

The politics of cultural conservatism in colonial Botswana: Queen Seingwaeng's Zionist campaign in the Bakgatla Reserve, 1937-1947

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Abstract

Studies of Christian Zionist churches in southern Africa have suggested that they were non-political. This paper puts the growth of Zionism among the BaKgatla in the context of local political struggles and the life of Queen Seingwaeng, mother of Chief Molefi. She was politically important from the 1910s until the 1960s, articulating the views of ordinary people otherwise considered politically helpless. She led popular opposition to the "progressive" authoritarianism of Regent Isang, promoting the restoration of her son Molefi to chieftainship through religious movements in the 1930s—and joining the Zion Christian Church in 1938. However, by 1947, Seingwaeng and the Zionists were seen as a political threat by Molefi and the ruling élite, who expelled them from BaKgatla territory. Molefi was reconciled with his mother in 1955, but she did not return home to Mochudi until 1967, nine years after his death.

In 1947, Queen Mother Seingwaeng was beaten in public by her son Molefi, *kgosi* (king) of the BaKgatla, for refusing to abandon the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). She was a large, strong woman, known for her quiet, respectful demeanour, and then sixty-four. Molefi ordered her and the other Zionists to be rounded up and put on an open lorry and driven out of Mochudi, the Kgatla capital.

Seingwaeng spent the next seventeen years in exile at Lentswe-le-Moriti, a farm 460 kilometres from Mochudi. She lived as a ZCC member until her death in 1967, which came nearly ten years after her son's life ended in a car crash. She closed her life in much the same fashion as she had spent it, as a warm but deeply religious person. Before Molefi had been born, Seingwaeng was raised in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and was married to Molefi's father at the age of twenty-two, in a grand ceremony at the new DRC church in Mochudi.

As a member of the women's *kopano* and regular attendant at Sunday services, she remained a steadfast DRC member into the 1930s, when she joined a breakaway church led by the Reverend Thomas Phiri. When his church faltered, Seingwaeng joined *Ipelegeng*, whose mission included consulting *dingaka*, persons adept in African religion. Soon, she and other *Ipelegeng* entered the ZCC of Joseph Lekganyane of Pietersburg and established colonial Botswana's first ZCC congregation, in Mochudi. Like the *Ipelegeng*, Seingwaeng's ZCC prayed for the restoration of Molefi as Kgatla *kgosi*, because they believed his troubles, and those of the BaKgatla, were the

result of the breakdown of the social order brought on by labour migration, economic decline, drought, and conflict between older and younger generations. The ZCC rejoiced at Molefi's reinstatement, and Seingwaeng's dealings with colonial officials played an important role in this regard, but his return answered none of their prayers about improving life in the Reserve. The alcoholic Molefi, who regarded the ZCC's all-night prayer vigils as a nuisance rather than a message, simply got rid of them.

Seingwaeng's life mirrors the women's public role in religious and political affairs in the Bakgatla Reserve that came into existence with the Christianizing of the royal family following the 1892 conversion of *kgosi* Linchwe (ruled 1875-1920), rose until the 1930s, and ebbed after World War Two. In the early 20th century, an increasing number of Christian wives, daughters and mothers of prominent men acquired literacy and property rights and joined women's religious organizations. Women made up a large majority in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the only mission church Linchwe permitted in the Reserve. Theirs constituted as well a political presence, because power within the Bakgatla Reserve was expressed through religious alliances.

Until World War One, Linchwe kept his royal followers in the DRC where he could control them, but as his health waned during the war, royal male leadership vying for succession came increasingly into conflict with the DRC, and new religious forces came into play. Attempts at creating secular followings failed. Isang, who ruled as regent from 1920 to 1929 tried build a Western-educated, modernist cadre but was forced repeatedly to appease both traditional BaKgatla religious believers and the DRC establishment, and alienated both. Molefi, installed in 1929, unseated in 1936, and reinstated in 1945, appealed most strongly to urbanized young hedonists, but at least until 1946 his political survival was made possible by his mother's generation and those of her moral stamp.

Throughout the period religious support of political groups was closely related to social ideology. And with regard to women such as Seingwaeng, their shifting religious affiliations came without compromising their social and cultural outlook. Seingwaeng's DRC in Linchwe's day, though largely royal in its membership, stood for a strict code of personal conduct, respect of persons of commoner status, and a rejection of urban modernism. Though able to control church affairs within the Reserve, the BaKgatla DRC members usually respected the Afrikaner missionaries in their midst, and "Ethiopianism" was taboo. Zionism, which entered the Reserve as a political movement to reinstate Molefi following his banishment in 1935, became increasingly concerned with social and economic hardships particularly among young women, who along with children made up the vast majority of Zionist members.

Seingwaeng, who helped bring the Zionists to the Bakgatla Reserve in 1937 in order to restore her son to the throne, was motivated as well by a long-standing concern about the failure of the Reserve establishment to attend to the suffering of ordinary people. As something of an outsider in DRC royal family since her marriage to Linchwe's eldest son, the church-going

Seingwaeng was religious in a way that made her accessible to and popular among non-Christian commoners. Events in the 1930s revealed she shared with them a deep disquiet about the growing social pathologies ignored by a leadership that alternated between authoritarianism and materialism. The core of this conservative sentiment, which yearned for the elimination of debauchery, abandonment of women and mothers, and disrespect of age, was present among DRC women in the 1920s, popularized itself in the 1930s as an anti-Isang, pro-Molefi protest element, and found its final expression in Zionism.

Seingwaeng's long religious career suggests that Zionism likely was rooted in older forms of religious activity, particularly among women.¹ It provides an alternative explanation of women's religious empowerment to Landau's study of the BaNgwato which, in part, accounts for the increased secular and religious influence of women in colonial Botswana and in other parts of southern Africa. Among the BaNgwato, women enhanced the king's secular authority and enlarged their own religious influence through "their alliance with the state."²

Seingwaeng's story shows that, in the first half of the twentieth century, women in at least this part of colonial Botswana required no such alliance. In fact, they gained a public voice as well as social leverage at just the time royal authority came into conflict with the DRC and defied Christian standards of conduct. They did so by supporting a range of religious organizations, including independent, or visionary, churches, forming secular and religious coalitions, and by responding to social, economic, and political forces affecting the rank and file in colonial Botswana and originating outside, mainly from South Africa. Seingwaeng's life sheds some light on women who tried to shape events and strengthen their gender position, and it illustrates the risks and costs involved.

Her life in the Bakgatla Reserve also calls into question, as does Landau's account of LMS Christians among BaNgwato, the notion that African-led religion and especially Zionism, is to be classified as political only insofar as its beliefs, implicit or explicit, relate to white control.³ Landau's account of religion in Gammangwato suggests that the old adage "all politics is local" could be rephrased as "all religion is local politics." Like the BaNgwato, the BaKgatla of Seingwaeng demonstrates what can be learned from the study of religious life in the context of local political forces and actors.⁴ As Bengt Sundkler's works reveal and Adrian Hastings gently reminds us, "Zionism had anything but an African origin," and was "far less a movement of 'schism' or 'independency' than is normally imagined."⁵ What has distinguished Zionism from other religious movements is its appeal to persons of diverse circumstances who can adapt its practice to standing beliefs in African traditional religion and mission Christianity. And what distinguishes Zionism in Seingwaeng's case is that it represents not a break in, but a continuum of, her religious beliefs in a social environment highly charged by cultural malaise and political struggle.

