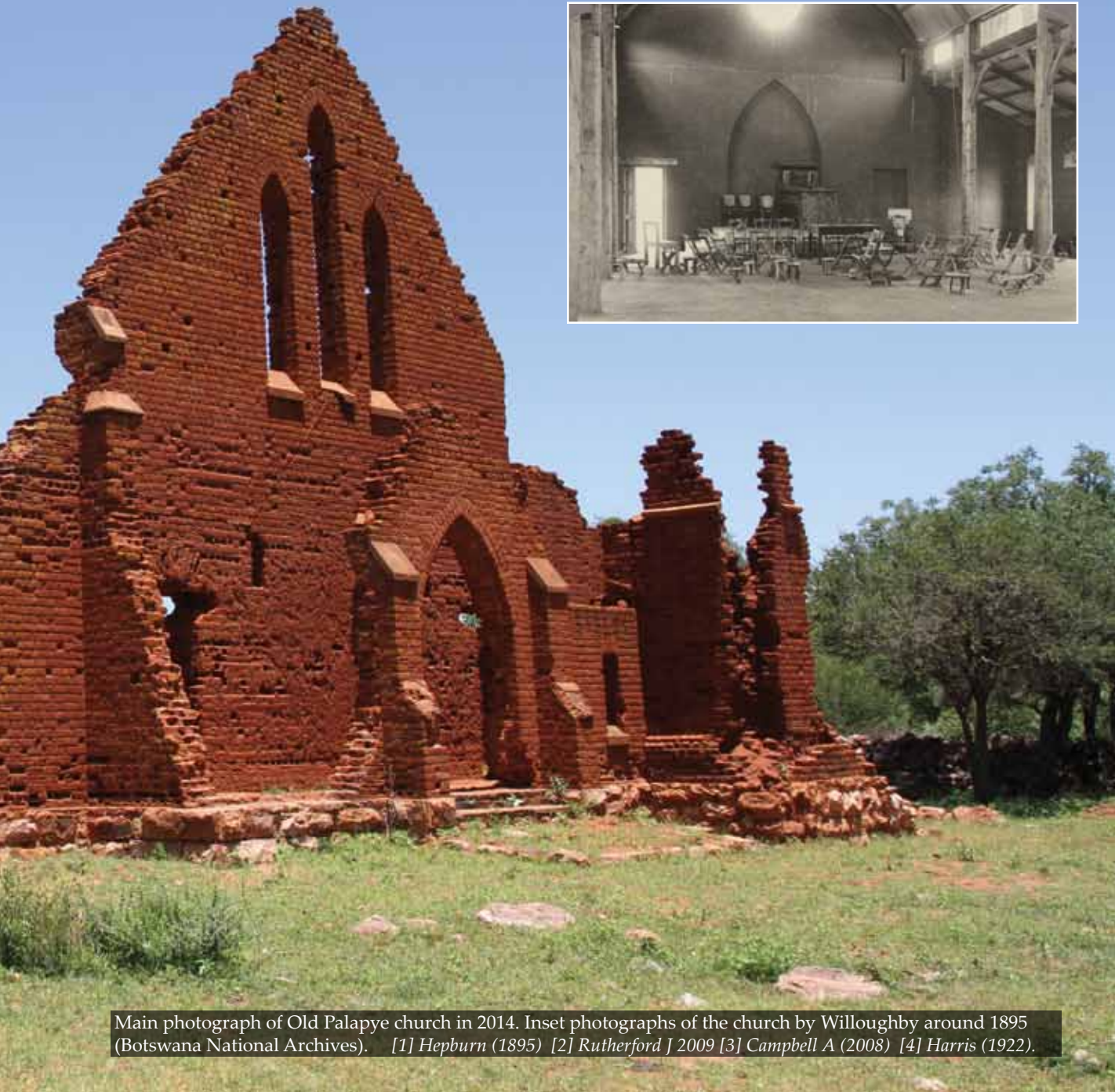
Sadly, not long after the move in December 1889, Khama's wife Mma Bessie died after giving birth to a child. Hepburn's family also suffered ill health and his wife and children were forced to go to the Cape. He wrote "Deaths have been frequent since our removal to Palapye. It is not so healthy as Shoshong".¹

Hepburn carried on preaching, with weekly congregations numbering as many as 2,000, and he struggled in declining health to build a fitting church for the new capital. The church was never fully finished, but was still a splendid achievement in the circumstances.² Parts of the great gable walls still remain, giving a good impression of the size and grandeur of the church.

During this period Hepburn clashed with Khama who saw him as making unreasonable demands such as wanting the Christians to live apart from heathens and to send a mission to the Kalanga living in an area claimed by Khama. As a result of these arguments, Hepburn left in late 1891. He then repented of his haste and returned the following year, but Khama would not see him, and Hepburn returned rather forlornly to England where he died not long afterwards.³

In his book, "Khama - The Great African Chief", John Harris notes that when Hepburn left, Khama sent after him a letter full of affectionate appreciation and regret, and a gift of £1,000 as a token of his regard and personal good-will.⁴





Main photograph of Old Palapye church in 2014. Inset photographs of the church by Willoughby around 1895 (Botswana National Archives). [1] Hepburn (1895) [2] Rutherford J 2009 [3] Campbell A (2008) [4] Harris (1922).

Shoshong was no longer on the main North-South route, but was not completely forgotten. A hunter/naturalist, Henry Bryden wrote in around 1891 “... I met [Strangeways] coming down-country, at Boatlanama, a water on the desert road, between Khama’s old town of Shoshong and Molepolole. In latter days this was not the usual route to and from Palachwe and Matabeleland, but having been several times by the Crocodile road, I happened to have taken the more westerly route for a change.”¹

He describes how giraffe are rapidly disappearing from Southern Africa; “A few years since they were to be found at no great distance from Khama’s old capital, Shoshong; now they are first encountered in the bush and forest-region beyond Kanne, or Klaballa, on the way from Shoshong to Lake Ngami. This waterless tract, well called thirst-land, serves them as a safe retreat. From Kanne to the Botletli River, and thence halfway to the

lake, Khama reserves them for his own and his people’s hunting, and Dutch hunters, with their wasteful methods, are not permitted — a very wise precaution.”

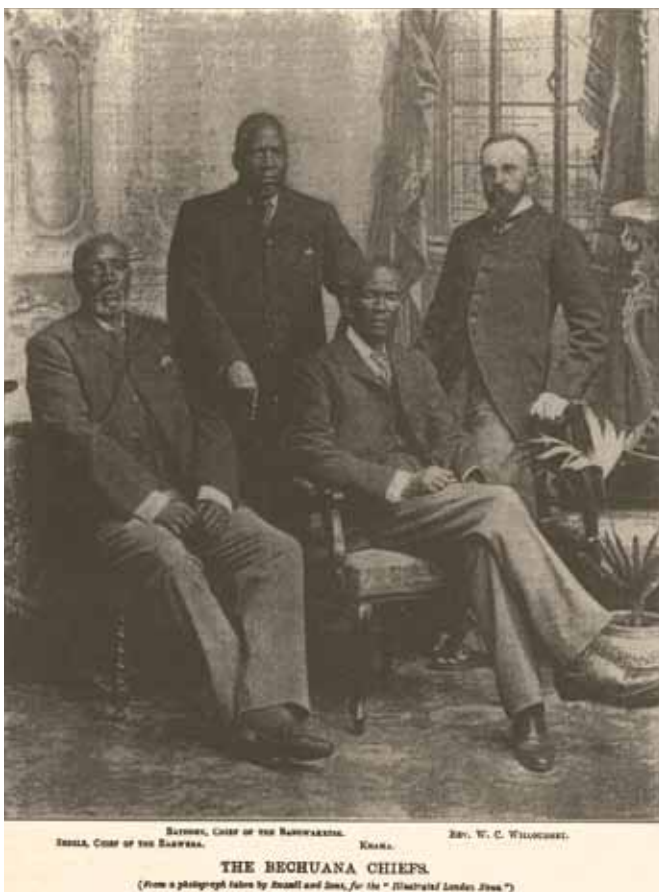
Bryden also notes how accessible the area is now; “From Palachwe to Vryburg... (420 miles), is but 20 day’s journey, even by the slow moving ox-waggon. From Vryburg to Cape Town the journey now occupies by rail two days and nights only.”

