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MOSHWESHWE'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS  
WITH  
THE INDIGENOUS CHIEFS  
OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1822 - 1870

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Degree  
Philosophiae Doctor in the Faculty of Arts, Department of  
History, of the University of the Orange Free State.

Promotor: Professor A.H. Marais

30 May 1994

DECLARATION

I, Peter Seboni, declare that the thesis hereby submitted by me for the Ph.D. degree at the University of the Orange Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university or in another faculty.

I furthermore cede copyright of this thesis in favour of the University of the Orange Free State.

Signed by me ... *P. Seboni* ..... at *Pretoria (O.F.S.)*  
on *30th May* 1984 .....

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD		1	-	5
INTRODUCTION		6	-	37
CHAPTER 1	: MOSHWESHWE'S RELATIONS WITH CHIEF MOROKA OF THE BAROLONG	38	-	64
CHAPTER 2	: MOSHWESHWE AND THE BAPHUTHI CHIEF MOOROSI	65	-	89
CHAPTER 3	: MOSHWESHWE'S ALLIANCE WITH MOLETSANE, CHIEF OF THE BATAUNG	90	-	116
CHAPTER 4	: MOSHWESHWE'S TRYING TIMES WITH SEKONYELA, CHIEF OF THE BATLOKWA	117	-	144
CHAPTER 5	: MOSHWESHWE AND THE BAPEDI CHIEFS - SEKWATI AND SEKHUKHUNE	145	-	164
CHAPTER 6	: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MOSHWESHWE AND THE SWAZI CHIEFS - SOBHUZA I AND MSWATI II	165	-	175
CHAPTER 7	: MOSHWESHWE AND SEBETWANE, CHIEF OF THE BAFOKENG OF PATSA	176	-	197
CHAPTER 8	: MOSHWESHWE AND THE MATEBELE CHIEF, MZILIKAZI	198	-	207
CHAPTER 9	: MOSHWESHWE'S DEALINGS WITH THE BAKWENA CHIEF SECHELE	208	-	236

CHAPTER 10	:	MOSHWESHWE AND THE NORTHERN NGUNI CHIEFS	237	-
CHAPTER 11	:	MOSHWESHWE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOUTHERN NGUNI CHIEFS	261	-
CONCLUSION			285	-
BIBLIOGRAPHY			299	-
MAP				
SKETCH				
SUMMARY				

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## FOREWORD

The idea of writing about Moshweshwe's Diplomatic Relations with the Indigenous Chiefs of Southern Africa came after I had visited Botswana, the Cape Province, eastern Transvaal and Swaziland where I found people talking about Moshweshwe's kindness and friendship. He had made his country (Basotholand/Lesotho) a centre of political activities and also a centre of learning for many black people who were settled in the interior of South Africa. I had read many books on Moshweshwe and the works of P.B. Sanders, Moshoeshoe Chief of the Sotho and L.M. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds appear to be outstanding, but neither of these and others discuss his diplomatic ties in full. I felt I should do some research on his diplomacy and to find out why he wished to be friendly with all his neighbouring fellow chiefs and even those who were far away from his country. Some of the chiefs with whom he established diplomatic links remained attached to him for the rest of their lives.

To pursue and attain these objectives I conducted interviews of oral tradition and supported this with documents of primary (published and unpublished) and secondary sources.

Oral tradition has its problems : some people were hostile in behaviour and viewed me with some suspicion and were not

helpful; some people were adding a lot of exaggeration to their recitals while telling what they had read from books and regarded that as their oral history. However, in the long run I succeeded in meeting reliable people whose recitals were either supported or confirmed by some people within the same area. It was a long and irksome task that had to be done. I travelled to several places in southern Africa where Moshweshwe had established diplomatic relations.

I came to realize that while oral traditions are informative and enlightening there is a great danger of exaggeration and making up for the missing link. I noticed this at Quthing (Lesotho) where the old man, Mpopo, was viewing Chief Moorosi as the wronged party in all his dealings with other people including Moshweshwe. He was also proud that he knew and understood the episodes of Moorosi better than many other people. Such feelings or tendencies tend to mar the truth as exaggeration cannot be avoided. Until I met another old man in the same place who confirmed some of the recitals of Mpopo I would have discarded his tradition. According to Jan Vansina's Oral Tradition as History, (p.13) "many historians tend to ignore the in-depth analysis of individual testimony because the masses of accounts cross-check each other". But a careful oral historian can eliminate some of these discrepancies by comparing various accounts before writing down anything from oral sources. I was careful not to be

tricked into writing one-sided versions. I found that comparison of different views was necessary when I recorded oral tradition in order to obtain a well-balanced version.

As more and more indigenous communities now tend to rely on written history about themselves it would be wise to have their oral traditions written down as not all about them had been recorded (particularly the Bafokeng and the Dihoja). In the long run all could be forgotten and their real past shall remain partly known. Despite its flaws oral history can't be ignored as "... is as old as history itself. It was the first kind of history". (P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past, Oral History, p.19).

Other than working in South Africa I visited Europe to finalize my research. I worked at the School of Oriental and Africa Studies library at the University of London, British (Museum) library (London), Glasgow University library (Scotland), Oxford University library (Rhodes House), Public Record Office at Kew Gardens (London) and I also visited D.E.F.A.P. in Paris, France. In all these places I found some primary sources (though not much) and various secondary source material. I also had a chance of talking to some professional historians and lecturers in history departments who enlightened me more on my work, and on the historical method.

Many Sotho-Tswana communities as well as some communities in the Transvaal (Tsonga and Bapedi in particular) and Swaziland owe their enlightenment to Moshweshwe's benevolence. He freely and unselfishly allowed them to come to his country to attend school - after the French missionaries had established institutions of learning in Lesotho. During the Difaqane turmoil Moshweshwe also turned his country into a refuge for the afflicted, homeless and displaced people. Both Lesotho and South Africa stand to gain by acknowledging the role he (Moshweshwe) played in trying to establish a peaceful co-existence with all his neighbours (Blacks and Whites).

Moshweshwe's thoughtfulness, patience and some amount of intelligence played a great role in helping him to win friends to his side and even turned enemies into friends. He was able to foster diplomatic relations with ease. He could have easily formed a federation of black states had such an idea occurred to him. He commanded respect and his personality and fair judgement earned him popularity.

He was ambitious and strove to be the supreme potentate among other rulers and yet he was not an absolute monarch or dictator. He became a darling of his people. It would seem his main aim of establishing diplomatic relations was to make himself the leading figure among the black rulers of Southern

Africa. He sugar-coated this ambition with the type of kindness that would baffle a keen and suspicious observer. Many people in Lesotho still regard him as the best of all their rulers. The diplomatic links he had established with some communities have been retained up to now.

There were some chiefs who were either not impressed by his overtures or jealous of him. They were not to befriend him and turned down his requests of forming an alliance or a friendship with them. As he was not easily discouraged in achieving his objectives he undauntedly continued to extend a hand of friendship.

In the end he had succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with several indigenous chiefs of Southern Africa. He lived until he was old and died being over eighty years in age in 1870. Through his diplomacy trade links were created between his country and other countries.

As my main primary sources were interviews it should be noted that the footnoted interviews are for new information. Sometimes they were used instead of secondary sources because they sounded better though they may appear to be the same.

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N.B.: The spelling of M-O-S-H-W-E-S-H-W-E has been used instead of the old orthography of M-O-S-H-O-E-S-H-O-E for easy pronunciation for all people including non-Sotho speakers.

MOSHWESHE'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE INDIGENOUS  
CHIEFS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA 1820 - 1870

INTRODUCTION

MOSHWESHE'S AMBITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Moshweshwe's diplomatic relations and foreign policy with many of his contemporary Black chiefs emanated from a notion of being a great ruler and superior chief in and around the Caledon River valley. He entertained this notion in his early life. He wished to be acknowledged as a man of high status and be obeyed without being questioned. That was his ambition. At one stage while being a young boy he is reported to have killed five young boys who infuriated him by not obeying his command.<sup>1</sup> He wanted to command respect and be revered. But he later realized that respect based on fear does not last as it leads to enmity and challenges.

It is generally believed that Moshweshwe was born in about 1786. His place of birth was Menkhoaneng near Butha Buthe in northern Lesotho. His father was Mokhachane the second son of Peete. Moshweshwe's people belonged to the Bamokotedi

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1. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 12-10-1990.

group which was a sub-group of the Bakwena - one of the outstanding Sotho groups in Lesotho. Mokhachane was a minor chief in comparison with other chiefs as the Bamokotedi were an insignificant group in the Caledon River valley during the 18th Century.

Moshweshwe's parents were perturbed by his behaviour. His mother was Khodu, but in the African tradition women played no role worth mentioning except being just mothers. His father was more worried for his safety. It was possible that one day he would come across a strong and daring boy who could kill him. His belligerent attitude was cause for concern. Not far from Menkhoaneng there was then a village called Rampoi. A man of great standing who was a herbalist (doctor), and could be described as a philosopher and mystic and who was also a chief of the Bakwena, visited Rampoi. His name was Mohlomi and his fame was unequalled. By the fact that he was a Mokwena the Bamokotedi were ipso facto related to him.

His presence at Rampoi aroused great excitement at Menkhoaneng. It was a traditional practice for the Bakwena to take their sons to an important and great personality,

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2. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 12-10-1990.

such as Mohlomi, to be blessed.<sup>3</sup> Peete, (Moshweshwe's grandfather) took him there for blessings. The ceremony for passing blessings was conducted by uttering some words and rubbing of foreheads. Mohlomi did all these to young Moshweshwe.

In about 1805 Moshweshwe was old enough to be sent to lebolong - an initiation school. Boys were sent to this school to undergo training for manhood and adulthood. Memories were tested to see how retentive they were by encouraging the initiates to recite long praise poems of their choice. Reliability, trustworthiness and loyalty were encouraged. Tolerance, patience and leadership qualities were identified.<sup>4</sup> Circumcision was a rite that was performed here. The trainers or initiators were trusted men of the community. The initiates were given new names symbolizing a new social status.<sup>5</sup>

After returning from the lebollo Moshweshwe felt he was old

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3. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, Lesotho, 05-10-1990.

4. M. Makhetha's interview, Roma, 14-09-1990.

5. Many missionaries were against lebollo and condemned it as primitive and paganish. They encouraged many chiefs to abolish it as they said it was unChristian. When Moshweshwe was chief, missionaries who laboured in his country tried, on numerous occasions, to persuade him to ban it in his land. After trying and trying to convince him, he eventually relented by making concessions for those who were Christians rather than discarding it. It must be remembered that it was a national institution that could not just be wished off by missionaries - who wished to undo African practices - calling them paganism. (Makhetha's interview).

enough to marry. He needed cattle of his own to enable him to pay the dowry - bohadi. He was proving to be innovative. Together with his lebollo mate, Makuanyane, (who later became a general of his warriors) he went for cattle raiding. They attacked the village of Ramonaheng at Kholelong. They captured almost all his cattle. Moshweshwe praised himself for his feat and praised himself in this way:

"Ke 'na Moshoeshoe Moshoshoaaila oa ha Kali  
Lebeola le beotseng Ramonaheng litelu." <sup>6</sup>

Literally translated it means:

"I am Moshweshwe, the barber of Kali  
the shaver that shaved the beard of Ramonaheng."

All along he was called Lepogo and after the Ramonaheng incident the name "Moshweshwe" superceded Lepogo and in the long run this name ceased to be used.

With the cattle available his father and grandfather got him a woman to marry. It was the daughter of a man named Seepheephe and her name was Mabela. It is believed that his marriage took place in 1810. A son was born called Mohato

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6. W.S. Matsie, "The Basotho" in The African Drum,  
April 1951, p.12.

and Mabela came to be called 'Mamohato'<sup>7</sup> - the term means Mohato's mother.

Moshweshwe appeared unhappy. He wished to be superior to all other men. His grandfather again took him to Mohlomi who was at Maritoe - near the present day Ficksburg. His anxiety for megalomania made him appear as though he was mentally deranged. According to Peete and Mokhachane he was to be cured of his "madness". Both he and Peete expected the doctor, (Mohlomi) to give him medical treatment and a talisman. To their surprise they were told that Moshweshwe is to be cured psychologically. Mohlomi went on to say : "... it is truly his heart alone that we are changing, his mind that we are curing and resetting anew .... his medicine is his knowledge and pursuance of peace and justice in his service and relations with all men regardless of their status ....".<sup>8</sup> Moshweshwe's attitude had to change if he wished to be anything great. According to Mohlomi he was to look at life in a different perspective.

Mohlomi had been a great traveller and had built affinal relationships with many chiefs whose daughters or sisters he married. In every country he visited he married somebody

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7. M. Damane, Tlhaho le ho hola ha Moshoeshoe, (pam.) pp.5-6.

8. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I Profile, Se-Moshoeshoe, p.33.

there. He had realized the advantage of such a relationship : it keeps countries in harmony. He was the first man in Southern Africa who had an opportunity to form political alliances had such an idea dawned on his mind. But whenever he left the place he had visited he left his newly married wife behind. He did not take any of the women he had married to his country. They, in turn, were free to re-marry and the children born belonged to him as he was the first man to have paid out the bohadi (lobola) cattle to consummate the first marriage. Whoever paid cattle for the first time as bohadi (dowry) to the parents of the woman he wished to marry remained the rightful husband to such a woman. If he left her (not divorcing), as Mohlomi did, she was still his wife. The bohadi cattle meant a lot to the Basotho.

Moshweshwe was also involved in an almost similar situation of being a father to children who were biologically not his. He paid the bohadi cattle for some young men who were not able to raise cattle for marriage. Children born of such a relationship were his. According to the Basotho custom they were rightfully his children because he was the one who provided such cattle.

As he was a medicine man Mohlomi travelled to cure the sick and know more of other countries. For curing the sick he was paid with cattle and became very wealthy. He was the greatest thinker of his time - the Socrates of the African people. He gave sound advice to those who needed it. He is described as : doctor, rain-maker, traveller, poligamist and philosopher.<sup>9</sup>

Moshweshwe and Peete spent ten days at Mohlomi's place. Mohlomi was impressed by the young Moshweshwe and at the end of their stay he did the following to Moshweshwe : gave him one of his ear-rings and told him to wear it as it was a symbol of authority; gave him a knobstick - symbol of power; spear and shield - to be used exclusively for the defence of his people; gave him a black cow - a symbol of wealth and hospitality and finally rubbed his forehead against Moshweshwe's.<sup>10</sup> After all these Mohlomi told Moshweshwe to live in peace and harmony with his neighbours including neighbouring countries; he must be a poligamist to have loyal supporters by fostering affinal relationships and alliances; he must show compassion to the needy; make his house a sanctuary for the stranded fugitives and other afflicted people; in the event of war he should form an

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9. L.B.J. Machobane, Mohlomi, Traveller and Sage, (pam.) p.21.

10. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

alliance with other chiefs to stand against a common enemy; should never annihilate the survivors or remnants of a defeated tribe as such survivors would be his loyal supporters and should always obey the biddings of the spirits of the dead.<sup>11</sup> Mohlomi was declaring Moshweshwe a chief. At that time Moshweshwe was still under his father. In the Biblical language one would say he was being "anointed" by Mohlomi.

What Mohlomi did to Moshweshwe upset some of his people. He had his own sons and close relatives who deserved to be declared chiefs but they were ignored. One of his close relatives named Makhetha complained bitterly. He could not understand how a member of a junior group, such as the Bamokotedi, could be raised above members of senior groups.<sup>12</sup>

Mohlomi's greatness in the whole of the Caledon River valley could not be surpassed. What he had done and said could not be reversed.<sup>13</sup>

After this meeting Moshweshwe was transformed to a better man - a man of high personage. He had patience to listen and analyse events before acting. He was a man of consideration and moderate in behaviour.<sup>14</sup> He was a "product" of Mohlomi and

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11. Mokhehle's interview, 12-10-1990.

12. Makhetha's interview, 14-09-1990.

13. According to M. Makhetha, Mohlomi detected wisdom and greatness in Moshweshwe - qualities nobody among his people had, hence the "anointment".

14. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I, pp.40-41.

not much could be done to challenge him. Before Mohlomi died in 1815 Mokhachane and Moshweshwe visited him again and he was pleased to find the "blessed" Moshweshwe being a changed man.

In 1820 Moshweshwe left Menkhoaneng to settle at Butha Buthe with his followers to start a new life as a leader. Mokhachane was gradually receding into the background. Moshweshwe had been helping him in the administrative duties at Menkhoaneng.

Before 1822 the land between the Orange and the Vaal Rivers had been relatively tranquil and stable until they were disturbed by an unprecedented turmoil commonly referred to as Difaqane in Sesotho and Mfecane in the Nguni language. The actual cause of this episode is still unknown as it is not yet fully established beyond doubt. It is believed that it started in Natal when Dingiswayo, chief of the Abathethwa and Zwide chief of the Ndwandwe fought each other for the political leadership.<sup>15</sup> Shaka joined the fray later and waged war against all the communities of Natal to assert his supreme political leadership. Those who could flee fled beyond his reach. The Hlubi of Chief Mpangazitha and the

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15. G.T. Nurse et al, The People of Southern Africa, p.73.

Amangwane of Chief Matiwane fled from Natal across the Drakensberg and entered the Orange Free State where they set the whole area aflame.

The Sotho-Tswana communities of the Orange Free State were caught unaware and were too weak to stand against Mpangazitha's and Matiwane's hordes. They fled and attacked whoever was in their way. These attacks led to the whole area being in a turmoil. Thousands of people lost their lives. Security and protection were needed. It was then that Moshweshwe emerged to offer shelter, security and protection to the homeless and hopeless people. His home at Thaba Bosiu became a haven for refugees. Ultimately he became the most astute politician of his time. He was able to blend together the miscellaneous refugees and his own followers into a great nation.<sup>16</sup> He owes his rise to power to the Difaqane. There is talk, in recent times, that Difaqane did not take place; it is a coined up story to justify and condone the white man's entry and encroachment into the interior of South Africa. The depopulated and empty areas that attracted white settlers were never there.

According to Julian Cobbing the Mfecane (Difaqane) did not

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16. H. Goiran, Une Action Créatrice de la Mission Protestante Française en Sud de l'Afrique, p.17;  
J. du Plessis, A History of Christian Missions in South Africa, p.190.

take place in South Africa. There was never such a thing as Mfecane. It is just an alibi - a myth which had been invented by South African white people to justify their occupation of a black man's land and to be exonerated from any possible accusation of having cheated a black man of his land. When one looks at the situation in South Africa from the turn of this century to the 1990s one is tempted to believe what Cobbing said. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the position of a white man was not what it is in the twentieth century. He was not yet well organized to form a full-fledged political state to promulgate laws such as the Group Areas Act and forced removals to the detriment of a black man.

The myth of the Mfecane as advocated by Cobbing sounds more sensational and controversial than just putting the record straight. It is not surprising that there had been a sharp reaction from his contemporary fellow historians. He has caused a debate that needs further and intensive research to clear his myth of the Mfecane.

Cobbing looks at the concept "Mfecane" as a term created by the historian Eric Walker in 1928<sup>17</sup> to describe the turmoil

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17. J. Cobbing, The Mfecane as Alibi : Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo, Journal of African History, p.519.

that afflicted the black people of Natal and the highveld as well as some places such as Swaziland and Botswana.

If the term "Mfecane" only became known since 1928 one wonders what term was used to describe the turmoil that took place in Natal when Dingiswayo and Zwidé, and later Shaka, perpetrated wars of destruction and annihilation - forcing survivors to flee to places of safety. There are people in Natal whose surname is "Mfecane" and by virtue of their age this name was in use long before 1928. Among the black communities of South Africa there are people who change their names to adopt new ones to commemorate great events. It is not correct for Cobbing to associate Mfecane with Eric Walker in 1928 when in actual fact this term was used almost hundred years before.<sup>18</sup>

In the Orange Free State and the Transvaal the turmoil was called "Difaqane" meaning the same thing as the Zulu "Mfecane". The main perpetrators here were people from Natal who had fled into the highveld : Mpangazitha, Matiwane and Mzilikazi. After the Batlokwa were dislodged from their settlement at Sefate, they became marauders under the leadership of Manthatise and later her son, Sekonyela. The

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18. H.J. van Aswegen, Die Mfecane Werklikheid of Mite, Historia Jaargang Volume 39 No. 1 Mei/May 1994, p.30.

relatively quiet highveld was set aflame. It would be folly to believe that such an event never occurred when there are ruins at various places. These ruins are of the dislodged communities during the Difaqane era. The few people found in the environs of these ruins associate them with the upheavals of the Difaqane wars. It is possible that there could be exaggerations here and there in these people's recitals but there should be no doubt that the Difaqane episode did take place.

By stating that "the Mfecane is a characteristic product of South African liberal history used by the apartheid state to legitimate South Africa's racially unequal land division" and that "some astonishingly selective use or actual invention of evidence produced that myth of an internally-induced process of black-on-black destruction centering on Shaka's Zulu ...."<sup>19</sup> Cobbing is misreading the facts. When the Voortrekkers reached the interior in the 1830s the Difaqane wars were almost at an end and there is no way they could have caused or formulated an idea about Mfecane. They might have taken advantage of the plight of the indigenous people of the interior to consolidate their own position.

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19. J. Cobbing, The Mfecane an Alibi, p.518.

To say that Moshweshwe did not create the Basotho nation and that people gathered together due to pressure from the Grique bands,<sup>20</sup> is another mistake he is making. The implications is that Moshweshwe was more of an opportunist than the diplomat he is remembered for. In other words, Moshweshwe found people gathered together and proclaimed himself their leader. This is a distortion of facts.

The missionaries Thomas Arbousset and Eugene Casalis came to labour in the land of Moshweshwe in 1833 and had written so much about the Difaqane wars and Moshweshwe without any outside influence. They wrote about what they saw and what they could gather from the survivors or remnants of the Difaqane. When they started writing they had nothing to do with South African politics.

For Cobbing to blame slave traders at Delegea Bay, the missionaries and government officials as people responsible for the turmoil in the interior<sup>21</sup> - it is very wrong indeed. The slavery was not an open business; whoever did it had to do so stealthily - especially after 1807 when the British authorities stopped the disembarkation of slaves at its colonies. It is impossible for such a practice to cause an

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20. J.D. Omer-Cooper, Has the Mfecane A Future, Journal of Southern Africa Studies, June 1983, p.285.

21. H.J. van Aswegen, Historia, p.19.

upheaval such as the Difaqane. Most known missionaries fought against slavery : Philip and Livingstone. It would have been unChristian for missionaries to turn their mission stations into slave markets. It is true that some whites continued to indulge in slavery in spite of the laws promulgated to stop it. Under such conditions the practice must have been on a minor scale to cause an upheaval similar to the Difaqane episode. As for government officials, whatever they did should have been so minimal as to attract no attention.

Robert Moffat who was a missionary of the London Missionary Society and based at Kuruman is reported to have met vast waves of people moving in flight on the highveld in 1823-1824.<sup>22</sup> It is obvious that Moffat reported on what he had witnessed - disproving the assumption of Cobbing.

On the other hand M. Legassick compiled his work on the Difaqane by using oral traditions. It is apparent that none of his informants supported Cobbing's version. In 1822 the Hlubi and their Chief Mpangazitha entered the highveld. Their presence in this area led to the eruption and horrors of the Difaqane.<sup>23</sup> Seeing what was happening in the environs

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22. C. Northcott, Robert Moffat : Pioneer in Africa 1817-1870, p.87.

23. M.C. Legassick, The Griqua, The Sotho-Tswana and The Missionaries, pp.324-327.

of the Caledon River valley, Moshweshwe applied his diplomatic strategy of turning enemies and possible attackers into friends. He offered Mpangazitha some cattle in exchange for corn.<sup>24</sup> The Basotho still speak of Pakalita (Mpangazitha) of the Hlubi having been kept at bay by Moshweshwe during the Difaqane wars.

The conditions on the highveld are further described by some Wesleyan missionaries who were based at Thaba Nchu. It was horror at its worst. The incessant Difaqane wars had destroyed the inhabitants around Thaba Nchu and many "scull-bones" were scattered all over the place.<sup>25</sup>

J.B. Peires describes J. Cobbing (and J. Wright) as "... having resurrected historical dragons long dead in order to kill them again for the amusement of the spectators".<sup>26</sup> This could be the most appropriate description of Julian Cobbing. Cobbing goes on to describe Shaka as not being bloody.<sup>27</sup> There had been numerous negative references pertaining to Shaka and some of them are definitely exaggerated, however, that does not make him clean or exonerate him from all blame. Shaka's people and descendants describe him in mild terms without making his actions less bloody. It would seem

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24. T. Arbousset and F. Daumas, Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-east of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, pp.405-406.
25. K. Schoeman (Edit.), The Wesleyan Mission in the O.F.S. 1833-1854, pp.26-27, 49.
26. J.B. Peires, "Paradigm Deleted : The Materialist Interpretations of the Mfecane", Journal of Southern African Studies 19:2 (June 1993).
27. C.A. Hamilton, "The Character and Objects of Chaka" : A Re-consideration of the Making of Shaka as 'Mfecane' Motor, Journal

Cobbing is against anything negatively said about Shaka by Europeans. As though that was not enough he absolved the Zulu (in Natal) of the upheavals of the Mfecane.<sup>28</sup> As far as he is concerned the Whites are responsible for all the misdeeds that befell the Blacks as if Blacks have no brains to think for themselves.

Cobbing has started the ball rolling. A lot must be done in research work to challenge his interpretation of the Mfecane. The new intensive research should include black historians who could make a clearer contribution to elucidate the myth of Mfecane - particularly those based in Kwa-Zulu. The controversy created by Cobbing needs sober minds to avoid inconclusive answers and prejudice. He cannot be ignored or dismissed as an inconsiderate historian.

As this work is not about the origin of Mfecane it suffices to go this far and concentrate on how the Mfecane/Difaqane affected Moshweshwe's political career. Without the Difaqane there is a possibility that he would have been relatively unknown.

One of the Sotho-Tswana communities of the Caledon River

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28. E. Eldredge, Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, 1800-30 : The 'Mfecane' Reconsidered, Journal of African History 33:1 (1992), P.35.

valley called the Batlokwa whose leader was a woman named Manthatise and was later succeeded by her bellicose son, Sekonyela, attacked Moshweshwe and his people. He was still weak then. He diplomatically engaged the assistance of a neighbouring chief of the Matlotlokoane whose name was Sepheko. The Batlokwa were driven away albeit temporarily.<sup>29</sup> After this episode he fled to a far better secured mountain fortress - Thaba Bosiu (1824), where he lived for the rest of his life.

As he was fleeing to Thaba Bosiu accompanied by all his people his grandfather Peete was attacked, killed and eaten up by cannibals whose leader was Rakotsoane. Sometime later Rakotsoane and some of his cannibals were caught and brought to Moshweshwe to be executed. Contrary to expectation Moshweshwe refused to have the cannibals killed saying that their bowels had entombed Peete. Killing them would be tantamount to destroying the grave of his grandfather.

Such reasoning was never thought of before. He then gave Rakotsoane and his man-eaters some cattle and told them to go away and lead a normal life by desisting from eating human flesh.<sup>30</sup> He succeeded in curing Rakotsoane from being a cannibal. Such kindness was disarming.

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29. Damane, *Tlhaho le ho Hoha*, p.10.

30. E. Moshoeshoe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 04-09-1987.

Thaba Bosiu was not spared from attacks as the Difaqane wars continued to rage and devastated the whole land. Despite numerous attacks Thaba Bosiu was never conquered. It later became the centre of diplomacy and a refuge for many homeless and displaced people. From the chaotic situation Moshweshwe tried to build a great following. The unique conviction and courage he had made him a sublime man. He endeavoured to find a practical formula for a continued peaceful existence with his neighbouring chiefs. He extended a hand of friendship to all who could reach him. Thaba Bosiu became a sanctuary for many destitute people.<sup>31</sup>

From these various groups that flocked to Thaba Bosiu, Moshweshwe was able to knit together a big nation - the Basotho nation. To build this nation he integrated them with his Bakwena people and were gradually absorbed and became Sesotho-speaking. Only their surnames tell that they were not originally Sesotho-speaking.

A Mofokeng chief called Makara had his cattle captured by some members of the Bamokotedi group. Chief Makara came to Moshweshwe appealing for their return. Accompanied by his father (Mokhachane) Moshweshwe talked in a friendly manner

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31. M. Damane, Moshoeshe A Man of Peace and Reconciliation, p.2.

to the cattle-raiders, showing them how desparate Makara and his people were. The cattle were duly returned to their owners. Chief Makara was so grateful that he told Moshweshwe that he would be the greatest of all the chiefs. A few years later Makara and his people came to Moshweshwe and offered to be his subjects.<sup>32</sup>

On another occasion some Zulu men who were settled in the land of Chief Lethole became jealous of Moshweshwe. Lethole was a Mosotho chief. They told him to murder Moshweshwe when next he visited him and they would help in the killing. Lethole instead, warned Moshweshwe not to come to his place but should send some people to represent him. Lethole had a liking for Moshweshwe. A few months later there was a public gathering at the foot of the Kolo mountain and there Lethole and his followers joined Moshweshwe's people and offered to be his subjects.<sup>33</sup> There were several other chiefs who gave up their chieftainship to be under Moshweshwe. Times were hard and difficult and a strong leadership was needed to weather the storm. Moshweshwe was such a leader as he appeared to know what to do to the dismayed people and those who had suffered the depredations of the Difaqane wars.

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32. Mokhehle's interview, 12-10-1990.

33. Leselinyana (a Lesotho newspaper), 01-05-1892.

With so many people flocking to him for protection and offering to be his subjects his ambition of being a great chief - an idea he cherished during his youthful days - was being realized. In the French history there was Napoleon Bonaparte who described himself as the "son of the Revolution" (le fils de la Revolution) because it was through this revolution that he became the greatest military leader of his time - his prowess could not be challenged. While Moshweshwe said nothing about himself he could befittingly be called the son of the Difaqane. He owes all his greatness to the Difaqane. His statemanship surpassed all his contemporary potentates.

People in Lesotho, like M. Makhetha, believe that Moshweshwe was a "disciple" of Mohlomi. All he did was Mohlomi's. This is incorrect as Mohlomi only advised him to endeavour to do good to all mankind. There are many things Moshweshwe did which were contrary to Mohlomi's teachings such as cattle-raiding and waging wars. Perhaps necessity compelled him to do so, but in all fairness he was a unique character whose diplomacy helped him to surmount many hurdles that came his way.

While Mohlomi could be described as "immaculate", Moshweshwe was not. He had to be cruel to acquire some of the items he had to have : cattle and fire-arms. On several occasions he conducted cattle raids. His raids were done at far away places such as Pondoland and Tembuland in the Cape Colony. This he did to avoid detection and immediate follow-up or retaliation. He was not selfish - he helped the needy families with the captured cattle. His actions were incongruous as he deprived others to help others.

When he was well-established he went on to establish diplomatic relations with some chiefs of the Cape Colony, some of whom were victims of his cattle raids.

As the Difaqane turmoil was abating and various communities which were adversely affected by this unprecedented catastrophe were trying to resettle, Moshweshwe came forward and tried to form what can be termed an "ideal" state by advocating for peace and harmony amongst his people and the neighbouring chiefdoms. To achieve all these he had to strive for honesty. He realized that peaceful co-existence could only be established on ethical foundation and eternal values of forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>34</sup>

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34. M. Damane, The Reign of Moshoeshe The Great and The Founder of The Nation, (pam.) p.4.

He adopted the "mafisa" system of loaning cattle to the poor to use for their needs - to build friendship with the local people. Many poor people were saved from possible starvation and poverty. He gained their loyalty. Some villages that benefited from his "Mafisa" system were Makokoane and Khongoana.<sup>35</sup> In this way he was able to build a strong and reliable following.

He helped young men who wanted to marry but did not have cattle to pay for the lobola. He provided them with the required number of cattle. Children born of such a marriage were said to be the children of the person who provided the cattle. So Moshweshwe had many children though biologically they were not his.<sup>36</sup> Cattle paid out of marriage were a guarantee for a life-long relationship between families of the two partners.

Poligamy had been a common practice among the indigenous people of southern Africa. It was not every man who indulged in polygamous marriage. Only the wealthy men could afford such marriages as each marriage involved paying out of cattle. The less rich and poor men were content with one wife. Moshweshwe also indulged in polygamy and his wives

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35. A. Ambrose and A. Brutch, Missionary Excursion into the Blue Mountains, p.17.

36. Damane's interview, 05-10-1990.

were many. When missionaries came to labour among the Black communities they condemned polygamy as adulterous and encouraged their followers to do away with other women and remain with just one partner.

Moshweshwe was also encouraged to divorce many of his wives.<sup>37</sup> It was a difficult thing to do as the divorced women would be stranded and it would not be easy to fend for themselves. Some men did divorce while others refused to do so and even pulled out of the church to avoid the missionaries' message of divorcing.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting to learn that some people condemned the missionaries for being against polygamy because a man attached to one wife has private "wives" which is a worse adulterous life than having legal wives.<sup>39</sup>

As a polygamist Moshweshwe preferred to marry daughters of other chiefs with an aim of fostering alliances with such chiefs. It was such marriages that helped him to establish diplomatic relations. Thus it was part of his strategy. Moshweshwe's number of wives is not known. In 1833 the French missionaries, on their arrival in Lesotho, believed

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37. Commission on Laws and Customs of the Basotos, 1873, p.26.