Seingwaeng's early years

As did other women of her time, Christian and non-, Seingwaeng assumed her position in society in accordance with her birth and marriage. She was the daughter of Lekanyane Seboe, a farmer and blacksmith of the Tlhakong subward of Mathubudukwane, a small village situated on the Madikwe (Marico) River. Her grandfather, Seboe, was born in Mabieskraal in the western Transvaal and established this ward when he settled among the BaKgatla during the reign of Linchwe. The Tlhako of Mathubudukwane were of the Tlou totem, and settled in Mathubudukwane in 1882 with Letsebe, uncle to Linchwe and leader of the BaKgatla of Molepolole, the BaKwena capital, where they formed a nucleus of the first converts to the London Missionary Society(LMS).

Seingwaeng, born in 1883, was betrothed at an early age to Linchwe's eldest son, Kgafela, as his *mohumagadi*. In all probability she was selected by Linchwe I, whose mother, Dikolo Ramontsana Tlou, was Tlhako by origin and an important influence in his life. Seingwaeng was given instruction in the catechism and taught to read and write at Mathubudukwane by Hendrick Molefi, DRC evangelist/teacher and the tutor of Linchwe's children.⁶ In 1901, she was conscripted into the female counterpart of Kgafela's age regiment, *Makuka*, and was assigned a senior position below the regimental leader, Mosadiathebe, Linchwe's daughter by his second (and, since Linchwe's conversion in 1892, divorced) wife. On 15 August, 1905, at twenty-two, Seingwaeng Seboe was married in Mochudi by Kgafela Linchwe Kgamanyane in the new DRC church constructed at the behest of Linchwe.⁷

At the time she entered the royal family, her father-in-law had been *kgosi* for thirty difficult and eventful years and was already preparing Kgafela for the succession.⁸ While Kgafela assisted and understudied his father, Seingwaeng began her role as the mother of her own husband's heirs.

Though a large, strong woman, Seingwaeng had difficulties bearing children that survived. Of her first six babies, four died: two at birth, one at one year, another at six. Linchwe suspected witchcraft. Fortunately, her second son and third child, born in 1909, grew to be healthy and robust. He was named Molefi ("God has made good the loss"). Before she could bear another healthy infant, however, Seingwaeng's life met with additional tragedy in 1914, when Kgafela died in a Mafikeng hospital of pleurisy. Months later, she bore Kgafela's last child and, in December 1915, had him baptised as Mmusi.⁹

Seingwaeng, Isang, and the politics of succession

Kgafela's death confronted Linchwe, already old and in declining health, with the strong possibility that his *bogosi* ("kingship") would pass, not to Molefi or Mmusi, but into the hands of his enemies. The position of *kgosi* in BaKgatla society was in the early colonial period still one of considerable power, wealth and importance for the occupant and for loyal relatives and commoners.

Though Linchwe's reign was a long and popular one, it was attended by internal feuds and several attempts to unseat him. Kgafela himself had been

the target of ambitious members of the royal family; and with his death a new contest for power began. One contender was Ramorotong, descendant of Linchwe's senior uncle, whose claims on the *bogosi* dated to the mid-nineteenth century. Linchwe feared even more the designs of Isang, his oldest surviving son. Strong-willed, exceptionally quick-minded and brash, Isang liked to dominate his surroundings and bend others to his will. In the years following Kgafela's death, Linchwe deliberately withheld from Isang all ritual knowledge of the *bogosi*, and the rainmaking paraphernalia. But such efforts seemed to increase rather than thwart his ambitions. Moreover, Linchwe's failing health forced him to rely increasingly on Isang's many administrative talents and to make him the logical choice to serve as regent until Kgafela's son could reach his majority.¹⁰

Before he stepped into the *bogosi* in 1920, Isang's threat to the survival of Molefi and Mmusi had become a major concern to Linchwe and Seingwaeng. As the deceased's oldest brother, Isang was obligated to care for Seingwaeng and her children and, with Seingwaeng, produce more children in the name of Kgafela. As if to confirm his growing reputation as the man most determined to seize the *bogosi*, Isang openly rejected Seingwaeng, privately told her that he would have no child by her who would call him *rangwane* ("uncle") and humiliated her sexually. Isang's younger brothers, over whom he had strong influence, also rejected Kgafela's widow.

By the time Isang was installed as regent in August 1920, Seingwaeng was already convinced that he wanted to kill Kgafela's sons. To protect them she kept Molefi and Mmusi away from Isang and taught these little boys to fear their uncle. For her own security and for the sake of Kgafela's line, she placed herself in the care of the quiet and tractable Bakgatla Pilane, Linchwe's most junior son and Isang's half-brother. By Bakgatla Pilane, whose compound stood next to Kgafela's, Seingwaeng bore two children. Both died at birth. And both deaths were attributed by Seingwaeng to Isang's witchcraft. In retaliation, so Isang alleged, she brought about the death of two of his wife's new-born infants by witchcraft.¹¹

Isang's rise to power also placed in jeopardy the form of government the BaKgatla had supported during Linchwe's reign. Under Linchwe I, leadership had been exercised for the most part through consensus of the majority of the commoners who accepted him as *kgosi*. The unity of the BaKgatla community had been necessary for meeting repeated threats to its dissolution, from the intermittent wars fought with the BaKwena in the 1870s and 1880s to the BaKgatla campaign against the Boers in the South African War of 1899-1902. Linchwe earned the loyalty of many commoner family heads by distributing cattle, and he controlled the disloyalty of members of the royal family by according them responsibility and influence under his direction. Linchwe risked some of his popularity in the early years of colonial rule, as he converted to Christianity and introduced Christian-based laws, But Linchwe retained support by tolerating traditional religious practices and adhering to standard chiefly rituals.

Isang did things differently. From the onset of his regency, he moved decisively to change the face of the Reserve and the lives of the people in it.

He believed in public, non-religious education, scientific agricultural and stock-husbandry methods, the latest machinery, record-keeping, cooperative marketing and efficient tax collecting.¹² To introduce these and other forms of Westernization, he believed in force. Age-regiments, which Linchwe used sparingly for public service, were in Isang's day, repeatedly summoned, men's and women's alike, to labour in the building of schools, dams and roads, and clearing land and herding stock. And the *kgotla*, or public meeting place, was used frequently as a court for the trial and punishment of those who violated Isang's orders or, worse, were suspected of opposing the *kgosi* himself. Fines were levied in cattle, and the cattle became the chiefs'.¹³

Isang's backers included most members of his *Machechele* age regiment, the growing number of progressive "new men" and most of the ranking members of the royal Pilane lineage.¹⁴ They supported Isang because they either believed as he did in the necessity of progressive change, or they derived special benefits from being in the vanguard. Joining Isang meant opportunities for acquiring incomes without leaving the Reserve to work in South Africa, and for the unscrupulous freedom to take advantage of the weak.

Isang also tried to cast himself as a secular leader, both to increase his following among the heavily non-DRC commoner element and to portray himself as a black man who could stand up to the white. Isang's political position among the BaKgatla was made precarious by the many drought years of his regency and the widespread perception that he lacked the knowledge [and the means] to make rain.¹⁵ In part his avid devotion to modern agriculture and the drilling of boreholes is to be explained as an attempt to silence his political opponents, who expressed their opposition by declaring their beliefs in traditional rainmaking practices. The same may be said by his undeclared war on the DRC.

From the point it became clear that Isang was to be regent, his relations with the church soured. In 1918 he and the African DRC minister tried to establish an Ethiopian church in the Reserve. Linchwe, though in serious decline, was active enough to squelch the attempt.¹⁶ The next year, Isang declared publicly "he had become a heathen again" by taking a second wife (taking a baptismal student into his house): he was censured by the church.¹⁷ Throughout his regency Isang had an on-again, off-again relationship with DRC missionaries. He was readmitted to the church in 1923, but censured again in 1925 for adultery.¹⁸ Isang got on well personally with DRC missionary Johan Reyneke, who joined the Mochudi mission in 1922, but Isang's political persona stood in marked contrast to the agreeable Reyneke.

