

# The decline in the role of chieftainship in elections

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## Abstract

*This article focuses on three districts of Botswana, namely Central District, Ngwaketse District and Kgatleng District. It argues that as a result of the role played by the institution of chieftainship in elections, certain voting patterns that are discussed in the conceptual framework can be associated with it. The extent to which chieftainship has influenced electoral outcomes varies from one area to another.*

## Introduction

Chieftainship was the cornerstone of Botswana's political life, both before and during the colonial era. After independence in 1966 the institution underwent drastic reforms in terms of role, influence and respect. Despite the introduction of a series of legislation by the post-colonial government that has curtailed and eroded the power of chiefs, it still plays a crucial role in the lives of ordinary people in rural areas. Sekgoma (1993:413) argues that the reform process that has affected chieftainship so far is irreversible. The government is not under pressure to repeal parts of the Acts that have eroded the chiefs' powers. Therefore, neither the executive or legislative power will ever be given back to the chiefs. The chiefs will have to be content with their positions in the powerless House of Chiefs (Sekgoma, 1993:413).

Despite the above assertions, this article attempts to show that chieftainship has, in the post-colonial period, played a crucial role in influencing election results. The role of chieftainship, though it continues to decline, has resulted in particular voting behaviours in some areas of Botswana. The discussion is focused on three districts of the country, namely the Central District (capital, Serowe), Kgatleng District (capital, Mochudi) and Ngwaketse District (capital, Kanye). These areas have been chosen for the following reasons. First, during both the colonial period and in the post-colonial constitution they were three of the eight main or "principal" tribes in the country and had clear centralization of political power. The significance of this was that they were able to bring other ethnic groups within their areas of domination. The chiefs of these areas are ex-officio members of the House of Chiefs. Second, chiefs of these districts in the colonial era, Tshekedi Khama of Bangwato, Molefi Kgafela of Bakgatla and Bathoen Gaseitsiwe II of Bangwaketse had relatively high educational backgrounds and were vocal and outspoken in challenging some of the colonial government's actions. Even their successors, namely Seretse Khama (though he never formally ascended the throne); Linchwe Kgafela II and Seepapitso IV respectively, have been influential in Botswana's political process.

Voting trends in the three areas have been most revealing. First, since the first elections in 1965, the Central District has voted overwhelmingly for the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and this trend appears set to continue in the future. Second, the Kgatleng district has changed hands between three political parties, namely the Botswana People's Party (BPP), Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and Botswana National Front (BNF). Third, the Ngwaketse district has always been a battleground for two political parties, the BDP and BNF and the latter has gained the upper hand in most instances.

## Voting Behaviour: A Conceptual Framework

Voting behaviour is normally shaped by short-term and long-term influences. Short-term influences are specific to a particular election and do not allow conclusions to be drawn

about voting patterns in general. The main short-term influence is the state of the economy. This reflects that there is usually a link between a government's popularity and economic variables such as unemployment, inflation and disposable income. Here, a person's feelings about material circumstances are particularly crucial. Another short-term influence on voting is the personality or public standing of a particular candidate in a given constituency. This is particularly important because media exposure or coverage portrays candidates as the brand image of their parties on election issues (Heywood, 1997: 224).

Another factor is the style and effectiveness of the parties' electoral campaigning. Here, organisational capacity, finance and length of campaigning time play a very important role. A final short-term influence, the mass media, may be of long-term significance if there is biased or partisan coverage. In other words, those parties that are most successful in using the media to their advantage may mobilise more votes (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998: 596). This is highly effective in societies where the level of literacy is high. However, the pattern of media coverage may change from election to election. For example, the Conservative Party victory in Britain in 1992 was largely due to the traditionally pro-Tory *Sun*. Five years later, in the campaign of the 1997 election, the *Sun* switched allegiance and supported Labour leader, Tony Blair (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998: 596). All the above considerations, however, operate within a context of psychological, sociological, economic and ideological influences upon voting (Heywood, 1997:224). These are best examined in relation to rival models of voting.

There are four main theories of voting behaviour, namely the party-identification model, the sociological model, the rational-choice model and dominant-ideology model. The party identification model is the earliest theory of voting behaviour. It is based on the sense of psychological attachment that people have to parties. Voters are seen as people who identify with a party in the sense of being long-term supporters who regard the party as "their" party. Voting is, therefore, a manifestation of partisanship, not a product of calculation, influenced by factors such as policies, personalities, campaigning and media coverage (Heywood, 1997:224). This model places heavy stress on the early political socialisation, seeing the family as the principal means through which political loyalties are forged. For example, children often follow their parents' voting behaviour. Families, geographical locations and employment could also influence how the young vote (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998:593).