38. Makhetha's interview, 14-09-1990.

39. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

that he had forty wives. In 1865 the Catholic Sisters of the Holy Family thought that his wives were 150 and his friend, Nchakala, stated that his wives were about 200.<sup>40</sup>

Affinal relationship was not the only means of forming diplomatic ties : Moshweshwe also created trade links with other chiefs. He was a supplier of important commodities - horses and fire-arms. He was not the manufacturer of fire-arms and ammunitions but acquired them from white traders and trekboers. He bought horses himself and some of them were brought into his land by his people who had laboured on white farms in the Cape Colony and Transorangia. As money was not yet greatly used many labourers preferred to be paid with either guns or horses and cattle. Other fire-arms were plundered from the marauding Koranas and Griquas. He also got horses from the same marauders by attacking and defeating them whenever they caused skirmishes. The Koranas were more troublesome than the Griquas and they wished to capture Moshweshwe's cattle. It was when they conducted cattle-raids that they suffered great losses and lost their guns and horses in the process.<sup>41</sup>

Sir Harry Smith described Moshweshwe as a "simple-minded

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40. M. Damane, Moshoeshoe A Man of Peace and Reconciliation, (pam.) pp.3-4.

41. M. Damane, Moshoeshoe A Man of Peace, p.5.

savage"<sup>42</sup> and yet there was great correlation between what was practised by the Romans (Roman Empire) of the civilized world and Moshweshwe. The Romans practised "cursus publicus" whereby relaying messengers were posted at intervals on their roads to deliver messages to their destinations. Moshweshwe, on the other hand, had messengers who lived with him at Thaba Bosiu and others who lived at the courts of his friendly chiefs (such as Moorosi and Moletsane). These messengers of different courts would meet those of Moshweshwe on the road to exchange messages. They did not use routes commonly used or known by other people. They were known to them alone. These routes were 'short-cuts'. The use of these routes were Moshweshwe's innovation.<sup>43</sup> They were used to avoid recognition. Messages to be delivered were quickly relayed to their destinations. As superstition was still rife then many people believed that he had "doctored" his messengers to fly to their destinations. This was not the work of a "simple-minded savage".

He had three types of messengers who were well trained in the art of transmitting messages : Lititimi, Lihloela and Maqosa.<sup>44</sup>

The Lititimi were transmitters of oral messages to chiefs who

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42. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshe I, p.8.

43. M. Damane, Moshoeshe A Man Of Peace, p.6.

44. P. Phoofola, African Diplomatic Conduct in the 19th Century - A Case of Lesotho, p.17.

were his allies in the Caledon River valley. They were to maintain diplomatic ties between Moshweshwe and these chiefs. They were circumcised men whose retentive memories had been proved to be reliable during their training at the initiation school. They were taught how to compose lithiko (praise-poems).

Their praise-poems were mostly long and only people with retentive memories could recite them. This term lititimi is self-explanatory : it denotes the fast manner and the efficiency with which they transmitted messages entrusted to them.

The Lihloela were men entrusted with the sole responsibility of gathering information and secrets pertaining to the security of the state. As most of the Basotho villages were structured along the hills, the Lihloela had an advantage of spotting an enemy from a distance. They gathered information from within and without the Caledon River valley. In other words the Lihloela were intelligence corps. The safety of the state depended on their watchfulness.

The Magosa were messenger-ambassadors who were, for external

communication. Their duty was exclusively to keep contact with chiefs of other countries beyond the Caledon River valley. They were sent from time to time. In most cases they played the role of a plenipotentiary except in controversial cases where other members of the chiefdom or polity were to be involved in making a decision.

In such events they referred the matter to their ruler (Moshweshwe) who in turn, summoned a Pitso (a national assembly) to discuss the matter and have a unanimous decision or reach a consensus before action could be taken.<sup>45</sup> This was democracy in operation.

Another interesting matter was that the Magosa had intimate knowledge of the cultures and languages of the chiefs with whom they were to deal. Moshweshwe chose men whose background was almost similar - if not the same - to the chief whose alliance he sought so that there would not be any communication problem.

Among the various tribes that had come to settle in the Caledon River valley there was one called the Amavundle which had come from the Cape Colony. One member of this tribe who

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45. M. Damane, The Reign of Moshoeshoe, pp.4-5.

was called Tyali spoke and understood several Xhosa dialects. Moshweshwe appointed him his chief envoy and spokesman in all matters which had to do with Xhosa potentates in the Cape Colony. One other tribe was the Amahlapo. It had come from Natal. He used members of this tribe as his diplomats for his affairs with the Zulu chiefs in Natal. For the Sotho-Tswana communities of the Orange Free State and the Bapedi of the Transvaal his Maqosa were mainly the sons of chief Moletsane: Lekhooe and Raboroko.<sup>46</sup>

In spite of his policy of trying to unify all the people who were in his territory, Moshweshwe granted the Amavundle and the Amahlapo the permission to lead a free life and maintain their language and customs. He even gave strict orders to his territorial chiefs and headmen to see that nobody interfered in their affairs. These tribes have to this day preserved their culture, customs and language, however, they do speak Sesotho with ease. Moshweshwe had to give such strict orders as some of his brothers did not always support him but preferred to act on their own to his embarrassment.<sup>47</sup> Their behaviour perturbed him.

His Maqosa were granted political diplomatic immunity. He

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46. M. Damane, The Reign of Moshoeshoe, pp.6-7.

47. Makhetha's interview, 14-09-1990.



MOSHOESHWE'S INSIGNIA

(from: Basutoland Notes and Records)

Basotho came into contact with the Europeans.

Another improvement of Moshweshwe on politics without external influence was the manner in which he conducted the Pitso (National Assembly). He believed in and encouraged independence of the individual's mind - stating one's view without fear. Nobody was inhibited from expressing their opinion - bad or good, foolish or wise. In other words individuals were allowed active participation in the work of the government. He preferred to rule his subjects through peaceful means of persuasion, consent and cooperation. Denying people freedom of expression would lead to discontent thereby ruling unhappy subjects. He obviously believed in the maxim : the chief is the chief by the grace of the people. <sup>50</sup>

His subjects were allowed to express their opinion on his conduct in a direct and simple manner. If they disapproved of his behaviour or conduct they said it with frankness.<sup>51</sup> In spite of all this he remained the supreme master of his country. He had the final say in all the disputes that had to be settled.

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50. M. Damane, The Reign of Moshoeshoe, pp.6-7.

51. Paris Evangelical Mission Society (1835) (Journal des Missions Evangeliques), p.4.

Having succeeded in fostering harmony and contentment in his country Moshweshwe felt safe and free to extend a hand of friendship to other chiefdoms in southern Africa. His friendly overtures were a basis for establishing diplomatic relations with other chiefs throughout southern Africa. It was not an easy undertaking as some chiefs demurred to his endeavours and others acted treacherously. But as he was pertinacious and kind-hearted he succeeded in most cases.

It would appear that Moshweshwe's main objective of establishing diplomatic ties with other chiefs was to create a federation of African chiefdoms, albeit a loose one, and he himself being the dominating figure that was not domineering. He wished to have a peaceful co-existence with other chiefs far and near the Caledon River valley.

had invented an insignia which was called "Khau" - bearing his seal : 'Na Moshoeshoe Moren'a Basotho ke tiisitse', (loosely translated : I am Moshweshwe the king of the Basotho in earnest). The "Khau" identified his envoys and it also granted them safe conduct wherever they were. The essence of the "Khau" was to symbolize his greatness<sup>48</sup> - he had realized what he had cherished as a youngster. It also identified him from other potentates.

His envoys were invested with plenas potentas and were protected by the principle of diplomatic immunity known to the Basotho through the old saying of the wise : "Legosa la morena ha le na molato, molato ke oa khaloli" (the king's envoy is not to blame, only the sender is responsible). He was practising international politics albeit on a minor scale. The envoys were not expected to be chastised for whatever they had to say. Their duty was to deliver their king's message - whatever message - it did not matter. All envoys were expected and duty bound to know and act accordingly to the saying : Legosa la morena ke mahlo le litsebe le molomo oa morena, (an ambassador is the eyes, ears and mouth of the king).<sup>49</sup> It is obvious that the principle of diplomatic immunity had been in existence long before the

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48. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

49. P. Phoofofa, African Diplomatic Conduct, p.18.

## CHAPTER 1

MOSHWESHWE'S RELATIONS WITH CHIEF MOROKA OF THE BAROLONG

Moroka was chief of the Barolong who left Platberg, an area which was situated along the Vaal River, to settle at Thaba Nchu from 1833 to date. The Barolong were given permission to settle at Thaba Nchu by Moshweshwe whose jurisdiction extended up to this place.

Of all the chiefs with whom Moshweshwe established diplomatic relations, Moroka proved to be the most unreliable, sly and difficult to work with. He appeared to be docile in character. It would seem his docility encouraged stronger forces to manipulate him for their own selfish ends, thereby making him lose old friends. He was obviously influenced by the same forces to be precarious and inconsistent in his dealings with Moshweshwe.

The coming of the French missionaries in Lesotho heralded a new era in the history of the Basotho. Before their arrival in 1833 (T. Arbousset, E. Casalis and C. Gosselin who was a carpenter and assistant missionary), the Basotho had no

written records. They relied on their memories to recall the past. Narrating their past experiences was the only method known to them to educate their posterity. They had to have retentive memories to remember all they wished to tell. Part of the circumcision school programme was to test memories by encouraging people (initiates) to compose and recite long praise-poems. History has proved that it is not everyone whose memory is always good in recalling the past. When these missionaries started to record in writing and documents were made available the Basotho were thrilled. Many still regard the year 1833 as an epoch and mistakenly call it : "the beginning of the Basotho history."<sup>1</sup>

When the French missionaries arrived Moshweshwe was already well-established at Thaba Bosiu. The Difaqane wars had almost abated and the survivors were in search of new and better places for resettling. Large tracks of land on the Highveld, in particular, were denuded. Chief Moroka and his people accompanied by their Wesleyan missionaries were plagued by drought and constant fear of Mzilikazi's Matebele hordes and were looking for a better and safe place of settlement. The missionaries : Archbell, Edwards and Jenkins together with Chief Moroka came to Thaba Nchu where they

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1. D. Moremoholo's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 05-07-1988.

found a Sesotho speaking community under the leadership of a man named Moseme who was a vassal of Moshweshwe. They wished to settle there and Moseme took them to Moshweshwe.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the land Moroka's team wished to occupy extended into Chief Sekonyela of the Batlokwa's territory, Sekonyela had to attend their meeting with Moshweshwe at Thaba Basiu.<sup>3</sup> The missionaries who were in the company of Chief Moroka impressed Moshweshwe. It was a known fact that where missionaries were, life was relatively quiet. Moshweshwe granted them permission to settle at Thaba Nchu. To show their gratitude and consolidate their newly established friendship, both Moroka and the missionaries gave Moshweshwe eight head of cattle, thirty-four sheep and five goats.<sup>4</sup>

Both parties then signed a document which was prepared by the Reverend Archbell purporting to acknowledge the land deal. The contents of the document were meaningless to Moshweshwe as he was illiterate. All the Barolong who were at Platberg moved to Thaba Nchu. They were joined by the Griquas of Peter Davids; the Koranas of Gert Taaibosch and the Newlanders of Carolus Baatje. Headman Moseme was requested to take these new arrivals to the following areas : the

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2. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 14-12-1990;  
A sketch of the principal occurrences relative to the government of the Basutos since the year 1833, pp.1-2.
  3. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.
  4. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, p.402.

Griquas were settled at Lishuane; the Koranas at Mpukane and the Newlanders at a place they called New Platberg. Moseme and his followers left Thaba Nchu exclusively to the Barolong and resettled on its fringes.<sup>5</sup>

Moshweshwe strategically placed the newcomers to the places mentioned above. The Korana marauders had been a nuisance for some time. They manaced the Sotho-Tswana communities as cattle-raiders. Their notorious leader was Hendrick.<sup>6</sup> Other than conducting cattle-raids they also murdered the defenceless and innocent people. The areas occupied by these new people would be buffer states between the marauders and the Sotho-Tswana villages.<sup>7</sup> These arrangements minimized Hendricks's marauders attacks. Mission stations were revered and were not easily attacked.

Moshweshwe singled out chief Moroka as the best man with whom to establish diplomatic relations. He preferred him to the Griquas, the Koranas and the Newlanders perhaps because he was black while they were of mixed blood and Moroka had more followers than they did. He invited Moroka and some of his people to Thaba Bosiu to formalize their friendship and a spirit of goodwill developed. Moshweshwe furnished them with

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5. E. Casalis, The Basuto, p.50;  
R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, p.165.
  6. W.C. Holden, A Brief History of Methodism and Methodist Mission in South Africa, p.367;  
E.M. Leoatle, Morena Moshoeshoe Mor'a Mokhachane, p.18.
  7. P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe - Chief of the Basuto, p.51.

their immediate needs as they were still acclamatizing themselves to the new area.<sup>8</sup>

Moshweshwe's benevolence impressed the followers of Moroka that they composed a ditty about him. They even imagined and believed that he was a descendant of their royal family. They regarded him as a man of benevolent disposition.<sup>9</sup> They were grateful that he offered them land to settle on and saved them from leading a nomadic life due (having lived at Motlhana-wa-pitse, Boetsap and then Platberg), to drought and being afflicted by Mzilikazi's hordes.

Moshweshwe continued to be friendly towards the Barolong by giving Moroka's son, Sefunelo, a fire-arm as a present. He warned him to use it for hunting and defence and never against his own people. Moroka, in turn, adopted one of Moshweshwe's sons named Masopha and lived with him at his palace. He also gave him one of the few rare gifts of the time - Kaross.<sup>10</sup> The exchange of gifts involving their sons suggests the establishment of friendship and alliance between Moshweshwe and Moroka.

Moshweshwe developed an interest in fire-arms. He tried to

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8. M. Makhetha's interview, Maseru, 19-11-1991.

9. J.W. Widdicombe, Fourteen Years in Basutoland, p.31.

10. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. I (1832-1852), p.3.

collect as many as possible. As money was not yet in circulation then, he exchanged his grain for guns, gun-powder and lead. The exchange of these items was the job he assigned to the Barolong after coming to an agreement with Chief Moroka. On some occasions the Batlhaping who were based at Bethulie also helped in carrying Moshweshwe's grain to some farmers, traders and even Griquas to exchange for fire-arms.<sup>11</sup> The diplomatic relations between Moroka and Moshweshwe were cordial.

In the meantime the Koranas of Hendrick and other Korana brigands were not deterred for long by the presence of the missionaries and their mission stations. After a while they resumed their murderous acts in the Caledon River valley. To their relief they found Moroka's Barolong to be an easy prey. They were settled along the Riet River and conducted their cattle-raids from there. In 1836 Moroka could not take it any longer and appealed to Moshweshwe for assistance against his tormentors. Moshweshwe came to Moroka's rescue by inflicting heavy losses on these lawless cattle-raiders and recaptured Moroka's cattle.<sup>12</sup> The Barolong were saved from further forays.

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11. M. Damane, Moshoeshoe A Man of Peace, p.5.

12. P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe - Chief of the Basuto, p.51;  
R.C. Germond, Chronicles, p.165.

After all this the relationship between Moshweshwe and Moroka grew stronger. Moroka was invited regularly to attend the Basotho's pitso (National Assembly) as an ally. Interaction between Thaba Nchu and Thaba Bosiu became noticeable. Even though Moroka was living in the land of Moshweshwe he was treated as an equal to Moshweshwe and not as a vassal as it should have been the case.<sup>13</sup> That was Moshweshwe's diplomacy and statemanship.

Missionaries who laboured among the Black communities preferred to and insisted on having direct control of their mission stations. Some went as far as trying to manipulate chiefs in whose land they were settled. Their attitude towards the chiefs was reminiscent of the Popes in Europe before the advent of the Reformation. The Popes tried to control the kings and who ever resisted was threatened with excommunication. Once a king was excommunicated he lost control over his subjects as he was ostracized. It was a terrible punishment hence the argument : l'etat dans l'eglise ou l'eglise dans l'etat (the state under/in the church or the church under/in the state). The Wesleyan missionaries at Thaba Nchu wanted to have things their way and would brook no interference from within or outside their mission

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13. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. I, p.6.

stations' administrative affairs. To them a good Christian was the one who offered no resistance to their bidding. Such a person ought to put on European clothes, live in a four-cornered structure (house) and not a shack or a rondavel, be a monagamist and break away from traditional practices which, according to them, were for heathens. Moshweshwe was a thorn in the flesh of the Wesleyan missionaries at Thaba Nchu. They did not like his relationship with their "Christian" Moroka.<sup>14</sup> The Reverend James Archbell was the most vociferous in opposing Moshweshwe's diplomatic ties with "his" Moroka.

Chief Moroka and the Reverend Archbell tried to detach Thaba Nchu from Moshweshwe's jurisdiction. Archbell then produced a document he had drawn up in 1833 as evidence that Moshweshwe (together with Sekonyela) had "sold" Thaba Nchu to the Barolong and the Wesleyan missionaries. The eight head of cattle, thirty-four sheep and five goats which were given to Moshweshwe symbolized a business transaction where change of land ownership took place. Such an event was never heard of among the indigenous Black communities of Southern Africa. Europeans can buy and sell land freely. Black people do not do that : land is a communal property. No one

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14. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.

- including chiefs - could sell land. Moroka knew this and yet he supported Archbell's allegation. The stock given to Moshweshwe was peho - showing gratitude and acknowledgement of having been well received in his land. Perhaps the Wesleyan missionaries were not aware that "... neither Moshoeshoe nor anyone else could, by native custom, alienate any of the land he held in trust for the tribe."<sup>15</sup> The Basotho and some of the Barolong who were still regarding Moshweshwe as their saviour, were upset and shocked at Moroka's sudden change of attitude. He and Archbell wanted to secede from Moshweshwe's main territory. Accusations and counter-accusations ensued. Moroka was proving to be an ingrate so it was said by the Basotho.

As the Thaba Nchu secession became an endless controversy, a certain Wesleyan missionary named James Cameron in 1840 reviewed the whole case. He made a thorough study of the 1833 document and came to the conclusion that Archbell had given a blank sheet of paper to Moshweshwe and Sekonyela to put their crosses and subsequently filled particulars without the two chiefs being made aware of what he wrote. Cameron then informed the Superintendent of the Wesleyan missions in South-east Africa, the Reverend William Shaw, of his

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15. G. Tylden, The Rise of the Basuto, p.22.

findings. He stated that Thaba Nchu was never a "bought" land as it was still Moshweshwe's territory.<sup>16</sup> It would appear his findings were of no effect as there is no reaction of Shaw recorded anywhere. Archbell wanted a free hand in Thaba Nchu and wished to keep Moshweshwe at arm's length, hence the "bought" land question. On the other hand Sekonyela made no comment on this controversy.

When Moshweshwe was informed about the "written agreement" of Archbell he tersely responded by saying that it was a misapprehension of facts.<sup>17</sup> Despite Cameron bringing new facts to light, Moroka persisted in claiming the secession of Thaba Nchu and declaring its autonomy. Many of his people started to support him and said that Thaba Nchu was bought.<sup>18</sup> They knew that the buying or selling of land was not practised by the black people of Southern Africa yet supported Moroka's stand. It must be remembered that Moroka was a politician and the changing or denial of statements made was and is common among many politicians. The prevailing conditions and events supported his stand, although it was not true.

The Voortrekkers were already in the land between the Vaal and the Orange Rivers towards the end of the 1830s. Their

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16. L. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds - Moshoeshe of Lesotho 1786-1870, pp.129-130.

17. G. Lagden, The Basutos, The Mountaineers and Their Country, p.163.

18. D.A.M. Motshumi's interview, Mafikeng, 26-01-1991.

presence saved many Sotho-Tswana communities who were suffering from Mzilikazi's hordes' depredations. In the last encounter Hendrik Potgieter had against Mzilikazi, Moroka and some chiefs sent their warriors to help him (Potgieter) defeat their tormentors. Moroka and the Voortrekkers of Potgieter became friends. After the Difaqane wars big tracks of land were left denuded and attracted more Voortrekkers, and many of the survivors of the black tribes also wished to re-occupy these areas. As both the blacks and the Voortrekkers were farmers both needed land for agricultural purposes and this led to endless conflicts and clashes.<sup>19</sup>

Moshweshwe kept out of these conflicts as he believed that the Voortrekkers were en route to the north and would not be staying long. It is interesting to know that Moroka was the man who apprised Moshweshwe about the activities of the Voortrekkers in the land between the Orange and Vaal Rivers.<sup>20</sup> He was so docile that he tried to please everybody. He sided with Archbell over the land issue; he befriended the Voortrekkers because they defeated Mzilikazi and sent messages about the activities of the Voortrekkers to Moshweshwe to try and appease him. He was apparently tactless. He had to be good because he was a "true"

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19. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa, pp.414-415.

20. P. Becker, Hill of Destiny, p.117.

Christian".<sup>21</sup> To the Barolong he was a peace loving chief who never clashed with the Voortrekkers. On the other hand one must be careful not to mistake weakness for kindness.

The Voortrekkers' defeat of Mzilikazi who was believed to be a formidable warrior, instilled great fear among the Sotho-Tswana communities on the highveld. Many of the Basotho including Moshweshwe's father, Mokhachane, and uncle, Libe, felt so uneasy that they asked him (Moshweshwe) to do something about the Voortrekkers. He still believed that they were passing to the north and not much could be done to temporary sojourners. When many of them started to occupy huge areas of arable land, some of which belonged to Moshweshwe, he looked for a greater force to help him in solving this problem - he appealed to the British at the Cape Colony.<sup>22</sup> The British were quick in responding to his request for protection. It was an opportunity they had been waiting for - to pursue the Voortrekkers into the interior. The coming in of the British on the highveld led to a clash of interests : the Blacks, the Voortrekkers and the British and eventually wars broke out.

In 1843 George Napier, the governor of the Cape Colony,

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21. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

22. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991;

H. Suzman, Moeshoeshoe Memorial Lecture (1972), (pam.) p.7.

introduced the so called "Napier Treaty" which demarcated Moshweshwe's territory from the Griquas of Adam Kok in the Philippolis region. The rest of the other communities were within Moshweshwe's jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> Moroka and other chiefs protested strongly as their "independence" was cancelled or over-ruled by this treaty. Moshweshwe had earlier on (1836) put out feelers through Moorosi to Andries Stockenstrom, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Cape, about the British reaction if he were to befriend them.<sup>24</sup> The British reaction was positive, hence the "Napier Treaty" which allied Moshweshwe to the British Cape government. The treaty was invidious as it was a detriment to the aspirations of the Voortrekkers and Moroka. On the credit side Moshweshwe's diplomacy won him a strong force and his territorial integrity was acknowledged even though it was for a short time.

Sir George Napier was succeeded by Sir Peregrine Maitland as governor of the Cape Colony. Moroka and the Wesleyan missionaries continued to lodge their complaints of dissatisfaction at Moshweshwe's expanded territory due to the Napier Treaty. In 1846 Maitland sent a Major Henry Douglas Warden to maintain order on the highveld and was stationed

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23. A. Coats, Basutoland, pp.32-33.

24. M. Damane's interview, Maseru, 11-01-1991;  
Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.

at Bloemfontein. In the same year the War of the Axe (Seventh Frontier War) broke out and Maitland's attention was focused on this war. Moshweshwe took advantage of this war and sent his relatives and other people to settle at Thaba Nchu and to other areas where there had been complaints against his jurisdiction emanating from the Napier Treaty. He settled his people at these places to challenge whoever was against his jurisdiction and was fed-up with Moroka's behaviour. Maitland ignored him but rebuked Warden for not being firm enough in handling Moshweshwe.<sup>25</sup> In 1847 Maitland was recalled and Sir Henry Pottinger became his successor. He was a governor for 11 months : from February to December 1847, and did nothing of importance. He was followed by Sir Harry Smith in 1848.

Sir Harry Smith was interested in the affairs of the interior - the highveld in particular. He was intransigent in character. In May 1848 he wrote Moshweshwe a letter urging him to accept the Christian faith and prepare himself for the eternal life. He would then be the friend of the British queen (Victoria) and all her subjects. Moshweshwe was not impressed and did not respond to Smith's exhorting letter. Smith was disappointed and viewed Moshweshwe as a "simple

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25. D. Oakes (Edit.), Illustrated History of South Africa, p.140.



minded savage". He then turned to Moroka and the two became friends.<sup>26</sup> He did not have a problem in winning Moroka to his side as the latter was already "softened" by the Wesleyan missionaries.

Moshweshwe had his reservations with regard to Christianity. Accepting Christianity would have meant abandoning his traditional culture and even turn against the belief in the spirits of the dead. It was something he could not do. He was convinced that his ancestral spirits were better than the "Saviour" the missionaries preached about. He was not against Christianity as long as it did not affect his personal private life. He allowed and encouraged his people to be Christians. He learnt a lot about the Bible and was a regular church-goer. At Thaba Bosiu mission church there is a stone-chair where on he (Moshweshwe) used to sit whenever he attended church services on Sundays.

Towards the end of his life he told Adele - the daughter of Adolph Mabilie one of the French missionaries who was based at Morija - that : "To me Jesus Christ is but one of the many ancestral spirits. One of your own ancestral spirits. He is by no means superior to the ancestral spirits of our tribe

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26. S.M. Molema, Chief Moroka - His Life, His Times, His Country and His People, p.71.

.... the spirits of my fore-fathers have served me so well that I can see no good reason to forsake them so late in my life."<sup>27</sup> It was obvious that Moshweshwe would not be converted.

Missionaries who laboured among the Sotho-Tswana communities on the highveld preached against wars. Waging wars was unChristian. Many members of these communities came to believe that the Europeans or white people do not indulge in wars. In August 1848 the Battle of Boomplaats broke out between the English, led by Sir Harry Smith, and the Voortrekkers, led by Andries Pretorius. It was shock for the Sotho-Tswana communities and they started to doubt the teaching and the sincerity of the missionaries. A large number of them left the church very much discouraged. It was not an easy task to convince them again. Some returned while others kept away for ever.<sup>28</sup> The Barolong were the only exception. They remained attached to their church dauntlessly.<sup>29</sup>

Compared to Moshweshwe, Moroka had been exposed to the Christian teachings and doctrine early in his life when the Wesleyan missionaries did their missionary work among the

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27. N. Mokhehle, *Moshoeshoe I Profile se-Moshoeshoe*, p.94.

28. A. Brutsch's interview, Moriija, Lesotho, 12-01-1991.

29. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

Barolong while they were still at a place called Motlhana-wa-pitse. Moroka, in fact, became a Christian very much against his father, Chief Sefunelo. When Sefunelo died the Wesleyan missionaries persuaded the Barolong royal councillors to declare Moroka - the converted - the successor instead of the rightful other son of Sefunelo.<sup>30</sup> He was the missionaries' man and became their loyal follower. Sir Harry had no difficulty in befriending him after failing to convince Moshweshwe.

The presence of the British in the interior aggravated the situation. Tension mounted. The relationship between Moshweshwe and Moroka was growing worse. After the Battle of Boomplaats Smith told the chiefs that he would maintain the status quo as far as the boundaries were concerned and would not interfere in their internal affairs. In other words he was maintaining the Napier Treaty of 1843 which allowed Moshweshwe to control a large area of the highveld. While this pleased Moshweshwe Moroka was unhappy together with his missionaries. A short while later Smith went against his promise.\* He instructed the British Resident, Major Warden, to draw up new boundaries between the various areas occupied by the black chiefs. Each chief would be

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30. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

\* There is a strong feeling - among the Basotho (I spoke to) in Lesotho - that Smith's change of mind was due to the influence of the Wesleyan missionaries at Thaba Nchu who loathed to be under the jurisdiction of the pagan Moshweshwe. An independent Moroka would be easy to manipulate and they would achieve their objectives of converting the Barolong through him.

independent and be detached from Moshweshwe due to these boundary lines.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1849 Warden promulgated the controversial Warden Line which reduced Moshweshwe's territory to the benefit of Moroka and other chiefs. To make the Warden Line operative Warden prevailed on Moshweshwe to sign on the drawn up map under the threat of allowing the belligerent Batlokwa and the Koranas to attack him. Moshweshwe was bitter and disappointed as the directive of Warden robbed him of his arable land. Smith encouraged Warden to be hard with Moshweshwe.<sup>32</sup> Moshweshwe's process of amalgamating various Sotho-Tswana and other chiefdoms was disturbed and almost came to an end.<sup>33</sup>

In response to Moroka's volte-face Moshweshwe wrote him this letter as quoted in parts : "My dispositions towards you are still the same .... at the same time I wish to be persuaded that nothing will induce me to relinquish my right to the country in which you reside .... I am informed that I have been represented as having hostile intension towards you. Those rumours are quite unfounded. I may also say with sincerity that the unpleasantness you have occasioned, I am

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31. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, p.418.  
 32. S.M. Molema, Chief Moroka, p.70;  
 M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, pp.418-419.  
 33. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I, pp.55-56.

ready to forgive and forget." <sup>34</sup> Moroka did not reply to this letter. Even though Moroka was proving to be arrogant and showing a great dislike for Moshweshwe the latter remained pertinacious and nothing was to daunt him.

Smith, to the displeasure of Moshweshwe and the delight of Moroka, the Wesleyan chiefs and their missionaries, openly declared Moroka the paramount chief. <sup>35</sup> It was imperium in imperio. It was obvious that Sir Harry Smith was fighting Moroka's battle and subtly championing the course of the Wesleyan missionaries against Moshweshwe's French missionaries who could do nothing against the Cape Colonial authorities.

The Warden Line was a thorn in the flesh of the Basotho. Many of them including Moshweshwe's sons and brothers openly defied this boundary line and cattle raids ensued unabated. <sup>36</sup> This defiance was a challenge and an affront to Warden and Moroka.

In the meantime an old enemy of Moroka, chief Moletsane, had settled near Thaba Nchu at Mekuatleng. Moletsane was chief of the Bataung, a Sesotho speaking tribe, and was a friend

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34. N. Mokhehle, Moeshoeshoe I, pp.55-56.

35. P. Becker, Hill of Destiny, p.172.

36. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, p.419.

of Moshweshwe. He was accused of having attacked and sacked Umpukane - a Wesleyan mission station. Various neighbouring communities including Moroka's Barolong went to attack Mekuatleng. However, this attack did not destroy Moletsane. A short while later Moletsane singled out Moroka for revenge. He attacked Thaba Nchu without any mercy. He captured about four thousand cattle and a thousand horses. He gave some of his spoils to Moshweshwe. Moroka complained to Warden. The latter pleaded with Moletsane to return some of the cattle he had captured. About two thousand cattle were returned to Moroka. He was not content with the number of cattle that were returned to him and Warden promised to help him again at an appropriate time.<sup>37</sup> To the dismay of Moletsane and Moshweshwe Warden acknowledged Moroka as the peaceable and supreme chief in what was then still called the Orange River Sovereignty<sup>38</sup> (and the Orange Free State since 1854).

The Basotho continued to defy the Warden Line which had reduced the size of their land, by conducting cattle raids and occupying the area between the old Napier Treaty boundary line and the Warden Line. Warden viewed this as a challenge. He ordered a group of Xhosa called Mfengu, who were settled in the Caledon River valley, to drive the Basotho beyond the

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37. S.M. Molema, Chief Moroka, pp.76-77.

38. P. Becker, Hill of Destiny, p.172.

Warden Line towards Thaba Bosiu. The Mfengu were led by an English man named Thomas Bailie. The defiant Basotho defeated Bailie and his Mfengu warriors.<sup>39</sup> Many were killed and the survivors fled. It was disheartening and Warden was infuriated.

Warden then decided and planned to attack Moshweshwe. He allied with Moroka who was accompanied by his son, Tshipinare, and their Barolong warriors; the Griquas of Adam Kok and Peter Davids; the Koranas of Taaibosch; Sekonyela and his Batlokwa as well as some Mfengu with their Khoikhoi helpers. Almost all of them were ministered to by the Wesleyan missionaries. Moletsane was the only one who acted in concert with Moshweshwe. Both of them were having French missionaries.

Warden provoked the war by demanding six thousand cattle and three hundred horses within 10 days from Moshweshwe.<sup>40</sup> He knew this could not be done. He wanted to humiliate Moshweshwe to the benefit of Moroka in particular whose volte-face attitude towards Moshweshwe was supported by the Wesleyan missionaries and some farmers. Warden and his associates-in-arms attacked Moletsane at Mekuatleng.

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39. D. Oakes, *Illustrated History*, p.142.

40. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, p.419.

Moshweshwe quickly came to join forces with Moletsane and on 30th June 1851 at the Battle of Kononyana (Viervoer) Warden suffered a humiliating defeat.<sup>41</sup> His pride was clipped. Moroka and his Barolong played an active role and suffered most. Moletsane followed Moroka to Thaba Nchu and continued to harass him. The latter fled to Winburg where he remained until the cessation of hostilities.<sup>42</sup>

The Battle of Kononyane must have left a bad taste in Moshweshwe's mouth. He had least expected it. He had befriended the English (1843) hoping that he would have a strong ally and the two would live in harmony and he would benefit a lot from them. But that was not to be. They were making life difficult for him and were very provocative. But he was wise enough to avoid a direct confrontation with them. He only reacted when he was pushed to the extreme<sup>43</sup> - as it was the case with Warden (the Battle of Kononyane) and Cathcart (the Battle of Berea).