As the decade of the 1920s bore on, life for many in the BaKgatla Reserve was lived under an encroaching, though indistinct, form of tyranny. Many families lost the services of their eldest sons, who were conscripted into attending the Mochudi National School, where they lost interest in agricultural and veterinary pursuits.¹⁹ Demands for cash to pay taxes and tribal levies increased, as did the number of young BaKgatla leaving their parents to work in the farms, shops, factories, mines and European homes in the western Transvaal and Witwatersrand. The boreholes sunk by Isang with

BaKgatla revenues opened up new grazing areas, but the benefits were limited to the large cattle owners.²⁰ They pumped water of no use to poor farmers, who made up the bulk of the population, and for whom the droughts of Isang's regency were proof enough of his inadequacies as a leader.

The government of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the nearest administrative officer of which was stationed 45 kilometres from Mochudi, seemed to take little note of such hardships. Their interest and enthusiasm was reserved for Isang's educational projects, his ideas on upgrading cattle strains, and the efficient way he ran his Reserve. They also liked the man. Isang was one of the most striking figures of his time: forceful, eloquent in written and spoken English, confident and boundlessly energetic. He wore three-piece suits and a full moustache, and looked people, white and black, in the eye.²¹ Not many officials knew more than he did about the business of farming; few were his equal in determination and organization and none had a finer memory. They were content to let Isang administer his Reserve without outside supervision or interference, to deal with him through correspondence and to support his schemes financially where possible.

As a result, Isang governed the BaKgatla more or less as he wished.²² He also exploited government ignorance of the Reserve to contravene Protectorate and South African laws for the benefit of himself and his friends. In 1924, when the Union closed the Johannesburg market to Protectorate cattle, Isang's group ran an active cattle smuggling business through the adjacent Transvaal boundary fence.²³ The apparent ease with which Isang had his way probably account for his growing callousness in dealing with his subjects. In the late 1920s, his cruelty in the *kgotla* became commonplace as did his indifference to its effects.

By 1929 Isang finally encountered so much internal resistance to his regency that he was compelled to step down in favor of Molefi. Expressions of discontent surfaced in all quarters of the Reserve. Widespread grumbling about the burdens of regimental labor and hardships of drought were directed at Isang, as were complaints regarding the shortage of cash to meet the demands of tax. Royal advisors, key headmen, and other public figures who had worked with Isang began to turn against him—some in order to move with the changing tide, others to seek revenge for injuries received when they had fallen from his favour.

In Mochudi, rumours circulated of threats against his life. Isang's personality was too forceful for any one person or mob to challenge him in the open. The lead was taken instead by older, traditionally based groupings that could speak with one voice. Old men, standing together in regiments—*Makoba*, *Majanko*, *Mantwane*—all veterans of wars fought with Linchwe at the head, asked for Molefi's installation, as did *Makuka*, Kgafela's men. *Machechele*, Isang's regiment, were faced down and stayed loyal, but the younger men initiated later into *Mafatshana*, *Madima* and *Machama*, joined the elders.²⁴ Headmen of the more recent, commoner wards fringing Mochudi and in the outlying villages were also lost to Isang. Many of the ranking elders in the royal family and the lay leadership of the DRC backed the regent, but their support lapsed when the 20-year old Molefi succumbed to

pressure and agreed to assume *bogosi*. Standing in Molefi's way risked dividing the family itself.

Without any significant support internally and therefore without reason to appeal to the Protectorate Government, Isang had no choice but to yield to public pressure and stand aside. Yet, even in defeat, Isang's moves could be as calculated as they were pragmatic. He judged that Molefi, who was young and inexperienced, would create a vacuum of leadership that Isang, as his nephew's advisor, would naturally fill. Isang thus headed off the crisis by announcing Molefi's imminent return and leading the preparations for his installation.

Molefi became chief, too, because of his mother's singular achievements during the 1920s. She had spent the years of Isang's regency as a target of abuse, not only from her brother-in-law, but many of her in-laws and other of Isang's supporters. Their attacks, however, along with Isang's refusal to support her, increased public sympathy for Seingwaeng.

Out of the public view, Seingwaeng had troubles coping with her two sons, whose security was a perpetual concern and who proved hard to control.²⁵ Kept away for long periods in safety at cattle posts, they grew up unfamiliar with a disciplined home. Molefi was exceptionally unruly and disobedient. Seingwaeng tried to raise her children strictly and took up the stick often against her growing chief-to-be, but Molefi often as not defied her. As he grew into adolescence, he spent less and less time under her authority. He attended school in South Africa, where he did poorly in the classroom, and on holidays found his pleasure keeping to himself at the cattlepost.²⁶ Molefi remained largely unknown to the BaKgatla, who rankled under Isang and thought of Kgafela's sons as their saviour.

To those who would replace Isang with Molefi, the house of Kgafela was represented by Seingwaeng. In her they saw the qualities that commended Molefi to *bogosi*. Seingwaeng was an open, gregarious and kind-hearted woman who liked people.²⁷ In her personal choices, she identified herself with the BaKgatla élite: she wore starched waistcoats like other committed DRC lady converts, attended church regularly, took part in church activities, was a member of the women's *kopano*, and ran a Christian household.²⁸ In keeping with her royal position, she played an important role in regimental affairs as the effective leader of the *Makuka* women. But in her conduct towards everyone, Seingwaeng displayed tolerance and respect. Her home was open to commoners and the poor, the young and the old. She placed no restrictions on their behaviour or conduct and showed no disgust at drunkenness or rowdiness. For her kindness, people from all walks rewarded her with support. Individuals gave her money, and the *Makuka* gave her cattle, all on the quiet and unbeknown to Isang.²⁹

When Molefi took his place as *kgosi*, therefore, he did so amidst expectations that his rule would not only end the cruelties of the Isang era but, in the tradition established by Linchwe and transmitted by Seingwaeng, restore to the *bogosi* a concern for the commoner and somehow cure the social ills of the BaKgatla brought on by labour migration. The praise singers at Molefi's installation expressed it this way:

Seek the strays, child of the Makuka, bring home the human strays...

Search for them by telegraph. Some are heard of in the Cape....

Most of them are in Johannesburg.

At Rustenburg women are increasing; collect the women also, let them come.

Some women have left their husbands, they've left the men who wooed them;

It's said they went to acquire cupborads, they went, but haven't brought them back...

Men remain stubbornly in white areas, deserting the wives whom they wooed;

Women and children worry the aged, and make their grandfathers cry,

They do not dress, they are destitute.

Young men remain stubbornly in white areas; it's said they marry flashy girls,

They marry today and divorce tomorrow....³⁰

Seingwaeng and Molefi's demise

To the bewilderment of the public, young Molefi's conduct as chief fitted no previously known pattern. Few BaKgatla were old enough to remember being ruled by a *kgosi* as young and inexperienced as Molefi, or with less sense of direction. Normally *dikgosi*, Isang included, depended on older men to assist them. But Molefi lacked faith in age. Absent from Mochudi for much of his youth, he was on familiar terms with few of his uncles and, because of the conflict that had centered on Isang and Seingwaeng, distrusted most of those. He had little choice but to include them among his advisors for handling routine duties at the *kgotla*. But on major issues requiring the *kgosi's* judgment, Molefi ignored his advisors and followed his own instincts. He bound himself to no tradition, took each case on an *ad hoc* basis, and adhered to his own rules.³¹

Molefi made no attempt to be like Isang. If anything, he strove to be the opposite. He eschewed ambition as *kgosi* and had no design to impose on his people. His conception of *bogosi* was largely restricted to judging occasional cases and doing what he liked with his personal life without deference to others. As a judge, Molefi gained a reputation for fairness, in spite of his indifference to legal traditions. As a person, he gained notoriety for his indifference to propriety, in spite of the traditional decorum of office. He rejected the standards of conduct associated with the DRC and the Christianized élite with which his Pilane family were so closely linked for the previous two generations.