Hepburn’s replacement in 1893 was the Rev Willoughby, a young man who had previously been to Tanzania with the LMS. There was a significant drought during this period, and Willoughby had a well which was gradually deepened until it was 6m deep, but that too dried out.²

A mission school was built by Khama and run by Alice Young, and soon 190 children were attending in four classrooms.³



Musical drill at the “Native Elementary School” Palapye 1898 by Rev Willoughby (Botswana National Archives). Facing page: Studio portrait of the three chiefs and Willoughby as they appeared in the (London) Illustrated News Sept 21 1895, the “Three Dikgosi” memorial in the CBD of Gaborone (2013), and photo of Khama and company setting off on the journey by Rev Willoughby [1] Bryden (1891). [2,3] Rutherford (2009) [4] Parsons (1998)



Three Chiefs travel to England

In 1895 becoming increasingly concerned that Rhodes and the BSAC wanted to take over the Bechuanaland protectorate, Khama and fellow dikgosi Sebele and Bathoen decided to go to England. Over 11 weeks they toured the country, guided by the Rev Willoughby, and were very successful in gaining support for their cause. They met several times with Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, and were

able to express their fears. Finally a deal was agreed whereby the BSAC would be granted a strip of land for the railway, but the rest of the land would remain a protectorate. The three chiefs also met briefly with Queen Victoria and exchanged gifts. Rhodes was extremely angry when told of the agreement, and there is some doubt as to whether the agreement would have been honoured by the British had not the Jameson Raid taken place soon after. ⁴



Jameson Raid

Shortly after Khama and Willoughby returned to Palapye, Jameson (a doctor-soldier-politician working for the BSAC), passed through on his way South. Jameson admonished Khama for going to England:

“You had no reason to distrust the Company and you had no right to go to England in the way you did”

“Dr Jameson” replied Khama, “you have got a smooth tongue, but if, as you say, I should have relied on your friendship and peaceful intentions, can you tell me why these big guns are here? What is the object of their movement? Are they not a sign of destruction and death? Pease do not try to hoodwink me – I am not a child!”

“Oh no, no Khama! “ protested Dr Jameson, “I am going to Mafeking on important business and I am taking these guns down with me to have them repaired”

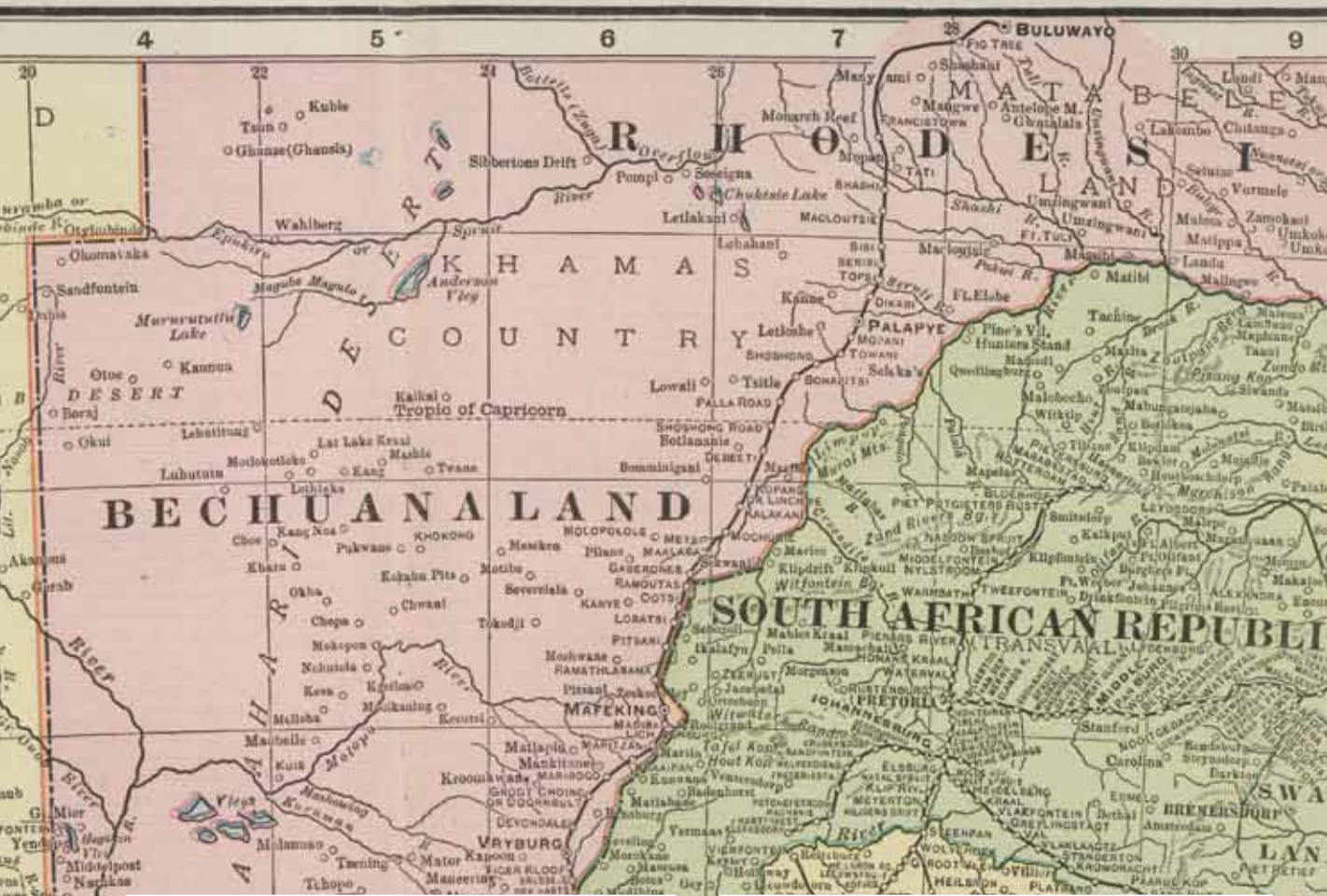
*“No doctor” maintained Khama, shaking his head, “I am not blind, I can see this is a military expedition”.*¹

Khama was of course correct, and Jameson led the disastrous raid into South Africa days later. His forces were made to surrender, and Cecil Rhodes, who had backed the incursion was obliged to resign as Prime Minister of the Cape Government. This led to the British government dropping any plans they may have had to hand over the protectorate to the BSAC.



This page: Jameson’s men fighting the Boers in 1896. Facing page: 1901 map published by George Cram showing the railway line. It incorrectly shows both Shoshong and Palapye as being on the railway line. Note “Shoshong Road” station on the Tropic of Capricorn. Inset: Laying track north of Palapye at half a mile a day (Rhodesia Railways), Class 6 steam locomotive at Bulawayo Railway Museum (Photo by Geoff Cooke).