After the Battle of Kononyane Moshweshwe did not turn against Moroka or tried to usurp Thaba Nchu. He continued to show a hand of friendship instead of entertaining the bitterness of the past. In 1854 when Sir George Clerk was sent to the

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41. P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s, pp.112-113;

K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, pp.67-69.

42. S.M. Molema, Chief Moroka, p.79.

43. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

interior to disannex the Orange River Sovereignty and restore it to the previous occupants Moshweshwe invited Moroka to accompany him to meet Clerk as representatives of their respective countries. He did not take offence against the unscrupulous Moroka.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the Barolong appreciated what Moshweshwe had done for them since their arrival at Thaba Nchu and continued to revere him. Others supported Moroka in his stand against Moshweshwe. They thought that Moshweshwe wanted Moroka to be subservient to him. Moroka feared that Moshweshwe wished to dominate him. This was the Wesleyan missionaries' propaganda to keep the two separate and the susceptible Moroka did not realize that. He adopted a negative and hostile attitude towards Moshweshwe.<sup>45</sup> His attitude of being indifferent elicited a harsh reaction from Moshweshwe's people who regarded him as an ingrate. All what he did proved that Thaba Nchu was not, and would never be his.<sup>46</sup>

As if to rebuke Moroka for his behaviour some Barolong women openly talked of Moshweshwe as a chief who never began war but fought only when he was attacked and had no fear of war and fought to the extent of absolute necessity.<sup>47</sup> There is

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44. Germond, Chronicles, p.225.

45. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

46. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.

47. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I, p.75.

no better discription of Moshweshwe than this. He was a man who preferred to foster harmony and peaceful co-existence with other chiefs to achieve his objectives.

Even though Moshweshwe remained illiterate he realized the value of education. He encouraged some of his sons to be educated and help him to understand the world around him. He was not going to rely on the French missionaries all the time. His sons had to understand politics and help where possible. Cape Town was their centre of learning.

One of his sons named Jeremiah was sent to England for his education and while there met Moroka's son called Samuel\* who had also gone there for his education. The two became friends. After a while Jeremiah died and was buried there. Samuel played a great role towards the funeral of Jeremiah. Members of the royal family in Lesotho were highly impressed and pleased. Samuel was indeed a true friend. He had endeared himself to them by his thoughtfulness.<sup>48</sup>

In 1870 Moshweshwe died without regaining Moroka's friendship despite all the efforts of winning Moroka to his side. Ten years later Moroka followed Moshweshwe. He died having not

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\* Both Jeremiah and Samuel had been baptized and these were their Christian names. Their names were Dibopiwa and Lehulere respectively. Christian names superseded other names.  
48. Damane's interview, 11-01-1991.

named his successor to the throne. A controversy ensued between Tshipinare and Samuel. The former was the son of Moroka's brother who died while his son was still very young and Moroka married his widow. From this marriage Samuel was born. Tshipinare knew no other father than Moroka. He grew to be a man under Moroka and became his right-hand man. He helped in the running of state affairs and led the Barolong warriors in expeditions and wars.<sup>49</sup> When Samuel returned from England his supporters proclaimed him the successor to the late Moroka. Tshipinare's followers refused to acknowledge Samuel. All meetings which were held to resolve this case ended in an impasse.<sup>50</sup> Conditions changed for the worse and civil war was imminent.

Samuel decided to leave Thaba Nchu for a short while and settled at Tswaing (near the present day Florisbad in the O.F.S.). In 1884 President J.H. Brand of the Orange Free State Republic was brought in as an arbitrator. He declared Tshipinare the successor of Moroka and chief of the Barolong. Samuel's supporters would not hear of it. They alleged that some whites influenced President Brand in appointing Tshipinare. Other than Tshipinare being not the biological son of Moroka he was docile and was not learned and the

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49. J. Moroka's interview, Thaba Nchu, 12-07-1986.

50. Damane's interview, 11-01-1991.

whites would easily manipulate him to their detriment as the Wesleyan missionaries did with Moroka. In spite of these allegations President Brand could not reverse his decision. Samuel's people hatched a conspiracy to remove Tshipinare from the throne. The army and the chief's body-guard were lured away from the palace. In their absence the palace was set alight and Tshipinare was killed.<sup>51</sup>

Samuel became the new chief of the Barolong of Thaba Nchu. His uncles and other relatives were glad that the rightful man was on the throne. The Basotho tacitly approved of Samuel's chieftainship. They were looking forward to the resumption of diplomatic relations which Moroka failed to maintain or sustain.

According to G. Lagden there was a rumour that the Basotho had conspired with Samuel to oust Tshipinare from power.<sup>52</sup> The death of Tshipinare could not be treated like any other death. Samuel and his accomplices were summoned to court in Bloemfontein to account for the death of Tshipinare and the burning down of the palace. As Thaba Nchu was not within the jurisdiction of the Orange Free State no judgement could be passed on Samuel and his accomplices.<sup>53</sup> However, he was

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51. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

52. G. Lagden, The Basutos, The Mountaineers and Country  
Vol. II, p.569;  
Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

53. G. Lagden, The Basutos, p.569.

banned from Thaba Nchu for a period of 25 years. He went to settle in Lesotho at a place called Sekameng. Many of his followers followed him to settle there. Their descendants are still found there.<sup>54</sup> Despite the hospitality Samuel received in Lesotho he left for Botswana and settled near the present day Francistown.<sup>55</sup>

There was no claimant to the throne of the Barolong and Thaba Nchu was leaderless. President Brand then annexed the whole of Thaba Nchu.<sup>56</sup> Sometime later Tshipinare's daughter got married to a man called Fenyang. Very much against the wish of the Barolong Fenyang was declared chief of Thaba Nchu by the Orange Free State government. Fenyang was a de facto ruler as he was not a member of any royal family.<sup>57</sup> Since the death of Moroka Thaba Nchu had never had an acceptable ruler to all the people - wrangles and disapprovals characterized their reaction to their new rulers. Some Basotho that I talked to believe that it was a curse on Moroka for his thanklessness towards Moshweshwe.

The diplomatic relations Moshweshwe tried to establish with Moroka did not last. It was a disappointment for Moshweshwe who had hoped that he would live in peace with his fellow potentate.

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54. Damane's interview, 11-01-1991.

55. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

56. G. Tylden, The Rise of the Basuto, p.195;  
J.W. Widdicombe, Fourteen Years, pp.246-248.

57. Motshumi's interview, 26-01-1991.

## CHAPTER 2

MOSHWESHWE AND THE BAPHUTHI CHIEF, MOOROSI

Moorosi was chief of the Baphuthi who were settled in the southern part of Lesotho presently known as Quthing. He and Moshweshwe became friends since 1825 - a year after the latter had settled at Thaba Bosiu. Their friendship had been controversial until 1870 when Moshweshwe died.

The Baphuthi were the last of the three Nguni communities who were the first Iron Age communities to settle in Lesotho. The first two were the Maphetla and the Mapolane. These communities were from the Thukela River valley (Tugela) in Natal. They entered Lesotho (which was then occupied by the San) at different times. The Maphetla were the first and the Baphuthi were the last. All the three groups were of the Mazizi origin.<sup>1</sup>

The Baphuthi after leaving Natal settled near Ntswanatsatsi (Cornelia) in the present day Orange Free State. They settled along the Namahadi (Wilge) River. They were called the Mazizi then which was the common name for all the Nguni

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1. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern, p.24.

tribes from Natal. Near Ntswanatsatsi they were the neighbours of a Sotho-speaking community called Maphuthing. The two lived for a long time together until the Mazizi adopted the customs and the totemic name of the Maphuthing which was Phuthi (duiker). Thereafter the Maphuthing dubbed them the Baphuthi. Sometime afterwards the two communities had a skirmish and the Baphuthi left and went to settle in Lesotho<sup>2</sup> where Moshweshwe found them in the early part of the 19th Century when their chief was Mukuoane, the father of Moorosi.

According to their tradition their genealogy has their chiefs as follows : Dlamini; Laake; Titi; Tsele; Khanyane; Kholenyi; Thibela; Mokhoebi; Mokuoane and Moorosi. The number of these chiefs denote the length of their stay in the Orange Free State. They might have been there for a century or two. The name Baphuthi was used for the first time during the reign of Titi.<sup>3</sup>

In Lesotho they spread themselves between Thaba Bosiu and the Orange River. As they were Iron Age people they became traders who exchanged iron-made hoes and red-ochre for all sorts of items including peltries with their Sotho-Tswana

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2. M. Damane, Moorosi Morena wa Baphuthi, p.7; Ellenberger, pp.24-25.
  3. Ellenberger, Histori ea Basotho, p.30.

neighbours in the Orange Free State <sup>4</sup> (exchange of iron made articles was a general practice on the southern highveld).

The unpredictable Moorosi was born in about 1795 at Thabana Morena in Lesotho - the son of Chief Mokuoane. When the Difaqane wars broke out he was already a young man in his late twenties. Fearing to be involved in these wars many of the Baphuthi fled to the Cape Colony where some of them became farm labourers. The core of the tribe remained with Mokuoane and later went to Bolepeletsa in the Quthing district. At this time Mokuoane was growing old and Moorosi was doing most of the administrative duties of the Baphuthi. Mokuoane and Moorosi, after realizing that the Maphetla and the Mapolane were disintegrating, endeavoured to incorporate them and build a strong Baphuthi tribe. The San were also incorporated. <sup>5</sup> The Baphuthi were gradually becoming people of mixed blood and even spoke a variety of languages.

As the Difaqane wars continued to rage the Baphuthi were not spared as every part of the land between the Orange and the Vaal Rivers was affected. The Baphuthi were subjected to regular attacks. The survivors, including Moorosi and his father, fled and ensconced in the mountains. There they

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4. R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, p.350.

5. G. Lagden, The Basutos, Vol. II, pp.484-485.

preyed on the unsuspecting Amaondo and carried off their cattle. The cannibals under the leadership of Motlejoa mauled the Baphuthi until Moorosi and his father decided to retaliate by waging a war against the cannibals. Many of the man-eaters were killed and many others fled to other parts of the country. Some of the cannibals fled to the environs of Thaba Bosiu. Their presence there made some people uneasy. In the meantime the Baphuthi continued to hunt them down with an aim of exterminating them. When Moshweshwe heard of this (1825) he sent his brother, Mohale, to the land of the Baphuthi to investigate the matter and re-connoitre the whole of the Quthing area.<sup>6</sup>

When Mohale met the Baphuthi a skirmish broke out and Chief Mokuoane was subdued. Mohale then returned to Thaba Bosiu as a conqueror of the Baphuthi and brought along their captured women and children. To secure their release Mokuoane had to have some cattle. He undertook a cattle raiding expedition to the land of the Thembu in the Cape Colony. He returned with many cattle and took some of them to Moshweshwe to ransom his women and children.<sup>7</sup> This was done and Mokuoane returned to Bolepeletsa with his people.

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6. L. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, p.54.

7. Ibid., p.54; M. Damane's interview, Maseru, 05-04-1991.

Moshweshwe had not been long settled at Thaba Bosiu - he had been there since the previous year (1824). He had, prior to settling at Thaba Bosiu, suffered a lot at the hands of the Batlokwa who were then ruled by Manthatise. His meeting with Mokuoane heralded the first establishment of diplomatic relation with the black chiefs. He needed some help to withstand further attacks from the prowling attackers and marauders of the Difaqane.

Moshweshwe and the Baphuthi chief established diplomatic relations. It was just unfortunate that a skirmish preceded their friendship thereby making the Baphuthi to feel like living in the shadow of Moshweshwe. Moorosi who was soon to succeed his aging father gave Moshweshwe a wonderful white ox and a horse as gifts to consolidate their newly established diplomatic ties.<sup>8</sup> He even spent some days at Thaba Bosiu helping Moshweshwe to master horse riding.<sup>9</sup>

After these incidents there developed regular movements between Thaba Bosiu and Quthing. The two chiefs had become allies and Moshweshwe accepted the Baphuthi chief as his equal and even shared their personal secrets.<sup>10</sup> Old Mokuoane towards the end of the 1820s had already bequeathed the

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8. Leselinyana, 06-05-1921.

9. M. Damane's interview, 05-04-1991.

10. Moeletsi oa Basotho (newspaper), 09-12-1979.

leadership of the Baphuthi to Moorosi. In 1829 Moshweshwe's heir, Letsie, and the boys of his age had to go to a circumcision school. Moshweshwe needed cattle to slaughter for his people to celebrate his son having reached the age of manhood. Moorosi informed him of abundant cattle in the Cape Colony at the villages of Chiefs Mtirara and Ngubencuka. Moorosi had established how careless and loose the sheperds were. Moorosi and Moshweshwe undertook a cattle raiding expedition and returned with many cattle which helped him (Moshweshwe) to meet the needs of Letsie's going to the circumcision school.<sup>11</sup> According to a report in the Leselinyana the raided Xhosa groups did not follow their cattle raiders instead they went for the white farmers' cattle and some loose Khoikhoi groups and took away their cattle thereby precipitating endless problems in the eastern Cape Colony.<sup>12</sup> This action strengthened the diplomatic relations between the two chiefs (Moshweshwe and Moorosi).

In 1835 Moorosi invited Moshweshwe to yet another expedition of cattle raiding in the eastern Cape. This time the Amapondo groups or clans were to be the victims. Preparations were made and many of Moshweshwe's followers

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11. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 12-10-1990.

12. Leselinyana, 13-05-1921.

including his brother, Makhabane, joined the expedition. It was not easy this time - the Amapondo resisted and a fierce war ensued and Makhabane was one of the many who were killed. It was a disastrous adventure but Moshweshwe and Moorosi returned with a few cattle. Notwithstanding this episode the two chiefs became great partners in cattle raids. Their general focus was the Cape Colony and they amassed a lot of cattle and became wealthy.<sup>13</sup> While Moorosi's wealth boosted his political and economic position and even made him a rich chief of the Baphuthi, Moshweshwe used his share of the booty to advance his course of building a large following and thereby formed a nation - the Basotho nation. He did this by helping the needy people and refugees by lending them cattle under the "Mafisa" system. This system created loyal followers and supporters.<sup>14</sup>

Moorosi had proved to be a brave and daring chief and Moshweshwe must have felt more secured to have established diplomatic ties with such a man. There had been a steady flow of some Xhosa dissident groups into the interior and adding to the problems of the Difaqane. Some of these groups were criminals who had escaped prosecution in the Cape Colony. These people continued with lawlessness. Moshweshwe

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13. Thompson, Survival, p.65.

14. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

requested Moorosi, who was in the southern side of Lesotho, to stop them from entering Lesotho and defend the southern region from attacks.<sup>15</sup> Moorosi's occupation of this area was of strategic importance to Moshweshwe. It was not just to forestall possible attacks from the Xhosa but also to stop the white forces from entering his land.

Whenever Moshweshwe was in trouble or envisaged danger he duly consulted Moorosi. In most serious cases the two acted jointly. When the Voortrekkers had clashes with Moshweshwe Moorosi was always ready to lend a hand. In 1835 when a Cape Colony governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban visited Grahamstown, Moshweshwe felt the need of meeting him. He was unable to undertake the trip to Grahamstown and as Moorosi was more in the south and therefore nearer to Grahamstown, he sent him there as a proxy. Moorosi travelled to Grahamstown to meet D'Urban and returned with a message of goodwill for Moshweshwe.<sup>16</sup> In this way Moshweshwe had laid a foundation of friendship with the Cape Colony's governors.

Sometime later when the Cape Colonial governors had become friendly towards Moshweshwe, the latter relayed messages to them through Moorosi. As Moorosi could speak various Nguni

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15. Thompson, Survival, p.65.

16. Damane's interview, 05-04-1991.

dialects Moshweshwe found it fitting to send him to convey messages to the Nguni chiefs with whom he had established friendly ties. Whenever he called for a pitso Moorosi was informed and duly attended. His advices were appreciated by Moshweshwe. The two chiefs also shared their problems and often acted jointly.<sup>17</sup>

It would appear, as time went on, Moorosi felt uncertain about his position. While he and Moshweshwe acted as equal partners and each representing his followers Moshweshwe was commanding more respect than he did. Perhaps he felt that he was too sub-servient to Moshweshwe to rank as his equal. Moshweshwe on the other hand, believed in the primus inter pares policy (being the dominating figure amongst the equals). Moorosi decided to detach himself from Moshweshwe and end their friendship. Moshweshwe did not want this to happen. He valued their diplomatic relations. The southern side of Lesotho was having a flow of the dissident Xhosa groups and some marauding Griqua and Koranna bands and Moshweshwe wished to neutralize their activities by having somebody to stave off their flow into the land. So Moorosi would be the man to help in this regard.<sup>18</sup>

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17. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

18. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

Moorosi was adamant and preferred to be on his own. He had apparently forgotten that his people had been vanquished as far back as 1825 by Moshweshwe. He was still young then to have participated in the war, but his father, Mokuoane made a plea to Moshweshwe to end their hostilities and the two lived in harmony thereafter. But Moorosi was trying to change all this by adopting a rebellious attitude.

One of Moshweshwe's methods or strategies of bringing other chiefs under his domain was to place a missionary (whose protector he was) in the chief's land. The presence of a missionary in such a place meant the land was Moshweshwe's as the missionary relied on Moshweshwe's protection and support. This was done in a subtle manner not to arouse suspicion (or ill-feelings) of Moshweshwe's intension. After all missionaries preached peace, harmony and obedience. Normally their teachings discouraged resistance against authority and rebellious behaviour.

To try to bring Moorosi who was openly unrepentant Moshweshwe decided to establish a mission station in the territory of the Baphuthi. Prudent as ever, he informed Moorosi in advance about the establishment of a mission station. In

1843 Moshweshwe and the prospective missionary, Christian Schrupf, of the French Missionary Society, came to Maphutseng - an area under the jurisdiction of Moorosi. They were to erect a mission station called Bethesda.<sup>19</sup> Moorosi resented Moshweshwe's idea of bringing a missionary in his territory. He felt that his authority and integrity as a chief were being undermined. On the day of Moshweshwe's and Schrupf's arrival in his land he went away to avoid meeting them. He was not so discourteous as to make them enter his territory without a formal reception - he delegated a man named Qhamane to meet them and even welcome them.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever differences that existed between Moshweshwe and Moorosi the missionary Schrupf kept aloof. He was more concerned with the welfare of the newly established mission station than taking sides in the controversy between the two chiefs.

Missionaries insisted on obedience from the converted members of their teachings. A chief who accepted the Christian faith was expected to obey the biddings of a missionary. In other words the missionary would control the state - albeit indirectly. As soon as a chief had become a converted man

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19. Damane, Moorosi, p.17.

20. Ibid., p.18.

he offered very little resistance to the teachings of the missionary - and all his subjects had to follow suit. The missionaries generally viewed and regarded the social life of a chief and his subjects as paganism and constantly condemned almost all their activities. Disobeying and rebelling against a missionary was taboo. Moshweshwe took cognizance of this. Converted subjects of the chief turned to side with the missionary if there was a dispute between the chief and the missionary.<sup>21</sup> In sending Christian Schrupf to the land of Moorosi he wished to break the chief of the Baphuthi's resistance and thereby nip him in the bud.

It was ironical for Moshweshwe to expect chiefs elsewhere to obey missionaries when he himself did not obey them. He lived in harmony with them and even protected them against attacks. He allowed them a free hand in all their activities but he himself refused to accept the Christian faith. It was strange that despite his opposition to the Christian faith he was a regular church-goer. It is a known fact in Lesotho that Moshweshwe knew many Biblical stories and would even quote them to illustrate a point and yet he remained non-committal to the faith. In his opinion Christianity could not replace the traditional religion which embraced the belief

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21. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, 14-12-1990.

in the powers of the spirits of the dead. He had his fears about Christian beliefs and yet (for political reasons) wished other chiefs to accept it.

Moorosi returned to his home long after Moshweshwe had returned to Thaba Bosiu. His strange behaviour perturbed Moshweshwe and strategic plans for the safety of his country would be shattered if Moorosi continued in that manner. His return eased the tension that was building up between them (he and Moshweshwe) and he apparently lived in harmony with the missionary, Schrupf, as there had been no report to the contrary. But in 1846 he left Maphutseng and migrated to Tulumaneng near the confluence of the Orange and Tele Rivers.<sup>22</sup>

The reason for his moving to Tulumaneng - far from the mission station - is still unknown. There are two versions for his action of migrating : one is that he was still smarting under Moshweshwe's idea of having brought a missionary in his territory and the other one is that he was opposed to Christianity.<sup>23</sup> He was perturbed by the notion that his leadership was not acknowledged by the man he had regarded as a friend. Their diplomatic relations were drifting apart.

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22. Thompson, p.185.

23. Damane, Moorosi, p.19;

According to S. Mpopo of Quthing - Moshweshwe had no right to have tried to impose his will on the Baphuthi as they had been in Lesotho long before the advent of the Sotho-Tswana communities. He was displaying unnecessary aggression on the Baphuthi.

At this time (1846-1847) Mohale (Moshweshwe's brother) was already settled at what later came to be called Mohale's Hoek which is not far from Quthing. When Moshweshwe heard of Moorosi having gone, returned and gone again he was displeased and thought that Moorosi was trying to out manoeuvre him. Previous events have shown that : "whether it was in war or diplomatic controversy Moshweshwe had proved to be more than a match for any adversary or a combination of his opponents." <sup>24</sup> Moshweshwe became blunt in his approach : he sent Mohale to Moorosi to warn him to return to Quthing and reminded him of his former position before they became partners or allies. The Baphuthi had been conquered and Moorosi's father (Mokuoane) had gone to Moshweshwe to offer his services as a vassal and begged for the release of the Baphuthi women and children who had been captured in 1825. It was also stated that he should be under Mohale. He returned from Tulumaneng albeit grudgingly and very much resented to be under Mohale. <sup>25</sup> This was proof enough that he had lost status of being Moshweshwe's equal.

To reiterate Mohale's humiliating message Moshweshwe in 1847 visited the Bethesda mission station in the company of the missionaries Casalis, Arbousset and the general of his

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24. J.A. Rogers, World's Men of Colour Vol. I, p.271.

25. P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe Chief of the Sotho, pp.119-120.

warriors, Makoanyane. He called for a pitso and Moorosi as well as his people were invited to attend. The Baphuthi were strongly warned by the missionaries : (Arbousset, Casalis and Schrumpf) against their unChristian life and that they should change for the better. Makoanyane told Moorosi and his people to comply with and conform to his "vassal status". Moshweshwe was the last to address Moorosi. He sternly reminded him of his background which was very pathetic and warned him not to be an ungrateful person. He also warned him to permanently remain at Maphutseng.<sup>26</sup>

Within a year Moorosi took his followers and their livestock and returned to the very place he was warned not to go to - Tulumaneng.<sup>27</sup> To him this place was not within Moshweshwe's or Schrumpf's jurisdiction.

He felt safe and was at liberty to engage in any devilish action without fear of being reprimanded by anybody. He still took delight in marauding activities. His departure for Tulumaneng was an open defiance and his behaviour was difficult to analyse or comprehend. Tulumaneng is presently called Palmietfontein.

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26. Thompson, p.185.

27. Ibid., p.185.

The War of the Axe (1847) in the Cape Colony was still raging. Many Xhosa refugees had fled to the interior and even crossed the Orange River and settled near Tulumaneng with their livestock. Their presence occasioned a great shortage of grazing land. Cattle thefts aggravated the situation. This ensued after the arrival of the refugees and The Baphuthi of Moorosi were the chief culprits. Moshweshwe became worried and instead of talking to the controversial Moorosi he appealed to the Cape Colonial government to drive the newcomers back to the Cape. While awaiting response from the British authorities from the Cape Colony he met Moorosi and they tried to persuade the refugees to return to the Cape Colony. Moorosi viewed their working together as a sign of reconciliation and recognition of his stay at Tulumaneng. He felt more relieved and was willing to work with Moshweshwe as partners.<sup>28</sup>

But the refugees were adamant and no amount of persuasion would make them budge until months later when they disappeared with Moorosi's cattle. His anger was elicited. He sought them, found them, killed some of them and retrieved his cattle.<sup>29</sup>

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28. S. Mpopo's interview, Quthing, Lesotho, 15-02-1992.

29. P. Becker, The Hill of Destiny, pp.145-146.

In December 1847 the War of the Axe came to an end but there was no peace that followed. No peaceful co-existence could be negotiated between the Xhosa groups and the Cape Colonial authorities. On the contrary sporadic clashes ensued. The Xhosa groups were more on the receiving end than their counterparts as they continued to assail each other. Many more refugees crossed the Orange River and entered Lesotho where Moorosi was. The newcomers brought guns along which they had looted when fleeing the Cape Colony.<sup>30</sup> These fire-arms reached Moorosi who passed some of them on to Moshweshwe who in turn gave the refugees sanctuary in the land in which Moorosi lived. Moshweshwe tacitly acknowledged Moorosi's autonomy and his occupation of Tulumaneng was being accepted as permanent. The fire-arms made both men more formidable. Their waning diplomatic relations were revived and once again Moorosi became a trusted ally of Moshweshwe.<sup>31</sup>

Major Warden was dismayed when he came to know of Moshweshwe and Moorosi possessing fire-arms. The two chiefs were in a position to offer resistance against the British domination and this would upset Warden's plans. His dislike for Moshweshwe continued and he even planned a war by which he would eliminate him. In the meantime Moshweshwe and Moorosi

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30. Becker, p.146.

31. Damane's interview, 05-04-1991.

met and agreed that Moorosi should take charge of all the various groups in the southern part of Lesotho. This would strengthen the position of Moorosi and lessen the burden on Moshweshwe of trying to control all the people who were entering his territory. Moorosi then got a chance of building a strong Baphuthi tribe by incorporating the neighbouring Sotho and Nguni clans including the San. Tension between Major Warden and Moshweshwe continued to build up and matters came to a head in 1851. War broke out - the Battle of Viervoet - and Warden was defeated. Moorosi did not physically aid Moshweshwe but offered him moral support.<sup>32</sup> In 1852 Sir George Cathcart clashed with Moshweshwe at the Battle of Berea and Moorosi joined Moshweshwe's warriors.<sup>33</sup> Their alliance proved too strong for Cathcart and at the end of the war Moorosi was endeared to Moshweshwe more than ever before.

After Warden had been dismissed as British Resident for the interior Moshweshwe and Moorosi acted in concert in many of their political affairs. When the commissioners Hogge and Owen came to the Orange River sovereignty to end the British administration of this territory, Moshweshwe and Moorosi met them and pleaded for the annulment of the infamous Warden

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32. Mpopo's interview, 15-02-1992.

33. Moeletsi oa Basotho, newspaper, 09-12-1979.

Line or at least have it shifted to meet the needs of their people. The commissioners promised that it would be changed.<sup>34</sup>

Between 1854 and 1868 Moorosi proved to be a devoted ally of Moshweshwe. Ever since the Bloemfontein Convention in 1854 there had been endless quarrels between the Basotho and the Voortrekkers and some of these quarrels ended in wars. Their bone of contention was land ownership. They had different views and interpretation of possession of land. The Basotho viewed a piece of land as a communal property and were all free to use it while the Voortrekkers believed in private or individual ownership of land and boundaries were respected. Boundaries were meaningless to the Basotho.<sup>35</sup> The Voortrekkers also believed in the buying of a piece of land and to the Basotho this meant nothing.

Due to this misunderstanding clashes were a common occurrence. Moorosi and Poshuli, Moshweshwe's brother, conducted regular raids on the farms of the Voortrekkers particularly in the environs of Smithfield. Moshweshwe was content and pleased with Moorosi's daring behaviour but he never allowed him to act alone or make unilateral decisions lest he should break away and be a problem again. To check against such a pos-

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34. P. Becker, p.179.

35. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

sibility in all raids he saw to it that Poshuli accompanied him. Despite all this he never ceased to assert himself as an independent potentate <sup>36</sup> and Moshweshwe duly acknowledged that.

During the late 1840s and early 1850s there were wars between the Blacks and the Whites in the Cape Colony, Lesotho and the Orange Free State. At this time there emerged a man named Mlanjeni who claimed to be a prophet. His advent took place between 1850 and 1851. He announced that he had a special message for the black people : all those who had retained their traditions and cultures in spite of the prevailing Christian beliefs were to undergo a purification ceremony or ritual and were to sacrifice their white cattle by killing them all; the consequence of this would be that the white people would be rendered powerless and would be driven into the sea to perish, churches would be destroyed by a hurricane and an earthquake; their ancestors would resurrect and be reunited with them and an everlasting joy would ensue. <sup>37</sup> This was sensational news. Mlanjeni was based in the Cape Colony.\*

In Lesotho Mlanjeni's prophecy was brought by some members

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36. P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa, p.116; Mpopo's interview, 15-02-1992.

(S. Mpopo feels that Moshweshwe was trying to own Moorosi, but the latter was too agile to be tricked and Moshweshwe had to let him have his way as an ally.)

37. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, pp.168-169.

\* Mlanjeni's advent need not be mistaken for the 1857 Nonqause's episode - both events involved killing of cattle.

of the aBathembu tribe who had come from the Cape Colony. Moorosi and Letsie, Moshweshwe's son and heir, were taken up by this news and believed the message of Mlanjeni. As most of Moorosi's people had already left Maphutseng for Tulumaneng to avoid the teachings of the missionary, Schrupf. Christianity was no issue - but the killing of the white cattle became the main discussion. Letsie, who was settled at Moriija encouraged many of his followers to stop attending church services and abandon the Christian faith. Moshweshwe's other son, Molapo, condemned missionaries as spies of the Cape Colonial government and suggested that they should be driven out of Lesotho. Moorosi came to Moshweshwe and tried to convince him about the prophecy of Mlanjeni. The whole of Lesotho was in a turmoil and pressure was mounting against the poor missionaries. Moshweshwe was not impressed by the prophecy of Mlanjeni and declined to heed Moorosi's advice. He preferred to be neutral and watch the scene from a distance. Many cattle were sacrificed without hesitation.<sup>38</sup> As Moshweshwe was not participating in Mlanjeni's sacrifices the killing of the white cattle soon abated and missionaries felt relieved. Nothing worth noting happened in spite of the cattle that were killed.<sup>39</sup>

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38. Damane's interview, 05-04-1991.

39. Makhetha's interview, 19-11-1991.

Moorosi and Moshweshwe continued to live in harmony as allies until in 1868 when Moshweshwe was on the verge of utter defeat by the Boers of the Orange Free State. Moorosi quickly moved out of Tulumaneng to resettle on the southern side of the Orange River. To save his country from possible ruin and conquest. Moshweshwe appealed to the Cape Colony governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, for protection and even offered to place his land under the protection of the British monarch, Queen Victoria Wodehouse responded positively. In 1869 at the Second Treaty of Aliwal North the Tele River was declared the southern boundary of Moshweshwe's territory and Moorosi was beyond this boundary.<sup>40</sup> So the British annexation of Lesotho did not affect him as he was not within the new boundary. He felt greatly relieved to have escaped incorporation and was not affected by the agreement between Lesotho and the Cape Colony.

At this time Moshweshwe had aged to senility. His sons and brothers were trying to impose their authority over other chiefs in the Caledon valley - whether some chiefs were Moshweshwe's vassals or allies they did not care. Whoever was associated with Moshweshwe had to be under them. Moshweshwe could do very little to stop or reprimand them -

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40. Damane, Moorosi, pp.28-29.

he was no more the energetic man he once was. Moorosi was aware of all this and was not prepared to play the second fiddle to anybody. The idea of having his brothers or sons exercising some authority over some chiefs was one of the various methods he (Moshweshwe) applied to extend his influence and control or authority in the Caledon valley.<sup>41</sup> During his prime he was able to exercise control over his sons and brothers. By 1868 he was too senile to control them effectively.

In 1869 Moorosi met Sir Philip Wodehouse and informed him that while his territory was not within Moshweshwe's jurisdiction he nevertheless wished to join Moshweshwe as an independent chief and be accorded the same protection that Moshweshwe's territory was afforded. The following year (1870) Moorosi told a certain John Austen (who later was to be the Magistrate of Quthing - Moorosi's region) that he was the subject of Moshweshwe and whatever affected him he was ipso facto to that.<sup>42</sup> This was the most controversial man. When an occasion suited him he declared himself Moshweshwe's subject and on other occasions he was an independent chief and had nothing to do with Moshweshwe. He was able to display gross obstinacy and resented any form of advice that

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41. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, p.118;

.. Damane's interview, 05-04-1991.

42. Burman, Chiefdom, Politics and Alien Law, pp.108-110.

went against his will.<sup>43</sup>

After the death of Moshweshwe (1870) the diplomatic relations between the Baphuthi and Moshweshwe's people began to wane. Moshweshwe was succeeded by his son, Letsie, as chief/king of the Basotho and the whole of Lesotho. Moorosi would not work with this new ruler. He was not prepared to be told what to do by Moshweshwe's son. As Lesotho was partly ruled by the Cape Colonial government he was also not prepared to obey instructions from the Cape Colony. His behaviour was casus belli. He alienated his one time allies. He was an ally of Moshweshwe with a great deal of autonomy and could only obey Moshweshwe's leadership when dealing with the Whites.<sup>44</sup> Otherwise he was not to obey anyone after Moshweshwe.