Molefi drank, smoked, wenched and spent his time with young men with the same habits. He married in the church built by Linchwe and dominated by Isang and his uncles, but he attended services rarely, quarrelled with the missionaries, gave the mission no public support and befriended those BaKgatla who had been driven away from its membership. Molefi did not respect notions of improvement, and he neither acknowledged nor feared the men, white or black, who felt superior to him.³²

Molefi was the first BaKgatla *kgosi* not intimidated by the economic and social forces at work in the Reserve and throughout Southern Africa. In the chiefly duties that had been assumed to accommodate the office to colonial

rule, Molefi took the least, if any, interest. He was incurably unpunctual at meetings scheduled by others, uninterested in public projects, disruptive of church and school activities, unavailable to colonial officials, uncommunicative about his movements or plans, and sullen and impatient in conversations with officials he could not escape. He was also anti-white. When he travelled through the Boer farm areas of the western Transvaal to visit the BaKgatla near Rustenburg or in Johannesburg, Molefi kept a shotgun behind the seat.³³ Molefi was always ready for trouble and, as often as not, looking for a fight.

To the young men of the Reserve, Molefi became a hero. Like them he belonged to a world upside down. The old order, in which tradition, age, cattle, parentage, marriage and progeny determined one's status, was giving way to a new panorama of symbols. The modern men of the 1930s wanted cash and the things it could buy. They were consumers. And Molefi was the most conspicuous consumer of them all. He flaunted the latest fashions: wide-brimmed hats and "Mussolini" shirts, and spent liberally on a rapid sequence of motor cars, which through carelessness, carefree drinking or both, he crashed.

Molefi had no wish to reverse all the changes, mostly bad, emanating from the Witwatersrand or set out to destroy the colonial system. He accepted that Africans were powerless to do so. He took therefore the things that gave him pleasure and spent no time regretting. And what he wanted, so did the other men who grouped around him: brandy, sex, cinemas, township music and football. Molefi's cohorts came from all sectors of Kgatla society. He discriminated against no one. A pure democrat, he drank, played, fornicated and fought with partners without regard to status. His closest allies were his age regimental fellows of *Machama*, but Molefi's retinue was a hotchpotch of the most disparate elements in the Reserve. And not all were BaKgatla. Together they regarded *bogosi* and the internal politics of the Reserve largely as the preserve of youth. They had no respect for Isang and the elders who wished to continue in the old way of administering the Reserve in harmony with the colonial administration.³⁴

Within seven years the Bechuanaland Protectorate suspended Molefi as the BaKgatla *kgosi* and banished him from the Reserve. The wonder is that he lasted so long. Molefi came into repeated conflict with the Protectorate administration, occasionally by opposing their plans or hounding their officials but much more frequently over his indifference to chiefly administration in the Reserve. Molefi was persistently absent from Mochudi and, when present, often drunk or quarrelling with his advisors, particularly Isang. Among the middle-aged and younger male public, Molefi fanned the hatred they felt for the ex-regent, and in 1932 violence nearly broke out.³⁵ Quarrels between Molefi and Isang over inheritance of the Linchwe Estate, which remained unsettled, also kept tempers on edge and made it impossible for uncle and nephew to work together.

The Protectorate administration, which in the 1920s needed men like Isang for implementing major changes in "native administration", tried to resolve the Molefi-Isang conflict by setting up an inquiry over the Linchwe Estate.³⁶

Yet, in spite of an acceptable settlement, wrangling continued. Isang, who had become overbearing and overtly ambitious, even in the eyes of the colonial administration, was exiled from Mochudi in 1936. But Molefi's problem was not Isang. It was himself. He had no taste for the *bogosi* as it stood. Nothing continued to be sacred. With a streak of paranoia no doubt widened by his alcoholism, he tormented his wife, harassed the teachers of the school, brawled in public, and provoked feuds with the DRC. And, after he set the *Machama* loose on his suspected enemies in Mochudi and several days of mayhem and roughhousing ensued, the colonial government held an inquiry and, on 30 October 1936, suspended him from the *bogosi*.³⁷

Seven months later, on advice from the District Commissioner, Mochudi, the Resident Commissioner banned Molefi from the Reserve. Molefi's banishment once again placed Seingwaeng in between the BaKgatla and their rulers. As the chief's mother, tradition entitled her to more power than any other BaKgatla woman.³⁸ During her son's *bogosi*, Seingwaeng used her new influence in pressing for a resolution to the Linchwe Estate in favor of Molefi. Though the public was indifferent to how much Molefi might receive, they supported Seingwaeng because they feared what Isang might do if he inherited Linchwe's large fortune undivided. They also sympathized with her attempts to chasten Molefi's behaviour. Not all of Molefi's young supporters favoured drink and loose living. In those raucous times, Seingwaeng remained a staunch DRC member, became more strict about who was admitted to her home and reproached Molefi for the company he kept.³⁹ Perhaps some were reminded of Linchwe's mother, who in 1870s smashed her son's brandy bottles and thus began the more sober and distinguished part of his reign. But Molefi was no Linchwe, and with him such traditions carried no weight.

If anything, Molefi's conduct worsened with time. By 1936, before his suspension, he had begun to neglect his mother's support, and she had to fend for herself.⁴⁰ Yet Seingwaeng remained loyal to Molefi. Like others who feared the return of Isang, the government's favorite, she believed that Molefi's misbehaviour was the result of his inability to deal with the hydra-headed opposition of his uncle. Therefore, when the Bechuanaland Protectorate suspended and banished Molefi, installed Mmusi as acting *kgosi*, and appointed Isang as his chief advisor, Seingwaeng was convinced that the colonial government was behind an effort to restore Isang's influence to the Reserve through her younger, and pliable, son.

Zionism and the politics of religion

Within months of Molefi's suspension, Seingwaeng, Bakgatla Pilane, and a small group of young commoners were organizing for the restoration of Molefi. In January 1937 they constituted themselves as a DRC schism and named themselves the Bakgatla Church. Though led nominally by the long-disgruntled Rev. Thomas Phiri, the movers of the group were Molefi and Bakgatla. Apart from their religious appearance, their activities included raising funds for Molefi.⁴¹

The church collapsed with Molefi's arraignment before the chief's *kgotla* and his subsequent banishment from the Reserve. Almost immediately a new

formation emerged. They called themselves *Ipelegeng* ("help yourselves"), alluding to Molefi's words spoken in the *kgotla* on the day of his suspension. The leader of this group was Rralefala Motsisi, one-time member of a black taxi owners' union in Johannesburg and an old friend of Molefi. In Mochudi as many as one hundred men openly belonged to the group, and probably many others donated in support. Money was collected among BaKgatla working in the Witwatersrand, and most of the *Ipelegeng* members had worked there at one time or other. The membership was predominately young and originated from various Mochudi wards. Several members of the royal family belonged and, like Bakgatla Pilane, had been in Molefi's camp since the 1920s.