In this model, attitudes towards policies and leaders, as well as perceptions about group and personal interests, tend to be developed on the basis of party identification. Events are thus interpreted to fit with pre-existing loyalties and attachments. This partisan alignment tends to create stability and continuity, especially in terms of habitual patterns of voting behaviour, often sustained over a very long period of time. Deviations from this "normal" voting pattern in most cases reflect the impact of short-term factors such as a "protest vote" against their party. One of the weaknesses of this model is when voter apathy and partisan alignment creeps in. The latter refers to a decline in the extent to which people align themselves with a party by identifying with it. Party loyalty weakens and electoral behaviour is likely to become more volatile, leading, in some instances, to greater uncertainty or the rise of new parties or decline of old ones. What is seen as the normal support for parties falls, and a growing number of electors become floating or swing voters (Heywood, 1997:225).

The second model, which is the sociological one, links voting behaviour to group membership, suggesting that electors tend to adopt a voting pattern that reflects the economic and social position of the group to which they belong. Rather than developing a psychological attachment to a party on the basis of family influence, this model highlights the importance of a social alignment, reflecting the various divisions or tensions within society (Heywood, 1997:225). For instance, the upper classes, middle classes and business community tend to vote for a party that advocates free-market policies and private property ownership, whereas the penurious and workers or trade union members vote for parties

with interventionist policies. In other words, in this model, significant divisions are those of class, gender, ethnicity and region (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998:596).

However, like all other models, it has its limitations, in the sense that by focusing on social groups, it ignores the individual and the role of personal self-interest. Moreover, there is growing evidence that the link between sociological factors and party support has weakened in modern societies. For example, the "New" Labour Party in Britain won the 1997 elections after being backed by big business and is now seen to be pursuing business-friendly policies such that its traditional support from trade unions has weakened.

The third model which is the rational-choice of voting shifts attention onto the individual and away from socialisation and the behaviour of social groups. In this view, voting is seen as a rational act, in the sense that individual voters are believed to decide their party preference on the basis of personal self-interest. Rather than being habitual and a manifestation of broader attachments and allegiances, voting is seen as essentially instrumental, that is, as a means to an end. This view stresses the importance of what is "issue voting", and suggests that parties can significantly influence their electoral performance by revising and reshaping their policies. For instance, the Labour Party in Britain won the May 1997 general election after eighteen years in opposition. This victory was achieved after the party shed some of its socialist policies such as nationalisation. This model, like others, has been challenged on the following ground: "Does the voter pick the party because of its policies or choose the policy positions because they are favoured by the party he or she supports?" (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998:595). The other weakness of the rational-choice theory is that it abstracts the individual voter from his or her social and cultural context (Heywood, 1997:226).

The last theory is the dominant-ideology model. This radical theory of voting tends to highlight the degree to which individual choices are shaped by a process of ideological manipulation and control (Heywood, 1997:226). In some respects, this theory resembles the sociological model in that voting is seen to reflect a person's position in a social hierarchy. However, where this theory differs from the sociological model is the manner in which education have made individuals and groups to interpret their positions depends. This education could be through the government, and, above all, by the mass media. This suggests that the media are able to distort the flow of political communications. Both setting the agenda for debate and structuring preferences and sympathies can do this. The consequence of this is that if voters' attitudes conform to the tenets of a dominant ideology, parties will not be able to afford to develop policies that fall outside that ideology (Heywood, 1997:226). In this way, far from challenging the existing distribution of power and resources in society, the electoral process tends to uphold it. The weakness of the dominant ideology model is that by overstating the process of social conditioning, it takes individual calculation and personal autonomy out of the picture altogether (Heywood, 1997:226).

Though all the four theories of voting behaviour are mentioned in this article, only two models are applicable to my case studies. As will be shown in the course of discussion, as a result of the influence of chieftainship, the voting behaviour in the Central District and Ngwaketse District resemble the party-identification model. Whereas in the case of Kgatleng District, though not clear-cut, the rational-choice may be applicable depending on the indirect role of the chief and his relationship with the different parties contesting the elections.