His diplomatic relation with the Basotho ended in 1870 when Moshweshwe died. He wanted to lead his own life without being disturbed by other people. His obstinacy eventually led to his untimely and horrifying death in November 1879.<sup>45</sup>

After the death of Moorosi the Baphuthi and the Basotho regained their old friendship and lived in peace and harmony.

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43. S. Mohale's interview, Quthing, Lesotho, 05-02-1992.

44. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, p.443.

45. Burman, p.131.

The Baphuthi are part and parcel of the Basotho nation and most of them are still found in Quthing, the home of their late chief, Moorosi. His mountain fortress is called Mount Moorosi.

According to some of them (Baphuthi) that I talked to in Quthing - they feel that it was wrong of Moshweshwe's successors to impose their authority over them as though they were Moshweshwe's subjects. Their case or argument is well supported by P. Bobore who stated that : "Moorosi was politically independent and was only a friend to Moshweshwe."<sup>46</sup> Because of this they feel that Quthing should be ruled by a Baphuthi chief and not by anybody else.

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46. P.B. Bobore, The Destruction of the Baphuthi Chieftainship, p.1.

## CHAPTER 3

MOSHWESHE'S ALLIANCE WITH MOLETSANE, CHIEF OF THE BATAUNG

The Bataung are one of the numerous Sotho-Tswana tribes that had lived on the highveld long before the troublesome 19th Century. The Bataung like many other black tribes broke up into splinter groups and each group had its chief. Of all these chiefs Moletsane was the most renowned. It was his prowess that induced Moshweshwe to make him a partner and the two established diplomatic relations after a while. In 1837 Moletsane, wearied by wars, came to Moshweshwe to offer him his vassalage. But the astute Moshweshwe, instead preferred an alliance to vassalage.

Moletsane became chief by dint of luck. His father-in-law, named Mokhele was chief of one of the numerous Bataung splinter groups. Mokhele was infamous due to his strong belief in superstitions. He tortured and killed his own people accusing them of practising witchcraft in his territory and even trying to bewitch him. He was also trying to cover up his weak leadership. His two sons : Sekaledi and Motsetsele, through the incitement of their grandfather on

their mother's side - Phere, conspired to assassinate him. By then Moletsane was married to Mokhele's daughter, Mpai. Realizing the danger that was coming his way Mokhele sent for Moletsane to help him against his sons. A skirmish broke out and Moletsane had no difficulty in defeating his conspirators. As Mokhele had already aged he disinherited his sons and declared Moletsane his successor.<sup>1</sup>

Moletsane was not totally an outsider to the chieftainship of the Bataung. His father, Mophethe, was the son of Thulo who was a younger brother to Seobi, the father of the ruling chief, Mokhele.<sup>2</sup> He had some royal blood in his veins. He was not an upstart.

There were three other sub-groups of the Bataung. Each sub-group was called by the name of its leader who were : Hlalele (Bataung-ba-Hlalele), Khuto (Bataung-ba-Khuto) and Ramokhele (Bataung-ba-Ramokhele).<sup>3</sup>

After becoming chief Moletsane consolidated his position by building a strong following. His prowess attracted many people including many of the other Bataung sub-groups. After a while the other Bataung chiefs receded into the background

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1. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern, pp.59-60.
  2. F. Ramakabane's interview, Mhaleshoek, Lesotho, 22-08-1987.
  3. D.F. Ellenberger, p.54.

and oblivion. Eventually almost everybody took pride in calling themselves Bataung-ba-Moletsane (the Bataung of Moletsane). When the Difaqane wars broke out his warriors and supporters were strong enough to hold their own. Moletsane was about 30 years old in 1822 - the year of the commencement of the Difaqane on the highveld.

It was unfortunate that Moletsane indulged himself in too many wars unnecessarily. Perhaps he thought such wars would boost his position even greater. Perhaps it was a quest for more power. He fought one battle too many and was destroyed. According to J.D. Omer-Cooper, at the end he was left with about 150 followers.<sup>4</sup> He had lost thousands of people. He had suffered heavy losses against the Matebele of Chief Mzilikazi. He found himself in an abject state. Fearing possible annihilation Moletsane sought refuge at Philippolis where the Griqua chief, Adam Kok II, offered him shelter.<sup>5</sup>

Philippolis was apparently not good for him as he soon left for Beersheba, which was a French mission station, near the present day town of Smithfield, in the Orange Free State. The missionary here was Samuel Rolland and the year was 1836 when Moletsane arrived. He was not happy at this place

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4. J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath, p.98.

5. M. Makhetha's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 23-09-1990.

either. The following year (1837) he left for Thaba Bosiu to meet Moshweshwe. Moletsane had a daughter named Moroesi who was married to Moshweshwe's younger brother, Mopedi.<sup>6</sup> There were affinal ties between Moletsane and Moshweshwe.

At Thaba Bosiu Moletsane offered himself to Moshweshwe to serve him as a vassal. But the benign Moshweshwe had different ideas from Moletsane's proposal. Instead of incorporating him he realized a great chance of forming a political partnership with the brave Moletsane. The two could work together against Moshweshwe's enemies within the Caledon River valley. There had been regular attacks on Thaba Bosiu by Sekonyela's Batlokwa hordes. An alliance with Moletsane could help in weakening and staving off such attacks.

It must be noted that even though Moletsane was in an abject state he still entertained an idea of being chief once more. He still wished for and needed his independence. If such an opportunity arose he would grab it. Moshweshwe was trying to offer him such an opportunity.

In 1837 Moshweshwe sent Moletsane to settle at Mekuatleng

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6. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, Lesotho, 24-09-1990.

which was in the midst of his enemies : Moroka at Thaba Nchu; Peter Davids at Lishuane; Carolus Baatje at New Platberg and Gert Taaibosch at Merumetsu. The presence of Moletsane at Mekuatleng was to disclaim the areas the afore-mentioned leaders were claiming as theirs after having "bought" them as discussed in Chapter 1. Moletsane's settling at Makuatleng was for three reasons : to be Moshweshwe's diplomatic ally, to stave off or neutralize attacks on Thaba Bosiu and to tacitly inform Moroka and his friends that their claims meant nothing to Moshweshwe. The land was his and no amount of protestations to the contrary would ever impress him. He settled Moletsane there without informing or consulting anyone of them.<sup>7</sup> Their behaviour did not warrant that kind of courtesy.

To consolidate Moletsane's position and settlement at Mekuatleng Moshweshwe agreed with the French missionaries to send the Rev. Francois Dumas of the French Missionary Society to settle there and labour among the Bataung.<sup>8</sup> This was a thorn in the flesh of the Wesleyan missionaries who were doing missionary work in all the places where Moshweshwe's enemies were settled (i.e. Moroka and his friends). Dumas would be the only French man in the midst of the English

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7. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, p.402.

8. R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, pp.166-167.

missionaries.<sup>9</sup> Moshweshwe was a great strategist. He knew how to upset and frustrate his enemies. He preferred to react to a provocation than to provoke others.

According to Paultney Bigelow : "The individual Negro most entitled to be called great in so far as history leaves any records - is Moshoeshoe .... with modification of colour and education he would have been welcome in diplomatic circles as an advanced strategist of the Bismarckian school."<sup>10</sup>

He warned Moletsane against Christianity. He was not to be converted or be baptized. He was to maintain traditional beliefs which were in contrast with the Christian faith. Relinquishing the belief in the powers of the spirits of the dead would be wrong and tragic to the Bataung as a tribe. At best he could be a nominal Christian than anything else. On the other hand Moletsane's followers were free to accept Christianity and be supportive to their missionary.<sup>11</sup>

In response to Moshweshwe's warning Moletsane moved out of the mission station settlement and settled a distance away. He (Moshweshwe) gave him a horse to ride to church and attend services but ought to remain non-committal.<sup>12</sup> Even though

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9. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 12-10-1990.

10. J.A. Rogers, World's Greatest Men of Color, p.282.

11. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

12. Damane's interview, 24-09-1990.

he remained non-committal his regular church attendance encouraged many of his people to eventually become fully-fledged Christians after being converted and baptized. All these endeared Moletsane to Moshweshwe and their partnership against Moshweshwe's enemies was strengthened.

Moletsane's settlement at Mekuatleng offered him an opportunity to recuperate. As soon as it was known that he was settled at Mekuatleng many of the scattered and surviving Bataung returned to rejoin him. His followers increased tremendously. Within a short while Mekuatleng had become a huge Bataung settlement. Moletsane was again strong enough to stand against any attack. He was almost as great as he was just before the advent of the Difaqane. All the Bataung remnants of the other chiefs preferred to be associated with Moletsane and many of them came to join him.<sup>13</sup> The Bataung who were on the brink of disappearing as a tribe or clan were revived. Moshweshwe also helped by encouraging other Bataung pockets to join Moletsane at Mekuatleng.<sup>14</sup> In the long run Moletsane appeared to be the only chief of the Bataung communities.

It was at this stage that Moshweshwe formally established

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13. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 12-10-1990.

14. Ramakabane's interview, 22-08-1987.

diplomatic relations with Moletsane. In some instances he preferred to work with Moletsane personally than through their ambassadors. It must be mentioned that Moshweshwe had a way of manipulating those whom he could dominate and even submit to him. Those whom he could not dominate and were even stronger than he was he preferred to form alliances with them. In instances where he could do neither of the two options he nominally played the second fiddle to such chiefs or persons.<sup>15</sup> This he did with Shaka and Matiwane, as we shall discuss later. Through his diplomacy he wished to dominate everyone (chiefs in particular) without openly saying so. In short he wanted to be primus inter pares - the first among equals.

Moletsane's settlement at Mekuatleng did not, however, end his troubles. More problems were still lying ahead. The English authorities had moved into the hinterland and were trying to dominate the whole area irrespective of who was who. The Voortrekkers wanted to have their independence without any interference from the English; Moshweshwe wanted to maintain the status quo despite the presence of the whites and the other chiefs wished to rule their followers freely. Possession of land became the bone of contention. Cattle

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15. W.F. Lye, The Sotho Paramount Chief and the Difaqane, p.16.

raids became prevalent. Nobody was prepared to be meek and compromise and accommodate the needs and interests of others. In the early 1840s raids and counter-raids went on without any sign of ending.<sup>16</sup> Such conditions were bound to lead to an open war.

The general population of the Voortrekkers was increasing in the present day Orange Free State as more other Voortrekkers came in from Natal after the British had occupied Natal in 1842. Moshweshwe was alarmed to see such a huge number of the Boers in his neighbourhood. Fearing what might happen to his land and its inhabitants he appealed to the Cape Colony governor, Sir George Napier for help and British protection.<sup>17</sup> Napier responded by coming into the hinterland and drew up some boundaries and expected everyone to observe them. It was a futile exercise as boundaries or lines were meaningless to the black tribes. The situation remained precarious.

In 1845 Moshweshwe wrote a letter to Napier's successor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, making a special plea for harmonious co-existence and peace with various neighbours. War was imminent and he wished to avoid it as much as possible.

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16. J.J. Buys, Die Oorsprong en Migrasiebeweging van die Korana en hul rol in Transgariep tot 1870, pp.67-68.
  17. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I Profile Se-Moshoeshoe, p.10; J. Halpern, South Africa's Hostages, p.67; Wilson and Thompson, p.415.

Chief Moletsane also expressed the same sentimental fear and appealed to Maitland for help. He and Moshweshwe wanted Maitland to intervene and avert war.<sup>18</sup> It became evident that Moshweshwe and Moletsane were likely to be attacked by other groups and had to stand together against all odds. Maitland could not do much to ease the belligerent situation. War clouds continued to gather.

Maitland was recalled to England by his superiors and was succeeded by Sir Harry Smith as governor of the Cape Colony. Smith was a man of forceful character. He cared very little about the welfare of other people. His behaviour towards the Voortrekkers whom he tried to domineer led to the Battle of Boomplaats in 1848. He won the battle. Major D.H. Warden was the British Resident who was brought into the hinterland to maintain order between the various groups. He was based at Bloemfontein. In 1849 he promulgated the Warden Line. It was a boundary line which reduced Moshweshwe's territory and jurisdiction to the pleasure of his enemies. Warden had earlier tried to befriend Moshweshwe but turned against him when he realized that he was a man of formidable character and somebody he could not manipulate.<sup>19</sup>

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18. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. I, p.92.

19. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

Warden made yet another blunder by involving himself in disastrous squabbles with the black chiefs against Moshweshwe and Moletsane. He tried to create an alliance with these chiefs : Sekonyela, Moroka, Davids, Taaibosch and Baatje as a counterpoise against Moshweshwe.<sup>20</sup> He even furnished them with fire-arms to launch an attack on Moshweshwe and his ally, Moletsane.

Pleas to revoke the Warden Line fell on deaf ears as Warden was not prepared to listen. Moshweshwe's people's pis aller was to ignore this boundary line. To add salt to injury the Basotho conducted cattle-raids on a wide scale to register their discontentment. Innocent people who were not even aware of the Warden Line's implication were subjected to these cattle-raids.<sup>21</sup>

Moshweshwe did all he could to try and avert confrontation with Warden but to no avail. Warden decided to go to war and there was nothing to dissuade him from the war path. In June 1851 together with the afore-mentioned allies with whom he had ganged up and had even added the easily influenced Fingos to form a formidable force, went for Moletsane. The latter had taken refuge on the Viervoet mountain.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Wilson and Thompson, p.418.

21. M.C.E. van Schoor, Argrief-Jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis 1950 II, p.103.

22. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. II, p.LI.

Moletsane's people had participated in cattle-raids in concert with Moshweshwe's people. Moletsane was to be eliminated before turning to Moshweshwe. Warden forces were led by Major Donovan. Moletsane was no match for such a huge force. Moshweshwe sent him help of warriors led by his sons : Letsie, Molapo and Mopeli (Mopedi). Warden's forces were crushed and routed.<sup>23</sup> So the enemies of Moshweshwe and Moletsane were vanquished and Warden's pride was humiliated and humbled at the Battle of Viervoet (1851).

Adolphe Mabilie one of the French missionaries who laboured in Lesotho and had close dealings with Moshweshwe described him (Moshweshwe) in this manner : "The chief had one aim : to keep his people together, to preserve their independence .... in the face of enemies who panted to possess their land and reduce them to servitude. Only when that is understood can we comprehend .... Moshoeshoe's inconsistencies, his finesse, his diplomacies."<sup>24</sup>

The Battle of Viervoet proved Moshweshwe's sincerity to Moletsane. He was reliable and dependable. On several occasions Moletsane had to suffer for being an ally of Moshweshwe. Moshweshwe had a peculiar gift for foresight.

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23. E. Walker, History of South Africa, p.260.

24. Mokhehle, Moshoeshoe I, p.11.

He somehow guessed or knew how invaluable an ally Moletsane would be when he settled him among his enemies. The Basotho and the Bataung came to regard themselves as comrades-in-arms. Moshweshwe's power was boosted.<sup>25</sup>

During the Battle of Viervoet Carolus Baatje fled from his home (New Platberg) as he and Warden's other allies were routed. Moshweshwe then settled some of his people at this place to keep Baatje out for ever. The latter had ganged up with Moroka against Moshweshwe claiming that the areas he had allowed them to occupy as places of settlement were theirs and were outside his jurisdiction as they had "bought" them. Moshweshwe was very bitter and upset by their attitude. Moshweshwe's occupation of New Platberg was to disclaim Baatje's claim that the area was his. As Warden was still bitter because of the defeat he tried to vent out his acrimony by furnishing the homeless Baatje with fire-arms to attack Moletsane who was not as strong as Moshweshwe. Baatje went for Moletsane and captured many of his cattle and horses.<sup>26</sup>

Moshweshwe viewed this attack on Moletsane as an indirect challenge against him. As Baatje was not having a fixed home

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25. G. Tylden, The Rise of the Basuto, p.19.

26. S.M. Molema, Chief Moroka, pp.83-84.

it would not be easy to track him down. Moshweshwe then sent his son, Masopha, to attack Moroka, who, together with the Wesleyan missionaries, had acted as a pressure group on Warden to promulgate the Warden Line which remained a bitter pill to swallow for Moshweshwe. Moroka was also a member of Warden's alliance and attacking him was just as good as attacking the rest. Masopha sacked Thaba Nchu which was more accessible than tracing the vagabond Baatje. Many cattle were captured from Moroka and some of them were given to Moletsane as compensation for what Baatje did to him.<sup>27</sup>

Warden had declared Moroka the supreme ruler in Thaba Nchu. Headmen of other chiefs within Thaba Nchu and in its outskirts were to be under him. He probably did this to challenge Moshweshwe when he and Moroka tried to belittle Moseme, the headman of the Baramokhedi who was earlier requested by Moshweshwe to vacate Thaba Nchu and allow Moroka and his followers to settle there. Moseme was asked to be under Moroka or leave Thaba Nchu. As a vassal of Moshweshwe Moseme refused to be under Moroka and remained loyal to Moshweshwe. Moroka's Barolong came to the village of Moseme and drove away his people's cattle. In trying to follow them and recapture their cattle Moseme's people were attacked and

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27. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. II, p.LX.

some of them were killed by Moroka's Barolong.<sup>28</sup> As a vassal of Moshweshwe Moseme was ipso facto a friend of Moletsane. He had always helped Moletsane in his encounters particularly against Moroka.<sup>29</sup> Warden was trying to undo what Moshweshwe was trying to achieve and was also causing unnecessary troubles among the black chiefs of the Caledon River valley.

In July 1852 Warden was replaced by Henry Green as British Resident of the Orange River Sovereignty. His mentor, Sir Harry Smith, was succeeded by Sir George Cathcart as governor of the Cape Colony. Green was not as provocative as his predecessor but the same could not be said about Cathcart. As soon as he took over the governorship from Smith Cathcart was bent on replenishing the British dented image. He wanted war against Moshweshwe and Moletsane.<sup>30</sup> Of all the allies Warden had had at the Battle of Viervoet Cathcart preferred just one - Sekonyela, chief of the Batlokwa, and even supplied him with fire-arms. After completing all preparations for the war Cathcart came to (New) Platberg, Baatje's one time home. While there he started the talks that were casus belli. He accused Moshweshwe of having taken away the cattle of the Barolong and the Boers. He told Moshweshwe to make available ten thousand cattle and one

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28. J.M. Orpen, History of the Basutus of South Africa, pp.83-84.

29. D.A.M. Motshumi's interview, Mafiteng, 21-04-1991.

30. D. Rafutho's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 06-10-1987.

thousand horses within three days as compensation.<sup>31</sup> Cathcart was for war and nothing else.

The time was too short to collect such huge numbers of cattle and horses and make them available. Moshweshwe pleaded for more time but Cathcart would not listen. A French missionary, Pierre-Joseph Maitin, and a few other people approached Cathcart pleading for extension of time after Moshweshwe had procured three thousand five hundred cattle, but Cathcart was not impressed by their pleas.<sup>32</sup> It was an ultimatum.

On 19th December 1852 the expected cattle and horses had not reached Platberg where Cathcart was. On 20th December Cathcart crossed the Caledon River, entered Moshweshwe's territory and camped at Berea mountain. He dared the Basotho to challenge him as he tried to drive away their cattle. He was intercepted. About six hundred of the Basotho were mounted and having their guns. Moletsane from Mekuatleng and Moorosi from Quthing joined forces with Moshweshwe's warriors. Cathcart soldiers were joined by Sekonyela. The belligerents met at Berea and a fierce war broke out. Cathcart was vanquished. The British soldiers were once

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31. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. II, p.LXII.

32. K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, p.69.

again beaten by a man they were trying to bully.<sup>33</sup> It was the Battle of Berea fought in December 1852.

To forestall the defeated Cathcart from calling for possible reinforcement the astute Moshweshwe sent him a well thought out letter pleading for cessation of hostilities and peace. He also gave Cathcart the impression that he (Moshweshwe) was the loser and Cathcart the winner of their encounter.<sup>34</sup> The letter did the trick and Cathcart was content and did not worry Moshweshwe any more. The doctrine of instigating quarrels among the black tribes (divide et impera) came to an end.<sup>35</sup> Moshweshwe's war with the British revealed some sinister motives of the divide and rule practice.

The new British Resident, Henry Green came into the picture after the Battle of Berea. He wrote Moshweshwe a letter (3rd February 1853) without making any reference to his war with Cathcart : "You yourself, Moshesh (sic) now that the peace has been made, are as much an ally of the Queen of England as Gert Taaibosch - with this difference, that you are a great chief, and he is a petty one."<sup>36</sup> It was a fluttery but it made him feel important as his greatness was being acknowledged. He was pleased with Green's letter.

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33. Rafutho's interview, 06-10-1987.

34. Wilson and Thompson, p.422.

35. Orpen, p.118.

36. Ibid., p.118.

Moletsane and Moshweshwe became more and more close to each other and continued to assist each other in various ways - including exchanging of gifts - for the general improvement of their subjects.

In February 1854 at the Bloemfontein convention, the British abandoned the Orange River Sovereignty and returned it to the Boers who renamed it : Orange Free State. The abandonment of this territory between various communities brought in more complicated problems for Moshweshwe and his only ally, Moletsane.

Cathcart was succeeded by Sir George Grey as governor of the Cape Colony. The first president of the Orange Free State was Josias Hoffman. He had been on friendly terms with Moshweshwe long before 1854. His election to the presidential position was good news for Moshweshwe and his Basotho subjects. The Basotho viewed him as a man of integrity.

After becoming president, Hoffman visited Moshweshwe and there he was given a warm reception. In trying to show his

gratitude, by presenting his host with a keg of powder, his people turned against him accusing him of being weak and untrustworthy. He was replaced by J.N. Boshof as president in 1855.<sup>37</sup> His resignation dismayed Moshweshwe - he had hoped for justice and fairness in the rearrangement of the boundary lines which had terribly reduced the size of his territory and Hoffman was showing interest and understanding in the affairs of the Basotho.<sup>38</sup>

It was unfortunate that Hoffman did not get support from his people when he tried to extend a hand of friendship to Moshweshwe. He was sympathetic to Moshweshwe's problems which were created by Warden. He had, on several occasions, advocated for the Basotho cause. Had he remained long in office as president of the Orange Free State there was a good chance of fostering a peaceful co-existence between Lesotho and the Orange Free State.<sup>39</sup> Moshweshwe would have, probably, tried to establish diplomatic ties with him. Moletsane whose territory was within the Orange Free State would have definitely benefitted by such ties and peaceful co-existence.

The British authorities at the Cape Colony had been unfair

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37. P. Sanders, Moshweshwe of Lesotho, p.43.

38. Orpen, p.127.

39. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

to the Basotho. They pulled out of the hinterland promising to be neutral in all future problems and yet behind Moshweshwe's back (at the Bloemfontein Convention) had made an agreement with the Orange Free Staters that they would sell them ammunition - something they could not do to the Basotho.<sup>40</sup> Many of the Basotho lost faith and trust in them.

Notwithstanding all this Moshweshwe did not despair and continued to regard the Cape Colony government as his official channel when dealing with the Orange Free State. He even urged the British Special Commissioner, Sir George Clerk, to write a letter to the British Secretary of State for Colonies, requesting for the appointment of a British diplomat to reside in Lesotho and handle his diplomatic problems with the Orange Free State authorities.<sup>41</sup> Nothing came out of this request as the Orange Free Staters protested that such a step would be tantamount to the violation of the Bloemfontein Convention where the British authorities had promised not to meddle in the affairs of this territory.<sup>42</sup>

After consulting with Moletsane Moshweshwe made a request in 1856 to Hoffman's successor President Boshof of appointing resident political ambassadors for both countries (Lesotho

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40. Sanders, p.42.

41. P. Phoofolo, African Diplomatic Conduct in the 19th Century - The Case of Lesotho, p.14.

42. Damane's interview, 24-09-1990.

and the Orange Free State). This request was made in writing in a letter form and was written in Sesotho. It was taken to Thaba Nchu for translation. After a while Boshof informed Moshweshwe of having received the letter but made no comment to the request.<sup>43</sup> Both Moshweshwe and Moletsane were disheartened by Boshof's non-committal response to the letter. Moletsane had hoped that a positive response from Boshof could ease the tension that was brewing in the land particularly around Mekuatleng - his residential area.<sup>44</sup>

From 1856 a state of lawlessness prevailed throughout the Caledon River valley and neighbouring areas. Pillaging and pilfering became a common practice. Moletsane and Poshudi (Moshweshwe's son) joined their forces to pillage many parts of the Orange Free State.

The chief culprit was Chief Wietsie and his followers who were based near the present day Harrismith - in the Orange Free State.<sup>45</sup> So bad were the conditions that the Boers declared war on him in 1856. This was after Moshweshwe had advised and warned Wietsie to refrain from his cattle-raiding activities on the Voortrekkers' farms but the refractory chief would not listen. In 1858 another war broke out

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43. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

44. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

45. Orpen, p.133.

between the Boers and the Basotho-Bataung alliance. The war broke out as a result of the wrangles over the Warden Line which Moshweshwe's and Moletsane's followers continued to ignore and defiantly pillaged areas beyond it. Sir George Grey, the Cape Colony governor, was brought into the picture as mediator at the First Treaty of Aliwal North in September 1858.<sup>46</sup>

President Boshof was succeeded by M.W. Pretorius in 1860 and in 1864 J.H. Brand followed as the President of the Orange Free State. The Basotho and the Bataung continued to have intermittent clashes with the Boers. Not all the Boers were honest in honouring peaceful agreements made. On the other hand some of Moshweshwe's people in concert with Moletsane's acted behind his back and sabotaged his plans for a peaceful co-existence with the Boers.<sup>47</sup>

The intermittent clashes led to another open war in 1867-68 between the Basotho and the Boers with Moletsane joining forces with Moshweshwe's subjects. The Basotho-Bataung allies were over-run by the Boers and the Caledon River valley became turbulent. The Basotho-Bataung allies were on the verge of utter defeat when Moshweshwe's diplomacy brought

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46. Ramakabane's interview, 22-08-1987.

47. Damane's interview, 24-09-1990.

Sir Philip Wodehouse, Grey's successor as governor of the Cape Colony, to protect their losing forces.<sup>48</sup> Moshweshwe at this time was old and senile and could not do much any more.

When the plight of the Basotho became known to the outside world, Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's Secretary of Native Affairs, became interested in the matter. He tried to extend his expansionist scheme beyond the borders of Natal by incorporating Lesotho. He was causing unnecessary confusion. Wodehouse would not allow this to happen and he then annexed Moshweshwe's territory to forestall the avaricious Shepstone.<sup>49</sup> Shepstone's presence in the affairs of the Caledon River valley would have compounded the land issue question. He was a man who wished to have things his way all the time against all odds.

Both Moshweshwe and Moletsane suffered a great deal by the events of the 1867-68 war. Moletsane was to cede Mekuatleng to the Orange Free State government. He was terribly worried and fearful. Wodehouse had promised him that he would help him retain Mekuatleng at the impending meeting at Aliwal North. In the meantime the High Commissioner's agent, James

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48. S. Majara, Morena oa Thaba, pp.86-87.

49. L. Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, p.22.

Bowker, tried to remove him from his home (Mekuatleng) and send him to a place called Maboloka in Lesotho.

The abject Moletsane could not understand how somebody else other than the governor could poke his nose into his affairs. He refused to leave for Maboloka as he knew that this area was already earmarked for Letsie, Moshweshwe's heir.<sup>50</sup> He would have lost both places by going there and would have been without a home.

On the 12th February 1869 the long awaited Second Treaty of Aliwal North was held. Moshweshwe regained no piece of land that he had lost during the war. Moletsane failed to retain Mekuatleng. What Wodehouse had promised was not considered. His expectations were shattered as nothing was fulfilled.<sup>51</sup>

Moletsane had to leave Mekuatleng as he could not bear to be under the Orange Free State government. The only place available was Lesotho, though greatly reduced. He left for Berea in Lesotho when Mekuatleng was declared part of the Orange Free State. Moshweshwe invited him to join him at Thaba Bosiu but he declined as he wished to retain his autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Moshweshwe was very old and not long he could

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50. Motsualle oa Beboleli le Balisa ba Likolo (pam.), 1893.

51. P.E. Webber, The Church in Basutoland 1833-1884, pp.186-187.

die and his successor might not treat him well - the Bataung could even be assimilated by the Basotho (Bakwena of Moshweshwe) that would be the demise of the Bataung as a Sesotho speaking tribe. As Moshweshwe was a man of integrity he accepted Moletsane's refusal of joining him at Thaba Bosiu without any qualms.

Moletsane was not to remain long at Berea. Wodehouse after failing to secure Mekuatleng for him negotiated with the Boers to vacate Thabana Morena which they had occupied after the war. Moletsane was asked to settle there with Moshweshwe's blessing and approval.<sup>53</sup> So Thabana Morena became the home of the Bataung. It is popularly referred to as Taung-ha-Moletsane, (the home of the Bataung of Moletsane).

In dealing with other chiefs of the Caledon River valley Moshweshwe found Moletsane to be the best partner to work with. The two established diplomatic relations when Moletsane went to settle at Mekuatleng.

Moshweshwe's younger brother, Mopeli's marriage to Moletsane's daughter, Moroesi, helped to consolidate their

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53. Damane's interview, 24-09-1990.

friendship and diplomatic ties. Moshweshwe was impressed with Moletsane's shrewdness. They planned invasions together. They visited or met ambassadors and other dignitaries together. In 1860 when Prince Alfred, the son of England's Queen Victoria visited Aliwal North Moshweshwe invited Moletsane to accompany him but the latter was unable to go along and sent his two sons, Raboroko and Lekhuoe, to represent him by accompanying Moshweshwe's entourage.<sup>54</sup>

Moshweshwe had earlier in his dealings with Moletsane advised him against becoming a fully-fledged Christian and warned him not to be baptized. Moletsane heeded this advice until after Moshweshwe's death in 1870. He then accepted the Christian faith and was baptized in 1871.<sup>55</sup> He was a loyal ally.

Like Moshweshwe Moletsane was a poligamist and had about thirty three wives<sup>56</sup> - this was a far less number compared to Moshweshwe who had over a hundred wives. It was unfortunate that these two potentates indulged in too many wars which nearly destroyed them. Moletsane lived until 2nd October 1885 when he died being about a hundred years old and was buried at Thabana Morena. His people - the Bataung - are part and parcel of the Basotho communities in Lesotho.

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54. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990;  
Damane's interview, 24-09-1990.

55. A.H. Marais, History of Moletsane and the Bataung, p.7.

56. A.A. Moletsane, An Account of the Autobiographical Memoir, p.1.

Moshweshwe's and Moletsane's diplomatic relations and friendship out-lived them as they were established with sincerity and loyalty.

## CHAPTER 4

MOSHWESHWE'S TRYING TIMES WITH SEKONYELA, CHIEF OF  
THE BATLOKWA

Chief Moroka of the Barolong in Thaba Nchu was not the only potentate in the Caledon River valley to have given Moshweshwe trying times. There was another more troublesome in the person of Sekonyela, chief of the Batlokwa of Manthatisé. He had a strong dislike for Moshweshwe and their relationship was characterized by bitterness and skirmishes for the entire life of Sekonyela who lived until 1856 when he died. He was a difficult man and there was nothing to appease him. He took delight in attacks and counter-attacks. Anything contrary to war did not appeal to him.

Sekonyela had a deep-rooted abhorrence for Moshweshwe and on numerous occasions he tried to humiliate and frustrate him. No amount of diplomacy could thaw his dislike for Moshweshwe. On the other hand Moshweshwe tried on numerous occasions to woo and win him to his side but the refractory Sekonyela was not impressed. Both of them had huge numbers of followers more than any other chief in the Caledon River valley. By

1828 their followers' populations were almost equal.<sup>1</sup> Had they found a common ground on which to form an alliance they probably would have formed a formidable force that the advent of the Difaqane might have taken a different course altogether on the highveld.

Sekonyela was a great-grandson of Chief Motonosi of the Batlokwa. Motonosi was a great statesman of his time and commanded respect among his contemporary potentates. After his death his son Montoedi succeeded him. The latter was also a man of prominence. He was followed by his son Mokotjo, the father of Sekonyela. Before the advent of Montonosi the Batlokwa had been under other important rulers such as Mokoro, Sebedi, Molefe and Mokhalaka.<sup>2</sup> Their lineage had not been broken right up to Sekonyela's time.

Moshweshwe, however, did not have such a long outstanding lineage. His background starts with Peete, his grandfather, and then his father Mokhachane. He had very little to talk about as far as his lineage and background were concerned. Sekonyela's attitude towards Moshweshwe suggests that he was aware of his lineage (Moshweshwe's) and compared to his Moshweshwe was a nobody. He prided himself in his

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1. P.B. Sanders, Sekonyela and Moshweshwe, p.443.
  2. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern, p.353.

illustrious lineage. According to him Moshweshwe was an upstart who had to be eliminated so that he (Sekonyela) could reign supreme among the Sotho-Tswana communities of the highveld.<sup>3</sup>

Sekonyela's father, Mokotjo, died while he (Sekonyela) was still young and was at a circumcision school. His mother, Monyalue (alias Menthatise), was declared a regent due to her bravery. It was a unique event for any tribe to be ruled by a woman then but the Batlokwa were content with her leadership. Due to the jealousy that was prevalent amongst Mokotjo's brothers Manthatise became worried for her son's safety. She had a strong suspicion that her son would be killed by his uncles and her regency would be null and void as the death of Sekonyela would bring someone to the Batlokwa throne - one of Mokotjo's brothers.