Ipelegeng was very much an anti-Isang group, but it represented something more than a refurbished pro-Molefi party for the purpose of engaging in internal squabbles. *Ipelegeng* was created to function outside the tribal structure and deal directly with the colonial administration. Motsisi and others wrote letters to the District Commissioner and members contributed to a fund for hiring a white Mafikeng lawyer to challenge the suspension order in court. *Ipelegeng* also contained elements that used African religious beliefs. Members prayed for Molefi's return and employed *dingaka* ("traditional doctors") from outside the Reserve to perform rituals for the same purpose.⁴²

Ipelegeng survived but a few months. Its ultra-legal methods left it vulnerable to attack by Mmusi's advisors and attracted the interest of the colonial government. In August 1937 Mmusi, in the presence of A.D. Forsyth Thompson, the acting Resident Commissioner, convicted members of *Ipelegeng* for forming a society without his permission and disrupting tribal affairs, fined them, and banned *Ipelegeng* from the Reserve. Seingwaeng was not publicly reprimanded, but Forsyth Thompson admonished her to "stop intriguing for [Molefi's] return" and threatened to remove the ex-chief further away from the Reserve if she persisted.⁴³

With the breakup of *Ipelegeng* the leadership of conservative protest devolved largely on Seingwaeng. After 1937 the majority involved in open political opposition to Mmusi and support for Molefi's return were women. By and large they carried forward the grievances of *Ipelegeng* and provided support for ex-*Ipelegeng* men to continue helping Molefi. In 1938 Rralefala Motsisi and Bogatsu Dintwe gained the blessing of the leader of the Zion Christian Church, Joseph Lekganyane, near Pietersburg in the northern Transvaal, to establish a chapter of the ZCC in Mochudi.

Seingwaeng was the first to be baptised in the new church.⁴⁴ Bakgatla also became a member. In a short time, Seingwaeng welcomed other, ex-DRC members into the new congregation, as well as previously non-Christian BaKgatla.⁴⁵ Like *Ipelegeng*, ZCC members tended to be young and concerned for the future of Molefi. But their new designation reflected a much fuller commitment to religious methods for achieving their ends. Encouraged by Lekganyane, they prayed in the belief that their call for Molefi's return would be answered.

ZCC members also evinced a stronger concern for the contamination of life by modern habits and beliefs. In conformity with Lekganyane's teachings,

they rejected the formalities of worship, the use of traditional or western medicines, drink or tobacco and being cared for by non-members. Prayer, possession and the use of water blessed by Lekganyane became their means of curing illness and barrenness or countering witchcraft. Male polygamy was accepted, as was the leadership of songs and services by men. Bogatswe Dintwe, an ex-*Ipelegeng* leader, served as local head of the church.⁴⁶

The colonial government, like Mmusi and his advisors, were convinced that the ZCC was merely *Ipelegeng* with a new name, but the ZCC avoided confrontation and made few overt political moves. They did send money to Molefi; and the better known commoner members, such as Motsisi, employed lawyers to protect themselves from harassment by Mmusi and his advisors. The ZCC group itself, however, kept to themselves and remained free from direct attack. No Protectorate law could be used against them, and Mmusi was not the type to confront his mother. He had trouble enough resisting her pressure on him to become a Zionist.⁴⁷

In 1938 Seingwaeng discovered she had additional power to exert against the colonial administration. They and Mmusi's advisors, still led by Isang, required the support of Seingwaeng as the senior woman of the BaKgatla in forming new age regiments. No regiments had been formed since 1928. Unless new regiments came into existence, the labour available for tribal administrative purposes was restricted to the few men and women in their twenties and thirties living in the Reserve and not working in South Africa. Isang convinced the colonial administration that the people were demanding tradition be observed and age regiments be formed. The Protectorate authorities concurred: colonial rule had its use for such traditions.

Seingwaeng said no. Unless Molefi instructed her to assist, she said she would do nothing.⁴⁸ For months preparations remained at a standstill. Only after the new Resident Commissioner, C.N. Arden Clarke, threatened to ban her from the Reserve and exclude her and Molefi from areas nearby, did Molefi instruct his mother to cooperate.⁴⁹ She agreed, but before lifting a hand to aid Isang, Seingwaeng removed to the lands and there waited until the District Commissioner and Isang came to ask her formally for her assistance.⁵⁰

When World War II started, the Protectorate needed Seingwaeng again. In 1941 while the government was attempting to recruit men into the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC) and mobilize women in "gifts and comforts" schemes, Seingwaeng rallied her women followers and opposed both—mainly on behalf of the men, who feared retaliation. Seingwaeng's group failed to delay recruitment, but the government feared that her obstruction of the gifts scheme would ultimately affect troop morale.⁵¹ Because they also acknowledged her as the leader of the Molefi group in the Reserve, the government hesitated suppressing her activities lest that too reduce BaKgatla commitment to the war effort. The government devised a plan, therefore, to gain her support, as well as that of Molefi, who was weary of exile, broke, and willing to deal with government for the chance to return.

Molefi was offered the promise of reinstatement if he would enlist and contribute to the recruitment drive in the BaKgatla Reserve. Mmusi would be

induced to join the Pioneer Corps as well, and the *bogosi* would be temporarily replaced by men acceptable to Molefi and Seingwaeng. The District Commissioner even proposed that the regency be filled by Seingwaeng herself. The government also saw its plan as a means of leading the *Ipelegeng* and Zionist factions "back into the tribe" and eliminating opposition to tribal administration in the long run.⁵²

Seingwaeng agreed to cooperate on government's terms. The women swung into line behind her in support of the gift scheme, Mmusi joined the AAPC, Molefi backed recruitment and journeyed to North Africa and the Middle East to be with the BaKgatla companies there. He was given the rank of sergeant-major, as high as any African from the Bechuanaland Protectorate could go and with the least effort. Back in the Reserve, a three-man regency was created, with Bakgatla Pilane as one of its members.

At the conclusion of the war, Resident Commissioner Aubry Denzil Forsyth Thompson overlooked reports from the military authorities that Molefi was drinking again, and pronounced him fit to return to the BaKgatla as *kgosi*. The government was counting on Seingwaeng to keep him under control. "Her influence [in Mochudi] is a strong one," the Acting District Commissioner confidently pronounced, "and she should have a beneficial effect on Molefi."⁵³ Molefi returned from war to a warm welcome. His banishment order was rescinded in August, and by September 1945 he was *kgosi* of the BaKgatla once more. As he addressed the *kgotla* assembly gathered for the occasion, Seingwaeng sat on the podium at his side.⁵⁴

Exile

Within two years, Molefi had driven his mother and her Zionist friends out of the Reserve. What led him to do this, as well as to beat her in private and public, no living contemporary claims to know. At the time, it was rumoured that Molefi was encouraged by his advisors to deal sternly with the Zionists in order to squelch disunity within the Reserve. He was forced to single out the leading ZCC members—Seingwaeng and Bakgatla Pilane—as testimony that he meant business.⁵⁵ Anti-Zionists in the Molefi circle were also convinced that the ZCC was a cloak of religion used by its polygamous male members to lay hands on much younger, susceptible women.⁵⁶

It is unlikely that Molefi fell under the sway of older men during his second *bogosi* any more than he had in the first. What is even less probable is that Molefi objected to the ZCC on moral grounds. Exile had, if anything, sharpened Molefi's own physical appetites, and he was no closer to the DRC establishment after the war than before. In 1947 he commandeered the church for a viewing of the raunchy films "Arabian Nights" and "Slave Market Beauties," followed by a live performance of the famous "Jazz Maniacs" from Rustenburg. The next morning the missionary surveying the scene found the floor littered with cigarette butts; the coloured glass windows had been smeared with cow dung "to discourage the curious".⁵⁷

In all probability, Molefi banished the Zionists because he thought their religion was humbug, and because they were disliked by the members of the royal family on whom he depended to run his *bogosi*. Molefi had learned two

lessons in exile: that he could not support himself without a chief's income, and that without older men experienced in running the tribal administration he could not run the Reserve. Thus, in order to support his heavy drinking habit, love of cars, trips to Johannesburg and a bevy of other personal requirements, Molefi became a rigid authoritarian in the tradition established by Isang—sustained by the elderly advisors he inherited from the acting *bogosi* of his weak, and even more compliant brother, Mmusi. Molefi made his mind up about the Zionists when he learned he had to cooperate with the colonial government—and that was long before the war was over.⁵⁸

Seingwaeng and the Zionists who were trucked out of Mochudi in the winter of 1947 numbered far fewer than had existed when Molefi's campaign against them began in 1945. Slightly more than a hundred or so were prepared to undergo the uncertainties that lay before them. They were dumped in a bushy area between Mochudi and Gaberones, to the latter of which they trekked—camping near the railway station. Two elderly members and two children died of malnutrition and exposure before spring and as the group searched for a place to live.