### **Central District: Party-Identification Model**

The Central District is the largest district, comprising fourteen parliamentary constituencies. Though different ethnic groups such as Bangwato, Bakalanga, Babirwa and Batswaping, as well as other smaller groups occupy it, the post-independence constitution refers to them all as Bangwato.

As the winds of change swept across Africa in the 1960s, Botswana was not left behind in the formation of modern political parties. The Botswana People's Party (BPP) was formed in 1960 as one of the first major political parties in the country. It called for immediate independence and was critical of despotic chiefs and members of royal families who represented traditions of inequality and was against any form of royal privilege. The party is said to have stated very clearly that chiefs could not be its members (Maundeni 1998:125). However, although the three founders of the BPP, Kgalemag Motsete (President), Philip Matante (Vice President) and Motsamai Mpho (Secretary-General) were all well educated, they lacked the traditional status required to make a broad-based appeal to the people of Botswana. At political rallies, old men constantly taunted them with questions: "How can you rule us? Who is your father?" (Vengroff, 1972:204).

Seretse Khama, heir to the chieftaincy of the powerful Bangwato ethnic group, formed the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in 1962 and this gave it a clear advantage over other parties. Seretse Khama had the traditional charisma that the BPP leaders lacked. Immediately after its formation, the whole of the Central District rallied behind the party because of Seretse and some of its early recruits, such as Goareng Mosinyi and Lenyeletse Seretse, were of royal descent. In the south, Seretse was able to bring on board Quett Masire one of Chief Bathoen's tribesmen. Other recruits from the south were R.N. Kalaben of Kanye and E. Masisi from Moshupa (Mbuya and Morton, 1987:156). The first elections were held on 1 March 1965 and were contested by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the Botswana People's Party (BPP) and the Botswana Independence Party (BIP). Seretse Khama's BDP scored an overwhelming electoral victory, capturing twenty-eight of the thirty-one parliamentary seats. Seretse himself made a remarkable personal showing in his own Serowe North constituency, where he received 5,909 votes in contrast to 53 for the BIP candidate and 39 for the BPP candidate (Stevens, 1967:144). Seretse's charisma and royal attraction have been largely responsible for the BDP's huge victories in the Central District. In the subsequent elections of 1969, 1974 and 1979 all fourteen constituencies in the Central District remained solidly behind the BDP, with other political parties failing to make an impact. None of the constituencies in the area can be said to be marginal. Seretse Khama installed his eldest son, Ian Khama Seretse Khama as kgosi or chief of Bangwato in May 1979. Even after Seretse's death in July 1980, the Central District voted overwhelmingly for the BDP in 1984, 1989 and 1994.

Gillett (1973: 183) states that:

In Gammangwato, the traditional authorities support "their" government led by their "chief" Seretse Khama, the BDP gains overwhelming majorities. But elsewhere, as in the Ngwaketse in 1969, if the chief has his own reasons for supporting an opposition party – in this case the BNF, the result is an almost equally emphatic defeat for the BDP.

Referring to family ties in party-identification model, the BDP had to call in Ian Khama Seretse Khama to reinvigorate the popularity of the party as its support was in the wane taking into account the results of the 1994 elections, especially in the Central District. Before the 16 October 1999 general election, BDP parliamentary candidates especially in constituencies whose support was faltering invited Khama to help them campaign for the elections. The strategy seems to have paid dividends as the party managed to win some of those areas, such as Selibe-Phikwe and Ngwaketse West. One local newspaper had this to say about the BDP in the 1999 general election:

The Seretse Khama legacy is still here and the presence of Ian Khama, at least in the minds of many people, will perpetuate that legacy especially in the Central District. (*Mmegi*, Vol:16, 22-28 October 1999:8)

Like his father, Lieutenant-General Ian Khama is believed to be very popular among his Bangwato people and he has individual appeal. These are the traits that account for the BDP's huge majorities in the Central District.

Table 1 below shows the results of the October 1999 election in the Central District in which the BDP scored convincing victories in twelve of the fourteen constituencies in the district, having comfortable majorities of over two thousand in each of them. The total number of people who cast their votes throughout the country on 16 October 1999 was 336, 982. The BDP's national vote was 192,598, which is 57 percent of the national vote. In the Central District, 74, 546 people, amounting to 38.7 percent of the national vote voted for the BDP. In terms of the national vote, the Central District accounted for 22.1 percent of the electorate who voted for the BDP. "Only in Nkange and Selibe-Phikwe did others make a fairly good showing, but they still lost."