[1] Grant (2012a) [2] Rutherford (2009)



Railway

In 1896-7 the railway was constructed through Bechuanaland, passing not far from Palapye. Khama provided workers and the increase in trade led to significant benefits. A station was built on the railway called "Shoshong Road Station" some 50 km south of Shoshong, which is presumably the place now known as Mamabula. The fact that the railway passed to the east of Shoshong permanently changed the North-South trade route and Shoshong would have lost

its influence even if Khama had stayed there. The Anglo-Boer War had limited effect on Bechuanaland, although the administrative capital, Mafikeng, endured a long siege in 1899. When the Boer troops were around 60 km from Palapye, the commander sent word that the Bangwato need fear no harm; it was the Europeans they were after. Khama replied that all his people, black and white, were his responsibility and that he would defend them. No attack came.²

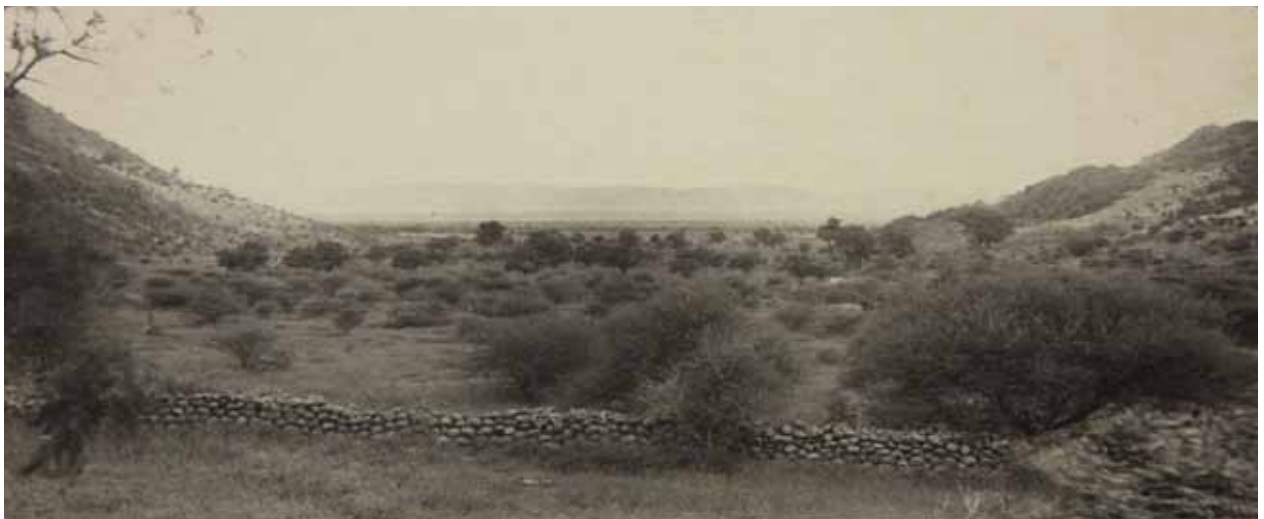
Return to Shoshong

After the death of Kgosi Mosinyi in 1892, the Bakaa tribe fragmented further, and groups settled in Bokaa, Kalamare (in 1894) and in 1896 a group under Kgosi Tshwene re-occupied Shoshong.¹

Khama married one of his daughters, Pidio, to Kgosi Tshwene, cementing relations between the Bangwato and Bakaa.

In Palapye, water shortages continued to be a huge problem, and Khama realised it was necessary to reduce the population there and decentralise his power base. In 1897 Hamilton

Goold-Adams was appointed as Resident Commissioner for the Bechuanaland Protectorate, having previously been in the new Bechuanaland Border Police. He came to Palapye to lead an enquiry into the long running dispute between Khama, his brother Kgamane and son Sekgoma. On 29th March 1899, Goold-Adams upheld Khama's wishes and ordered Sekgoma to leave Palapye and stay at Lephepe, and ordered Kgamane to Shoshong.² Other sources refer to Khama making his brother the Governor of Shoshong.³



The relationship between Khama and Kgamane clearly remained a very strained one.

In the same year the Baphaleng under Kgosi Kubung left Palapye and returned to Shoshong, together with some of the Bakaa. In 1901 the LMS had twenty outstation congregations and reopened the mission station in Shoshong which had a “fairly large church” under pastor Peter Gaeonale.⁴

Khama had been considering another move for some time, and in 1902 he made the decision to move from Palapye to Serowe,

the site of Kgari’s old capital. (Old) Palapye was burnt and razed to the ground, and a smaller development by the railway would become the modern day Palapye. The remaining Bakaa in Palapye returned to Shoshong at this point.

In 1903, Howard Williams, LMS missionary and enthusiastic educationalist, started work at Shoshong. The elementary school had 53 pupils in 1904, with an “industrial class” where 12 boys learnt building skills, and knitting and sewing classes for 26 girls where they were taught in the use of sewing machines by Mrs Williams.⁵



Photographs of Shoshong in 1894/1895 by Rev Willoughby (Botswana National Archives). Facing page: Ruins of Mission Station, and view from Old Shoshong. This page: Ruins of trader’s house and waggons at the former LMS church. Inset Pidio and Tshwene (Cweni) photographed by Rev Willoughby c1985.

[1] Morton (2008) [2,5] Parsons (1973b) [3] Morton (2008) [4] Rutherford (2009)

Expulsion of Lloyd

Williams having left, in 1907 Edwin Lloyd was transferred back to Shoshong, having been involved in some disputes while serving in Kanye. However, in 1912 Lloyd fell out with Kgosi Tshwene after refusing to perform the marriage between Tshwene's uncle and niece. He then also fell out with Kgamane, and in 1913 Khama forced the LMS to remove him, a sign that the influence of the missionaries was in decline.¹ The LMS appointed a Motswana, Moruti Seakgano, as their minister in Shoshong from 1917-23. Seakgano had been born in Shoshong in the 1860's and had studied in Lesotho.²

Trading

According to the 'Encyclopedia Britannica', Shoshong had a population of about 800 in 1911; clearly it remained a very small village in comparison to its former size.

Around this time a trader R.A. Bailey and his employee Thomas Shaw built a shopping mall in Palapye, and also a store in Shoshong which still remains today. Several other traders operated in Shoshong, including S. Hoare, who also quarrelled with Kgamane, although trade was dominated by the better connected centres of Serowe, Palapye and Mahalapye.