For six years they eked out an existence as underpaid employees on a white-owned farm in the Lobatse Block. In 1953, after Joseph's son Eduard Lekganyane purchased land for them in the northeastern corner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, they trekked three months before arriving at their farm, Lentswe-le-Moriti, in the Tuli Block, 460 kilometres from Mochudi. By then, they numbered 312 believers, of whom only 89 were 21 years or older, and of those 64 were women.⁵⁹

Seingwaeng had her chances to return to Mochudi, but she preferred to stay at Lentswe-le-Moriti. She built her house on the compound of Bakgatla Pilane, her long-time consort and the titular leader of the BaKgatla Zionists. Bogatswe Dintwe remained the minister of the community, as he had been in Mochudi. Rralefala Motsisi had died during the Second World War. In 1955, after the death of Bakgatla Pilane, Molefi travelled to Lentswe-le-Moriti to tell his mother and the other Zionists that they were welcome to return to Mochudi and enjoy freedom of religion.

Seingwaeng, once again empowered by a man's request, said no. That was the last time Seingwaeng saw her son, Molefi Kgafela Linchwe Kgamanyane Pilane. In 1958 she visited Mochudi briefly, to attend his funeral, and returned directly to her home. There she remained until 1967, when at the age of 84, another man came to ask for her cooperation. She did not agree willingly, but she agreed. Seingwaeng was taken back to Mochudi in a car driven by Linchwe II, Molefi's only son. Within a few months, she had died.

Conclusion

Scholars who have examined Zionism in southern Africa have preferred to emphasize its rituals of healing and ignore local political contexts in which Zionism operated. The political nature of Zionism has been considered only within the context of the colonial state. As Matthew Schoffeleers has noted, Zionist and other healing churches "lean heavily towards political acquiescence." Much has been made of the kind words given by ZCC high

priest Joseph Lekganyane to *apartheid* leader P.W. Botha on his visit to Pietersburg in 1984. Only African-led churches classified as separatist or "Ethiopian", have been conceded some kind of political agenda of their own, and that is seen to have lapsed by the Second World War or soon thereafter.⁶⁰

Schoffeleers readily acknowledges that healing among Zionists is meant to "correct" a wide range of social disorders, such as poverty, alcoholism, criminality, and the like. But Schoffeleers rejects the argument of Jean Comaroff and R. Buijtenhuijs that Zionist churches represent a counter-culture that is implicitly or symbolically engaged in a kind of political protest, against a white, Western, colonial, or bourgeois order.⁶¹

Seingwaeng's life suggests, to the contrary, that political considerations directly influenced her and other BaKgatla baptized into the ZCC. Rather than representing a religion of protest or resistance, however, Seingwaeng and other Zionists consolidated a local political alliance engaged in power struggles within the Reserve—at least until Molefi resumed *bogosi*.

Without gainsaying the spiritual appeal of Zionism as a means of addressing real social ills on the minds of the BaKgatla, the same might be said of earlier religious expressions in the Reserve. Rituals of healing apart, the social and political concerns of Zionism in the Reserve were pretty much the same as those expressed by early followers of the DRC, of the BaKgatla Church, and of *Ipelegeng*. Like Zionism, they sought to align the purposes of *bogosi* to those of its religious supporters, and give priority to their concerns about the future of BaKgatla society.

Although tension existed within the Reserve between Afrikaner DRC missionaries and certain leading royals, anti-Afrikaner sentiment *per se* was absent throughout the period in which Zionism surfaced. If anything, BaKgatla resented British colonial interference in local affairs more, and identified British power and influence in the region as a greater threat to the fabric of life than Afrikanerdom—at least until the consequences of the 1948 election in South Africa began to reverberate in the region.

The pentecostal teachings of the Scots-born American founder of Christian Zionism, Rev. John Alexander Dowie of Zion City, Illinois, had spread among some radical Afrikaners in the DRC church in tandem with its spread among African Zionists. The new faith based on medicine-free healing took fire at the beginning of the century in Johannesburg with Rev. Johannes Buchler, and was transplanted to Zululand by DRC minister Rev. P.L. LeRoux.⁶²

This brings to mind an earlier historical moment of parallel significance, demonstrating the predisposition of some DRC ministers to seek the new Jordan, a new source of "living water"—at the time when Afrikaners and Africans beyond the Cape were being eclipsed politically and culturally by waves of European immigration. Among early Boer immigrants on the highveld were the "Jerusalem Pilgrims" led by J.A. Enselin'. Unlike the majority of *Voortrekkers*, whose aim was better economic and political opportunities within reach of an Indian Ocean port, the "Jerusalemites" had the religious mission of seeking the surest route to the literal Jerusalem. They

assembled in the Marico district, along the Notwane and Limpopo rivers, across the waters from the BaKgatla. Then, in the 1870s, the "Jerusalemites" crossed BaKgatla territory, into Gammangwato and across the northern Kalahari—where many perished.⁶³

We have no evidence that the BaKgatla were in contact with the "Jerusalemites", but many Africans who had been slaves of the Boers (*inboekselinge*) then settled among the BaKgatla. During their slavery some had acquired skills such as literacy, masonry, blacksmithing, and thatching, that gave them an enhanced ticket for re-entry into African society.⁶⁴

It is tempting to speculate that Seingwaeng's father, Lekanyane Seboe, who was a blacksmith, had had *inboekselinge* origins.⁶⁵ Equally tantalizing is the notion that Seingwaeng herself was aware of the existence of the Zionist movement from its earliest years. In a 1917 photograph shown to the writer by Seingwaeng's grandson, she is wearing the costume of the earliest Zionist women—white blouse, full black skirt, and on her head a distinctive *doek* (head-scarf) consisting of an elaborately coiled black cloth. Her grandson, born in 1935 and raised by Seingwaeng, told the writer that Seingwaeng stood out among Mochudi women by continuing to wear such a *doek* throughout her life.⁶⁶

Afterthought

All said, the discussion above is perhaps better understood as a commentary on the personality of Seingwaeng and her times, rather than on the nature of Zionism in southern Africa. Though she may appear to have been less important than the men whose lives she intersected, perceived as a side-show act in the history of Kgatla chiefly succession, the fact remains that Seingwaeng was a significant figure in BaKgatla history over an extended period.

She surfaces repeatedly in oral and archival records, as a key participant at the centre of major events between the 1910s and the 1940s. Her significance is augmented by longevity, encompassing the entire colonial period. She was born two years before the Bechuanaland Protectorate was proclaimed in 1885, and died one year after Botswana gained its independence in 1966. From her youth to her old age, she was present and part of major political, social, and religious changes affecting the BaKgatla and other peoples of the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

What is clear is that Seingwaeng identified herself with new intellectual and religious concepts that confronted problems of social deterioration as well as colonial intrusion. She became progressively concerned more with the general malaise in society than with her personal position or status in the evolving order. The circumstances of her life and her personal motivation placed her in association with commoners and allowed her to sense and reflect concerns of the BaKgatla as a whole, in spite of her royal position. Seingwaeng's ability to assemble and articulate the opposition of the politically helpless to the powerful in the BaKgatla colonial world, was greater in the final analysis than her symbolic importance as *mohumagadi*, mother of Molefi.