**Table 1: Party Performance in the Central District During the 1999 Election**

	BDP	BNF	BCP	BAM
1. Bobirwa	4,913	1,244		
2. Boteti	6,053	2,354	797	
3. Mahalapye	6,024	2,736	706	
4. Mmadinare	4,398	576		
5. *Nkange	3,925	877	1,523	1,061
6. Palapye	5,164	796	1,675	171
7. Sebina/Gweta	4,249	401	551	964
8. *Selibe/Phikwe	6,713	2,775	4,295	134
9. Shoshong	4,589	1,703	260	
10. Serowe/North	6,392	329	225	
11. Serowe/South	6,538	966	248	
12. Tonota	4,724	1,035	561	434
13. Tswapong/North	4,973	531	330	
14. Tswapong/South	5,891	1,867	468	

Source: G. Seeletso, Report to the Vice President and Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration on the General Elections 1999.

### **Kgatleng District: Rational-Choice Model?**

Chief Linchwe II ascended the throne of Bakgatla in 1963. Although he has tried to stay above partisan politics, he has nevertheless influenced election results. In 1963, when the BPP held its annual conference in Mochudi, Linchwe delivered the welcoming address (Mbuya and Morton, 1987:159). This was seen as supporting the party and by this time the role of chiefs in partisan politics was not yet defined in law. Indications are that while he remained neutral in 1965, he apparently gave tacit support to the successful BPP candidate T.W. Motlhagodi (Picard, 1987:155). T.W. Motlhagodi, won the election with 2,163 votes in comparison to a BDP vote of 1,278 for its candidate, R.D. Molefe, and a distant third vote of 407 for the BIP's S. Tladi (Parson, 1990:106). Linchwe's support for the BPP was shown through his elder sister Tshire who was backed by a movement mainly comprised of commoners called Mphetsebe ('lend me your ear') led by M. Moremi and D. Seame. Mphetsebe's members were critical of Mmusi Pilane's regency and they wanted Tshire to take over. At political rallies, Tshire claimed that the BPP stood for Linchwe and chieftainship (Parson, 1990:106). Linchwe's silence on these views implied in other quarters that she had his support. After the elections, Linchwe became aligned with the BPP members on the Kgatleng District Council (Parson, 1990:106). He criticized the reforms that the government was bringing into local government administration.

The BPP's success in the 1965 and 1969 elections in the Kgatleng district were reminders to the BDP leadership that its hold on power depended on, or at least partly depended on, the passive support of the chiefs (Gillet, 1973:183). Chief Linchwe was young and highly educated and had the ability to mobilize his people for or against the government. Moreover, he was also likely to have some appeal even outside his area.

The coming into power of a new government in 1965 resulted in whatever power that still remained in the hands of chiefs, being further curtailed and other powers being taken away altogether. This led to anger and frustration among chiefs such as Linchwe II and Bathoen II. Linchwe had now cut ties with the BPP, because he saw the party as too weak to offer any meaningful challenge to the BDP on its own. After the 1965 elections, Linchwe became involved in discussions with a number of political opposition leaders (including Kenneth Koma, Daniel Kwele and heir to the Bangwaketse throne, Seepapitso IV. The talks were aimed at joining all opposition parties into a united front strong enough to challenge the BDP in 1969 (Picard, 1987:156). Also, the Central Intelligence Committee reported in 1965, that "prominent personalities and politicians" met under Linchwe's chairmanship (BNA, Office of the President I/6/2986, 23/2, Central Intelligence Committee Report for May 1965).

Subsequent to this meeting, it was reported that another meeting took place at the Mochudi Community Centre in August 1965. It is reported that thirty-four people, including K. Koma, Seepapitso IV, T. Motlhogodi, Ray Molomo, Daniel Kwele, and representatives, but not national leaders, of the BIP and BPP attended the meeting. Chief Linchwe was reported to have declared that he was not a member of any political party, but he did chair the meeting. Koma is said to have presented a document on "National Democratic Culture" and to have answered questions. In the meeting, Linchwe wanted to find out what Koma's attitude was towards chiefs. Koma reportedly said they would eventually disappear after offering certain concessions to the chiefs (BNA, Office of the President I/8/3035, Special Branch to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs). The first meeting of the BNF was held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1965 in Mochudi and was opened by Linchwe who thereafter withdrew on the ground that his position as a member of the House of Chiefs barred him from active participation in partisan politics (Parson, 1990: 110).