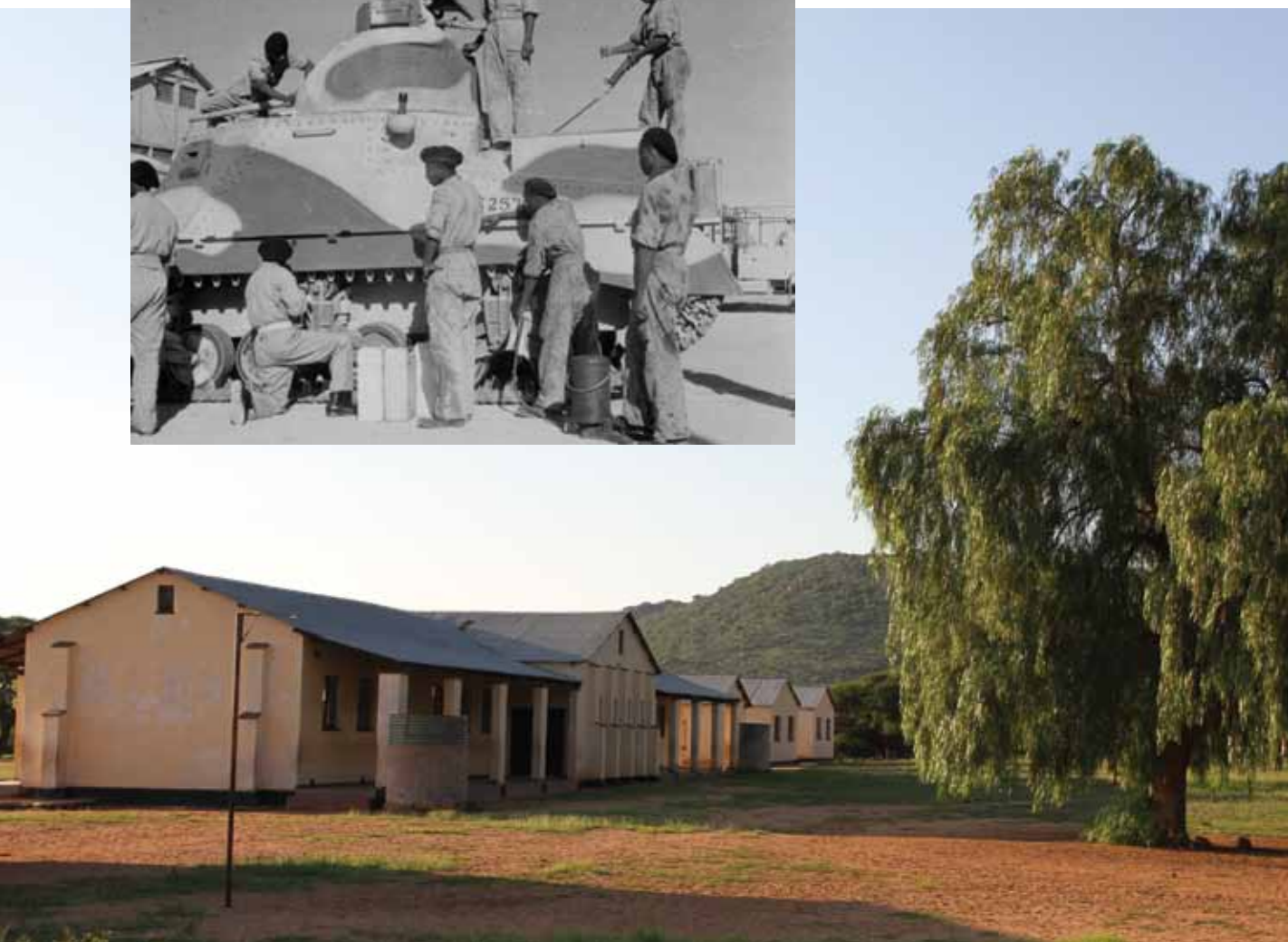
During the First World War (1914-18), Khama boycotted recruitment to the armed forces, although some Batswana served in France with the unarmed South African Native Labour Contingent.



Khama's death

Khama was something of a dictator, and his relationships with the rest of his family including his son Sekgoma suffered as a result. However, shortly before his death in 1923 at the age of 88, Khama reconciled with his son. After Khama's death, Sekgoma was kgosi for a short time, until his death in 1925. His half brother, Tshekedi Khama, then took over as regent for Sekgoma's son Seretse Khama, who was born in 1920 and so was an infant at the time.³

Following the death of Khama's brother Kgamane, his son Gorewang took over as Governor of Shoshong. Gorewang's son, Rasebolai, was born in 1907 and during the Second World War served with the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps within the British Army, rising to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major, the highest ranking Mongwato. About 20% of the Bechuanaland adult male population saw active service in the Second World War.⁴



Facing Page: Trading store just off the road to the kgotla, once owned by Thomas Shaw (2013).
 This page: Shoshong Primary School, which was constructed pre 1930's. Inset soldiers with the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps maintaining vehicles in the Middle East (Imperial War Museum UK)
 [1] Parsons (1973b) [2] Landau (1992) [3] Michael Crowder's unfinished biography www.thuto.org [4] Morton (2008)

Seretse Khama

Goareng Mosinyi was born in Shoshong in 1915, a member of both the Bakaa and Bangwato royal families, and was sent to the Tiger Kloof school in South Africa, established in 1904 by the Rev Willoughby.

As a child Seretse Khama spent several years at Tiger Kloof with Goareng, before attending the University of Fort Hare. In 1945 he travelled to England, spending a year at Oxford University and then training to be a barrister in the Inner Temple, London. Here he met Ruth Williams and they decided to marry.

While Tshekedi Khama and many others were against Seretse marrying a white

English woman, Goareng supported Seretse in his choice.

In 1949 Seretse visited Serowe, and was able to persuade people at the kgotla to accept his decision. Tshekedi, together with Gorewang and Rasebolai went into self imposed exile in Pilikwe, while Seretse returned to the UK to resume his studies.

Meanwhile, 1948 saw the election of the 'National Party' in South Africa and the birth of Apartheid. Concerned about the possible effects of such a prominent multi-racial couple so near to South Africa, the British government prevented Seretse and Ruth returning to Bechuanaland.



This page: Seretse Khama addresses the Serowe kgotla in 1949, with Tshekedi Khama seated alongside him.

Facing Page: Seretse and Ruth Khama photographed above Serowe by Margaret Bourke-White in 1950. Images

© Getty Images, reproduced under "fair use" guidelines for non-profit educational purposes. Inset Goareng Mosinyi.

[1] Morton (2008) [2] Seretse Gasebalwe (2013)

In 1953 Rasebolai was appointed by the British authorities as African Authority over the Bangwato, despite having previously been rejected by the kgotla. He kept this position until 1964, achieving widespread support following the reconciliation between Seretse and Tshekedi.¹ When accepting this appointment, Rasebolai renounced his claim to the Shoshong governorship, and his cousin Setohile was installed in his place, a position he kept until his death in 1970.²

In 1956, after renouncing his claim to the Bangwato chieftaincy, Khama and Ruth returned to Bechuanaland.

During a visit to South Africa in 1960, the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan made his speech about the “winds of change” blowing through Africa, and in the light of this it was not unexpected that the British turned down South Africa’s request to take over the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1963.

In 1961, Seretse together with Goareng and others founded the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which would dominate the Botswana political scene for the next fifty years.



Mahalapye

The town of Mahalapye was established on the railway line some 40 km east of Shoshong. In 1922 it had only three wards, but access to transport, labourers, possibility of jobs and proximity to cattle posts and arable lands led to its rapid growth. Mahalapye is unique in not having an indigenous ruling family – instead lots of different tribes settled there including Herero, Xhosa and others as well as Bangwato.

In the 1933 map of the area (facing page), it is clear that Mahalapye was already more important than Shoshong. In 1946, it had 2,453 inhabitants, but by 1964 this had grown to 13,199.¹ Mahalapye became

the headquarters for the Department of Agriculture in 1935 and was one of the serious contenders to be the capital of Botswana in 1965, but partly due to concerns about a shortage of water, Gaborone was finally selected (renamed Gaborone after Independence). Nevertheless, Mahalapye continued to expand, and in 2011 had a population over four times that of Shoshong.²

As Mahalapye developed, the main access into Shoshong became the road from Mahalapye, although the road due South from Shoshong, called the “Tale Road”, intersecting the railway around Mamabula could still be used.