In other words, her personal qualities transformed an acknowledged position of high social status into a previously undefined role of political leadership. She anticipated this role in the 1920s, and it came to the fore in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As a woman, Seingwaeng's major pre-occupation in her young and middle years were with the well-being of her children and their heritable rights. But, in her later years, her individual nature became more apparent, as did her interest in larger issues.

For all her assertiveness and unconventionality, Seingwaeng was an intensely conservative person who touched a chord among those whose major fear was being overwhelmed by change. She stands for something resilient in society, and shows the power of conviction to resist changes imposed by authoritarian means. She represents an assertive spirit among those expected to be politically passive by both the colonial authorities and the ruling order in the BaKgatla Reserve.

Notes & References

This paper was originally presented at the African Studies Association 41st Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 1, 1998.

- 1 Though women are acknowledged in the literature on Zionism in South Africa and Zimbabwe, particularly women prophets, much remains to be learned. Women's pre-Zionist history is not addressed at all in B. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); idem, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); M.L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches* (Mouton: The Hague, 1974); idem, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987); G.C. Oosthuizen, *The Birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa* (KwaDlangezwa: University of Zululand, 1987).
- 2 P.S. Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), 213.
- 3 M. Schoffeleers, "Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of the Zionist Churches in Southern Africa," *Africa* 60, 1(1991): 1-25; J. Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985), esp. 192; and B.A. Pauw, *Religion in a Tswana Chieftdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).
- 4 It is striking, for example, in his discussion of Zionist leadership in Mashonaland that Daneel refers to the elaborate royal entourage used by Johane Maranke to administer and inherit his church but attempts no explanation as to why only closely-related persons of Maranke's royal Sithole were so religiously suited. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, pp. 315f.
- 5 A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 500, 501.
- 6 Details of Seingwaeng's childhood are based on interviews with Selogwe Pilane, Kgosing ward, Mochudi, Amos Kgamanyane Pilane (d. 1984), and Sebele Motsisi, Lentswe-le-Moriti.
- 7 DRC Marriage Register (Thanks to Prof. I. Schapera for his notes from this source).
- 8 For an overview of Linchwe's reign, F. Morton, "Land, Cattle and Ethnicity: Creating Linchwe's BaKgatla," *South African Historical Journal*, 33(1995): 131-154. See also

- idem, "Chiefs and Ethnic Unity in Two Colonial Worlds: The Bakgatla-ba-ga-Kgafela of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Transvaal, 1872-1966," in A. I. Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans: Studies in Human Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984* (London: C. Hurst, 1984), 127-153; and idem, "Choice of Action: Linchwe I and the Kgatla Campaign in the South African War, 1899(1902," *Journal of African History*, 26 (1985): 169-191.
- 9 DRC Baptism register; Selogwe Pilane; W.L. Maree, *Uit Desternis geroep die Sendingwerk von die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk onder die Bakgatla von Wes-Transvaal en Betsjoenaland* (Johannesburg: N.G. Kerk Boekhandel, 1966), 185.
- 10 For a brief biography, F. Morton, "Isang Pilane, Motshwareledi of the Bakgatla Kgafela (1921(1929)," in F. Morton and J. Ramsay, ed. *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987), 23(29; also I. Schapera, *Rainmaking Rites of Tswana Tribes* (Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1971), 28-30.
- 11 "Domestic Relations between Isang and Molefi," n.a., n.d., s. 305/19, Botswana National Archives (hereafter BNA). This anonymous confidential report appears to have been the work of J.D.A. Germond, colonial magistrate's clerk and interpreter at Mochudi, and was submitted in 1934. Though bearing certain earmarks of Schapera's account (*Rainmaking Rites*, esp. 29f), Schapera claims not to have written it (Interview, July 1995). The account is supported in many parts by other archival sources and by BaKgatla informants who requested that they, too, remain anonymous.
- 12 Morton, "Isang;" S. Grant, "A Very Remarkable School", *Botswana Notes and Records*, 8(1976): 87(96; I. Schapera, *Tribal Innovators: Tswana Chiefs and Social Change, 1795-1940* (New York: Athlone Press, 1970), passim; R. Dikole, "Isang Pilane and His Modernizing Programme," (Gaborone: University of Botswana B.A. dissertation, 1976).
- 13 These facts surfaced in several inquiries in the 1930s. See esp. s.207/8, s. 402/8 (1934), s. 402/12 (1934-1935), and s. 402/15 (1934).
- 14 Interviews with Selogwe Pilane, Amos Kgamanyane Pilane, Rramariba Moremi, and Bakgatlabatsile Pilane of Mochudi, Dupleix Pilane (then of Gaborone), et al.
- 15 Schapera, *Rainmaking Rites*, 2-3, 20-1; "Domestic Relations."
- 16 Journal van Mochudi, entry 65 (1920), 15/4/7/1 (A), Dutch Reformed Church Archives, Cape Town (hereafter DRC)
- 17 Ibid, entry 46 (1919); H.R. Barrish to DRC, 25 Jul. 1919, 15/4/3/1(A), DRC.
- 18 Journal van Mochudi, entry 95 (1925), 15/4/7/1 (A) and Reyneke to DRC, n.d. [December 1925], 15/4/3/14 (A), DRC. Reyneke requested that the censure not be publicized.
- 19 Isang pressured individual families to send their eldest sons to school, thereby breaking the inclination of BaKgatla to send only their daughters, a pattern which dominated school attendance throughout the protectorate and the Bakgatla Reserve in the pre-1920 period. See E.B.Sargant's Report on Education in Bechuanaland Protectorate (1905), copy in University of Witwatersrand Library, Johannesburg. Ex-students interviewed in the 1980s recalled the preference of scholars at the National School for salaried employment as against stock-keeping. J.M. Selemogo, Moneng ward, and K.T. Mathlapeng, Tlokweng ward, Mochudi.

- 20 P. Peters, "The Privitisation of Communal Property: the Example of Borehole syndicates in the Kgatleng District," paper presented to the History Department Seminar, University of Botswana and Swaziland, Gaborone, April 1980.
- 21 Isang's qualities are attested in numerous archival and oral sources. Perhaps the best photograph of the regent, whom Schapera knew and respected, appears in his *Tribal Innovators*, frontispiece.
- 22 The Protectorate placed its first official, an agricultural officer, in the Reserve in 1931. Another four years passed until a district commissioner was posted to Mochudi.
- 23 Ratsegana Sebeke, Molapo Lands, Mochudi; also Germond diary, 27 Aug. 1934, DCM 1/14, BNA.
- 24 Reyneke to Daniel, 22 Dec. 1928, and Members of the Royal Family, Councilors and Headmen to Daniel, 5 Feb. 1929, s. 103/1 (1921-1929), BNA; Interviews with Amos Kgamananyane Pilane of Mochudi and Sebele Motsisi of Lentswe-le-Moriti.
- 25 Interviews with Selogwe Pilane of Mochud, Tidimane Pilane of Saulspoort, and Sebele Motsisi of Lentswe-le-Moriti.
- 26 Interview with Tidimane Pilane.
- 27 The word used by informants to describe her is "*bonala*"(friendly, firm). Two extremely old informants who knew Seingwaeng in the 1920s, spoke of her as a strong but pleasant person. Interviews with Motswere Pilane, *Kgosing* ward, Mochudi, and E.M. Reyneke, Groenkloof, Pretoria. Both women were in their nineties.
- 28 Interviews with Selogwe Pilane, Mochudi, Tidimane, Saulspoort, Sebele Motsisi, Lentswe-le-Moriti, and E.M. Reyneke, Pretoria. By 1933 her reputation in this resepect was known even to the Resident Commissioner based in Mafikeng. Rey Report, 11 Mar. 1933, s.305/12, BNA. The women's *kopano*, a.k.a. the Christian Women's Society, consisted of about one hundred of "the more important women" and was headed by Isang's wife and long-standing church member, Martha. Journal van Mochudi, entry 91 (1925), 15/4/7/1 (A), DRC. Interview with E.M. Reyneke.
- 29 Interview with Sebele Motsisi of Lentswe-le-Moriti and Motswere Pilane of Mochudi.
- 30 From the *leboko* of Molefi, I. Schapera, *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 116(118).
- 31 Among the files with abundant detail regarding Molefi's conflicts with his advisors, Isang, and the colonial administration, see especially s.305/7-19, s. 244/4, s.402/114, and s.333/3-10, BNA.
- 32 The folklore on Molefi is extremely rich and forms the basis of this and the subsequent paragraph, along with archival files reporting his feuds with the dutch Reformed Church, especially s.444/10, BNA. This section is also derived in part from F. Morton, "Popular Unrest in the Kgatleng," in Morton and Ramsay, *Birth of Botswana*, 82-91.
- 33 Interview with Seame Difalho, Tlokweg ward, Mochudi. Seame was Molefi's driver.
- 34 These attitudes come out most clearly in the extended testimony recorded at the 1936 Molefi Inquiry, s. 334/1/4, BNA.
- 35 See s. 305/11, BNA.
- 36 See s. 343/19-27, BNA.
- 37 High Commissioner to Molefi, 30 Oct. 1936, s. 334/1/2, BNA.
- 38 McClaren to Forsyth Thompson, 19 Dec. 1938, DCM 3/12, BNA. I. Schapera, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 74.