The Seretse Khama government felt threatened by two chiefs in the south, namely Linchwe II of Bakgatla and Bathoen II of Bangwaketse. Khama felt that Linchwe should be tackled first as he was still young and could be won over to national loyalty with a prestigious position. Hence, Linchwe was offered the position of ambassador to the United States, which was being separated from the ambassadorialship to the United Nations in New York (Parsons et al 1995: 278). To the surprise of many, Linchwe gladly accepted this move in December 1968. It was expected that the BDP would make political mileage out of this appointment as it removed Linchwe from the political scene, but after that, BNF growth in Kgatleng was kept in check.

Chief Linchwe, as earlier stated, had given his support informally to the BPP, which won the Kgatleng constituency seat in 1965 and 1969, so after his return from Washington, in 1972, he resumed the chieftainship and participated in government development projects in his area. By 1974, J.A. Wiseman states that:

The chief (Linchwe) realised that he was fighting a losing battle with the Government-BDP machine and decided to eschew confrontation as a means of getting what he wanted. Linchwe thus withdrew his support from the BPP and placed it behind the party in power, with the result that the BDP won all but one of the council seats in the 1974 elections in Kgatleng District and took the Mochudi seat in the National Assembly from the BPP (Wiseman 1978:494).

This new relationship was further symbolized by a photograph in the *Botswana Daily News* (25 November 1977) in which Chief Linchwe and President Khama walked hand in hand in Mochudi. The BPP proportion of votes in Mochudi in 1974 fell to 21.8 per cent and the BDP won the election with 60.2 per cent of the votes (Parson, 1990:118).

Despite his earlier involvement in the formation of the BNF, by the mid-1970s Linchwe seemed to be far from embracing the party. He quarrelled with one of its leaders, Rrapula Sello of Morwa village in Kgatleng. Sello is said to have attempted to speak in the Mochudi Kgotla and the chief is said to have yelled at him to sit down and that the kgotla

was not a freedom square. This was seen as a personal embarrassment for Sello and as a deliberate attempt by the chief to suppress the BNF (Parson 1990:118). The chief's dissociation from the BPP combined with these incidents may have played a role in the BDP's victory in 1979. The BDP increased its proportion of votes to sixty two per cent. The chief's actions were perceived as tacit support for the BDP and they indirectly influenced people.

This article began by arguing that chieftainship plays a significant role in influencing election outcomes, but it does have limitations. This was shown in Mochudi in the 1984 elections when the outcome for chief Linchwe was mixed. Linchwe had for quite some time been unhappy with the incumbent Mochudi Member of Parliament of the BDP, Greek Ruele. It appeared that Linchwe's sympathies lay with Ray Molomo who was defeated by Ruele in the BDP primary elections. After this event, the chief's actions were interpreted as those of someone who had thrown his lot behind the independent candidacy of Sandy Grant (a white man and long-time resident of Mochudi who was director of the Phutadikobo museum in Mochudi). Grant wanted to use as his election symbol, the monkey, the totem of Bakgatla, but Ruele protested. However, the chief did not object to the use of the Bakgatla totem for political reasons. Owing to the controversy, Grant gave up the symbol and settled for an eye. Grant's posters and his symbol of an eye could be seen everywhere in Mochudi and elsewhere. His symbol – the eye seemed to dominate the village from its perch on the chief's house, high on a hill (Parson, 1990:130). The BDP retained the constituency with 2,928 votes, the BNF coming second with 1,296 votes, the BPP third with 731 votes, while Grant came a dismal fourth with 250 votes. Despite the fact that independent candidates have never been a factor in Botswana politics, the results showed that chieftainship had limitations, as the Bakgatla did not vote as its chief wished. There is a possibility that other factors were at play that made people vote the way that did.

