

## Editorial preface

The 'Legacy of Schapera' research project, to conduct research following up aspects of Isaac Schapera's monumental scholarship on Botswana, is based within the Department of Sociology at the University of Botswana. As part of the project Professor Suzette Heald agreed to compile a complete bibliography of the works of Professor Isaac Schapera, from 1923 to date—a total of seventy-five years. The bibliography was duly compiled, and appears as the last article in this issue.

It was originally intended that this issue of *Pula, Botswana Journal of African Studies* should just be an ordinary issue, albeit combining two numbers of the volume in order for the journal to catch up on its annual publishing schedule. However, when the issue was brought together from contributions submitted, it became apparent that the issue touched on a number of topics which had featured in the scholarship of Isaac Schapera.

The editorial board of *Pula* therefore decided to dedicate this issue of the journal to Professor Schapera, in honour of his remarkable seventy-five years of extremely important and influential scholarship.

Isaac Schapera's first published article appeared when he was eighteen in 1923. His first book was published in 1930 when he was twenty-five. It was a classic compendium of existing knowledge on the Khoesan-speaking peoples, and he had already begun research among the BaKgatla of Botswana.

This issue of the journal illustrates the wide coverage of Isaac Schapera's interests since 1930, with a focus on Botswana, his main geographical area of interest. Articles in this issue range from history and law, religious and mission studies, literature, to politics and administration, cultural studies, and bibliography.

The issue begins with a revaluation of an aspect of Tswana law and custom, by a historian. Contrary to experience elsewhere in colonial Africa, it argues that women's property rights were an innovation in indigenous law which was reversed under colonialism. Barry Morton suggests that Schapera's sources for *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* (1938) were sophisticated, Western-educated neo-traditionalists trying to put the clock back—to dish rival female accumulators of property.

Isaac Schapera first came to Botswana in 1929 to attend the official installation of Kgosi Isang as regent of the BaKgatla at Mochudi. Fred Morton's article puts Isang's regency within the context of complex internal politics, highlighting the role of Seingwaeng, queen-mother of the young chief Molefi for whom Isang acted as regent. We see a woman driven by her convictions and affiliations into religious separatism, and then into twenty years of exile.

One of Isaac Schapera's crowning achievements is his extraordinary detailed and careful editing of the previously unpublished letters and journals of the missionary David Livingstone, relating to his early years before he became a trans-continental explorer. In this issue, Fidelis Nkomazana makes a plea for Livingstone's ideas on combining "legitimate" commerce with

Christianity to be understood in the context of his early repugnance for slave-trading, rather than his being seen retrospectively as a harbinger of colonialism.

Isaac Schapera's interest in literature can be seen in publications on maxims and riddles to the novels of Jane Austen. Our article on literature is by Henryk Zins, previously author of an appreciation of Isaac Schapera. Zins puts the great—or is it awful—African novel *Heart of Darkness* of his fellow Pole, Joseph Conrad, in the context of the Congo Reform Movement in Britain, campaigning against the genocidal colonialism of King Leopold II of Belgium. The Congo showed what could go wrong when colonialism took on the mantles of the civilizing mission and "legitimate" commerce presaged by Livingstone.

Between about 1936 and 1951, Isaac Schapera was a valued advisor to the local tribal and central colonial administrations. His speciality being a number of reports on land tenure. Such work could be counted irrelevant in the 1960s and 1970s, when the main focus of government in Botswana was centralization and suppression of "tribalism". But decentralization and land tenure have become live issues again since the 1980s. In this issue Mogopodi Lekorwe takes up questions of the desirability and democratization of civic self-governance, rather than urban management by central government, for the capital city of Gaborone.

In the arcane way of academics, Isaac Schapera may be classified in the British school of "social anthropology" rather than the American school of "cultural anthropology", but that should not obscure the fact he has written so much about culture. In this issue, Isaac Mazonde takes up the thorny issue of how—rather than if—Botswana can have a national cultural policy. He argues that Botswana has got beyond its post-independence phase of centralization and suppression of diversity, and a multi-cultural approach is needed to make all the flowers bloom. Mazonde looks beyond ethnic or "tribal" diversity to the recognition of the special needs of the poor, women, and youth.

The last article in this issue is a bibliography of works by and on Isaac Schapera—the fourth bibliography to appear since 1969, and surely there will be a fifth in future. Because problems and phenomena studied by Isaac Schapera are re-emerging in modern form, this bibliography was commissioned to make researchers more aware of the whole corpus of Isaac Schapera's scholarship. As was remarked at a conference in 1980, it takes a whole village of scholars and administrators to study today what Schapera studied almost alone in the 1930s and 1940s.

Finally, in this issue, a book review takes us back to the topic of women's property and other rights, in the context of laws and customs in Botswana today.