- 39 Germond diary, s.v. 28 Aug. 1934, DCM 1/14, BNA.
- 40 Parker to Rey, 28 Sep. 1936, s. 334/1/1, BNA.
- 41 Lawrenson investigation, 3(16 Jul. 1937, s. 335/3, BNA; *Kgotla* minutes, 2 Sep. 1937, DCM 3/8, BNA; Lawrenson report, 17 Dec. 1940, s. 291/18/1, BNA. Testimony of Bakgatla Pilane in Bakgatla Tribal Authority, 5th to the 7th August 1948 vs. Bakgatla Pilane. DCM 6/7, BNA. See also P. P. I. Monnatsie, "The Growth and the Spread of Religious Sects in Kgatlang: The Case of the Zion Christian Church, 1933-1977," (Gaborone: University of Botswana and Swaziland B.A. Dissertation, 1980).
- 42 Discussion of *Ipelegeng* is based on the following archival sources: DCM 2/9, DCM 3/8, s. 334/3, s. 335/1-3, all BNA, and the following oral sources: Interviews in Mochudi with Selogwe Pilane, Stephina Pilane, Seame Difatlho, Motlapele Molefi, and Ntonono Jack Ramotswetla, among others.
- 43 Forsyth Thompson notes of a meeting with Seingwaeng, 23 Aug. 1937, DCM 3/8, BNA.
- 44 McClaren to Forsyth Thompson, 30 Jan. 1939, DCM 3/12 and Sinclair to Forsyth Thompson, report on Motsisi Ralefala, 17 Dec. 1940, p. 6, s.291/18/1, BNA. For the little known of Leganyane, see Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, 297-298 and passim.
- 45 Minutes of the DRC Kerkraad, 27 Aug. 1938, DCM 2/9, BNA.
- 46 Material on the ZCC in the Bakgatla Reserve has been derived primarily from the following archival sources: DCM 6/7, DCM 3/12, DCM 2/9, s.435/1, and s.219/18/1, BNA; and from interviews with Gladys Boitumelo Bakwena, Amos Kgamanyane Pilane, Seame Difatlho, and Gabriel Palai of Mochudi, as well as Sebele Motsisi and Baekgedi Nkele of Lentswe-le-Moriti.
- 47 Maree, *Uit Desternis Geroep*.
- 48 McClaren to Forsyth Thompson, 19 Dec. 1938, 27 Jan. 1939, and 21 Apr. 1939, DCM 3/12, BNA.
- 49 Sinclair notes of a meeting with Molefi, Seingwaeng et al, 12 May 1939, DCM 3/12, BNA.
- 50 Sinclair to Forsyth Thompson, 19 May 1939, DCM 3/12, BNA.
- 51 Sullivan to Forsyth Thompson, 28 Jul. 1941, s.291/18/1, BNA.
- 52 Notes by Forsyth Thompson on letter cited in Note 50 above, and Sullivan to Forsyth Thompson, 13 Aug. 1941, s.291/18/1, BNA.
- 53 Sinclair to Forsyth Thompson, 10 Jul. 1945, s.336/1/1, BNA.
- 54 Sinclair to Forsyth Thompson, 10 Sep. 1945, s.291/18/1, BNA.
- 55 S. Grant, "Church and Chief in the Colonial Era", *Botswana Notes and Records*, 3 (1971): 59-63.
- 56 Interviews with Amos Kgamanyane Pilane and Seame Difatlho, of Mochudi.
- 57 Murray to Sillery, 23 Aug. 1947, s.336/1/1, BNA.
- 58 As early as 1943 Moefli expressed to the DRC missionary his intentions of rooting out the ZCC on his return from war, and in his first *kgotla* meeting after being reinstated as chief, Molefi declared that the ZCC would be disbanded forthwith. Sinclair to Forsyth Thompson, 10 Sep. 1945, s.291/18/1, BNA. Also Maree, *Uit Desternis Geroep*.

- 59 S. 435/2/1 and s. 497/5/1(4, BNA; interview with Sebele Motsisi and Baekgedi Nkele of Lentswe-le-Moriti; Wray to Dept. High Com, 27 Aug. 1955 and Winstanley Report, n.d. [1956], s.497/5/4, BNA.
- 60 Schoffeleers, "Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence," 1, 6-7. Schoffeleers' opinion applies to the earliest publications such as Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*; idem, *Zulu Zion*; and Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*; to the most recent: cf. C. Steyn "Spiritual Healing: A Comparison Between New Age Groups and African Initiated Churches in South Africa," UNISA website <www.unisa.ac.za/dept/press/rt/32/steyn.html>
- 61 Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*; R. Buijtenhuijs, "Messianisme et Nationalisme en Afrique Noire: Une Remise en Question," *African Perspectives*, 2 (1976): 25-44.
- 62 Zulu Zion, 14ff; G.C. Oosthuizen, *The Birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa* (KwaDlangweza: University of Zululand, 1987).
- 63 J.A. Templin, *Idoecology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundation of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1652-1910* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), especially 135-137; J. Ramsay, B. Morton, and F. Morton *Historical Dictionary of Botswana*. 3rd ed.(Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 59-60.
- 64 F. Morton, "Cattleholders, Evangelists and Socioeconomic Transformation among the BaKgatla of Rustenburg District, 1863 (1898," *South African Historical Journal*, 38 (1998), forthcoming. See also idem, "Slavery in South Africa," in E. A. Eldredge and F. Morton, ed. *Slavery in South Africa: Captive Labor on the Dutch Frontier*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 251-270; idem "Captive Labor in the Western Transvaal after the Sand River convention," in *ibid.*, 167-86; P. Delius and S. Trapido, "Inboekselings and Oorlams: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class," in B. Bozzoli, ed., *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Populist Response* (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1983), 53-81.
- 65 Attempts in 1995 to locate and interview a knowledgeable Lekanyane descendant in Mathubudukwane and surrounding villages were unsuccessful. Ranking male members of the Kgatla royal family married women of ex-slave origin, especially those who were literate and raised in the church. Morton, "Cattleholders, Evangelists and Socioeconomic Transformation."
- 66 Interview with Linchwe II, Cresta Cumberland Hotel, Lobatse, July 1997.