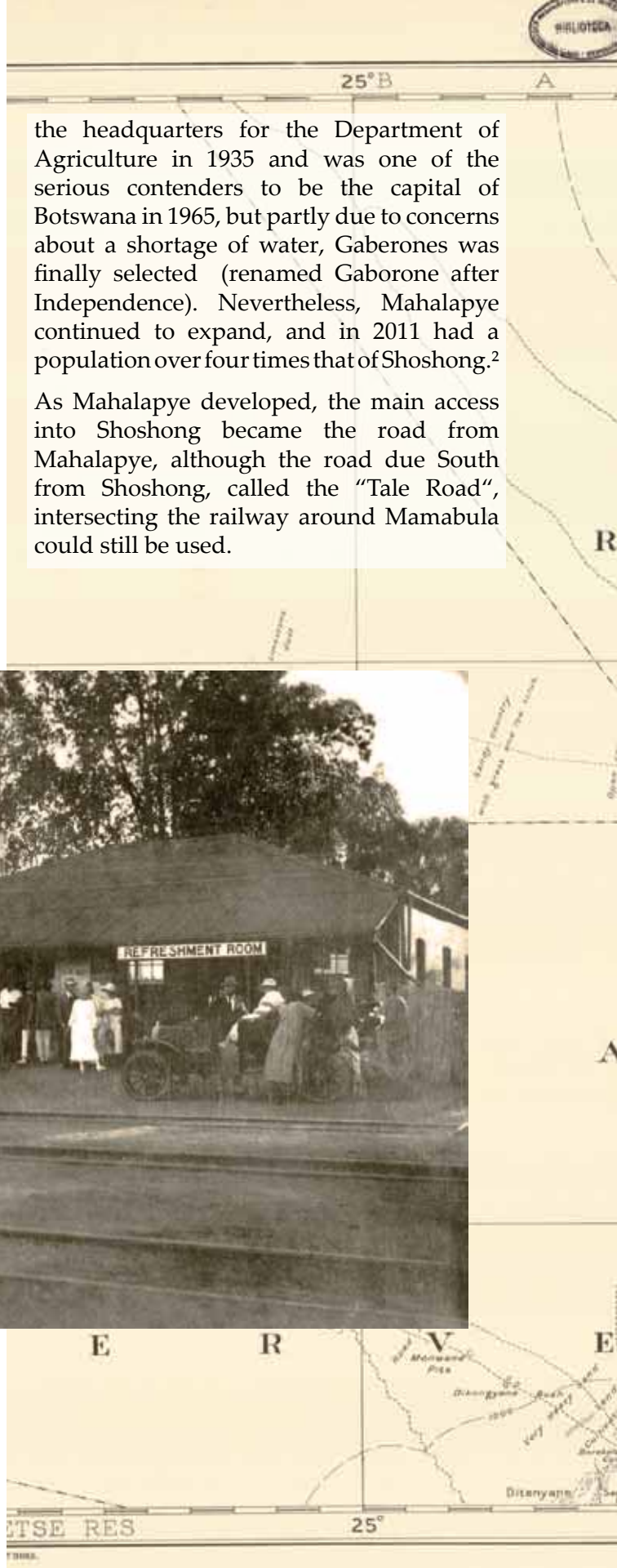


Photo above: Mahalapye Railway Station by John Reilly c 1928 <http://www.jacanaent.com/>

Map dated 1933 “Shoshong” spelt as “Shushong”.

[1] *Kebonang* (1989)

[2] *National Census 2011* <http://www.cso.gov.bw/>.

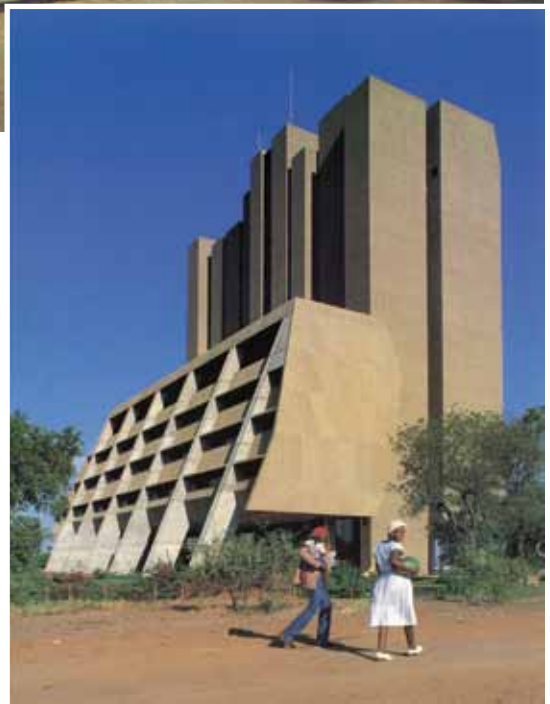




Independence

Botswana gained its Independence from the British on 30th September 1966. Princess Marina presented President Seretse Khama with the constitutional instruments on behalf of Queen Elizabeth.

Not long afterwards, in 1969, diamonds were discovered in Orapa which, with good economic management, were to transform Botswana from a poverty stricken country into a middle income one.



Social Survey

To give an idea of the situation in Shoshong after Independence, some statistics from a survey carried out in 1969 reveal that:¹

11% of heads of household were not living in Shoshong (ie working elsewhere).

38% of males aged 16-45 were absent (of whom 45% were in South Africa mostly working as miners).

16% of females aged 16-45 were absent.

Transport

35% had bicycles, 23% sledges (dragged along the ground), 6% a vehicle which can carry several people (eg a donkey cart).

Cows

30% of heads of household had no cows, 26% had between 1 and 10 cows, 35% had between 11 and 50 cows, 9% had more than 50 cows.

Media

88% had no access to radio, 75% had never read the Daily News.

School

45% of children were attending school. Another survey in the early 1970s found that Shoshong boys aged 7-14 spent four and a half times as much time looking after cattle than they spent in school.²



Facing page: Houses of Parliament and Orapa House, Gaborone, under construction (Arup Botswana).

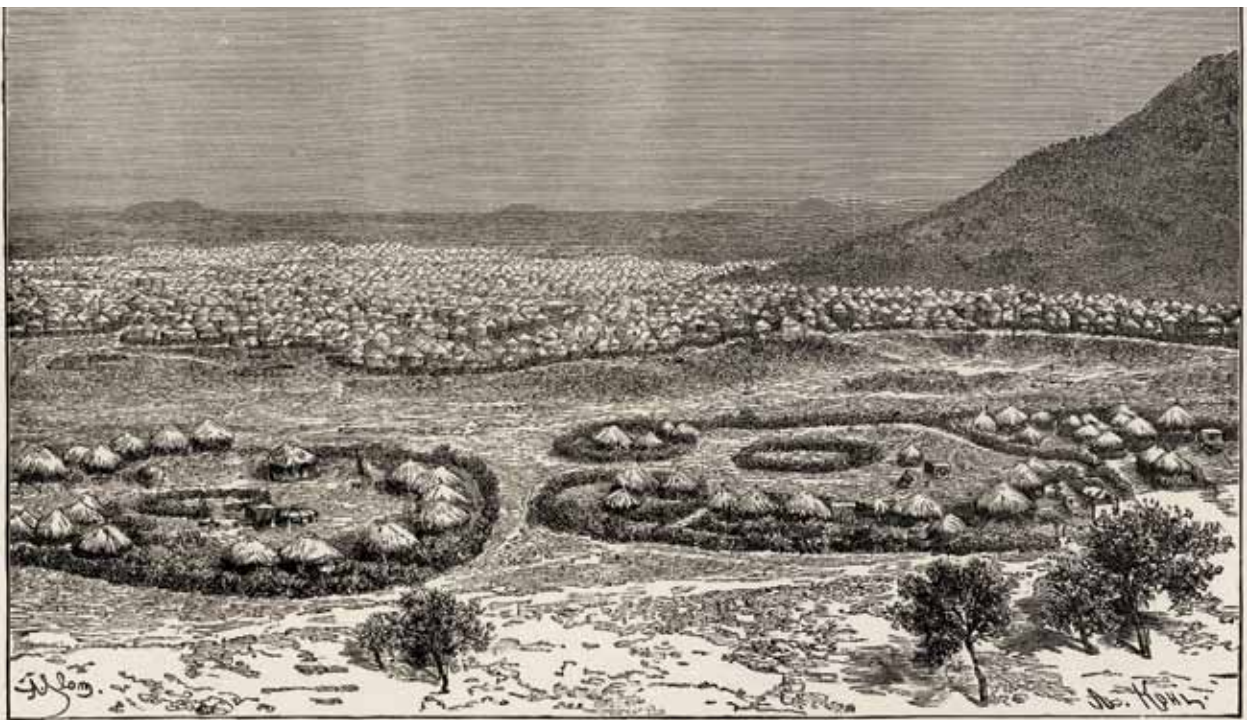
This page: Batswana men travelling to South Africa to work in the mines (Michael Kahn).