Again a unique event occurred very much against tradition : Manthatise withdrew her son from the circumcision school. It is obnoxious and a taboo for anybody to pull out of any initiation school. For the safety of Sekonyela she ignored the traditional practice and took him away before completion of his lessons. She then took him to the land of the Basia,

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3. M. Mokotjo's interview, Mafeteng, 07-03-1991.

her people. She had been a princess of the Basia before she married Mokotjo, the Batlokwa prince. Her brother, Letlala, was the ruling chief of the Basia at the time. She gave him Sekonyela to complete his circumcision school lessons at the Basia's. Her action, though unprecedented, elicited very little excitement or negative reaction from the general populace except for Mokotjo's half-brother named Sehalahala. He was the man she (Manthatise) feared could murder her son. He accused her of undermining the Batlokwa customs and remonstrated with her and made all sorts of threats.<sup>4</sup> His reaction confirmed her suspicion that her son was to be killed. She, nevertheless, remained undeterred and Sekonyela continued to live with the Basia under the guardianship of his uncle, Letlala.

Sekonyela went on to complete the rites of the circumcision school in the land of his mother's. What he learnt there made him no different from those who learnt at the Batlokwa school. The ceremonies and the training to be undergone are the same at all various places. The Batlokwa would not doubt his "credentials" of his manhood and adulthood.

As a maternal uncle Letlala spoiled Sekonyela. He denied him

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4. Ellenberger, p.47.

nothing. He did not rebuke him for whatever wrong he did. On the contrary he tried to please him all the time. Sekonyela knew no form of discipline.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Letlala did this to impress his sister that her son lacked nothing to complain about. He was receiving the best possible treatment.<sup>6</sup> It is common practice among the black tribes for maternal uncles to let their nephews (sisters' sons in particular) to have their way. It is rare to find an uncle who treats his sister's children hard enough to foster good discipline particularly with the boys. In addition a child who grows up without the guardianship of his/her father tends to be ill-disciplined. Sekonyela became ill-bred. He was contemptuous, pugnacious and unrepentant.<sup>7</sup> He would not obey anyone and such a man was to be the ruler of the Batlokwa.

Moshweshwe in turn had a forceful and domineering personality in his youth as described earlier but his father, grandfather and Mohlomi advised him accordingly and he heeded their advices. He acted within the constraints of their advices. All these helped him to realize the need for a good personality. With such a background he worked his way to the top.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Mokotjo's interview, 07-03-1991.

6. W. Mota's interview, Qwa Qwa, 20-04-1987.

7. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, 07-03-1991.

8. M.L. Lehohla, King Moshoeshe I and the Law, p.1.

Sekonyela did not have a Mohlomi in his life. He probably would have had a different attitude towards other people if he had met a Mohlomi at an early stage in his life. He grew to be belligerent and preferred confrontation to peace. He seemed to have had the impression that his illustrious lineage was enough to pave his way to the top and greatness. He also delighted in undertaking dangerous and disastrous adventures.<sup>9</sup>

Tradition has it that Basia when faced with a crisis appeal to the god of war for more power to fight than to the god of peace.<sup>10</sup> Solving a problem in a peaceful manner was meaningless to them. Vanguishing an enemy was more appealing than retreating. It is obvious that Sekonyela's frame of mind was somehow influenced by this belief of the Basia. He proved to be avaricious and wished to dominate everybody by conquest. His pernicious and arrogant behaviour blinded his reasoning.<sup>11</sup> As a neighbour of Moshweshwe the two had to meet either for consultation or confrontation. What he learnt from the land of the Basia and the influence of his uncle, Letlala, made him l'enfant terrible. Had his father lived longer and helped in shaping his life-style he might have been a different person.

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9. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

10. Damane's interview, 07-03-1991.

11. Mokotjo's interview, 07-03-1991.

Originally the Batlokwa were settled at Sefate near Verkykerskop in the present day Harrismith district. Their ruins are still found on a farm called Sunrise. They were dislodged there by the Hlubi of Chief Mpangazitha during the early years of the Difaqane. In fact the Hlubi's attack on them heralded a chain reaction of attacks on various tribes and communities which characterized the Difaqane wars. After taking an active part in these wars the Batlokwa settled at Marabeng near the modern town of Ficksburg.<sup>12</sup> In 1824 Manthatisé attacked Moshweshwe at Butha Buthe and forced him to flee to what became his home - Thaba Bosiu where he remained for the rest of his life.

After sometime Manthatisé receded into the background as Sekonyela was becoming of age and active in the administrative duties of the Batlokwa. By 1834 he had become the absolute ruler. His mother by then could not advise or reprimand him any longer. He was everything to himself and had come into prominence.<sup>13</sup> As soon as he assumed the leadership of the Batlokwa Sekonyela refused to acknowledge Moshweshwe's position as the paramount chief of the Caledon River valley. He viewed him as an upstart who should be crushed and not be allowed to be anything of importance. He

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12. M. How, An Alibi for Mantatisé, p.65.

13. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

was aware of Moshweshwe's policy of expansion and interpreted that as a ruse to bring the Batlokwa under his jurisdiction. He had also realized that in his system of alliances with other chiefs Moshweshwe was primus inter pares - the dominating figure amongst equals. He was not prepared to befriend such a man, least of all, to establish diplomatic ties.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime Moshweshwe, despite the fact that he was harassed by the Batlokwa in 1824, wished to forget the past and befriend Sekonyela for political and economic reasons.

In 1833 Moshweshwe received French missionaries and in 1834 Sekonyela received James Allison of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Unfortunately there developed some rivalry between the French and the Wesleyan missionaries caused by petty jealousy<sup>15</sup>; this rivalry affected their followers who came to look upon one another as enemies thereby intensifying the tension between Sekonyela and Moshweshwe though the latter tried to remain as friendly as possible.

Due to intermittent attacks on the highveld by various groups Sekonyela decided to follow the example of his rival or enemy (Moshweshwe) who was perched on Thaba Bosiu to forestall

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14. Mokotjo's interview, 07-03-1991.

15. Motshumi's interview, Mafikeng, 21-04-1991.

possible attacks and defend himself better, and occupied two mountain strongholds in Marabeng : Joalaboholo and Khoroebetlwa. These mountain strongholds are still referred to as the "Batlokwa mountains" - a reflection of their past history and their chief.

The Reverend James Allison continued to labour among the Batlokwa until 1838 when Sekonyela drove him out of his territory. He turned against him after the Piet Retief incident. Retief was one of the Voortrekker leaders who emigrated to the hinterland from the Cape Colony. Dingaan, King of the Zulu, had accused Retief and his men of having taken his cattle away. In fact it was Sekonyela's men who masqueraded as Boers or Koranas who had driven away about five hundred cattle of Dingaan.<sup>16</sup> The Batlokwa men had dressed in European clothes and were riding horses carrying guns. From the land of Dingaan they passed through the Voortrekkers' encampment or settlement.<sup>17</sup> If there was a pursuit from Dingaan the Voortrekkers would be the guilty party. If they fought the better for him. He did not care and he obviously disliked both groups.

Sekonyela's ruse was detected by some Voortrekkers and when

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16. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

17. J. Backhouse, A Narrative of a Visit to Mauritius and South Africa, p.403.

Dingaan accused Retief of the theft he knew where to direct his steps for the culprit. Retief and his men went to the Reverend Allison's mission station at Mparane and there Sekonyela was invited to meet them. The unsuspecting Sekonyela came to the mission station. In the garden of Allison and in his presence one of Retief's men, named Bezuidenhout, handcuffed Chief Sekonyela under the pretext of fitting him bangles. Retief then demanded the return of Dingaan's cattle. Fearing what might happen to their chief the Batlokwa gave Retief their cattle for the release of Sekonyela.<sup>18</sup> Allison did nothing to show concern for the chief's safety.

This was a shock to the Batlokwa to witness their chief being humiliated. They accused Allison of being in collusion with Retief's party in degrading Chief Sekonyela.<sup>19</sup> They interpreted the incident as proof that Allison had no respect for them and their chief, and cared less for their welfare. Sekonyela told Allison to move out of Mparane as his services were no more needed. Sekonyela went on to harass other missionaries who tried to enter his territory after the departure of Allison. To him all missionaries were as treacherous as Allison. Moshweshwe kept his missionaries and

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18. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa, p.358.

19. Damane's interview, 07-03-1991.

lived in harmony with them. Sekonyela did not like that. Missionaries were to leave black communities and Moshweshwe was not going to do that.<sup>20</sup> Sekonyela's and Moshweshwe's rivalry became more pronounced. Moshweshwe guaranteed his missionaries safety and they in turn served him well.

As a belligerent chief Sekonyela did not relent from provoking his neighbours. He went for the Korana of Gert Taaibosch who in 1837 had left Umpukane for Merumetsu mission station. He attacked them and captured their cattle and horses. He created a turmoil in the environs of his territory. Eventually Peter Davids, Carolus Baatje, Moletsane and Moroka joined forces to help Taaibosch in attacking Sekonyela.<sup>21</sup> Sensing what would happen to Sekonyela if he lost the impending attack Moshweshwe offered to keep some of his (Sekonyela's) cattle until after the war. Otherwise Sekonyela would lose a lot of his cattle. The war took place and Sekonyela was severely punished. Afterwards Moshweshwe duly returned him his cattle.<sup>22</sup> It was hoped that this act of goodwill would be appreciated by the Batlokwa chief. It was not so with Sekonyela.

After the war and ensuing sufferings some of the Batlokwa

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20. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

21. P.B. Sanders, p.446.

22. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 08-06-1992.

deserted Sekonyela to join Moshweshwe; some went to join other chiefs while others sought shelter at neighbouring mission stations. The missionary of Mekuatleng, François Dumas, was prompted to visit Marabeng, Sekonyela's chief village, and was disheartened by what he witnessed there and commented : "Le pays de Mantaetis qui a été malheureusement desole par les guerres des Korannas et des Griquois, est tres-peu peuple comparivement a ce qu'il lorsque je le traversai au commencement de 1836." <sup>23</sup> \* Yet despite all this Sekonyela remained unrepentant and continued to indulge in further depredations. The Batlokwa had to suffer due to his uncompromising behaviour.

So much was his dislike for Moshweshwe that he even sent a spy named Mokakailane to reside at Thaba Bosiu to watch Moshweshwe's movements. One day Moshweshwe undertook a cattle-raiding expedition to the Cape Colony. As soon as he was gone Mokakailane apprised Sekonyela of his absence. Moshweshwe had taken many warriors with him and Thaba Bosiu was almost left unprotected.<sup>24</sup> Sekonyela stealthily came to Thaba Bosiu to sack it and carry off as many cattle as possible. Young Letsie who was at a circumcision school together with his inmates was called home to defend Thaba

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23. Sanders, p.446.

\* The country of the Manthatise (Batlokwa) was devastated by the wars of the Korannas and the Griquas and very few people are remaining compared to what they were when I passed through it at the beginning of 1836.

24. Makhetha's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 23-09-1990.

Bosiu.

A fierce battle took place and Sekonyela was driven away empty handed. The treacherous Mokakailane was discovered and killed. When Moshweshwe returned and was told of Sekonyela's raid he sent him this message : "... let this sort of thing come to an end, and let us live at peace with each other again. Let us not go on fighting."<sup>25</sup> There was no response from Sekonyela and he was seemingly not impressed by Moshweshwe's overtures.

As there was no response from Sekonyela Moshweshwe sent his own spy, Khomokholo, to live at Marabeng. Khomokholo found nothing serious to report back and decided to return to Moshweshwe before he could be discovered. In leaving he stole one of Sekonyela's councillors' loin-cloth. The missing loin-cloth caused great fear at Marabeng. The whole royal village was going to be bewitched. There is a strong belief amongst the superstitious people that a stolen loin-cloth is used by sangomas of one's enemies to bewitch its owner and his associates. Sekonyela had to call his traditional doctors to use their charms to forestall whatever evil that might befall the Batlokwa due to the missing loin-

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25. T. Moshoeshoe, The Story of the Sotho, Part II, p.148.

cloth. It was believed Moshweshwe was going to use it against the Batlokwa.<sup>26</sup> Khomokholo wished to scare the Batlokwa and the ruse had produced positive results.

The chiefdom of Moshweshwe continued to expand while Sekonyela's was either shrinking or remained static. Sekonyela, despite all this, remained a great chief. He was the only man who could stand up to face Moshweshwe without flinching. Due to this people in the Caledon River valley were either the followers of Moshweshwe or Sekonyela. Many chiefs who remained scattered over the land seemed to have submitted either to any of the two. Their choice depended<sup>27</sup> on who of the two could support or coerce them at the time. Sekonyela in most instances relied on coercion and was too avaricious to share anything with anybody. He was not totally loathed. He still had a sway over many people - hence Moshweshwe unceasingly tried to win him to his side and establish diplomatic relations with him.

Finding Sekonyela to be a stumbling block to his expansion policy and being a thorn in his flesh Moshweshwe told him to return to Sefate (the original home of the Batlokwa). Sekonyela ignored Moshweshwe's order to leave for Sefate and

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26. S. Majara, Morena oa Thaba, pp.64-65;  
Damane's interview, 07-03-1991.

27. W.F. Lye, The Sotho Paramount Chief and the Difaqane, p.14.

became more supercilious. He suspected that Moshweshwe was trying to have him under his thumb - something he would never do. He fought hard to maintain his independence.<sup>28</sup> If he had tried to maintain his independence by keeping away from Moshweshwe or having regular talks he would have done himself a world of good. Contrary to this he conducted perpetual attacks on Moshweshwe and other chiefs thereby ruining himself. It must also be stressed that it was his surly manner that earned him the fear rather than the love of his adherents.<sup>29</sup> Long after the Difaqane wars had ended the Batlokwa were still dreaded due to Sekonyela's belligerent and surly behaviour.<sup>30</sup> He failed to maintain amity with many of his neighbouring potentates.

Before the advent of the Difaqane the area which the Batlokwa were occupying (i.e. Marabeng) was the home of some of Moshweshwe's new adherent groups and some insignificant chiefs. During the Difaqane turmoil these groups were dispersed as they were attacked by stronger tribes including the Batlokwa who later went to re-settle there. When Sekonyela refused to return to Sefate Moshweshwe sent his son, Molapo, and his son-in-law, Lesawana together with Chiefs Kadi and Ramaisa to Marabeng's environs to settle

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28. K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, p.67.

29. D. Oakes (Edit.), Illustrated History of South Africa - The Real Story, p.89.

30. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

there. Their followers came along and Marabeng was eventually surrounded in 1844-45.<sup>31</sup>

Sekonyela feared that the presence of so many people of Moshweshwe in his territory would make it easy for Moshweshwe to annex Marabeng. He loathed Moshweshwe's expansion policy because it made him (Moshweshwe) a supreme ruler and he was being eclipsed. He ordered Kadi and Ramaisa to return to Moshweshwe's land as they had no right to be in his territory. They refused to leave. A Sekonyela man named Masoetsa started the trouble by telling Molapo's adherent, Nkhase, to stop grazing his cattle in Sekonyela's place. The two argued and eventually fought and Masoetsa was thrashed and fled to Sekonyela. The latter sent his son, David, with some warriors to burn down the villages of Kadi and Ramaisa.<sup>32</sup> Molapo came to extinguish the fire but the damage had been done. More clashes followed. Cattle and horse raids and counter-raids were conducted. Eventually an open war broke out and the Batlokwa were defeated.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the defeat the Batlokwa were not driven out of Marabeng. Moshweshwe had some hopes that he and Sekonyela could meet and be allies or just friends and have a peaceful

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31. Moshoeshoe, pp.154-155; Sanders, pp.446-447.

32. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. I, pp.191-192.

33. Leselinyana, 01-11-1892.

co-existence.

In 1848 Sir Harry Smith, the Cape Colony governor, proclaimed the area between the Orange and the Vaal Rivers a British territory and called it the Orange River Sovereignty. He brought Major Warden into the picture as a British Resident. Under the pretext of keeping order in the Sovereignty Warden was implicitly expanding British imperialism. He soon realized that Moshweshwe was an impediment to his plans. Moshweshwe was against encroachment in his land and was ready to act against anybody who tried to do so.<sup>34</sup> Warden soon discovered that there was no love lost between the two powerful chiefs in the Caledon River valley : Moshweshwe and Sekonyela. He took sides and subtly supported the Batlokwa chief thereby rekindling and intensifying Sekonyela's dislike for Moshweshwe. Clashes between the two chiefs continued.

As a person supposed to keep order in the hinterland Warden had to try to bring the clashes to an end. He warned both leaders to stop their sanguinary clashes. He added that whoever attacked the other would be regarded as an enemy of the British Queen (Victoria) and would be severely punished. A certain British field-cornet by the name of Jack Fick hated

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34. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

Moshweshwe for all he had as a great ruler with a large following and would not be manipulated by any white man.

He decided to cause trouble for him. He took advantage of Sekonyela's dislike for him and then set him (Sekonyela) upon the villages of Moshweshwe's subordinate and petty chiefs : Rantsane and Chosane who were settled in the environs of Winburg. The attack on these villages took place in January 1849. About 28 men of these chiefs were killed. Some Boers who were interested in occupying the areas of Rantsane and Chosane had joined the fray by physically fighting along side Sekonyela's warriors. Two white men, the Reverend P. Faure and Dr Robertson, who witnessed the attack were upset by the Boers' complicity and informed Major Warden. Moshweshwe also sent a letter to Warden supporting the report of the two white men. Warden gave a mild response promising to meet both Sekonyela and Moshweshwe at Platberg for peace.<sup>35</sup> Nothing happened to the instigator, John Fick, who probably smiled from ear to ear to have upset and hurt Moshweshwe by having more of his people killed.

Moshweshwe was looking forward to Warden's meeting at Platberg. Sekonyela, perhaps assured of more help from the

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35. J.M. Orpen, History of the Basutus, pp.60-61.

Boers who helped him earlier, refused to attend the Platberg meeting and sent word that he wanted war not peace.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps John Fick continued to incite him. He even sent a message to Moshweshwe that he must send him his daughter named Juta to be murdered by him to avenge the death of his (Sekonyela's) brother's wife who was killed in a previous encounter.<sup>37</sup> Sekonyela's brother was named Mota. Moshweshwe sent Sekonyela a letter pleading for peace. He was not going to deliver his daughter. While awaiting a reply from Sekonyela, Mota went on to attack one of Moshweshwe's villages and carried off the village's cattle.<sup>38</sup>

Moshweshwe lost his patience and went for the Batlokwa. It was another clash that led to unnecessary loss of life. Many cattle of the Batlokwa were captured. Contrary to expectation, Warden accused Moshweshwe of trying to starve the Batlokwa by taking their cattle. He blamed him and told him to return the Batlokwa cattle. For the sake of peace Moshweshwe returned the Batlokwa's captured cattle. Warden then said that Sekonyela was going to mend his ways. But Moshweshwe's followers advised him not to believe Warden as he was a liar who liked defending Sekonyela all the time.<sup>39</sup> Warden was proving to be inconsistent and was losing respect

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36. Ibid., p.61.

37. Theal, p.193.

38. Orpen, pp.62-63.

39. Moshoeshoe, p.159.

and popularity.

It was about this time that Moshweshwe wished to possess more fire-arms for a better defence instead of relying on traditional and primitive weapons. He had fire-arms before but they were not enough to be used in a war. He did all he could to acquire more. He eventually collected enough. Even though his people were not trained in their usage they were able to use them successfully as combatants. He did not take advantage of his fire-arms to provoke or challenge other chiefdoms. In some instances he used them for trade and also as gifts to other chiefs with whom he wished to establish diplomatic relations. Sekonyela, on the other hand, was not deterred by the many fire-arms Moshweshwe had to continue challenging him. He had his but they were not many. He prided himself as a fighting warrior who wished to crush an upstart called Moshweshwe.<sup>40</sup>

Major Warden's discursive talks were not conducive to easing tension among the various communities of the highveld. He expected implicit obedience from all groups despite his behaviour. As a result a chaotic situation prevailed. He entertained the hope that the elimination of Moshweshwe would

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40. Mokotjo's interview, 07-03-1991.

automatically make him the most powerful man on the highveld and thereby endear himself to all who were Moshweshwe's enemies. In 1851 he and Sekonyela as well as several petty chiefs who viewed Moshweshwe as a thorn in their flesh ganged up together to form a formidable alliance against him (Moshweshwe). He was to be humbled. Warden was so sure of what they were going to do that he even boasted to the two missionaries who were attached to Moshweshwe, E. Casalis and H. Dyke, that Moshweshwe was to be made "to take his abode in the mountains like a rock-rabbit."<sup>41</sup> Preparations were made to end Moshweshwe's reign. Sekonyela was looking forward to end the life of an upstart who was blocking his way to the top. In June 1851 war broke out near the Konanyana mountain around Mekuatleng. It was the Battle of Viervoet and Sekonyela, Warden and their allies were defeated. Warden was degraded and his personal prestige was destroyed.<sup>42</sup>

Major Warden brought more confusion and chaos on the highveld than the peace he was supposed to maintain. His mentor Sir Harry Smith was so displeased with his blunders that he even condemned him to the Commissioners W.S. Hogge and C.M. Owen who were sent from Britain to assess the situation in the

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41. Orpen, p.95.

42. Oakes, p.142.

land Smith had renamed Orange River Sovereignty which was previously called Transorangia. The commissioners were apparently not impressed by either Smith or Warden. Both were recalled and were replaced. General Green came in for Major Warden as British Resident and Sir George Cathcart replaced Sir Harry Smith as the governor of the Cape Colony.

During this period of replacements Sekonyela did not relent to menace Moshweshwe. It would appear the Battle of Viervoet meant nothing to him. It was a general war that did not affect the Batlokwa directly. The defeat was more for Warden than the allies. He wished to defeat Moshweshwe single-handed so that the glory could be his and his Batlokwa. He attacked without any warning, killed some people and carried off their livestock. Pleas that were made to him to stop his attacks were defiantly ignored. Moshweshwe had to retaliate and war broke out. The Batlokwa were overrun and defeated. During the war in June 1852, the Batlokwa were driven out of Marabeng. Sekonyela sued for peace. As Moshweshwe was for peace and wished to have Sekonyela as an ally he accepted his plea which was a delusion. He was allowed to return to Marabeng.<sup>43</sup>

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43. D. Rafutho's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 06-10-1987; Orpen, p.107.

In the meanwhile events in the Cape Colony were disheartening and were the cause for concern. Moshweshwe was alarmed by what was happening there. There were intermittent skirmishes among some Xhosa tribes and also between the Xhosa and the Cape British authorities over the land question. Each group wanted to occupy another's area. On the highveld the situation was the same. The black tribes were quarreling with the white groups over a piece of land. Moshweshwe then thought of establishing a pan-African alliance. If all the black tribes of the highveld and the Cape Colony could unite they would offer a far better resistance against a white man's penetration or encroachment in their land.<sup>44</sup> This idea of pan-Africanism can be deduced from his overtures as his long term aim of fostering diplomatic relations with indigenous chiefs. In the Caledon River valley he had an insurmountable task in the person of Sekonyela who appeared to be bent on wrecking his plans. By refusing to work with Moshweshwe Sekonyela missed an opportunity of expanding his territory as he was only interested in destroying him thereby giving him (Moshweshwe) a chance of expanding his kingdom.<sup>45</sup>

After trying on numerous occasions and failing to foster diplomatic ties with Sekonyela Moshweshwe sent him this

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44. Sanders, pp.448-449.

45. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

message in September 1852 :

"We are both black and one nation - it is now our duty and interest to sympathise with each other - to lay aside all hostile feelings, and henceforth to be united, and only to keep a jealous eye on enemies of another colour - It never was my wish to make war on you, but your constant depredations have driven me reluctantly to do what I have done."<sup>46</sup>

If all the indigenous chiefs - particularly those of the highveld and the Eastern Cape - had understood and agreed to Moshweshwe's plan of forming pan-Africanism through his diplomatic relations the situation might have taken a different turn. Petty jealousies and wrangles among various tribes could not permit such a grand plan to be realized. Sekonyela's fear was that of teaming up with Moshweshwe. The latter's popularity would eclipse him and he would have to play the second fiddle and in the long run his independence could even disappear. He regarded Moshweshwe's message as a trap and enticement. He refused to respond.<sup>47</sup> It would appear that there was no amount of overtures and spirit of goodwill that could have made Sekonyela's dislike for

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46. Sanders, p.449.

47. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 12-10-1990.

Moshweshwe thaw. He was bent on destroying him and nothing was to detract him from that course. In spite of previous defeats he persisted in tormenting Moshweshwe.

Other than Marabeng (Sekonyela's chief village) the other Batlokwa lived in small pockets in the environs of Marabeng between Clocolan, Ficksberg, Rosendal and Sekonyela Siding as these places are presently known. It was at these places that Moshweshwe and Sekonyela had had their frequent clashes.

Knowing how susceptible Sekonyela was to anything said against Moshweshwe, Gert Taaibosch, in 1853, met him and incited him by encouraging him to demand the areas he (Sekonyela) had occupied before the Battle of Berea. As mentioned earlier in this chapter - Cathcart and Sekonyela had allied to attack Moshweshwe but were beaten. During this war many of the Batlokwa abandoned their homes and fled. Moshweshwe settled some of his people there.<sup>48</sup> Reclaiming these places would be casus belli. Taaibosch wanted another war between Sekonyela and Moshweshwe. If only Sekonyela could have met Moshweshwe to discuss the question of restoration of his people's homes there was a likelihood that Moshweshwe would have recalled his people.

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48. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

Despite previous losses Sekonyela was ready for another war against Moshweshwe. Together with Taaibosch they formed an alliance and were subsequently joined by some loose and leaderless Korana brigands.

They commenced their hostilities by demanding the return of areas which were occupied by Sekonyela's people before the Battle of Berea. Before receiving any response from Moshweshwe Sekonyela and Taaibosch conducted raids over a wide area occupied by Moshweshwe's followers. At first Moshweshwe ignored the attacks hoping that they would abate after some cattle were captured. But Sekonyela persisted dauntlessly. In October 1853 Moshweshwe decided to retaliate. War broke out.

Sekonyela and his allies were defeated in spite of the fact that they fought fearlessly. Taaibosch and Maketekete, Sekonyela's son and heir, were amongst those who were killed.<sup>49</sup>

Sekonyela survived and escaped unscathed. He found a temporary refuge in the environs of Winburg. Moshweshwe sent him a message requesting him to return to Marabeng and try to live in harmony with him. He still detested Moshweshwe

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49. Leselinyana, 01-12-1892.

and pride continued to blind his reasoning and did not respond to his request. Instead he preferred to accept a British offer of an asylum in the Wittenbergen Nature Reserve near the present day Herschel<sup>50</sup>, outside Lesotho. It was unwise and foolish of Sekonyela to let hatred control him for the rest of his life against a man who never got weary of showing a hand of friendship despite the fact he had been snubbed on numerous occasions.

In 1856 Sekonyela died having achieved nothing good worth mentioning for his people. His chieftdom was shattered. Some of his people went to settle in Witzieshoek (Qwa Qwa) with his brother, Mota. The core of the Batlokwa chieftainship developed upon his (Sekonyela's) grandson named Ledingwana. Unlike his grandfather, Ledingwana befriended Moshweshwe and later became a great friend of Moshweshwe's heir, Letsie. Ledingwana and his followers went to settle in the Maluti mountains on the Lesotho side.<sup>51</sup> The rest of the Batlokwa were absorbed by the Basotho.

Marabeng became scantily populated. The Boers who were in need of a place to settle moved into the depopulated Marabeng and divided the area into farms and some years later they

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50. J.J. Buys, Die Oorsprong en Migrasiebeweging van die Korana, pp.81-82.

51. Mota's interview, 20-04-1987.

established Ficksburg.<sup>52</sup> Some people - in Lesotho - believed that Moshweshwe was wrong to have attacked Sekonyela to a point where he had to leave Marabeng. His absence there created a vacuum which led to its subsequent occupation by the Boers. They do not seem to realize how Moshweshwe had tried on many occasions to befriend the belligerent Sekonyela but failed. Had Sekonyela not behaved the way he did probably the whole area where he once lived would still be part of the Batlokwa - Basotho region.<sup>53</sup>

Pride and prejudice blinded Sekonyela's reasoning so much that he failed himself in realizing his ambition of becoming a great Motlokwa chief like his predecessors. His warlike attitude was his demise which had an adverse effect on the Batlokwa. On the other hand, having refused to work with Moshweshwe he failed the latter in establishing a grand alliance of black chiefs or a pan-African federation in the Caledon River valley.\*

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52. Damane's interview, 07-03-1991.

53. Makhetha's interview, 23-09-1990.

\* I came to this conclusion after a lengthy discussion with both Selatile and Mota. According to Selatile it was Moshweshwe's idea to unite all Black chiefs against a common enemy.

## CHAPTER 5

MOSHWESHWE AND THE BAPEDI CHIEFS - SEKWATI AND SEKHUKHUNE

Sekwati was a junior son of Chief Thulare of the Bapedi - who are today known as the Bapedi of Sekhukhuniland - one of the various North Sotho speaking tribes. In the early years of the nineteenth century Chief Thulare and his followers were already settled in the eastern part of Transvaal between Olifants and Steelpoort Rivers in the environs of Lydenburg. His capital village was called Maroteng along the Steelpoort River. Thulare died in the early 1820s just before the Difaqane wars engulfed the highveld.<sup>1</sup> After his death one of his numerous sons named Malukutu succeeded him as chief.

In 1824 the Matebele of Mzilikazi invaded Maroteng and the neighbouring villages. A massacre ensued. Among the many of the Bapedi who lost their lives were all the sons of the late Thulare including the ruling chief, Malekutu.<sup>2</sup> Sekwati was the only son who survived the killing of the merciless Matebele. While the other survivors hid in the neighbouring mountain caves, Sekwati and a few other people, fled to the Zoutpansberg area in the northern Transvaal. He remained

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1. W.F. Lye, The Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa 1822-1823, p.213.
  2. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa to 1870, p.403.

there until 1829 when he decided to return to Maroteng.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime the Matebele had left the devastated Maroteng and the people who had survived the massacre had returned to rebuild their dwelling places which were destroyed during the Matebele invasion.

Malekutu's death created a chiefless polity as all his brothers - except Sekwati - had been killed. A certain man of the Bakone declared himself a ruler of all the Bapedi in and around Maroteng. The Bakone even though they are related to the ruling dynasty they are not of royal blood and could not claim the leadership position. This man (whose name is not known yet) was a "pretender" to the throne - he was a de facto chief. He was tolerated until the rightful claimant could emerge.<sup>4</sup> As Sekwati was the only survivor he was declared the new ruler, in fact, a de jure chief. The incumbent chief and his supporters were against Sekwati. To avoid unnecessary clashes the diplomatic Sekwati talked the "pretender" into giving up his chieftainship without much ado. The man of the Bakone agreed and Sekwati became the undisputed chief of the Bapedi. He then left Maroteng to establish himself at his own place called Phiring.<sup>5</sup> This was a mountain fortress.

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3. W. Sekhukhune's interview, Soweto, Johannesburg, 17-08-1992.

4. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

5. W.F. Lye, p.213.

His reign came during the time when the Iron Age communities (the black tribes of South Africa) were gradually abandoning their iron manufacturing technology and enhancing the money economy. It was a new life-style that was an acculturation and had a great impact on their general outlook of life. Several black tribes were being slowly transformed into a new system of offering their labour services for wages. Men left their homes to seek work at far away places to earn money with which to buy European goods such as clothes and fire-arms.<sup>6</sup>

Owning fire-arms became a sensation; all men wished to have fire-arms. Some men would even prefer to be paid with guns than money from their employers. The quest to have more cattle and fire-arms became the "push" factor as men left their homes to seek employment at far away places to labour for money with which they procured these two items. Areas of employment were the Cape Colony, Natal and the Orange Free State. The Cape Colony took the lead in offering employment and the common centres were : Cape Town, Colesberg, Graaff-Reinet, Port Elizabeth and Victoria West. In Natal the area along the coast including Durban as sugar-plantation region also attracted job-seekers. In the Orange Free State men

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6. N. Nota's interview, Soweto, Johannesburg, 28-06-1987.

were employed as farm-labourers.<sup>7</sup>

Access to these places was not easy. Permits or "passes" had to be produced by employment seekers before they could be considered for a job. Without a "pass" one was regarded as an untrustworthy alien who could not be employed. People within Moshweshwe's jurisdiction were issued these "passes" and were then employed wherever they went. The issuing of these passes commenced in the 1840s.

The diplomatic ties between Moshweshwe and Sekwati were established a few years after the latter had become chief and the Difaqane wars were gradually moving to an end and travelling through out the country was becoming safe towards the end of the 1830s. Sekwati's prominence as a man of prowess and prudence attracted Moshweshwe's attention.<sup>8</sup> It must be remembered that Moshweshwe preferred to associate with chiefs of great standing than to ordinary ones.