In the 1984 elections, the BNF captured the then two Gaborone constituencies. At its victory celebration in Gaborone in early 1985 the party invited Chief Linchwe to be the guest speaker. This event caused unease within the government and in mid-1985 the government dispatched the then assistant minister of Local Government and Lands, Lesedi Mothibamele, to reprimand the chief before his people for meddling in politics. After his speech, the minister refused to answer any questions and left for Gaborone. This infuriated the Bakgatla who rallied behind their chief. A delegation comprising the chief's uncles and senior tribesmen was appointed by the people to go and lodge a complaint with the Ministry of Local Government and Lands about the minister's treatment of their chief. The Member of Parliament for the area, Greek Ruele, was invited to join the delegation but he declined. This exacerbated the already soured relationship between the chief and the Member of Parliament. This incident might have been one of the reasons that led to the defeat of Ruele by Ray Molomo in the BDP primary elections for the 1989 general election. Meanwhile, the BNF started to make inroads in Kgatleng by using the strained relations between the chief and the government. Ray Molomo retained the constituency with a narrow margin of 104 votes.

The chief was now perceived to be sympathetic to the BNF and after the 1992 Delimitation Commission, Kgatleng was divided into two constituencies, namely Kgatleng East and West. In the October 1994 elections, the BNF won the two. Here the role of the chief was unclear and there might have been some short-term influences that made the people vote for the BNF. In April 1998, internal wrangling led to the split of the BNF that resulted in the formation of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). The two Members of Parliament, Isaac Mabiletsa and James Pilane defected to the BCP.

As a consequence of the October 16 1999 general election, the BDP recaptured the two Kgatleng constituencies. What the election figures show is that this was mainly due to the split of votes between the BNF and BCP as this area was one of those profoundly affected by the BNF split. For instance, in Kgatleng East the BDP polled 2,968 votes, the BCP 2,333 and the BNF 2,138 votes. In Kgatleng West, the BDP won 4,569 votes, the

BNF 3,616 votes and the BCP 1,676 votes (*Mmegi*, vol.16, 22-28 October 1999). In both constituencies the combined opposition vote was greater than the BDP vote. What the 1994 and 1999 elections showed in Kgatleng was that the role of the chief had almost disappeared and there may have been other factors that influenced the electorate to make the rational choices they made at the time.

### **Ngwaketse District: Party-Identification Model**

Chief Bathoen II ascended the Bangwaketse throne in 1928 and he had a tight grip over his people. When modern political parties were formed in the 1960s, Bathoen's attitude created a lot of confusion among his people. They did not comprehend his stand. He is said to have shown no interest in the BPP. He is said to have taken part in the early discussions leading to the formation of the BDP, but soon withdrew because he was suspicious of the intention of modern political parties (Mbuya & Morton 1987:156). In 1962 he is said to have declared in front of his people at a pitso (kgotla meeting), "I don't pay attention to these organisations" (Mbuya & Morton, 1987:156). According to Picard (1987:157) Bathoen had doubts about the BDP's commitment to traditional authority. However, in 1965 he supported Seretse Khama and the BDP and encouraged other tribal leaders to do likewise. Some of his people, such as Quett Masire had openly joined the BDP and it appears he carried Bathoen's people with him. In the March 1965 elections, the BDP won all four constituencies in Gangwaketse with overwhelming majorities. For example, in Kanye itself, Quett Masire polled 3,700 votes, handing defeats to both his opponents, Matante's BPP candidate, P. Maruping (89 votes) and BIP's M. Ketshabile (77 votes) (Parson, 1990:107).

In the discussions that finally led to the constitution of post-independence Botswana, Bathoen lost his battle for a separate house for traditional authorities with legislative powers equal to parliament. Bathoen and his colleagues were relegated to a powerless and mere advisory House of Chiefs. The first meeting of the House of Chiefs took place on 12 April 1965. Chief Bathoen being the most experienced and oldest of the chiefs, was nominated for the chairmanship, but he declined both as a protest against the weakness of the House and because being in the chair would prevent him from contributing substantially to the proceedings (Proctor 1968:65-66). Chief Linchwe II of Bakgla was then nominated, but is said to have declined for the same reasons. The choice of chairman finally fell on sub-chief Katlholo Ramokate of North East District (Proctor, 1968:66).