Underground in the Selebi-Phikwe copper mine (Amax Ltd)

[1] Syson (1972)

[2] Roe, Fortmann (1982)





SHOSHONG, FORMER CAPITAL OF THE BA-MANGWATOS.

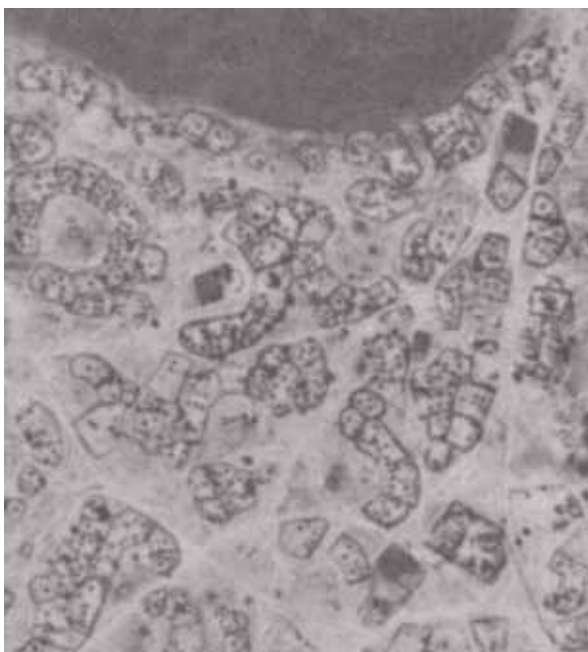
Urban Development

These illustrations show how the character of the village has changed between 1890 (engraving above), 1970 (black & white photos) and today (colour photos).

In the past houses were grouped in circular or horseshoe shaped compounds, each housing an extended family.

Gradually with the formation of the Land Board, and regulations forbidding livestock to be kept in the village, these have been converted into more rectangular individual plots mostly with wire fencing.

However, there has been little change in the access routes through the village, and the tarred road today winds through the village following what clearly were existing tracks.



supermarket library petrol station



Facing page: Engraving of Shoshong in around 1890 by Elisee Reclus. B&W aerial photo taken on 1st May 1971 from Syson (1972) and corresponding colour aerial photo from google (2014). This page: B&W photo by Sandy Grant taken in 1968, with the same view photographed in 2014.



Housing

Houses were traditionally built with sun-dried clay bricks and plastered with a mixture of clay and cow dung.

A gradual change of housing style has taken place, with a move away from the mud walled rondavals with thatched roofs to rectangular cement block buildings with corrugated iron roofs. However, rondavals are still valued for ceremonial occasions, and most compounds still have at least one rondaval.





The practice of rendering the mud walled rondavals with cement has sadly led to many collapses since the mud walls are no longer able to “breathe” and allow passage

of moisture out. In the 1991 census, only 38% of houses in Shoshong were made with “mud” walls.¹

Facing page: Photo of Khama’s house in Palapye by Willoughby c1896. Photo of Sekgoma’s (Khama’s son) house in Palapye shows a move towards a more European style. (Botswana National Archives). Photo of a modern “two and a half” house under construction. This page: A traditional mud walled rondaval still standing in Shoshong (2014).
[1] Grant (1995).

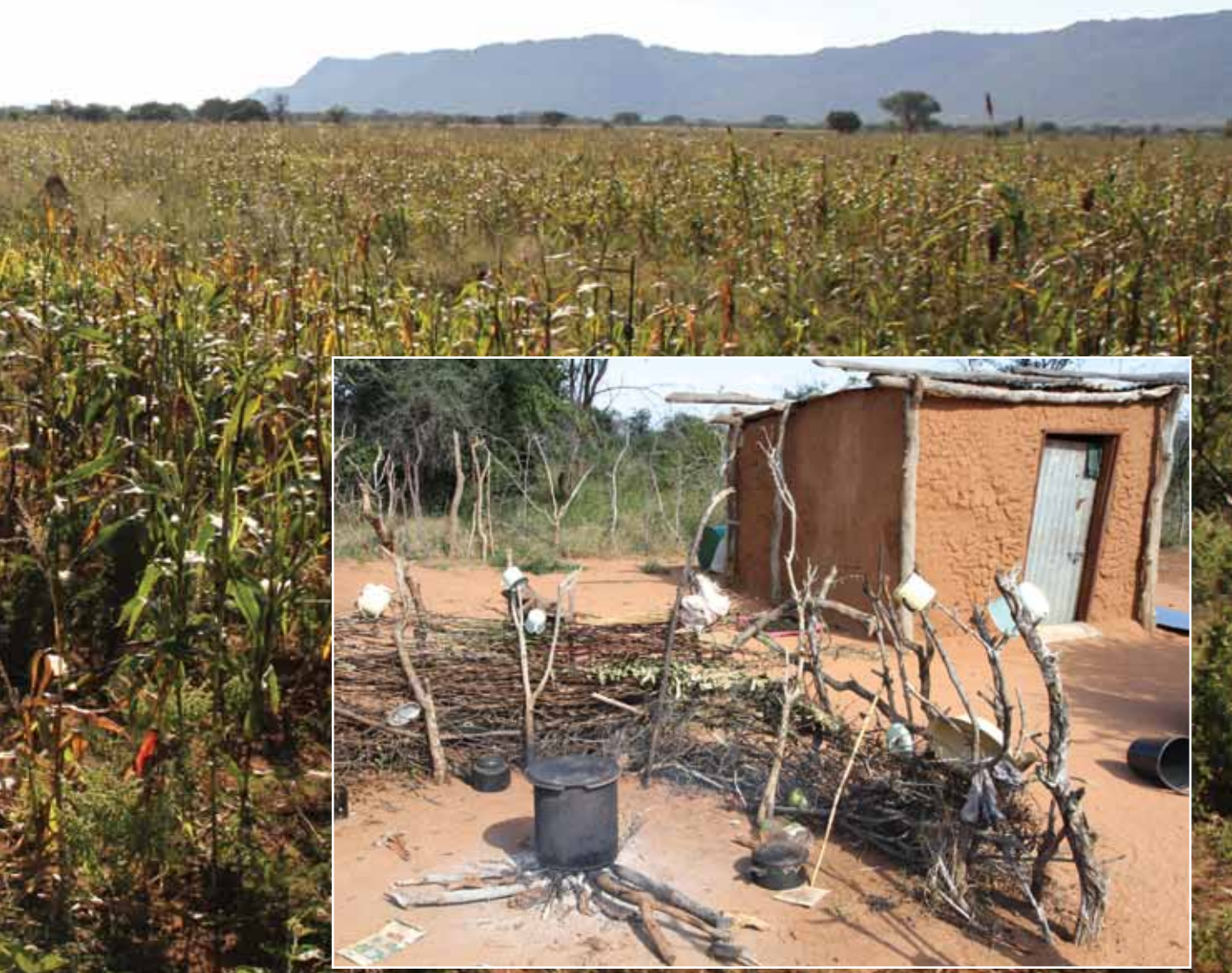
Agriculture

Many people would live in the fields (masimo) during the planting season, typically starting in November/December, only returning to Shoshong after the harvest around May or later. Others lived much of the time at cattle posts (meraka).

Sorghum (mabele) is the main cereal crop in Botswana but is in gradual decline in preference for maize and other crops. While in 1982, in rural southern villages 89% of people ate sorghum every day, by 1998 this had fallen to 75%, and in urban areas only 47%.¹

Despite the best efforts of Khama III, locally brewed beer remains an important part of many people's lives and is often drunk at traditional ceremonies.