When Sekwati took over the chieftainship of the Bapedi the whole region was in a turmoil. As most of the Bapedi did not acknowledge the leadership of the man who succeeded Malekutu, they defied him and did as they pleased. There was no order

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7. P. Delius, The Land Belongs to Us, p.64.

8. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 12-10-1990.

and the Bapedi polity was on the verge of disintegration. The Matebele marauders had done their havoc and it would take some time to recuperate. A man with a strong personality and being innovative was needed to put matters right. Sekwati appeared to be such a person. He went all out to rebuild the polity which was in disarray. He tried and did not fail to ensure the survival and regeneration of his chiefdom. The displaced people and the refugees who came to his country were well received and incorporated into his domain. He formed a system of alliances with his sub-chiefs instead of forcing his authority over them.<sup>9</sup> His strategic methods, which were almost similar to Moshweshwe's, earned him his people's loyalty and respect.

He decentralised his authority by granting his sub-chiefs some fair amount of autonomy. He extended this to his neighbouring chiefs. In spite of all this he was wise enough to remain primus inter pares by maintaining a supreme position. He did not abuse his power. He had the means and the resources to subdue anybody who could have challenged him.<sup>10</sup> Everybody seemed to be content with him except a few of his relatives who tried to derail his plans but they were too weak to be a threat to him and he only warned them and

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9. P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa from Early Iron Age to 1870s, p.127.

10. *Ibid.*, pp.127-128.

that was enough to silence them forever.<sup>11</sup>

When Moshweshwe came to know of Sekwati he was highly impressed and wished to acquaint himself to him. At that time Sekwati had repulsed the Swazi and the Zulu attacks and this made him a great chief in the eastern Transvaal. Moshweshwe made his overtures through his Maqosa (Messenger - ambassadors). Sekwati's response to Moshweshwe's Maqosa was that the two should meet and have a tête-à-tête talk. They met at the Vaal River and both were accompanied by a huge entourage. Their meeting heralded the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lesotho and Bopedi (the land of the Bapedi).<sup>12</sup> This was a great achievement for Moshweshwe to have won the friendship of a great fighter who drove away the Swazi and the Zulu warriors.<sup>13</sup> An alliance with such a man would be beneficial.

The wars he had against the Swazi and the Zulu were occasioned by the many herds of cattle. They wished to capture them. Their defeat made Sekwati's position more secure. His agnates and other relatives who were against him ceased to complain and accepted his leadership and eventually became endeared to him. He in turn continued with his

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11. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

12. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

13. Wilson and Thompson, A History of South Africa, p.403.

general progress of his country and was able to make the Bapedi polity a principal African state in the eastern Transvaal.<sup>14</sup> All this made his diplomatic ties with Moshweshwe very strong and the latter married two women from Sekwati's royal house and one of these women was his (Sekwati's) daughter.<sup>15</sup> Sekwati also went on to marry Moshweshwe's daughter. This affinal relationship brought them closer to each other.

According to my informant on the history of the Bapedi Sekwati was not so different from Moshweshwe. He had several wives and helped the needy people by furnishing them with cattle for survival.<sup>16</sup> His wives were, however, far less than Moshweshwe's.

Moshweshwe had all sorts of women coming his way far more than did Sekwati. On a certain occasion he (Moshweshwe) met a very ugly woman at night and befriended her. A few days later she made an appearance at his palace. He did not recognize her and tried to drive her away. When she reminded him of their nocturnal rendezvous he gave her some few cattle and then sent her away. She regarded him as her husband. She probably never got married because she viewed Moshweshwe

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14. Wilson and Thompson, p.439.

15. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, 13-04-1992.

16. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

as her children's father - if she did have any - even though she probably never met him again.<sup>17</sup> Her claim might have been false or true but for the fact that he gave her a few cattle (two or three at most) was enough proof that he was her "husband". That was how important cattle were amongst the indigenous communities of South Africa. When all the girls whose mothers claimed Moshweshwe to be their husband were to marry the bohadi cattle were paid out to him thereby making him richer in cattle.<sup>18</sup> This might sound very strange to some people but that is true. It was a traditional practice.

Other than Moshweshwe and Sekwati having married each other's daughters their followers also intermarried<sup>19</sup> - resulting in the two states being bound politically and affinally.

Chief Sekwati and his Bapedi men wished to have fire-arms for the defence of their country and for their personal use. Money was needed to buy them. Sekwati arranged with Moshweshwe to have his people issued with permits to seek employment at the places mentioned earlier. The permits were to make the Bapedi men appear as though they were the citizens of Lesotho and subjects of Moshweshwe, residing in

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17. E. Moshoeshe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, Lesotho, 13-05-1988.

18. Damane's interview, 13-04-1992.

19. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

Lesotho.

Before the permits were written out Sekwati's men had to be in Lesotho for a month or two acquainting and acclimatizing themselves to the conditions of the land.<sup>20</sup> Permits or passes were written out by the missionary, Eugene Casalis, and sometimes his colleague, Thomas Arbousset, and Moshweshwe only added his cross (X) on the document to make it authentic.<sup>21</sup> This was so because he could not write.

Payment for work done was in the form of cattle or money. Some workers preferred to be paid with fire-arms. Most of those who were paid with money bought cattle and fire-arms. When returning home the Bapedi men entered Moshweshwe's territory to show their gratitude and those who could afford it gave him a cow or even two. Possessing or owning a fire-arm boosted a man's social status and having more cattle meant more wealth. Everyman in Sekwati's land was encouraged to have a fire-arm.<sup>22</sup>

Fire-arms that were bought by the Bapedi migratory workers in Sekwati's polity were not the only ones, some of them were obtained from some Griqua bandits who were roaming all over

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20. S. Gill's interview, Moriija, Lesotho, 23-05-1990.

21. Rev. A. Brutsch's interview, Moriija, Lesotho, 11-07-1992.

22. Damane's interview, 13-04-1992.

the highveld in search of mischief and indulging in dangerous adventures. They exchanged fire-arms for cattle and other items that were attractive to them.<sup>23</sup>

More and more of the Voortrekkers were entering the Transvaal and some of them moved to the eastern Transvaal and settled in the environs of Phiring and Maroteng. Their presence alarmed Sekwati. In the meeting he held with his councillors it was decided to have more fire-arms. They had heard of the clashes the Voortrekkers had had with some communities of Transorangia (the later Orange Free State) and they felt unsafe, hence the quest for more fire-arms. Sekwati sent word to his new friend, Moshweshwe, seeking help of fire-arms. The latter duly furnished the Bapedi polity with some few fire-arms that he had in exchange for iron made articles and wild beast skins such as hippopotamus and rhinoceros.<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese who were based in Mozambique also supplied a few of what fire-arms they had for cattle and iron goods.<sup>25</sup>

With so many fire-arms reaching Sekwati's land the neighbouring Voortrekkers became uneasy and worried. They then decided to ambush and disarm the Bapedi migratory workers on their return journeys. After some attacks by the

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23. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

24. P. Delius, pp.69-71.

25. W.F. Lye, p.216.

Voortrekkers the Bapedi workers decided to travel at night and moved in large groups to offer a formidable defence and resistance against further attacks. There developed ill-feelings between the Voortrekkers and the Bapedi of Chief Sekwati. The one time peaceful co-existence was fast becoming a matter of the past. Some of the Voortrekkers who were settled at Lydenburg tried to ease the tension and even allay fears by offering to live in harmony with Sekwati and his subjects. However one of the Voortrekker leaders, Hendrik Potgieter, was not of the same opinion as the Lydenburg people; he did not want peace or peaceful co-existence. He wished to disarm the Bapedi of their fire-arms. In 1852 he and his supporters besieged the mountain fortress of Phiring. It was "c'est la guerre" and the Bapedi were also accused of cattle theft. The Bapedi fought well in defending themselves and Potgieter and his followers failed to disarm or conquer the mountain fortress. He had to withdraw and moved away leaving Sekwati and his people in peace.<sup>26</sup> Like Moshweshwe who once left Butha Buthe mountain for a better mountain fortress of Thaba Bosiu, Sekwati also felt Phiring was not so safe and left for a better mountain fortress called Thaba Mosego.<sup>27</sup> This was a far better place and he remained there for the rest of his life.

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26. N. Parsons, A New History of Southern Africa, p.186.

27. P. Maylam, A History of the African People, p.128.

Not all the Bapedi migratory workers who entered Lesotho on their way home returned home. Some decided to settle in Lesotho. Being a friend of their chief (Sekwati) Moshweshwe had no objection to their settling in his land. He granted them permission to settle.<sup>28</sup> This was the beginning of Bapedi settlements in Lesotho.

There had been a general rumour that the Bapedi medicine men or traditional doctors were the best in curing the sick. This rumour reached Moshweshwe. As best doctors are needed all over the world Moshweshwe sent word to Sekwati requesting that he be sent a good traditional doctor. Moshweshwe needed such a doctor to cure his general ailments and even help in curing his senility. Nothing could be done to fight senility but Sekwati sent him a doctor. Moshweshwe was so content with the Mopedi doctor that he assigned him to his son, Letsie, to be his personal helper. He was to strengthen him with talisman and amulets.<sup>29</sup>

Missionary work in Lesotho impressed the Bapedi men who happened to stay longer on their way home from their places of employment. They admired the works of the missionaries : Casalis and Arbousset. They wished their country could

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28. Damane's interview, 13-04-1992.

29. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

have missionaries too. When they reached home they informed Sekwati about the importance of missionaries. He was also impressed and wished to bring Christianity to his land. He asked Moshweshwe to send him some missionaries.<sup>30</sup> Moshweshwe did not have any free missionary to send to Sekwati. It was a disappointment for the anxious chief who was expecting a missionary with all the excitement. He tried to obtain one from the Voortrekkers but could not get any. After giving up hope there emerged two German missionaries of the Berlin Missionary Society in 1861. They belonged to the Lutheran church and had come to labour in the land of Sekwati. One of these two missionaries was Alexander Merensky who, later in the the history of the Bapedi, played a great role in the Bapedi polity. The very year of the missionaries' arrival Sekwati died.<sup>31</sup> He died having not realized his long cherished hope of having missionaries working in his land.

Sekwati was succeeded by his son named Mampuru but his elder half-brother called Sekhukhune overthrew him and became the new potentate of the Bapedi.<sup>32</sup> At the time of his death Sekwati had acquired a good number of fire-arms thereby making the Bapedi polity a formidable one and many of his neighbours both black and white felt uneasy and became

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30. P. Sanders, Moshweshwe Chief of the Sotho, p.282.

31. R. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, p.74.

32. T. Cameron et al, A New Illustrated History of South Africa, p.155.

fearful.<sup>33</sup> More fire-arms were procured after Potgieter had besieged Phiring in 1852. Most of these fire-arms had come from Moshweshwe who was alarmed after the Phiring incident. He wished to make Sekwati a strong ally of his in the Transvaal.<sup>34</sup> Even though the Bapedi were not trained in the use of fire-arms and would probably lose in an open battle against trained soldiers, they nevertheless remained a danger to their neighbours.

As a new chief Sekhukhune continued with his father's diplomatic relations with Moshweshwe. He was harsh in behaviour and was not as friendly as Sekwati was. Some of his relatives were not happy at all with his new position which he had usurped from Mampuru. No one had the courage to defy him. One of his relatives was a young man named Moruthane who was a promising traditional doctor. Sekhukhune did not like him and told him to go away from Thaba Mosego and even out of the land. He told him that as a traditional doctor he was going to cause a rift in the Bapedi royal house. Moruthane had to leave. He went to the land of Moshweshwe. Some people in the land including other relatives of Sekhukhune joined Moruthane to escape the dictatorial behaviour of Chief Sekhukhune.<sup>35</sup> In Lesotho they

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33. P. Delius, pp.74-75.

34. Mokhehle's interview, 12-10-1992.

25. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992.

were going to join the Bapedi who were already settled there.

Moshweshwe welcomed the newcomers and was glad to have another traditional doctor from "the land of good doctors". The two traditional doctors would help in "doctoring" the ailments of his land. He gave Moruthane and his followers a place to settle near Moriija. The place where they settled came to be called Ha-Moruthane <sup>36</sup> (at Moruthane's place). This settlement is still called Ha-Moruthane today and it is sometimes referred to as "Bopedi" (the home of Bapedi). There is a school at this place called Bopedi Primary School. It serves as a reminder of the diplomatic relations Moshweshwe and Sekwati had established.

Many other Bapedi left "Sekhukhune land" to settle in Lesotho at Ha-Moruthane with their brothers and sisters. Some came because they feared the harsh government of Sekhukhune while others wished to be at a place of learning. At that time (1860s) Lesotho was gradually becoming a centre of learning for the people in the hinterland : Orange Free State and Transvaal. The French missionaries had established schools at Thaba Bosiu and Moriija. <sup>37</sup>

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36. Rev. A. Brutsch's interview, Moriija, 11-07-1992.

37. E. Moshoeshoe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 12-10-1988.

As the number of these people was not so great their Sepedi language was eventually forgotten. Their descendants do not speak a single Sepedi word. They are all Sesotho speaking and only their surnames tell that they are Bapedi. Very few of them have an idea of how they came to settle at Ha-Moruthane. Most of those that I talked to did not seem to know their background. However the place and the school tell a better story.

Another man from Sekhukhune land came to settle in Lesotho in the 1860s and became a Christian. His name was Maritona and when he was baptized he was given the name of Darius. He became known as Darius Maritona. He was an elderly man when he came to settle in Lesotho and Moshweshwe gave him one of his daughters to marry.<sup>38</sup> Maritona's descendants are still found in Lesotho and are settled at Leribe.

In addition to the Bapedi of Sekwati there was another group of the Bapedi which also settled in Lesotho. They did not have a chief or a leader. Having heard of Moshweshwe's kindness they preferred to enter his territory for their own safety as they could not stand the turmoil in their land. After the Difaqane they returned home but a few decided to

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38. Damane's interview, Maseru, 11-05-1992.

settle permanently. They were nicknamed "Ma-aowa". The term "aowa" means "no" in the Sepedi language. It was a new term that pleased the Basotho. The Basotho used it to identify them (Bapedi)<sup>39</sup>. The term is still used and it is interesting to note that many people to whom this name is referred do not know its origin. They accept it as just a pet-name. Many of those who use it are also ignorant of its derivation. They too like the Bapedi from Sekwati's land have forgotten their original language and speak Sesotho only. Many of the descendants of the French Huguenots who came to the Cape as far back as 1688 can't speak French - they either speak Afrikaans or English as their mother tongue. These are the effects of migration and permanent settlement in another country.

Before Sekwati died and during the early years of Sekhukhune's reign some men from their land came to Lesotho to train as Catechists and Evangelists at either Thaba Bosiu or Morija.<sup>40</sup> It was through the diplomatic relationship he had with Sekwati that it was easy for the Bapedi prospective trainees to come to his land. In this way he was able to spread Christianity to various parts of the Transvaal albeit as a facilitator. By granting free entry into his land for

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39. Noto's interview, 28-06-1987.

Nathaniel Noto, who passed away in 1990, was a descendant of the Bapedi who came to Lesotho during the Difaqane period. He was settled in Matsieng - the present Lesotho's royal village - before migrating to Johannesburg.

40. Sekhukhune's interview, 17-08-1992;  
Brutsch's interview, 11-07-1992.

trainees Lesotho became a great centre of learning on the highveld.

When Moshweshwe had wars with the Boers of the Orange Free State in the 1850s he somewhat encouraged his allies : Sekwati and Mapela to stir up trouble in the Transvaal and keep the other white people busy so that they should not join forces with those of the Free State. In 1858 when he had a war with President Boshof he sent word to both Sekwati and Mapela, who was a Ndebele chief in northern Transvaal, to detract the attention of the Transvaal whites so that Boshof must fight alone.<sup>41</sup>

Mapela, the Ndebele chief, was not related to the Matebele/ Ndebele of Mzilikazi. He was based in the environs of the present day Potgietersrus. His other name was Mokopane. He had married two daughters of Moshweshwe's minor wives. He followed Sekwati's example of sending his people to Moshweshwe to be issued with permits to seek employment in the same areas as Sekwati's people.<sup>42</sup> When Paul Kruger was still the Commandant-general of the Transvaal in 1860 - then called the Z.A.R. - Moshweshwe once took him to task for having punished Mapela unduly. Kruger had accused Mapela of

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41. G.M. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. 3, p.749.

42. P. Delius, pp.64-65.

having committed some crimes including murder.<sup>43</sup> Moshweshwe had always tried to intercede for or defend his allies whenever they were chastised especially those who were vulnerable and could hardly defend themselves.

Mapela was one of the chiefs in the Transvaal who requested Moshweshwe to furnish them with missionaries.<sup>44</sup> It would seem there was never a follow up to this request as no missionary ever visited Mapela from Lesotho or the Orange Free State. There does not appear to be much between Mapela and Moshweshwe - there is no evidence of any exchange of ambassadors. Whatever might have happened between these two potentates no concrete evidence is available yet to link them directly. They probably never met personally. It is a known fact that Moshweshwe's fame attracted various chiefs who did everything possible to associate themselves with him. His "khau" (seal) for identification (as explained earlier) granted his Lititimi and Maqosa free entry to many chiefdoms. It could be that only Moshweshwe's messengers met Mapela\* and established friendly relations on his behalf.

On the other hand the diplomatic relations between Sekwati's successor (Sekhukhune) and Moshweshwe continued until after

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43. P. Sanders, pp.272-273.

44. S. Ndaba's interview, Mahwelereng, Potgietersrus, 04-07-1992.

\* According to Samuel Ndaba of Mahwelereng - my informant on Mapela - Moshweshwe did not visit Mapela but the two communicated through messengers. Mapela's people joined Sekwati's to seek employment from Moshweshwe's land.

the death of the latter when the former was involved in wars against the Boers of the Transvaal in 1874 and the British in 1879. Moshweshwe's successor, Letsie, could do nothing as Lesotho was then under British control.

The diplomatic ties between Moshweshwe and Sekwati granted the Bapedi a second home - Lesotho. There were regular visits between the two states by messengers of both potentates.

## CHAPTER 6

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MOSHWESHWE AND THE SWAZI CHIEF -  
SOBHUZA I AND MSWATI II

Sobhuza I was ruler of Swaziland between 1815 and 1836. A few years after 1815 a precarious period of confusion and hardships developed occasioned by the ravages of the Difaqane turmoil. His people (the Swazi) were victims of the attacks perpetrated by the Zulu, the Matabele and the Bapedi. Most of his people survived by hiding in the mountain caves and shelters of big rocks of Swaziland which - fortunately for them - has a mountainous topography. As these attacks did not seem to end, Sobhuza I tried to foster an alliance with Zwide by marrying the daughter of the latter named Thandile. Zwide was the chief of the Ndwandwe clan which was settled in the northern part of Natal not so far from the Swaziland border. After marrying Thandile he made her his chief wife<sup>1</sup> to please Zwide so as to gain his support as an ally who would help him against further attacks. He went on to give two daughters to Shaka, the Zulu king, in marriage, with the aim of stopping the Zulu attacks. But when the two girls as Shaka's wives fell pregnant he (Shaka) killed them as he did

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1. J.S.M. Matsebula, A History of Swaziland, pp.8-9.

not want children.<sup>2</sup> It was frustrating and hurtful but there was nothing Sobhuza could do against Shaka. The marriage of his daughters did however ease the Zulu attacks.

As Christianity was being proclaimed in various part of the sub-continent of Africa by missionaries of different missionary societies Sobhuza I came to know of their signifance among the black communities. He was informed that the respect missionaries commanded was great and they were not easily attacked by marauders. Missionary stations were normally safe places. Even though, then, the Difaqane warfare was abating Sobhuza I wished to have a missionary. The only chief known then to have missionaries was Moshweshwe. Sobhuza I sent his messengers to Moshweshwe requesting a missionary.<sup>3</sup>

The Basotho called Sobhuza I "Raputswa" and referred to all his subjects as "Baraputswa" (people of Raputswa)<sup>4</sup>. The name Swazi (Maswati) came about during the reign of Mswati II, the son of Sobhuza I, who ruled between 1840 and 1868.<sup>5</sup> When the first missionaries visited this land they called it "the land of the Baraputswa". It was in fact the Basotho who failed to pronounce "Sobhuza" that led to the term Raputswa coming

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2. K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, pp.38-39.

3. E. Moshoeshoe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 03-04-1991.

4. The South African Weekly, 8 July 1949.

5. J.S.M. Matsebula, A History of Swaziland, pp.13-14.

into being.<sup>6</sup> Sobhuza I's messengers to the land of Moshweshwe brought the Basotho and the Baraputswa into contact. By the time of Sobhuza I's death in 1835 Moshweshwe had not responded to his request despite the fact that he had sent a second group of messengers.<sup>7</sup> It was probably impossible for Moshweshwe to send any missionary elsewhere as the three who came to his country were still new (having arrived there in 1833) and were not prepared to venture into yet another strange land. Moshweshwe was still learning much from them to think of sending any of them away. Also, he did not have enough influence on any of the missionaries to make such a request.

Sobhuza I had chosen the son of Thandile to succeed him as ruler of his subjects. Among the Swazi the reigning ruler has the prerogative to choose his successor from his sons. It does not matter how young the son is. With the Basotho, on the other hand, the first son of the great wife succeeds his father. One is an heir from birth while with the Swazi nobody knows until just before the death of the ruling chief. When Sobhuza I died Thandile's son, who was to be Mswati II, was still too young to rule and three people were chosen to run the affairs of the state until Mswati II was old enough

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6. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, 13-06-1992.

7. Moshoeshoe's interview, 03-04-1991.

to rule. The three were : Thandile (his mother), Malunge (his uncle) and Malambule (his half-brother who was the first son of Sobhuza I)<sup>8</sup>.

As soon as he was of age and was ready to take the reins of the Swazi polity Mswati II was challenged and internal strife ensued. His three half-brothers: Malambule, Fokoti and Somcuba together with their supporters were against Mswati II and his leadership. External forces joined the fray and aggravated the situation. These were the Zulu of King Mpande and some Boers from Lydenburg area - who were against Mswati II. A Boer community from another town in the eastern Transvaal near Lydenburg called Ohrigstad came to the defence of Mswati II and the rebels were subdued.<sup>9</sup>

In 1844 Mswati II sent a delegation of messengers to Moshweshwe as his father had done on two occasions. He wanted a missionary. There was not a single French missionary who was interested in Mswati II's request. Moshweshwe then referred their matter to the Wesleyan missionaries. Their superintendent, the Reverend William Shaw, sent two missionaries, J. Giddy and J. Allison, to visit the country of Mswati II to study the place and give a report. They went

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8. K. Shillington, p.41.

9. P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa, pp.38-39.

there and came back.<sup>10</sup> Giddy was not interested in going back there while Allison was.

Allison had a good reason for going there. The Reverend James Allison was the same one discussed in Chapter 4 who laboured among the Batlokwa of Chief Sekonyela.

Allison had also incurred the wrath of the Voortrekkers in the Orange Free State. He had accused them of having attacked a native village in the environs of Thaba Nchu. Some people were killed and about sixty children were taken away and sold to some white farmers who had settled along the Modder River. Many other bad and negative things were said about the Voortrekkers by Allison. It was a serious case as they denied all the allegations. Eventually their case was referred to Pietermaritzburg for arbitration. It would appear there was not enough evidence as nobody was charged. The Voortrekkers turned against Allison for poking his nose in their affairs.<sup>11</sup> He became persona-non-grata in the Orange Free State. Mswati II's request was an offer he could not refuse.

Allison and Giddy had observed that there was a need for

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10. W.J.G. Mears, The Rev. James Allison Missionary, pp.6-7.

11. W.J.G. Mears, pp.5-6.

evangelists to help in missionary work. A missionary alone would not be in a position to do much. The Swazi people wished to be Christianized and were - about 80 000 as a population of the whole enclave (Swaziland). The Wesleyan Missionary Society did not have black people as evangelists or catechists nor did it have training centres yet. The French missionaries had two such centres : at Morija and Thaba Bosiu. Moshweshwe was approached for assistance. He obliged and four trained evangelists from Thaba Bosiu were requested to accompany the Reverend James Allison to the land of Raputswa.<sup>12</sup> This was in 1844 when Allison and the four evangelists left for the new place.

The presence of the Basotho evangelists in the land of Raputswa (as the Basotho continued to refer to Swaziland) renewed the interest Moshweshwe had since Sobhuza I sent messengers to him in 1834 requesting a missionary. Moshweshwe then sent his special messengers (Maqosa) to Mswati II to establish a formal friendship. The two countries commenced working together. They exchanged goods and there were regular visits by messengers of both potentates. Mswati II and Moshweshwe became friends and allies.<sup>13</sup> It is not known whether Mswati II did marry a

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12. Damane's interview, 13-06-1992.

13. Moshoeshoe's interview, 03-03-1991.

Mosotho woman or Moshweshwe married a woman from Swaziland.

What is, however, known is that Sobhuza I did marry a Mosotho woman from the royal family in 1834.<sup>14</sup> This was arranged by his messengers who had gone to Moshweshwe for the second time asking to be given a missionary.\*

In the land of Raputswa Allison established the Mahamba mission station. For the sake of better management four other sub-stations were also erected not so far from the main one. Each one of the four was assigned to one of the Basotho evangelists. Allison had regular access to these sub-stations to give guidance where possible. The evangelists played a greater role in guiding the Swazi towards a Christian lifestyle,<sup>15</sup> thanks to Moshweshwe's kindness in allowing them to accompany Allison.

What a great pity it was that Allison and his helpers did not remain long at the Mahamba mission station. It was a short-lived period. In 1847 the Mahamba mission station was in disarray. Everything had turned topsy-turvy. Mswati II's half-brothers, Malambule and Somcuba, once more challenged his leadership. They wanted to remove him from the throne.

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14. K. Shillington, p.38.

\* According to E. Moshoeshe, the curator of Thaba Bosiu, it was rare for Moshweshwe to let another chief marry a woman of his country without him not doing the same. A woman from another country helped him to understand such a country better. Moshweshwe might have had a wife from the land of Raputswa even though this cannot be confirmed as there is no record of it.

15. Z. Nkosi's interview, Lobamba, Swaziland, 23-05-1992.

He would not succumb to their pressure. Their followers were very supportive and were ready to displace Mswati II and replace him with Malambule. Mswati II's supporters would not allow this to happen and attacked them. Most of them fled to Mahamba mission station for protection as a mission station was a place of peace and safety. On Sunday 14th September 1847 just before the church service in the morning Mswati II's warriors, accompanied by four mounted Boers, arrived at the mission station and turned it into a battle field. Fifty men were killed mercilessly and many more were seriously wounded.<sup>16</sup> It was horror for Allison and the evangelists.

Mswati II was all out to eliminate his enemies saying that he was clearing his country of witches and other evil people. He demanded from Allison the delivery of eight seriously injured men and a woman who had shouted - during the massacre - that Jehovah is greater than Mswati II. These words had infuriated Mswati II who had accompanied his warriors. The nine wounded people had sought refuge in Allison's mission house. Allison refused to take them out of his house. When he tried to find out the reason for the four Boers participation in the attack he, in turn, was accused of

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16. The South African Weekly, 15 July 1949.

trying to interfere in the affairs of the king. Mswati II had obviously forgotten the call he had made for a missionary. Fear and confusion reigned at Mahamba. There was no sign of the situation changing for the better. On 17th September 1847 Allison, the Basotho evangelists and some converts left Mahamba. Allison had promised to return the following year but he never did.<sup>17</sup>

Their departure brought three years work of Christianity to a standstill. However it was not the real end of the Methodist Church in Swaziland - many years later it was resumed. The names of Allison and the Basotho evangelists are still the trade mark of the Mahamba mission station.<sup>18</sup>

Allison could not return to the Orange Free State. He was still l'enfant terrible as neither the Batlokwa nor the Voortrekkers would have him back. It would be risky to venture there again. While the Basotho evangelist returned to Lesotho, Allison went to Natal and settled at a place called Indaleni near Pietermaritzburg. A few years later a misunderstanding developed. Allison could not agree to the proposals made to him by his superiors. He preferred to tender his resignation rather than give in to the suggestions

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17. W.J.G. Mears, p.11.

18. Nkosi's interview, 23-05-1992.

made. He then left the Wesleyan Missionary Society and worked independently among the Zulu of Indaleni.<sup>19</sup> His followers and the new converts remained attached to him despite the mishaps.<sup>20</sup>

In the meantime the events at Mahamba adversely affected the diplomatic relations between the land of Raputswa and Lesotho. The Basotho and their ruler thought it risky to continue visiting a "bloody" country and refrained altogether from going there.<sup>21</sup> Mswati II was also too busy with his internal problems to think of foreign issues.

The departure of the Basotho evangelists from the land of Raputswa put Moshweshwe at ease. He would have probably acted to secure their release and safety had they remained in the strife torn country. He once secured the release of a certain minor Mosotho chief and his few followers who were trapped in the land of Andries Waterboer at Griquatown.<sup>22</sup> Moshweshwe was always showing concern for the safety of his people in foreign countries either being there on a diplomatic mission or on their own account.

Diplomatic relations between Lesotho and Swaziland were

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19. W.J.G. Mears, p.13.

20. Nkosi' interview, 23-05-1992.

21. Moshoeshoe's interview, 03-04-1991.

22. D.P. Ambrose, The Basotho Settlement at Griquatown 1824-1840, p.64.

resumed after the death of Mswati II in 1868.<sup>23</sup> The two states did not exchange ambassadors as it was the case with other chiefs. Their relationship was based on trade - exchanging of goods such as iron made articles and skins of wild animals.<sup>24</sup> By 1868 Moshweshwe was an Octogenerian and was weak. The two states have maintained their friendship up to date.

Although the relationship between Lesotho and Swaziland was not politically motivated from Moshweshwe's side as it was with many other countries elsewhere, it nevertheless increased the number of his friendly states. What Sobhuza I started as a request for a missionary led to the two states becoming allies strengthened by the affinal relationship of Sobhuza I with a Mosotho woman.

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23. J.S.M. Matsebula, A History of Swaziland, p.14;

H. Kuper, Sobhuza II Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland, p.20.

24. Damane's interview, 13-06-1992.

## CHAPTER 7

MOSHWESHWE AND SEBETWANE, CHIEF OF THE BAFOKENG  
OF PATSA

Sebetwane was a chief of the Bafokeng of Patsa - one of the numerous Bafokeng splinter groups that were scattered on the highveld. The Bafokeng of Patsa were originally settled at Kurutlele - a mountain side near the modern town of Sekekal in the Orange Free State. These Bafokeng remained settled at this place until they were dislodged by the Batlokwa of Manthatise at the break-out of the of the Difaqane wars on the highveld in the early 1820s. They were attacked and forced to abandon their home forever.

Sebetwane, like Moletsane chief of the Bataung, was not originally an heir to the throne. The prevailing circumstances of the time seemed to have favoured him. His bravery earned him support and attracted many people who became his adherents and followers. When he had to be chief nobody could challenge or dispute his claim to the throne.

Not far from Kurutlele there is another mountain called

Khoele which was the home of another splinter group of the Bafokeng. This group was the Bafokeng of Khoele and Moshweshwe's mother belonged to this group.<sup>1</sup> Sebetwane and Moshweshwe's mother were tribally related as they were both Bafokeng and lived adjacent to each other. The area between Lindley (a town in the Free State) and Thaba Bosiu was once the home of various Sotho-Tswana communities. Most of them perished without trace due to the Difaqane warfare. The Bafokeng of Patsa and the Bafokeng of Khoele were two of the few who survived. The Maxim Homo Homini Lupus (man is a wolf to his fellow men) befits the Difaqane period. Only the strong, the daring and the lucky were able to survive. One had to kill one's fellow man to live.

The Bafokeng of Patsa were the first victims of the warlike Batlokwa in 1822. This was the period of the Difaqane's commencement on the highveld. Sebetwane - at the time - was a young man of about twenty years of age when his Bafokeng were attacked. The survivors became wanderers. Their chief was Mangwane and his heir was killed and eaten up by a lion. Soon after the death of his heir Mangwane died. The Bafokeng of Patsa were leaderless. Young as he was Sebetwane had to be chief as he was the younger brother to the man who was

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1. M. Makhetha's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 11-02-1991.

killed by a lion.<sup>2</sup> Despite his youth his people expected him to lead them through this turmoil and the young Sebetwane stood up to the challenge.

He had to marry to command respect amongst his people - without a wife a chief is still regarded as a boy. He married the daughter of Chief Ramatlakane, the ruler of the Bahlakwana - one of the numerous Sotho-speaking tribes of the highveld. Her name was Malikuku (pronounced Madikuku) whose sister was Makhitsane the wife of Moletsane chief of the Bataung.<sup>3</sup> Sebetwane and Moletsane became friends as they were affinally related. Moshweshwe regarded the Bafokeng of Patsa as his relatives because they were the same people as his mother's and were even neighbours.<sup>4</sup>

After taking over the leadership of the Bafokeng from his father Sebetwane proved to be a great warrior with prowess. This attracted the attention of Moshweshwe and Moletsane. The three became friends and also allies. Moshweshwe and Sebetwane agreed to establish diplomatic relations. As the Bafokeng of Patsa's home was not so far from Thaba Bosiu (they were near what is today called Ventersburg) there was no need to exchange ambassadors. Their messengers met

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2. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern, p.306.
  3. Ibid., pp.306-307.
  4. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 11-02-1991.

regularly. On various occasions the two met personally. The three chiefs (Moshweshwe, Moletsane and Sebetwane) met on numerous occasions for the purpose of planning defence and staving off attacks emanating from the prevailing Difaqane.