The second meeting of the House of Chiefs was held in November 1965. Within a few hours of the meeting starting, Chief Bathoen moved the motion:

That the House of Chiefs...does hereby pass a vote of no confidence in the existence and functions of this house and therefore requests:

- the dissolution of the House of Chiefs in its present form;
- that the house be reconstituted to have some six elected members of standing outside the Chieftainship;
- that a Parliament for Bechuanaland be constituted with two houses, namely a house of Chiefs and a House of Assembly. (Proctor, 1968: 66)

Bathoen stated that he was quite unwilling to accept the purely advisory role that had been provided for the house and demanded that it be given real legislative authority. Chief Linchwe, supported the motion but asked for delaying powers only. The motion was unanimously passed, but it seemed to have no effect.

The BDP's strategy after the 1965 elections was to instigate a massive campaign to disengage the people from the chiefs so that the people could think independently. The plan was to implement a series of legislation that would be geared at curbing the powers of chiefs. The Chieftainship Act of 1965, came into effect in July 1966. This Act altered succession to chieftainship. It was no longer a purely tribal matter for the people to choose a chief according to their custom. It was for the government to approve a chosen heir. In



other words, the eldest son of a particular chief who according to custom was to succeed his father could be bypassed for another candidate. Other Acts included the Local Government (District Council) Act of 1965, which empowered the president to establish district councils in respect of areas where he may think it necessary to do so. The members of these councils were to be elected by the people and were to take most of the chiefs' responsibilities (Sekgoma, 1993:410). Its sister Act, the Local Government (Tax) Act of 1965 took away the power to impose and collect tax from chiefs to district councils (Sekgoma, 1993: 410). The Customary Courts Act of 1966 limited the power of chiefs to cases such as stock theft, customary law cases and common crimes such as burglary.

The Tribal Land Act of 1968, which established Land Boards, as far as the chiefs' powers were concerned provided the final straw. The same year, the Matimela (Stray Cattle) Act took away the chiefs' claim to ownership of lost and stray cattle (Parsons et. al., 1996:277). All these reforms increased Bathoen's disillusionment with the political system in the country. Picard stated the following in relation to Bathoen's frustration:

Neither the president nor the vice-president (Quett Masire, who was VP, and from Ngwaketse) made any attempt to accommodate themselves to the increasingly alienated Bathoen in the first four years of independence. Instead, a decision was made to render it impossible for Bathoen to remain in Kanye as chief, with the hope of forcing him into some kind of retirement (Picard 1987: 157).

In a stern warning to the government, Bathoen stated that: "A people who rely on their chiefs as heavily as the Batswana can turn a government that silences this traditionalism" (Steven, 1967:148). The BDP's reply to this chieftainship threat was voiced by Quett Masire, who pointed out that: "While the chiefs may tell their people who to vote, they can't go with them to polling booths" (Stevens, 1967:148). Although Masire was correct, as shown by the case of Kgatleng, ironically, two years later, he suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Chief Bathoen in the general election.

The decision by Chief Bathoen II to resign his chieftaincy and join opposition party politics in 1969 and his subsequent election as the BNF presidential candidate for that year's elections was of great concern to the ruling BDP. The government was worried that if other chiefs decided to adopt the route taken by Chief Bathoen, this might change the political landscape in rural areas where BDP support was centred. The coming into politics by Chief Bathoen was based on the belief that it would counteract the prestige and charisma of Seretse Khama of the BDP. Bathoen's influence was felt in his Gangwakese area but could not match the national stature of Khama. In the 1969 general election, the opposition BNF won three out of the four constituencies that made the Ngwaketse District. Chief Bathoen beat Quett Masire, who was then Vice-President in the Kanye South constituency, by 1,245 to 505 votes (Report on the General Elections, 1969: 55). Other seats won by the BNF were Kanye North where M. Yane beat the BDP's B.R. Chibana by 1,607 votes to 643 votes. In Ngwaketse/Kgalagadi, P. Tshane of the BNF defeated P.M. Sebotho of the BDP by 2,030 votes to 1,344 votes (Report on the General Elections, 1969:56).

The Bakgatla-baga-Mmanaana live in Moshupa, which was under Chief Bathoen who had had a long-running dispute with their chief Gobuamang dating back to the 1930s. After an administrative enquiry in 1932, Gobuamang was ordered to move to Kanye, where he might be better controlled. Gobuamang refused to do so. In 1933, some police were sent to fetch him. Gobuamang's Bakgatla overwhelmingly outnumbered the police and they were forced to withdraw (Sillery, 1952:143). But Gobuamang decided to give himself up unconditionally and was sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. After this, he was banished from the Bangwaketse area and left Moshupa with half of his people and settled in Thamaga in the Kweneng District in 1933 (Sillery, 1952:143). The significance of this incident was that during the 1969 election campaign, the BDP used this dispute to their advantage.