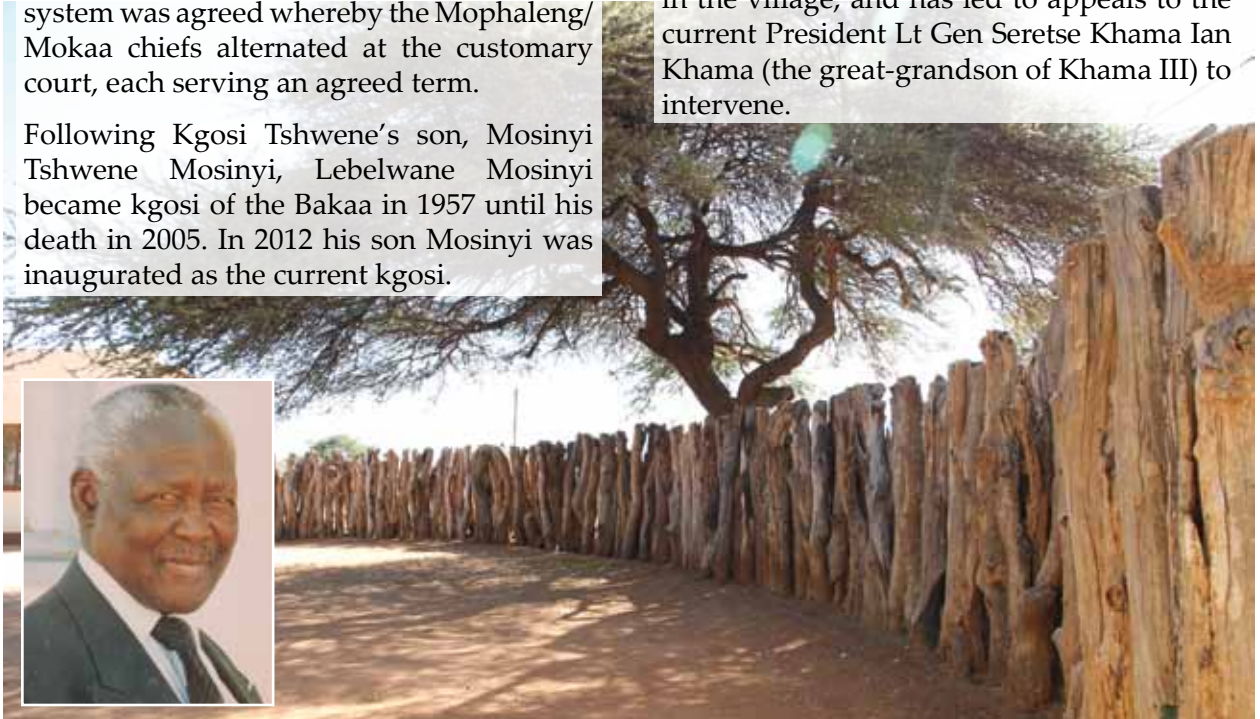
Main photograph field between Shoshong and Tobela. This page: typical basic accomodation at the field. Inset harvested sorghum (mabele) and traditional beer. Mma Nkhuba cuts a melon (lerotse) [1] Kebakile (2003)

Customary Court

Shoshong is made up of Bakaa (30 wards), Baphaleng (32 wards) and Kgamane (7 housesteads).¹ The Bakaa and Baphaleng both have their own kgosi and kgotla in addition to the village level customary court. In the 1970's, not long after Independence, a system was agreed whereby the Mophaleng/Mokaa chiefs alternated at the customary court, each serving an agreed term.

Following Kgosi Tshwene's son, Mosinyi Tshwene Mosinyi, Lebelwane Mosinyi became kgosi of the Bakaa in 1957 until his death in 2005. In 2012 his son Mosinyi was inaugurated as the current kgosi.

However, in 2012, Kgosi Sediegeng Kgamane, the son of Setohile who was Governor of Shoshong until 1970, announced that he was returning the overall chieftainship to the Kgamane family and installed Felix Kgamane as regent for his son Setohile.² This has caused much controversy in the village, and has led to appeals to the current President Lt Gen Seretse Khama Ian Khama (the great-grandson of Khama III) to intervene.



Politics

Ever since Independence, the MP for Shoshong has been a member of the ruling party, the BDP. Following the original MP Goareng Mosinyi (MP from 1965 until 1989), Esther Mosinyi took over until 1994. Modibedi Robi was MP for a number of years, followed by Duke Lefhoko who became

assistant minister of Trade & Industry, but narrowly lost the BDP candidate elections in 2008 to Phillip Makgalemele, who was duly elected MP at the elections in 2009. In 2010 Makgalemele briefly joined a breakaway party, the Botswana Movement for Democracy, following its formation, but shortly after returned to the BDP.



Facing page: The Bakaa kgotla in 2014, Inset Lebelwane Mosinyi and scenes during the enthronement of Kgosi Mosinyi of the Bakaa in 2012 (Amelia Plant). This page: Independence day celebrations at the main kgotla (2013) and MP's Duke Lefhoko and Philip Makgalemele. [1] email from Susan Keitumetse. [2] Seretse Gasebalwe (2013).

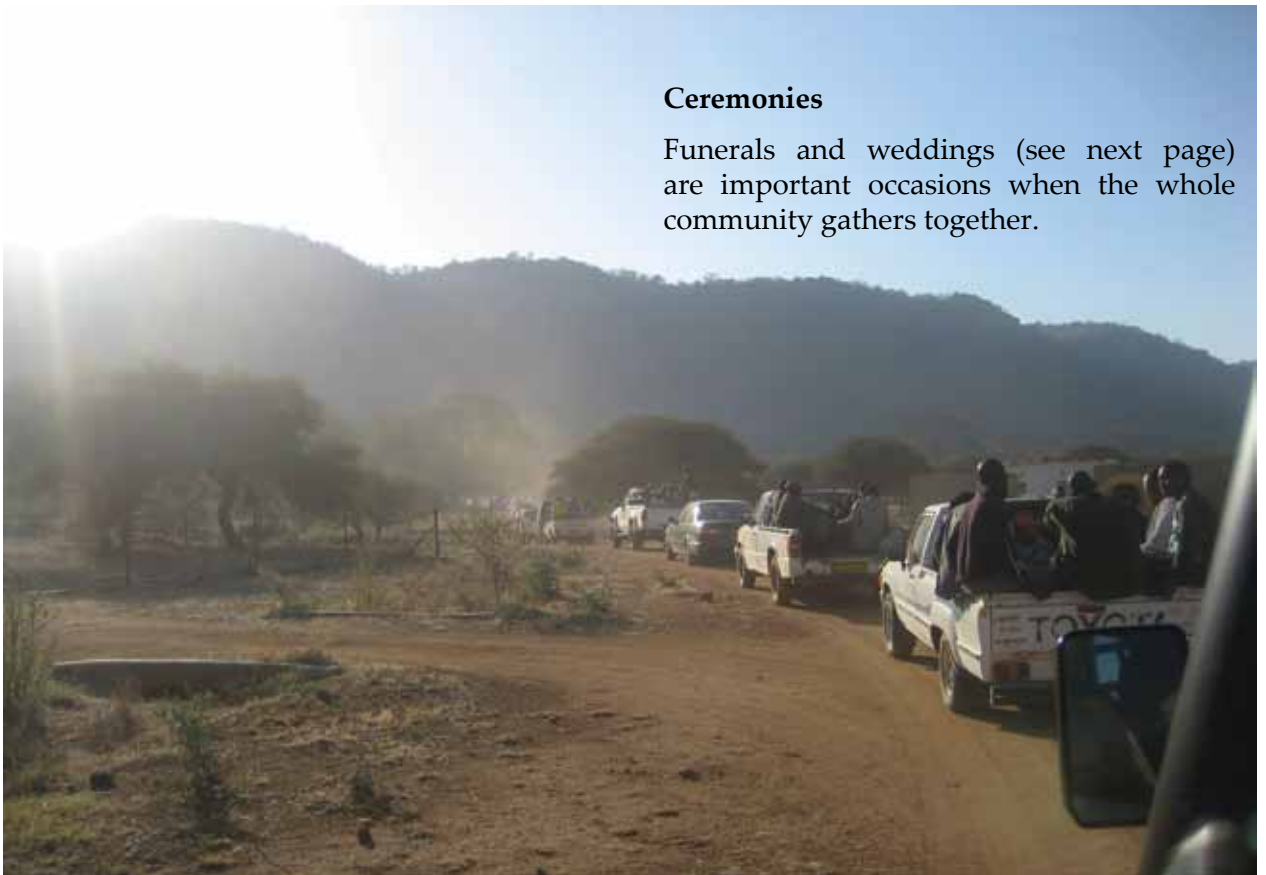
HIV/Aids

The Shoshong Clinic opened in the 1960's and moved to its current location in 1979. Throughout Botswana, the 1990's saw the start of the devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic. Anti-retrovirals (ARVs) were made available in Mahalapye in 2003 and then in Shoshong from 2008 and have helped stabilise the situation, but a walk in the Shoshong graveyard is all that is needed to see the terrible impact of the disease.