As the pressure of the wars continued and gained momentum the three were pushed apart. Each one of them took a direction of safety hoping to find solace. The three chiefs lost physical contact. Moshweshwe went to settle at Thaba Bosiu and remained there for the rest of his life. Moletsane wandered all over the hinterland until 1837 when he settled at Mekuatleng and later went to Thabana Morena (in Lesotho) where he died. Sebetwane went on to wander, traversing various parts of Southern Africa until 1838 when he ended his wandering by settling in what is now called Zambia<sup>5</sup> where he lived until he was no more.

Sebetwane, like Moshweshwe, was the "product" of the Difaqane. He was first involved in the Difaqane warfare in 1822. Since then he never had a full rest. His life was characterized by belligerent activities. He was forever engaged in attacks : either attacking or being attacked. Homo Homini Lupus became his motto. He spared no tribe that

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5. A.J. Dachs, Papers of John Mackenzie, p.74.

happened to be in his path. He won most of his war engagements and D.F. Ellenberger dubbed him "the conqueror Sebetwane."<sup>6</sup> From the time he moved away from Moshweshwe he had very little time for resting. The ravages of the Difagane transformed him into a fighting chief. Ellenberger's saying described him in the best possible way. As a man who knew how to plan his attacks his followers liked him and hero-worshipped him.<sup>7</sup> It was his fighting strategies that pleased Moshweshwe and he wished to retain their alliance.<sup>8</sup>

The name Bafokeng of Patsa did not remain long in use. During his campaigns Sebetwane encountered the Maphuthing (another of the many Sotho-Tswana tribes on the highveld). He had no difficulty subduing these people. Among the women he had captured there was one called Setloutlou whose beauty enchanted him. After a while he married her and she bore him a son named Sekeletu. Setloutlou belonged to the Makololo tribe. He soon made her his chief wife.

His followers liked her very much and came to regard her as the mother-figure of the Bafokeng - of Patsa. They subsequently changed their name and renamed themselves the

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6. Ellenberger, p.305.

7. M. Mofokeng's interview, Matwabeng, Senekal, 20-03-1991.

8. Makhetha's interview, 11-02-1991.

Makololo (Kololo or Bakololo).<sup>9</sup>

After a while this new name superseded the old one. They referred to themselves as Makololo and they were also called the Makololo.\* Eventually the name Bafokeng of Patsa was totally in oblivion. Yet they did not change their totem. They continued to venerate phoka (dew) which was the totemic name of all the Bafokeng on the highveld.

In about 1831 Sebetwane realized that there was nothing to be gained from the ceaseless warfares in which he was one of the most active participants. He therefore decided to emigrate to the north and be far from the highveld which was the focal point of the Difaqane activities. He was in search of a problem free country where he could live in peace and security.<sup>10</sup> Sebetwane did not stop informing Moshweshwe of his whereabouts. He had met a man whose friendship was invaluable. He wished to maintain their friendship. He had thought the Difaqane turmoil would abate and life would be normal and he and Moshweshwe would have the best times living in peace exchanging ideas and goods.<sup>11</sup>

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9. K. Shellington, History of Southern Africa, p.47.

\* It would seem Setloutlou's people (Makololo) were an insignificant tribe and yet Sebetwane found their name so appealing that he adopted it as his and for his people. He probably wished to do away with the name "Bafokeng" and form a new tribe (group) of his own as some splinter groups did.

10. D. Wilson, A History of South and Central Africa, p.78.

11. Mofokeng's interview, 20-03-1991.

The peace he thought of was more of a wishful thinking than anything else. The quest to own more cattle was still very strong in him. As he was directing his steps to the north he raided the Barolong and the Bahurutshe. He forced them to flee and captured their cattle and yet he wanted a peaceful co-existence with other people. He then entered Botswana and went to Kanye the home of the Bangwaketse. Their chief, Makaba, tried to fight to protect his cattle which Sebetwane was trying to drive away. The Bangwaketse were no match for the veteran Sebetwane. They were easily subdued and scattered and their cattle were driven away.<sup>12</sup> He then met an off-shoot of the Batlokwa who were settled in Botswana and their chief was Khosi. Sebetwane attacked these people and even killed Khosi. The rest fled and he took their cattle. The survivors split into two sections. One section was under a man named Matlapeng and the other one was under the leadership of Lethage. The former section decided to leave Botswana and returned to the southern highveld. The section under Lethage joined Sebetwane's Makololo.<sup>13</sup> Their incorporation meant the end of the Batlokwa in Botswana. Their identity and independence came to an end. Khosi had fled to Botswana with his supporters due to the Difaqane warfare. He had broken from the main Batlokwa group and fled

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12. Chief Bathoen II's interview, Kanye, Botswana, 13-08-1989.

13. Ellenberger, pp.308-309.

as a splinter group to the land of Botswana in the north-west of the highveld.<sup>14</sup>

After the defeat of the Batlokwa Sebetwane went for the Bangwato in northern Botswana. Having heard of his coming they fled before he reached their land. He then went to the western side towards Lake Ngami and found the Batawana and their chief Moremi I. War broke out between Moremi I and Sebetwane. The Batawana were defeated and Chief Moremi I and his survivors fled and Sebetwane occupied Ngamiland and added their cattle to his. He was not satisfied with Moremi I's cattle. He planned and conducted cattle-raids in the land of the Herero in Namibia. The Herero resisted and the desert-like conditions drove Sebetwane out of the land he had invaded.<sup>15</sup>

He remained at Ngamiland for sometime. He then wandered northwards and crossed the Okavango River and entered the land of the Lozi (Barotse) which is today called Zambia. The Makololo moved further on and came to the Chobe swamps and Sebetwane renamed this place Dinyanti. He settled at this place for a while and then roamed all over the land and finally returned to Dinyanti and made it his capital village.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Mofokeng's interview, 20-03-1991.

15. D.E. Needham et al, From Iron Age to Independence - A History of Central Africa, p.72; Shellington, p.48.

16. R. Kukubo's interview, Gaborone, Botswana, 15-04-1992.

As fighting had become a way of life Sebetwane could not rest for long. He soon engaged in wars against various tribes of the country. He attacked and defeated the tribes of the land who were of the Thonga chiefdoms. The main tribe was the Lozi. He eventually became the master of Buluzi (Barotseland).<sup>17</sup>

The whole world was his. His methods of fighting were unknown to the people of Buluzi and this was the advantage he had against the various chiefdoms of this territory. He came to the waterfalls along the Zambezi River which the Lozi called Shongwe-na-Mutitima and changed this name to a Sesotho name : Mosi-oa-Tunya (where the smoke is thundering or thundering smoke).<sup>18</sup> Later the missionary and great traveller, David Livingstone, came to the same waterfalls and named the place Victoria Falls. The name Mosi-oa-Tunya has been retained up to date.

Sebetwane had nobody to wage war against. He had conquered all possible rivals. He then established a home for the Makololo in a strange country. It was a "mini empire" that he had created in southern Zambia.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Wilson, p.119.

18. N. Parsons, A New History of Southern Africa, p.76.

19. J.D. Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.60.

To forestall possible negative re-actions or a coup d'etat, Sebetwane allowed the chiefdoms, he had defeated, some amount of self-rule (*imperium in imperio*).<sup>20</sup> One cannot tell how much influence Moshweshwe had on him - he was doing almost everything that Moshweshwe did. He married women of other tribes thereby gaining the loyalty of their tribes. So prudent was he that he encouraged intermarriage between the Makololo and the tribes of Bulozhi to make them be acceptable and not be shunned as foreigners. He went on to incorporate the Lozi warriors into the Makololo army.<sup>21</sup> This was a well thought plan to stifle any idea of an uprising against him. It was at this time when he was settled that he informed Moshweshwe, through his messengers, of his new home.<sup>22</sup> Though Bulozhi was far and risky to travel due to wild animals and unfriendly tribes in between Sebetwane wished to resume the diplomatic relations with Moshweshwe. On the other hand Moshweshwe wished to extend his influence to far away places and resumption of their diplomatic ties would be something very good. He would know more of other regions of Southern Africa. By then, 1840s, he (Moshweshwe) had befriended Sechele, chief of the Bakwena of Botswana. Their messengers could use Sechele's place as a resting centre. There were no official boundaries then and travelling to strange areas

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20. Needham, p.74.

21. Wilson, p.119.

22. Mofokeng's interview, 20-03-1991.

required no particular permits.

While the Makololo were great conquerors of many a tribe they were no match for the Matebele (Ndebele) of Mzilikazi who had menaced and afflicted them when they were both still on the highveld. When Sebetwane was in Botswana Mzilikazi came for him and did a lot of havoc on the Makololo and forced them to flee. Mzilikazi never succeeded in conquering Sebetwane in that each time he tried to attack them they fled and this angered him more. He continued to follow them. When they were settled in Bulozzi (Zambia) he again came for them. This time the Makololo did the Matebele a lot of harm. They were repulsed with heavy losses.<sup>23</sup> After this suffering and loss of human lives Mzilikazi ceased to afflict Sebetwane and this gave him (Sebetwane) a chance to recuperate and introduce his internal and external policies without fear of being disturbed.

The capital village where Sebetwane finally settled - Dinyanti - was not really suitable for habitation - it was a malaria infested region. Sebetwane wished to have guns and the only people from whom he could obtain them - European traders - kept away from Dinyanti due to its unhealthy

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23. Wilson, p.119.

conditions. He was forced to undertake journeys to far away places in search of fire-arms. He even explored the west coast of Namibia hoping to procure them.<sup>24</sup> It was a fruitless undertaking.

Some Portuguese half-breeds called the Mambari visited him and offered to give him eight fire-arms in exchange for eight young men that they would take as slaves. Sebetwane disliked slavery and had met David Livingstone, a great pioneer of anti-slavery movement in Africa, and was stunned by the condition laid down by the Mambari. But the desire to have fire-arms was too strong to be resisted. He gave in and gave the Mambari eight prisoners of war for their eight guns.<sup>25</sup> It would appear the Sotho-Tswana communities of the highveld including the Bapedi of the eastern Transvaal of the 19th Century were so much dogged by the idea of possessing fire-arms that they would sacrifice almost everything possible to procure them. Sebetwane, though in Bulози, was no exception.

As a consequence of Dinyanti being a malaria infested area, the only known traders to have visited Sebetwane in Bulози were some Griquas from the Cape Colony who were trading in British goods and the others were the Ovimbundu of Angola who

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24. Parsons, p.76.

25. Ellenberger, pp.319-320.

were selling Portuguese wares. None of these two groups had fire-arms for sale.<sup>26</sup>

Sebetwane needed more fire-arms and the possibility was Moshweshwe though very far. In sending his first messengers from Dinyanti after settling permanently there he made a request for fire-arms. It was a hazardous journey and when they eventually returned they brought him a few as a gift and some horses were added to this gift of fire-arms.<sup>27</sup>

Moshweshwe had a great desire of knowing more of northern regions beyond the highveld. Unlike Mohlomi who was reported to have travelled to various regions of southern Africa Moshweshwe did not go that far or travelled that much; his messengers were sent to do the travelling for him. Sebetwane's settlement in Bulozhi opened the way for him to know of the places and the people far beyond the highveld. As Sebetwane was the supreme ruler in Bulozhi Moshweshwe was content to confine his dealings with him only as the other chiefdoms were subordinates to the Makololo chiefdom. Due to the long distance between Bulozhi and Lesotho Chief Sechele's main village of Kolobeng (later Molepolole) in Botswana became the resting place of the messengers of both

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26. Parsons, p.77.

27. Makhetha's interview, 11-02-1991.

Moshweshwe and Sebetwane.<sup>28</sup> Sechele was Moshweshwe's ally as will be discussed in the next chapter. They even exchanged ambassadors to strengthen their diplomatic ties as Moshweshwe wished to keep the Makololo attached to the Bafokeng of the highveld.<sup>29</sup>

Sebetwane's dealings with Moshweshwe made him long for home. The Difaqane wars had ended and returning home would be an ideal thing to do. He informed his people of his wish of returning to the south. They would not hear of it. The elderly people who had travelled the hazardous and tortuous journey for almost twenty years were the ones who were very much against returning to the highveld. They could not bear the idea of retracing their steps. Returning home would also mean starting life anew and they were too old for that. They would not go back.<sup>30</sup> So the prudent Sebetwane brushed aside the wish of returning to Kurutlele. He had thought of going back home and having a rest and die amongst his people - the Bafokeng.

Despite the fact that he had made himself acceptable to the people of Bulozhi (Zambia) Sebetwane still had a problem. Some few people - the die-hards - refused to acknowledge his

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28. B. Setlhako's interview, Molepolole, Botswana, 15-02-1992.

I found that, in the outskirts of Maun - a town in the far northern Botswana towards the border of Zambia and Botswana - there were some illiterate people who vaguely spoke of Moshweshwe's messengers from Lesotho having traversed their area.

29. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, Lesotho, 13-04-1992.

30. Ellenberger, p.319;

Makhetha's interview, 11-02-1991.

leadership. To them he was still a foreigner. Fortunately for him they were too few to start an insurrection. But their dislike for him was so strong that they decided to move out of Bulozhi and live far away in the north where it was outside his jurisdiction and would have nothing to do with them.<sup>31</sup>

Moshweshwe practised nepotism in appointing people for strategic positions. He put his sons and brothers in positions of authority in areas of strategic importance. One still wonders what influence or advice Moshweshwe had or gave Sebetwane because the latter adopted the same practice. He chose his close relatives to be in charge of areas of importance. Whether he was acting on his own initiative or he was advised to do so is unknown but he did what Moshweshwe did. He placed his nephew, Mpollo, at the head of Naliele - a village he once occupied during his early days in Bulozhi; he put his brother-in-law, Morantsiane, at Sesheke as the chief over-seer of the place. At Nalolo he made his daughter, Mamochesane, to be in charge of the whole place. At other villages around Dinyanti he put one or two of the Makololo families as lords of such places.<sup>32</sup> All these places were to be supportive to Dinyanti.

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31. Shillington, p.48;  
G. Khapwale's interview, Roma, University, 25-06-1991.

32. Ellenberger, p.320.

Sebetwane encouraged his subjects to cultivate the land. Tributes were paid in grain and nuts, hoes and spears; ivory and skins and sometimes canoes, which had become important as a means of transport, were also offered.<sup>33</sup> Skins and ivory were often sent to Moshweshwe as gifts to show appreciation for the few fire-arms he received from the country of the Basotho. Despite that he was innovative, Sebetwane sought Moshweshwe's advice where it was possible.<sup>34</sup>

He was a great statesman of Bulozhi and gained admiration of his own Makololo, the Lozi and the strangers. His affability and liberality delighted those who came into contact with him.<sup>35</sup> He took measures to boost his Sesotho language by encouraging all his people to use it. As there were various language groups in Bulozhi (South-western Zambia) there was not common official language so Sebetwane took advantage of this and encouraged the language of the Makololo to be the main language.<sup>36</sup> The influence of the Sesotho had had such a strong influence on the Lozi language that their language vocabulary has a lot of Sesotho words.

The anti-slavery missionary, David Livingstone, established himself in Bulozhi among the Makololo of Sebetwane. Chief

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33. Needham et al, pp.74-75.

34. Mofokeng's interview, 20-03-1991.

35. W.C. Blaikie, The Personal Life of David Livingstone, pp.110-111.

36. Needham, p.74.

Sebetwane made him his confidant. The two worked very well. It was a great pity that Sebetwane did not live long after Livingstone had joined and settled among the Makololo and other tribes of Bulози. In July 1851 Sebetwane died and left the Mokololo confounded. Livingstone had to be their comforter. Sebetwane's successor was his daughter, Mamochesane, who gave Livingstone the right to visit any part of her father's chiefdom.<sup>37</sup> He remained in Bulози for almost two years after the death of Sebetwane. He then left for the Congo River Basin and some parts of East-Africa. He was revered by the Mokololo and had he remained longer in that area there is very little doubt that he would have transformed the whole society into a Christian community. He had no difficulty in winning friends.<sup>38</sup>

After taking over the chieftainship of the Makololo Mamochesane soon realized the intricacies of leadership and what was expected of statesmanship. She lacked the patience and understanding of politics. She was not Manthatise, the mother of Sekonyela, who ruled the Batlokwa in a competent manner. After some few months she abdicated and her half-brother, Sekeletu, succeeded her.<sup>39</sup> The latter was the son of Setloutlou, the woman Sebetwane married and the Bafokeng

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37. Blaikie, pp.110-111.

38. Ibid., p.112.

39. Ellenberger, p.322.

of Patsa changed their tribal name to Makololo as discussed earlier in this chapter. To many of the Makololo who had regarded Setloutlou as their mother-figure it should have been a great delight to have a son of their favourite "mother" as their chief.

Sebetwane's death did not bring to an end the diplomatic relation he and Moshweshwe had fostered. The mutual visits of their messengers continued. Moshweshwe wished to maintain their diplomatic ties and expand his influence. The Makololo were the Basotho people and they had to remain attached to him and know their original home.<sup>40</sup>

The departure of Livingstone left a vacuum. His Christian followers among the Makololo and other tribes felt lost and frustrated. The unhealthy conditions of the Makololo region was keeping strangers away. No missionary was interested in visiting the area. For a long time the Makololo had to live without the guidance of a missionary. Moshweshwe was approached to help furnish Sebetwane's people with a missionary. Moshweshwe had been receiving such requests from various parts of the hinterland.<sup>41</sup>

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40. M. Damane's interview, Maseru, 27-04-1992.

41. E.W. Smith, The Mabilles of Basutoland, p.135.

Adolphe Mabilles of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society who was based in Morija was approached by Moshweshwe with a view of enlisting their help to do something for the Makololo. Mabilles was interested in the request of the Makololo. His compassion in serving the Lord made him more pertinacious. He wished to help all the black tribes far beyond the Vaal and the Limpopo Rivers. His own hands were full at Morija and there was no free missionary to send to Bulози. It was a very sad matter.<sup>42</sup> Only in 1884 was there a missionary willing to go and labour among the Makololo. He was Francois Coillard who was once at Leribe in Lesotho.<sup>43</sup> By this time it was fourteen years after the death of Moshweshwe.

Moshweshwe had encouraged many of his people to take advantage of Morija which had training facilities for evangelists, catechists and teachers. These trained men helped the missionaries in teaching the masses Christianity. He also relied on these trained men to establish friendly relations wherever they went to as evangelists or teachers. He made his country a home for all who wished to study and be trained. Eventually as we now know Lesotho became a centre of learning.<sup>44</sup> The irony of it all was that Moshweshwe,

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42. Damane's interview, 27-04-1992.

43. R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, p.563; Smith, The Mabilles, p.130.

44. Damane's interview, 27-04-1992.

the person behind all this, remained illiterate.

Through his encouragement and passion he had for Sebetwane and his Makololo the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society eventually decided to establish a mission station in Bulozhi even though by then he was no more.<sup>45</sup> He wished to retain the diplomatic relations he had established with Sebetwane and to help the Makololo in whatever possible manner.

Sebetwane had established a well defined hierarchical system in the whole of what is now called south western Zambia (the old Bulozhi or Barotseland). He transformed the whole area for the better. He was so innovative that the local tribes believed that all the Basotho are great and better thinkers.<sup>46</sup> But after his death the Makololo political hierarchy collapsed and changed for the worse. Sekeletu did not have the wisdom of his father. He was a blunderer. He developed leprosy and had a suspicion that some people were responsible for his ailment. His temper became uncontrollable. He vented his anger on the Lozi and would not take any advice. In the meantime the Makololo were dying of malaria fever and their behaviour and attitude towards the Lozi was contemptuous. There developed enmity between the Makololo and the Lozi.

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45. Makhetha's interview, 11-02-1991.

46. O. Ransford, p.64;  
Mafokeng's interview, 20-03-1991.

With the core of the Makololo disappearing the Lozi had a good chance of regaining their lost land and political autonomy.<sup>47</sup>

Even though the Makololo's political hegemony was declining their Sesotho language was not affected and remained the common spoken language.<sup>48</sup> When Francois Coillard eventually came to Bulozhi the changing political conditions were in progress and the Lozi were gaining the upper hand against the Makololo. He had nothing to do with the politics of the country. His was missionary work. He was accompanied by some Basotho evangelists and teachers. As Sesotho was the general language Coillard's helpers had no communication problem. Their settlement there heralded the foundation of the Barotseland Mission.<sup>49</sup>

Moshweshwe and Sebetwane should have lived long enough to witness the effects of their friendship. It was, destined to be so. Only their posterity came to be affected and enjoyed the fruits of their fathers' actions. Some of the Basotho teachers remained in Bulozhi for the rest of their lives. They were based at the mission stations of Kazungula and Sinanga. They died and were buried there.<sup>50</sup> Being

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47. Needham, p.75;  
Ellenberger, pp.324-326.

48. Makhetha's interview, 11-02-1991.

49. Germond, p.563.

50. Damane's interview, 27-04-1992.

buried at a place means one's home. It is generally believed that one's grave is a "holy" place as it is the home of the spirits of the dead. So Bulozhi (Zambia) was viewed with some awe by the relatives of those teachers who were buried there.

The Makololo are, like the Basotho of Lesotho, a cosmopolitan tribe as it was made up of various tribes who were either coerced into joining or did so voluntarily due to the Difaqane turmoil. From the time (1831) Sebetwane left the highveld for the Zambesi River basin the number of tribes he attacked and conquered made the Makololo a mixture of tribes and the Makololo marriage with various tribes of Bulozhi also helped to make them more cosmopolitan.<sup>51</sup> What Moshweshwe and Sebetwane did for each other is still cherished by some people in Lesotho.

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51. W.F. Lye and C. Murray, Transformations on the Highveld - The Tswana and Southern Sotho, p.46.

## CHAPTER 8

MOSHWESHWE AND THE MATEBELE CHIEF, MZILIKAZI

Mzilikazi was Shaka's confidant and general of warriors. In 1821 he came into conflict with Shaka and had to flee from Natal and become a prowler on the highveld. He led pugnacious and pernicious warriors who were sowing death wherever they went.

Mzilikazi, like Moshweshwe, Moletsane and Sebetwane, came into prominence as a result of the Difaqane wars. He built his Matebele (Ndebele in the Nguni language) nation by conquest and incorporation of the remnants of the communities he attacked. As the core of his followers were Zulu speaking all his people became Zulu speaking. However their Ndebele language is today slightly different from the Zulu language.

His conflict with Shaka came after he (Mzilikazi) had failed to give Shaka all the spoils he had collected from a Mosotho chief named Ranosi (not Ranisi as spelt in some books) who was settled on the western side of the Drakensberg. He had attacked and subdued Ranosi.<sup>1</sup> One is tempted to believe that

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1. A. Bing et al, Makers of Modern Africa - Profile in History, p.526.

Mzilikazi deliberately kept part of the spoils - in the form of cattle - to provoke Shaka and have an excuse for fleeing. He knew that Shaka did not tolerate wrong-doers and yet he went on to keep part of the spoils for himself, thereby arousing Shaka's wrath which led to his subsequent flight to the highveld across the Drakensberg.

On the highveld Mzilikazi became the most feared man (in the Transvaal in particular) by the Sotho-Tswana communities and many other tribes who were no match for his daring warriors.

In 1831 he decided to attack Moshweshwe at Thaba Bosiu. Chief Sekonyela of the Batlokwa, despite his dislike for Moshweshwe, still warned him of Mzilikazi's presence in the Caledon River valley.<sup>2</sup> Moshweshwe was now prepared for any eventuality from the Matebele. As Mzilikazi did not have a fixed place it was difficult for the astute Moshweshwe to trace him and talk him out of his war plans. In the attack that ensued the Matebele failed to conquer Thaba Bosiu. They were kept at bay by rocks which were rolled down on them. They eventually called off the siege and left.<sup>3</sup> As soon as they moved away Moshweshwe sent them cattle as food for their

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2. N. Grant, Moshoeshoe Founder of the Nation, p.31.
  3. D. Rafutho's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 04-09-1987.

journey back to their chief, Mzilikazi.\* This was one of Moshweshwe's methods of winning friends and turning potential enemies into allies.

Having failed in his quest to conquer Moshweshwe and the gift of cattle for his warriors Mzilikazi could never think of attacking Moshweshwe again. It was a lesson never to be forgotten. However, friendly relations developed between the Basotho and the Matabele rulers.

According to Moshweshwe, as reported in Power and Praise Poem, Mzilikazi had on more than one occasion expressed a wish to be allowed to settle on some hills in the Caledon River valley together with his subjects and lead a peaceful life.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately he could not live without indulging in wars. He fought one war too many and in 1837 the surviving victims of his attacks formed an alliance and went for him. These were the Voortrekkers led by Hendrik Potgieter, the Griquas of Peter Davids as well as the Barolong, Batlokwa and some Koranas. They attacked him at Mosega in the Transvaal and forced him to flee to a far away place - Zimbabwe where he established a permanent settlement called Matebeleland on

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\* It is still surprising that there are people who wish to discredit Moshweshwe's benevolent behaviour by trying to create some doubt on the cattle gift question. According to R.K. Rasmussen (Migrant Kingdom - Mzilikazi in South Africa, p.72) there is no concrete proof that Moshweshwe gave cattle to Mzilikazi's warriors as Casalis who came with this report did so in 1861 while his fellow missionary, Arbousset who also wrote about this did so in 1842 and did not mention the cattle Moshweshwe sent to the Matebele. When Casalis was in Cape Town a few years later, he met a delegation of Mzilikazi which told him about the cattle gift from Moshweshwe.

4. L. Vail and L. White, Power and Praise Poem - Southern African  
Voice in History, p. 87

the western part of the territory.<sup>5</sup>

When Dr Andrew Smith toured the hinterland he met Moshweshwe at Thaba Bosiu and the latter described Mzilikazi as a man who "raised himself into importance".<sup>6</sup> Moshweshwe knew the Matebele ruler well.

When Mzilikazi was settled in Zimbabwe there is very little known about what happened between Basotholand and Matebeleland except some bits of information collected at Mpopoma Location in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) to the effect that Mzilikazi and Moshweshwe were friends and that their envoys exchanged visits.<sup>7</sup> This information could not be confirmed elsewhere in Bulawayo, the big city of the Matebele. On the other hand from Basotholand there is a vague report that Moshweshwe's envoys used to visit Matebeleland via Molepolole (Botswana) and other villages of Chief Sechele of the Bakwena who was Moshweshwe's friend.<sup>8</sup> However this too has not been corroborated in Botswana by the descendants of Chief Sechele and his followers.

In the new land (Zimbabwe) Mzilikazi found the Mashona and the Makalanga as the inhabitants of the place. Mzilikazi

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5. N. Parsons, A New History of Southern Africa, p.101.
  6. Vail and White, p.107.
  7. E. Nkomo's interview, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 20-06-1992.
  8. M. Makhetha's interview, Maseru, 19-11-1991.

attacked and subdued them. His method of surrounding the enemy's village very early in the morning and attacking mercilessly and fearlessly was too much for the inhabitants of Zimbabwe. He soon became the master of the whole territory and forced the inhabitants to pay tributes to him.<sup>9</sup> They had become his vassals and had to obey him as their new paramount chief.

Possession of fire-arms had become a general trend among great potentates in the nineteenth century. Mzilikazi was no exception even though they were not used often in warfare. As Zimbabwe was a haven of Portuguese and English traders Mzilikazi obtained guns from these traders.<sup>10</sup> There was no way in which Moshweshwe could have been of help - as he did elsewhere - in furnishing his allies and friends with fire-arms. This could be the reason why very little is said about their relationship.

Mzilikazi was like all other chiefs of his time who had realized the value of having missionaries labouring in their territories. His missionary was the Reverend Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society. The two first met in 1829 when Mzilikazi was still a marauder on the highveld. They

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9. K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, p.51;  
Nokomo's interview, 20-06-1992.

10. Parsons, p.134.

later met again when Mzilikazi was already settled in Matebeleland. As Robert Moffat's hands were full at his mission station in Kuruman, where he was based, he delegated his son John Smith Moffat to work among the Matebele. The young Moffat was granted permission to establish his mission station at Inyati not far from Bulawayo - Mzilikazi's capital village. Robert Moffat visited Mzilikazi in 1854, 1857 and 1858 as they had become great friends. More missionaries were sent to join John Moffat and another mission station was established at Hope Fountain in 1870.<sup>11</sup> By then Mzilikazi had died. Like Moshweshwe Mzilikazi refused to become a Christian. Whether his refusal was based on advice he received from Moshweshwe or whether it reflected his own lack of interest one cannot tell.

Mzilikazi and his Matebele soon became disillusioned with the missionaries when they refused to sell them guns or to repair old ones. The poor missionaries had also become disillusioned with the Matebele because they could not be proselytised. All their efforts were not paying dividends. The Matebele went on to accuse the missionaries of being against their polygamous marriages.<sup>12</sup> But they did not drive them out of the land. The missionaries continued

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11. D.E. Needham et al, From Iron Age to Independence, p.96.

12. Bing, p.528.

to preach to the few who still attended their services.<sup>13</sup>

When Mzilikazi died in 1868 he had not appointed his successor from amongst the several sons he had had with various wives. A fierce wrangle developed as his sons quarrelled for the succession. Eventually only two had to contest for the chieftainship. These were Nkulumane and Lobengula. Some royal councillors felt that as Lobengula's mother was a Swazi, and not even of royal family, her son could not be the rightful successor. On the other hand Nkulumane's mother was a Zulu of royal blood. However Lobengula had better qualities and was a forceful character and was perhaps older than Nkulumane.<sup>14</sup> Theophilus Shepstone who was then based in Natal tried to join the fray by supporting Nkulumane. It was only in February 1870, two years after the death of Mzilikazi, that the son of the Swazi woman was declared a successor of his father after all sorts of threats were made.<sup>15</sup>

Moshweshwe did not live long enough to have a working relation with Lobengula as he died on the 11th March 1870.

Although there was nothing concrete that appears to have

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13. Nkomo's interview, 20-06-1992.

14. Nkomo's interview, 20-06-1992.

15. Parsons, p.144.

taken place between Basotholand and Matebeleland such as an exchange of ambassadors and trade links the two countries remained friendly with each other. Some time after the death of Moshweshwe an evangelist named Sehababane (from Leribe) of the Paris Evangelical Mission took some fellow evangelists to the land of Chief Lobengula to do missionary work among the Mashona and the Makalanga who were the subjects of Lobengula. They were well received and encouraged to do their work as they were from a friendly country.<sup>16</sup>

Lobengula was apparently not opposed to the Christianization of his subjects as long as it was done by black people. He disliked white missionaries coming to his land after their refusal to repair his father's fire-arms or to sell the Matebele new ones. He allowed Sehababane to establish a mission station at the village of Chief Chivi, one of the Mashona chiefs under his jurisdiction.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between the Basotho and the Matebele nearly ended abruptly. Molapo, one of Moshweshwe's sons, was settled in Leribe and played a great role in arresting Chief Langalibalele of the Hlubi and handing him over to his English pursuers from Natal. Chief Langalibalele was asked

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16. Needham, pp.96-97.

17. Ibid., p.97.

to hand over his people's unlicensed fire-arms to the English authorities. He would not do so and fled to Leribe to avoid arrest. Molapo had him caught and handed over to those who were chasing him. After this Molapo was rewarded with two thousand cattle taken from the Hlubi. Molapo's action was viewed by many black chiefs as betrayal of a fellow black chief and were angry and disappointed with him.

He might have acted in good faith and perhaps was trying to save himself from the wrath of the English authorities, but to the black chiefs the damage was done. When some Basotho men from Leribe visited Sehahabane in Lobengula's land the latter accused them and said they "smelt of Molapo that unworthy son of Moshesh".<sup>18</sup> He was so annoyed that he drove them out of his land calling them "Basotho of Molapo".<sup>19</sup> He wished to have nothing to do with all the Basotho and wished to cut any ties Matebeleland had with Basotholand even though the king there was Letsie who was not even on good terms with Molapo.<sup>20</sup> However after some cogitation and discussion with his councillors he rescinded his threat of cutting ties with Basotholand and chasing away all the Basotho including the already settled Sehahabane. Despite the retention of the spirit of goodwill the Basotho were still viewed with

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18. N. Herd, The Bent Pine - The Trial of Chief Langalibalele, p.45.

19. Needham, pp.97-98.

20. M. Damane's interview, Maseru, 19-11-1991.

suspicion and were not to be trusted.<sup>21</sup>

The spirit of goodwill that prevailed between Moshweshwe and Mzilikazi was enough proof that the Basotho king had obviously succeeded in fostering a peaceful co-existence with several great rulers of his time. It was a sort of a system of alliances which was the only one of its kind among the indigenous chiefs of Southern Africa.

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21. Nkomo's interview, 20-06-1992.

## CHAPTER 9

MOSHWESHWE'S DEALINGS WITH THE BAKWENA CHIEF SECHELE

Sechele was one of the six children of Chief Motswasele II of the Bakwena people of what was once called Bechuanaland and today is called Botswana. He was born in about 1810 and as he grew up he was subjected to a life of hardships before succeeding his father as chief of the Bakwena.