The situation was no better in Thamaga East and Thamaga West council wards where the BNF received only 4.8 and 5.1 per cent of the vote respectively (Vengroff, 1972:225). In both Moshupa and Thamaga, tribal squabbles continued to haunt the BNF campaign.

The growth of independent religious movements such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), Apostolic Faith Mission and Jehovah's Witness was resented by Chief Bathoen II. In 1958, Bathoen II with colonial government support resettled some ZCC members outside Kanye at Metlobo. This further exacerbated the anti-Bathoen feeling that worked against him in 1969, as this area also became a BDP stronghold (Ramsay, 1998: 111).

From 1969 and in the subsequent elections of 1974, 1979 and 1984, the Ngwaketse area became the stronghold of the BNF, similarly to Gammangwato where the BDP is consistently voted and the BNF has become the party of the Bangwaketse. However, the deviation in voting behaviour happened in the 1980s. Bathoen retired from politics to become President of the Customary Court of Appeals. Leach Tlhomelang as MP succeeded him for Kanye. Due to the BNF split in Kanye in 1989, the BDP recaptured that constituency.

During the run-up to the 1994 elections, the government decided to suspend Bangwaketse chief, Seepapitso IV, for what the government saw as insubordination for failing to prepare for the visiting Zambian President, Frederick Chiluba, to the Bangwaketse capital of Kanye. This incident angered the Bangwaketse who refused to co-operate with the government in any way. When President Masire visited the village, the tribesmen derailed his kgotla meeting as they took him to task over the suspension of their chief. The government soon reversed its decision but the damage had already been done and once again, Bangwaketse overwhelmingly voted for the opposition BNF in the October 1994 general election.

The April 1998 split of the BNF led to Kanye Member of Parliament, Sidwell Gabatshwane, defecting to the BCP. Later on, in the run-up to the 1999 elections, Kwenantle Gaseitsiwe, a paternal nephew of Bangwaketse Chief, Seepapiso IV, decided to enter politics on the side of the BCP and showed interest in the Kanye constituency. The BCP leadership tended to favour the youthful Gaseitsiwe over the sexagenarian incumbent MP, S. Gabatshwane. This was not only due to Gaseitsiwe's youthfulness (mid-thirties) but because he was a member of the Ngwaketse royal family and was seen as a more likely candidate to attract the electorate. In an unprecedented move, at a kgotla meeting, Kgosi Seepapitso IV introduced Kwenantle Gaseitsiwe who had declared his interest in joining politics. Other parties perceived this move as an endorsement by the chief of his nephew and also an attempt to influence the people to vote for him. Kwenantle Gaseitsiwe proceeded to win the BCP's primary elections, which were shrouded in controversy. Gabatshwane alleged that the BCP had orchestrated a plan to oust him as their candidate for the area. Nevertheless, Kwenantle Gaseitsiwe lost badly in the elections of 16 October 1999. The people voted for the BNF, largely because of their traditional association with the party. The BNF polled 5,331 votes, the BDP 3,927 votes and Kwenantle Gaseitsiwe came a dismal third with only 452 votes (*Mmegi*, Volume 16, 22-28 October 1999:6).

## Conclusion

This article has shown that chieftainship's role in, or influence on, elections varies in each of the areas under discussion. In the case of the Central District, since 1965, the people have consistently voted for the BDP with big majorities because of its charismatic and popular leader, Seretse Khama, of Ngwato royal descent. As the 1999 election results show, this trend is likely to continue moreso into the future, as his eldest son, Ian Khama is in government and continues his legacy. As a result of the Khama family's association with the BDP, the voting behaviour has taken on the features of the party-identification model.

In the case of Kgatleng, the influence of chieftainship has been indirect and, as a result, has waned. The voting behaviour has not been identified with any particular party,

so other factors influence the way people of Kgatleng vote. Here the rational-choice model resembles the voting pattern. As for Gangwaketse, since 1969 when Bathoen joined the BNF, the people have voted for the party and have come to be associated with him. The only deviation in this “normal” voting behaviour happened in 1989. The 1994 and 1999 election results indicate that the trend of voting for the BNF is set to continue. The Ngwaketse area can also be associated with the party-identification voting model.

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