Ceremonies

Funerals and weddings (see next page) are important occasions when the whole community gathers together.



Facing page: Bokaa ward graveyard (2013) and inset the Shoshong health clinic.

This page: Early morning funeral procession of cars accompany the coffin to the burial site (Amelia Plant) and prayers taking place at the house.



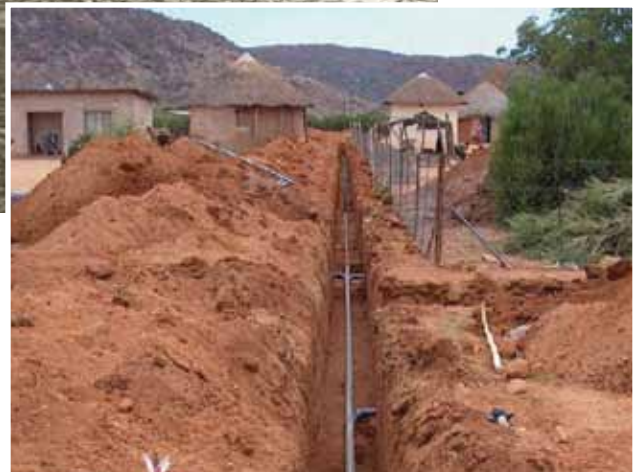
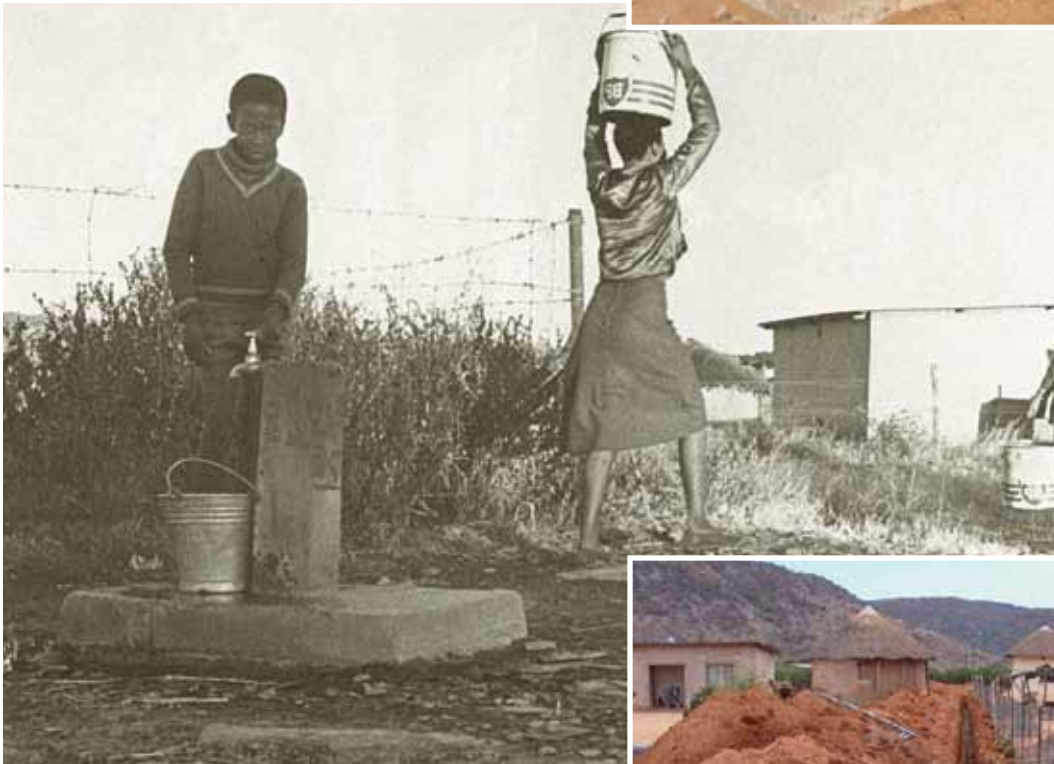
Infrastructure

In the 1970's, Shoshong was served with potable water from a small number of standpipes, and large queues would often form of people waiting for water. Gradually these were replaced with metered water connections to each plot.

The road from Mahalapye to Shoshong was tarred in 1993.

Mains electricity reached Shoshong around 2000, but as of 2014 a large number of houses are still not connected.

An innovative vacuum sewerage system was installed around 2003, where sewage is pulled by vacuum to the ponds and treatment works to the east of the village. This is one of the first examples of a village level vacuum system anywhere in the world.



Facing page: Wedding celebrations in Shoshong - Old Shoshong is always a popular spot for wedding photos. This page: B&W photo of a typical tapstand (not Shoshong) Michael Kahn c1980. Shoshong vacuum sewer during installation (Roediger Vacuum GmbH). Disused tapstand behind Mokaesi plot, Bokaa ward (2013).



Many shops have come and gone - the Supermarket on the main road near the petrol station held a near monopoly for a long time until 2013 when a branch of national chain "Choppies" was opened.



This page: Shoshong Supermarket in 2014 (exterior and inside). Former "Boka Small Trading" store, and interior of the Shoshong Library (opened in 2001). Facing page: Entering Shoshong on the Mahalapye road (2013)

The Future

It is difficult to predict what the future holds for Shoshong. Surveys in 2010 discovered significant Uranium deposits in the area, which may lead to changes in the sleepy village at some point.

However, let us hope that Shoshong's long and colourful history is not forgotten.



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available online free of charge
available at www.jstor.org

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Amelia Plant

Shoshong Library

Botswana National Archives

Visiting the Sites:

Old Shoshong (LMS Church)

GPS coordinates S23° 1.006' E26° 31.117'

Pitsane Hill - is 14km from Shoshong on the road NW towards Serowe.

GPS coordinates: S22° 59.277' E26° 23.427'

Old Palapye - is between the villages of Letsheng and Malaka.

GPS coordinates: S22° 38.746' E27° 17.559'

Kolobeng - on the road between Gaborone and Thamaga/Kanye

GPS coordinates: S24° 39.266' E25° 39.922'



This illustrated guide takes a look at the history of Shoshong in central Botswana, from its pre-history right through to the present day. Only 150 years ago, under the leadership of Segkoma I and his son Khama III, Shoshong was the capital of the Bangwato and the largest town for thousands of kilometres. Now a quiet and picturesque village, it is a shadow of its former self, but traces of its interesting history can still be found.

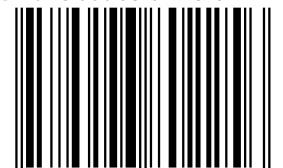
With its plentiful drawings, historic maps and photographs, the book is intended for younger readers as well as adults.



Cover photograph: Shoshong in 1895 - waggons at the old London Missionary Society church. Photo by Rev. Willoughby, tint by author (Botswana National Archives).
Above: the centre of Shoshong in 2014.

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