Tradition has it that all the Bakwena clans are descendants of a man named Kwena. According to the Bakwena genealogy the Bakwena of Lesotho are the descendants of Napo and the Bakwena of Botswana are the descendants of Mochudi and both these men were the sons of Masilo II and were brothers. Masilo II was a grandson of Kwena.<sup>1</sup> Both the Bakwena of Lesotho and Botswana venerate the crocodile (Kwena) and it is also their totemic name.

Long before Moshweshwe and Sechele could meet and know each other there had been regular meetings between the Bakwena of Lesotho (Moshweshwe's people) and the Bakwena of Botswana. According to Professor T. Tlou, co-author of History of

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1. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto, Ancient and Modern, p.337.

Botswana, some of the Batswana - many centuries ago - migrated to the south from Botswana but some returned while others remained.<sup>2</sup> There had always been a connection between the Sotho-Tswana communities of the highveld and the Batswana of Botswana. In the late 18th and early 19th Centuries there had been regular visits between the Bakwena of Lesotho and those of Botswana. These meetings and visits apparently started by Mohlomi (who was a Mokwena) the great traveller and doctor. He travelled to various parts of Southern Africa curing the sick and acquainting himself to various people's customs and also making friends. From Botswana people would come to Lesotho seeking medicine or medical treatment (from Mohlomi and other medicine men) and from Lesotho men went to Botswana in search of elephant tusks and horns as well as skins of wild beasts. In addition to this Mohlomi and Motswasele II were friends.<sup>3</sup>

On numerous occasions these two Bakwena communities met to comfort one another whenever death had occurred. When someone had died and buried before other relatives who stay far could attend it was normally arranged that after a while (a month, two or three sometimes even a year) such relatives should visit the bereaved to offer their condolences. Other

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2. T. Tlou's interview, Gaborone, 09-10-1986.

3. Chief Bathoen II's interview, Kanye, Botswana, 13-08-1989.

than travelling for trading purposes this practice helped the Bakwena of Lesotho and Botswana to remain in contact. Whenever such visits were undertaken a goat or a sheep was slaughtered to commemorate the loss of that particular deceased member of the family and also to let the spirit of the deceased to rest in peace among the other spirits of the dead.<sup>4</sup> These connections and contacts between the two Bakwena communities continued until the times of Moshweshwe and Sechele who improved everthing to diplomatic level.

Sechele was a remarkable individual of exceptional qualities and prowess. He lived, survived and prospered during hard times occasioned by turmoil of the Difaqane aggravated by the presence of white settlers. As it had been the case with Moshweshwe Sechele waxed in power and authority through the incorporation of refugees from dislocations and dislodgings of the upheavals of the 1820s and 1830s emanating chiefly from the Difaqane warfare. Like Moshweshwe, Sekwati and Sekonyela who realized the value of a mountain fortress Sechele also chose Dithubaruba as his mountain stronghold. Militarily both Moshweshwe and Sechele succeeded in acquiring fire-arms which, when combined with their strong defensive positions of Thaba Bosiu and Dithubaruba gave them an

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4. M. Damane's interview, Maseru, Lesotho, 16-03-1992.

advantage over their enemies.<sup>5</sup>

Before becoming a chief and also coming into prominence Sechele was adversely afflicted by the prevailing conditions of the time as hinted above. At one stage he was captured by the Mokololo of Chief Sebetwane and even made a prisoner. It was at the time when Sebetwane had sojourned in Botswana on his way to the north where he settled permanently in Bulози (Zambia). As a prisoner Sechele was ransomed by Chief Khama who was the son of Kgari of the Bamangwato tribe. Khama gave the Mokololo chief many gifts to secure the release of Sechele who was, in fact, a relative of his. After his release Sechele stayed at Khama's for a while. He then moved away and became a wanderer. He was moving from one place to another unable to find a suitable place to settle. His wanderings were confined to the southern areas of Botswana.<sup>6</sup>

The period between the 1830s and 1850s was precarious and irksome. Various Tswana speaking communities of Botswana and western Transvaal - near the present day Botswana border - were subjected to all sorts of attacks by the Matebele of Mzilikazi; the Makololo of Sebetwane and some Voortrekkers

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5. F.J. Ramsay's interview, Mochudi, Botswana, 27-10-1991.

6. I. Schapera, Ditirafalo Tsa Merafe ya Batswana, pp.46-48.

of the Marico River valley (in the environs of the modern Zeerust). In addition to these attacks the various Tswana groups fought amongst themselves over petty issues thereby failing to act jointly against their enemies.<sup>7</sup> They probably would have managed to drive their assailants away had they united as they would have formed a large formidable force. But their meekness also played a part in attracting marauders who regarded them as easy targets.

Sechele's father, Motswasele II, was killed by his relatives. At the time of his death Sechele was still young - a boy of about eleven years old. After his death the Bakwena came to be ruled by a de facto ruler named Molese. The Bakwena were never at ease with this chief, they wished to have somebody of royal blood and legitimacy. They wished to have someone they would approve of. They longed for Sechele. When he was old enough to be a ruler they encouraged him to depose Molese. Sechele was of the same opinion of doing away with the unwanted Molese. He prepared to attack him but it was a bloodless coup d'etat as Molese fled before he could be reached. He fled to hide himself without resisting. Sechele was declared a new de jure chief of the Bakwena.<sup>8</sup> This took place after his wanderings. He was fearing to join his

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7. Bathoen II's interview, 13-08-1989.

8. Schapera, p.49.

father's people lest he got killed. After Molese had failed to please and satisfy the Bakwena they went all out to seek Sechele.

After becoming chief Sechele did all that which was possible to consolidate his position by luring a large following. He developed his capital village by fortifying it to be a refuge for people who were fleeing from the attacks of their enemies - the Matebele in particular, as they were proving to be the most merciless. These attacks included deprivations. All sorts of defenceless people found shelter and protection at his place. He even incorporated all members of the Boorathosa tribe. This tribe burned its village into ruins to join Sechele's Bakwena. He placed all the newcomers' households under his direct authority.<sup>9</sup> He did this to show concern for their welfare and win their loyalty.

His actions made him a "Moshweshwe" of Botswana. While Moshweshwe, in some instances, invited people to join or even attacked others Sechele had people flocking to him to be under him. Moshweshwe, on the other hand, had a heterogenous following while Sechele's refugees were exclusively Tswana speaking who were from the western Transvaal and within the

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9. G.Y. Okihiro, Hunters, Herders, Cultivators and Traders, p.24.

borders of Botswana.

Sechele helped the destitute people by giving them loan cattle (the Mafisa system) from his royal herd which he had inherited from his father. His procurement of fire-arms - though not so many - and the ability to use them very well against his enemies made him be hero-worshipped by the defenceless and frustrated people in particular.<sup>10</sup> He and Moshweshwe became the best defensive strategists among the Sotho-Tswana communities, hence their followers and adherents continued to increase even long after the Difaqane.

As mentioned earlier that there had been regular and mutual visits between the Bakwena of Lesotho and those of Botswana but these were not so official - only relatives were involved in most cases. As Sechele was becoming more and more noticeable by eclipsing many other chiefs of Botswana who had been great before his rise, Moshweshwe extended his hand of friendship to him as a fellow potentate and also as a kinsman. A formal bilateral relationship was established through Moshweshwe's Maqosa.<sup>11</sup> This led to Sachele's country becoming part of a wider diplomatic network that Moshweshwe had been pursuing. On the other hand this was Sechele's

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10. F.J. Ramsay, The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South Central Botswana 1820-1940, p.78.

11. M. Setlhako's interview, Molepolole, Botswana, 15-02-1992.

first foreign relation ever established since he took over as chief of the Bakwena from Molese and probably the first in the whole of Botswana. Moshweshwe's state was larger and his access to fire-arms technology which came to him almost ten years earlier than in Sechele's case made him a better man of the two, and Sechele would benefit more by their newly established foreign relation.

The menace of Mzilikazi and Sebetwane was a passing phase in Botswana. The two warlike chiefs soon moved out of Botswana and left the Batswana to themselves. But their departure did not usher in a period of peace. It was not a relief as more unexpected disturbances ensued to complicate their living conditions. There developed a new threat which was more of a worse menace than the Mzilikazi and Sebetwane had been. It was an unprecedented threat : the Boers of the western Transvaal (the Zeerust-Marico area) wanted labourers for their newly established farms. They wanted free labour and nothing would deter them.

Initially there existed a cordial relationship between Chief Sechele and the white settlers of western Transvaal. On a certain occasion members of Hendrik Potgieter's Voortrekkers

party visited the Bakwena of Sechele and even bartered cattle for ivory. After this event it was agreed that some of the Bakwena could be hired to work for the Boers.<sup>14</sup> The labourers who went to work were compensated for their services.<sup>15</sup>

Going out to work and earning something like fire-arms, cattle, horses or even a bit of money was a new excitement that became prevalent among the Batswana tribes as it had been the case with other Sotho-Tswana communities of the highveld and the Bapedi of Sekwati in the eastern Transvaal. The presence of the white settlers in western Transvaal was exciting news for the Tswana communities in the environs of the Zeerust-Marico area.

During the 1840s matters changed for the worse. As more of the Boers came to settle throughout the western Transvaal the quest for black labour increased and later the Boers became more coercive in demanding labourers. The Bakwena of Mogopa (near the present day Ventersdorp) were compelled to provide an uncompensated labour. Those who tried to resist were threatened with death or arrest. Their chief Mmamogale was even humiliated by being whipped by a certain Boer who

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14. Ramsay, pp.92-93.

15. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

falsely accused him of holding back his people and refusing to let them go to the Boer farms. It was sheer cruelty to force people to work under duress and intimidation. Chief Mmamogale felt very unsafe and fled to Moshweshwe at Thaba Bosiu in 1845 for protection. Two years later another chief also fled to Thaba Bosiu - he was Chief Mogale of the Bapo tribe. He fled after being threatened by some of the Boers.<sup>16</sup>

The other people who found Thaba Bosiu to be far, fled to Chief Sechele to escape the harassment. Among those who fled to Sechele was the Bakaa, Balete, Batlokwa and the Bahurutshe.<sup>17</sup> Moshweshwe was perturbed by these events of the western Transvaal and decided to help Sechele by furnishing him with fire-arms and ammunition to defend his people should the refugees be pursued and be forced to return to their homes and offer free labour. When Sechele's messenger, Tlagae and members of his entourage visited Thaba Bosiu Moshweshwe gave him fire-arms and horses.<sup>18</sup> After this, regular visits took place between their territories. Some of Sechele's people went to settle in Moshweshwe's territory as messenger-ambassadors (Maqosa) and some of them settled in Lesotho permanently and their descendants are still found in various parts of Lesotho.<sup>19</sup> Their original

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16. N. Parsons, A History of Southern Africa, p.112.

17. S. Hughes (Edit.), Tshomarelo Ngvao, Botswana National Museum, Monuments and Art Gallery Publication, p.14.

18. Bathoen II's interview, 13-08-1989.

19. Damane's interview, 16-03-1992.

settlement was Morija after leaving Thaba Bosiu where they were based as Sechele's ambassadors.<sup>20</sup> There is no record of Moshweshwe's people settling in Botswana or at Molepolole\* - Sechele's capital village.

The fire-arms Moshweshwe sent to Sechele were not the only ones he received. There had been some English traders such as J.H. Wilson and S. Edwards as well as some Griquas who had been visiting Sechele's land and exchanged their fire-arms for ivory and skins of wild animals.<sup>21</sup> A few others were brought by some men who had gone out to seek employment at places where white people were settled. At this time Sechele's territory was known as Kweneng (the home of the Bakwena) Moshweshwe continued to advance Sechele with fire-arms whenever extra ones were available. Moshweshwe wished to make Sechele a formidable ally who could help him if he was faced with danger. Having Sechele, Sebetwane and Mzilikazi in the north he had nothing to fear from any attack or invasion from that direction and his influence could be easily extended. With so much help reaching Kweneng Sechele procured enough fire-arms to be in a better position to resist or defend his territory against foreign attack. He eventually became a remarkable marksman. He took delight in

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20. A. Brutsch's interview, Morija, Lesotho, 27-06-1991.

\* My informants : Chief Bathoen II and Mpelegeng Setlhako were not so sure about the Basotho who came to Botswana as messengers of Moshweshwe and settled permanently in Botswana. They, nevertheless, do know that some of the Bakwena of Sechele went to settle in Lesotho.

21. I. Schapera (Edit.), David Livingstone Family Letters 1841-1850 Vol. 2, p.151.

displaying his marksmanship to his visitors and even challenged other marksmen to prove who was better.<sup>22</sup> Fire-arms pleased and excited him.

To strengthen their diplomatic relation Moshweshwe married Sechele's sister and went on to encourage his people to marry women of Kweneng. In some instances he even furnished cattle for lobola (bohadi/bogadi - in the Sesotho and Setswana languages) to a few who could not afford such cattle. Sechele came to regard Moshweshwe as his ally, friend, kinsman and confidant. He sought his advice whenever he was faced with problems.<sup>23</sup>

Sechele supplied Moshweshwe with elephant tusks and ivory. Skins of wild beasts such as lions, tigers and rhinoceros were also sent to "the land of Moshweshwe" - as the Batswana of that time referred to Lesotho. Botswana had and still has a great variety of wild beasts. There are presently several game-reserves in the land to protect these wild animals from being killed freely. After the death of Moshweshwe his successors continued to request and received skins for royal attire from Kweneng.<sup>24</sup>

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22. H.H. Methuen, Life in the Wilderness, p.198.

23. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

24. Damane's interview, 16-03-1992.

In 1846 the missionary David Livingstone and his wife, Mary, came to settle among the Bakwena of Chief Sechele to do missionary work. Livingstone also helped in repairing fire-arms. Instead of seeking and buying new ones Sechele had most of his fire-arms repaired by Livingstone. The new ones and the old ones increased Sechele's collection and he was able to arm more men particularly the hunting parties.<sup>25</sup>

Conditions in the western Transvaal continued to deteriorate. The relationship between the Boers and another Tswana community - the Bakgatla of Mmanaana - was reaching its lowest ebb. The chief of the Bakgatla of Mmanaana was Mosielele. He, like Sechele, had lived cordially with the Boers in his neighbourhood. He was also leading a prosperous life by trading with some white merchants who used to visit his territory. All of a sudden he was told to supply a team of men to work on the neighbouring farms for no compensation - it must be free labour. One has a feeling that the Marico farmers did not have the means of paying the labourers; instead of making a confession of their limited coffers they preferred to use coercion. Fearing what could happen if he refused Mosielele sent a group of men to work on the farms. But this demand for uncompensated labour was not ending and

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25. A. Merriweather, Molepolole Mission History, p.15.

the chief felt it was slavery in disguise. At that time (1851) Sechele had given him some fire-arms. Mosielele refused to send labourers to the farms and prepared to resist. But when he was told of a boer force of about 500 mounted soldiers he lost courage and fled (with those who could flee) to the land of Sechele at Dimawe in Kweneng.<sup>26</sup>

A Boer commando under the leadership of Scholtz (who had replaced the troublesome Standers as leader of the Boer Commando in the western Transvaal) followed Mosielele and demanded Sechele to release him and accusing the "errant" chief of having stolen their cattle. Sechele refused.<sup>27</sup> His refusal meant war. He then apprised Moshweshwe of what was likely to occur. He needed more fire-arms. Moshweshwe, during this period of 1851 and 1852, was having problems with Major Warden (the Battle of Viervoet) and Sir George Cathcart (the impending Battle of Berea). His hands were full and could not do much to help Sechele and managed to send him a limited supply of fire-arms.<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime another group of the Boers suspected that the missionary David Livingstone was trafficking in guns and ammunition with the Bakwena chief. This group went to his

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26. L. Knobel, The History of Sechele, p.54.

27. Ramsay, pp.96-97.

28. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

house to investigate. Finding the missionary not in the group broke into his house and wreaked vengeance on his property after finding no fire-arms. The house was looted and then burnt down.<sup>29</sup> Livingstone was disliked for preaching against slavery and being a great protector of the indigenous people against unfair treatment. Some white people were indulging in slavery and felt Livingstone was interfering in their affairs. What these people did was to vent out their acrimony on a defenceless man.

On the other hand Livingstone continued to preach and teach the Bakwena and their chief. It was an exciting experience. Sechele was proving to be a keen learner. After a while Livingstone thought that the chief had learnt enough to be prepared for a baptismal ceremony. Sechele was also an enthusiastic scholar at an elementary school introduced by the very missionary and his wife who were prepared to go all out to fight illiteracy. He could read and write just a little.<sup>30</sup> It must be stressed that during those days (19th Century) amongst most Sotho-Tswana communities, the church and the school were mostly meant for the chief and his closest relatives. The rest of the community members were not really considered.<sup>31</sup>

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29. J.I. Macnair (Edit.), Livingstone's Travels, p.48.

30. I. Schapera (Edit.), p.91.

31. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

The idea of a baptism became a pressing issue for Sechele. He sent Tlagae to Moshweshwe seeking advice. He wished to know whether to be baptised or not. He was in doubt and was hesitant. Tlagae returned with the following from Moshweshwe : ten head of cattle, two horses, fire-arms and ammunition and a promise that more fire-arms would follow on condition that Sechele refrained from being baptized. Moshweshwe added that Sechele's people could accept Christianity and be baptized but he as chief should not do so.<sup>32</sup> As Christianity is a proselytizing doctrine he (Moshweshwe) feared the changes a chief would have to undergo which was a challenge to those who believe in the effects of the spirits of the dead. A lot of traditional practices would have to be abandoned.

Moshweshwe viewed Christianity as a challenge to the traditions of the Basotho and Africans in general. He also regarded the acceptance of Jesus Christ as one's Lord, as agreeing to play the second fiddle to another "king" and according to him there was to be no other person above him. He probably did not understand the difference between the secular and the religious-spiritual life. A mundane life was more important to him than the eternal life after death.

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32. J.M. Chirenje, History of Northern Botswana 1850-1910, p.42.

Only the power and influence of the spirits of the dead were meaningful to him and he believed in that - hence his advice to Sechele. He gave chief Moletsane the same advice.

Sechele had become a close friend of Livingstone and was learning a lot from him. After receiving all what Moshweshwe had given him he waited for a while cogitating and debating within himself. He then decided to ignore Moshweshwe's advice. He made preparations for becoming a fully-fledged Christian. He informed Livingstone of his intension and the latter put him on probation to test his sincerity. Sechele was ready for all expectations including the baptismal ceremony. One of the conditions put forward to him was a monogamous marriage. He had five wives then and had to abandon four and retain only one. His people were adverse to the divorce of the four women and were against his impending baptism with its other accompanying conditions. Those who were not interested in Christianity or ignorant were the most vociferous in condemning Sechele for what was going to happen. He called for a general meeting of the villagers (pitso) to explain his position and hoping that an explanation would lull the excitement. After his explanation there followed a commotion of unhappy and disgruntled people.

The relatives of the women to be divorced joined in the fracas. Whoever stood up to speak was against his impending baptism.<sup>33</sup>

However, Sechele had made up his mind and there was nothing to dissuade him. It was in 1848 when all this happened. He went for the baptism. Of the five women he was married to there were two who were of importance to him. They were Mokgokong and Selemeng. After examining the pros and cons of the two he decided on retaining Selemeng. He was conforming to the Christian precepts of monogamy. Later the children of Selemeng followed their father's belief of Christianity and were baptized.<sup>34</sup> Sechele became a Christian by ignoring Moshweshwe's advice and his own people's wish and plea. Moshweshwe was upset and disappointed with Sechele but did not abandon him. He continued to treat him as a friend and fellow potentate.<sup>35</sup>

Sechele's subjects continued to show their disapproval of what he did. Women of his capital village, Kolobeng, decided to all stay at home instead of going to the fields to hoe to lodge their protest. Their men in turn spent a period of a week meeting at Kgotla (villagers' meeting place) talking in

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33. Bathoen II's interview, 13-08-1989;  
Chirenje, p.42.

34. Ramsay, p.84.

35. Bathoen II's interview, 13-08-1989.

harsh terms condemning Sechele's actions. His actions were a violation of their tradition and they could not understand how he could turn against their culture. It was sad but Sechele stood firm and would not change his stand.<sup>36</sup>

As Christianity could not allow him to perform his traditional duties and rites Sechele delegated his half-brother named Kgosidintsi to perform all the Bakwena rituals on his behalf. He was detaching himself from the Bakwena cultural life-style.<sup>37</sup> Ritual duties do not need a substitute unless the concerned chief was incapacitated. Elsewhere such a chief would have been deposed. Except for complaints nothing physically was done to him and many of them continued to revere him. As chief he had proved to be stern, brutal and harsh when dealing with offenders but at the same time he was righteous. He was persona-grata.<sup>38</sup>

Moshweshwe first lived at Menkhoaneng, then went to Butha Buthe and finally settled at Thaba Bosiu. Sechele first settled at Dimawe then moved to Kolobeng and finally in 1864 went to settle at Molepolole. The prevailing wars of their times necessitated these changes of settlements. Most of Sechele's episodes took place when he was at Kolobeng.

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36. Ramsay, p.85.

37. Schapera, *Ditirafalo*, pp.55-56.

38. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

(Most of the Bakwena of Molepolole are kind-hearted and according to Setlhako and his family members this kind-heartedness emanates from Chief Sechele's righteousness.)

It was not long before Moshweshwe's advice against Christianity was confirmed. A short while after Sechele had divorced the four women he was married to one of them, Mokgokong, found herself enceinte and Sechele was responsible for her pregnancy and accepted the responsibility. When Livingstone came to know of it he suspended the chief from all church activities accusing him of adultery.<sup>39</sup> According to the Christian creed only Selemeng was to bear Sechele children. But the other four women were living with Sechele before they were divorced and Livingstone ignored this when accusing Sechele of adultery. Moshweshwe viewed all this as a violation of traditional practices. Becoming a Christian meant subjecting oneself to the rules of a missionary who was free to do as he pleased irrespective of the inconvenience or the hardship he caused all because one must conform to a Christian creed. All what Moshweshwe did was to send Sechele comforting words after hearing of what happened to him.<sup>40</sup> To many people who were against Christianity Sechele must have appeared a laughing stock.

In 1851 Livingstone left Kolobeng which was Sechele's chief village after Dimawe. He was not to return as he was to honour his missionary and adventurous obligations on behalf

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39. Chirenje, p.43.

40. Damane's interview, 16-03-1992.

of the London Missionary Society and Britain. He went to the north of Botswana travelling to various areas of the east and central Africa. He had only laboured in the land of Sechele for a period of five years. He left without a substitute and for almost six years the Bakwena were without a missionary. Their expectations for more enlightenment were shattered.

Sechele made a plea to the London Missionary Society for Livingstone's replacement. He received no response from this society. He then made a request to Moshweshwe to send him a missionary. The latter was unable to find anyone who was willing to go to Kweneng due to discouraging reports about an imminent war between the Boers of the western Transvaal and the people of Kweneng. As mentioned earlier various Tswana communities were fleeing the western Transvaal into Sechele's territory. He was receiving endless threats from the western Transvaal's Boers.<sup>41</sup> It would definitely be unsafe and risky for any missionary to venture to such a place.

In spite of being suspended by Livingstone Sechele remained a dedicated Christian and indulged in Christian affairs. The departure of Livingstone granted him an opportunity he

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41. Merriweather, Molepolole Mission, p.15;  
Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

probably would have never had, had he (Livingstone) remained in Kweneng. He became a lay preacher. He innovated the mandatory observance of the Sunday Sabbath as a day of rest amongst his people. He held regular informal gatherings on Sunday afternoons at his home in which Biblical discussion were the gist of the conversations. He understood the Bible so much that he interpreted it to justify his actions and could even engage himself in debates with some missionaries.<sup>42</sup>

In 1857 he received a group of missionaries of the German Hermansburg Missionary Society. The leader of this group was Herbs - they had come from the Transvaal. They were Lutherans. Herbs did not live long at Kolobeng in Kweneng - he died after a short stay at the new place. He was replaced by Schoder as leader of the group. They could not do much anymore as their missionary society in Germany could no longer send them funds due to Otto von Bismarck of Prussia who plunged the whole of Germany in wars to unify various states of Germany - fought against Denmark, Austria and France. Schoder and his fellow missionaries found themselves stranded and in 1864 they returned to the Transvaal.<sup>43</sup>

After the departure of Schoder and his helpers Sechele also

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42. Parsons, A History of Southern Africa, p.130;  
Ramsay, pp.85-86.

43. Knobel, The History of Sechele, p.57.

abandoned Kolobeng in the same year to resettle at Molepolole which was within Kweneng.

In 1866 the London Missionary Society sent its missionary, Roger Price, to continue where Livingstone had left off. It was 15 years since Livingstone had left. Price was greatly helped by his wife, Elizabeth, in his duties.<sup>44</sup> Sechele was relieved to have a missionary who was to help enlighten his people. The problems he had with Livingstone were something of the past and he was prepared to work hard for Christianity. At this time of Price there was very little, if any, opposition to Christianity.

Going back to the Boer threats it should be noted that the tension started in 1844 when Sechele was ordered to hand over his people's fire-arms and even submit to their authority. He refused to do either of their demands. He continued to assemble more fire-arms receiving some of them from Moshweshwe as already mentioned. In 1846 a man named Joseph McCabe had his wagons seized by the western Transvaal authorities for transporting arms to Sechele's territory. In 1849 Livingstone was accused of supplying Chief Sechele with fire-arms by the Boers of western Transvaal.<sup>45</sup>

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44. Merriweather, pp.15-16.

45. J. Listowel, The Other Livingstone, p.67.

Livingstone incurred their wrath when he proclaimed the facts of their practising slavery in the Transvaal. Even the Orange Free Staters accused the Boers of Transvaal of trading in slavery.<sup>46</sup>

In 1850 the commandant of western Transvaal, Adriaan Stander, sent Sechele a message to the effect that he should stop all English traders from passing through his territory. Sechele in turn prevented two parties of the Boers from passing through his land. He later refused to sign a treaty of friendship with the authorities of the western Transvaal. In 1851 the Commandant-General of the Transvaal, Andries Pretorius, suggested that Sechele should disarm. He went on to say that all the chiefs between the Marico River valley area and Kweneng should supply free labour to the farmers.

Having seen how bad it was to labour without any remuneration many chiefs preferred to flee than to try to fight against the superior forces of the Boers.<sup>47</sup> They had better weapons compared to the ones the chiefs had.

In 1852 Andries Pretorius and the British Commissioners, William Hogge and Charles Owen signed the Sand River

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46. Parsons, p.121.

47. Ramsay, p.91.

Convention and among the terms agreed upon was that there should be no further selling of arms to the Blacks.<sup>48</sup> Sechele was put at a disadvantage. It was then that he appealed to Moshweshwe for more fire-arms. The latter sent him very few<sup>49</sup> as he had his own problems with the British as already discussed earlier in this chapter.

In February 1852 Pieter Scholtz replaced Stander who had resigned as a commando leader after a commando he had assembled to shoot Chief Mosielele of the Bakgatla of Mmanaana defied him by refusing to shoot the chief. Scholtz invited all the chiefs in the environs of the Marico River valley, including Sechele in Botswana, to come and meet him. Sechele refused to attend. The chiefs who attended were told to be subservient to the Boer government. After some threats were made and directed to Mosielele who had thought that he could resist by fighting off the Boers and had refused to continue supplying the farmers with free labour, he fled after realizing that he was too weak to stand against Scholtz's forces. He went to Sechele's land and Scholtz followed him there. Sechele refused to release him.<sup>50</sup>

The refusal of Sechele to release Mosielele was tantamount

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48. Damane's interview, 16-03-1992.

49. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

50. Knobel, p.54.

to challenging Scholtz. A few days afterwards war broke out between Scholtz and Sechele. It was the Battle of Dimawe. Scholtz's commando was accompanied by some Batswana auxiliaries from western Transvaal who were coerced into joining.<sup>51</sup> Sechele instructed his warriors not to attack the "helpless" auxiliaries. Sechele's forces were no match for Scholtz and after 60 men of Sechele were killed the rest fled. Under the cover of darkness Sechele regrouped his combatant forces and assembled them on a hill-top not so far from Dimawe. This hill was called Dithubaruba. Compared to Moshweshwe's Thaba Bosiu it is a small mountain. Dithubaruba is a natural fortress. Being on this hill Sechele and his forces fought so well that he defended his people so well that Scholtz failed to penetrate Dithubaruba. The war went on for a few days without anybody gaining the upper hand and Scholtz had to withdraw and returned to the Transvaal.<sup>52</sup>

To the Bakwena of Molepolole this war called the Battle of Dimawe fought in 1852 is still the best thing to have happened to them. Sechele had accomplished an unprecedented feat. They speak of it in sentimental tones. A few of them who are highly susceptible to superstitions believe that Moshweshwe had "doctored" the guns that he sent Sechele. It

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51. D.A.M. Motshumi's interview, Mafikeng, 26-01-1991.

52. J. Chapman, p.82.

was the same year that Moshweshwe defeated the British forces of Cathcart at the Battle of Berea. It was not a really victory for the Bakwena but for the fact that Scholtz withdrew it was a great achievement for their Chief Sechele. In short, it was a Pyrrhic victory. Many people and several chiefs who had fled to Sechele were also content with Sechele's actions.

In withdrawing Scholtz became so irritable that he vented his acrimony on the innocent people. He captured many Tswana women and children including Sechele's son, Kgari. Many cattle of the Bakwena were also captured and taken to the Transvaal. Scholtz had failed in his campaign of subduing Sechele and even disarm him of the fire-arms.<sup>53</sup> The war did not end with the withdrawal of Scholtz to the Transvaal, as Sechele conducted guerrilla attacks on western Transvaal farmers to have Kgari and the captured people released.<sup>54</sup>

In the meantime there developed a split in the ranks of the Boers. One group wanted peace with Sechele and its leader was Jan Viljoen and the other group wished to continue with the war to subdue the Bakwena and Sechele - the leader of this group was the same Scholtz. On the other hand, Scholtz's

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53. Ramsay, p.103.

54. Setlhako's interview, 15-02-1992.

arrogance and ruthlessness were losing him support and his authority was crumbling. Viljoen met Andries Pretorius and won him to his side. He also explained Sechele's motive for the guerrilla attacks. Pretorius called for the release of Kgari and other people and the attacks ended.<sup>55</sup>

Sechele never ceased to apprise Moshweshwe of the episodes in his country. The latter, in turn, though having problems with the Cape Colonial and the Orange Free State authorities did not fail to give Sechele support and continued to show great interest in the welfare of the Bakwena of Botswana.<sup>56</sup>

Moshweshwe was a great statesman to see that destinies of all the indigenous chiefs and their followers, particularly those on the highveld, were bound together vis-a-vis the whites threat of encroachment.

Other than establishing diplomatic relations with Sechele Moshweshwe also cultivated alliances with the following chiefs of Botswana : Sekgoma of the Bangwato in the Serowe region (in northern Botswana), Kgamanyana and Pilane of the Bakgatla of Mochudi<sup>57</sup> near the modern Gaborone.

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55. Chapman, pp.84-86.

56. Bathoen II's interview, 13-08-1989.

57. Ramsay's interview, 27-10-1991.

The diplomatic relations between Moshweshwe and Sechele have been maintained to the present time. Lesotho and Botswana still have the sentimental attachment of the previous century (19th Century).

## CHAPTER 10

MOSHWESHWE AND THE NORTHERN NGUNI CHIEFS

Natal is the home of the Northern Nguni people (Zulu speaking communities). It is the land where the Difaqane wars originated. The perpetrators of these wars were Dinginswayo, paramount chief of the Mthethwa tribe, Zwide, chief of the Ndwandwe, King Shaka of the Zulus, Matiwane, chief of the Ngwane and Mpangazitha, chief of the Hlubi.<sup>1</sup> The wars between Dinginswayo and Zwide started the turmoil and later these wars spilled over to the Sotho-Tswana communities of the southern highveld (southern Transvaal and the Orange Free State). Matiwane and Mpangazitha were the ones who moved across the Drakensberg to set the whole land aflame. In fact all these five rulers were warlike and lived by engaging in endless wars. They only stopped fighting when they were dead as we shall learn later.

Shaka, Matiwane and Mpangazitha had greater military forces than various Sotho-Tswana chiefs and no one of them could match them (these three chiefs). Their methods of subduing their enemies were too confusing. They would surround the

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1. P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s, p.54.

enemy's encampment or village very early in the morning and then set it alight. As people fled from the burning area they would be attacked. If it was during the day they would arrange their warriors into regiments of three to four groups following one another. These regiments moved in semi-circles to prevent enemies from fleeing. The first regiment consisted of young men while the last one consisted of veterans. As soon as the first regiment had penetrated the enemy the second followed and then the others. They were a formidable and fearless force to be repelled.

Moshweshwe knew of these methods and realized that it would be folly to try and fight against them. He adopted a strategy of dealing with these potentates. He befriended them to deter them from attacking him. It was not easy as these people were warlike and belligerent. However he managed to keep them at a distance.

In the previous chapters we have seen how Moshweshwe established diplomatic relations with other potentates by fostering intermarriages and exchanging of goods, but these strategies would not apply or be adopted when dealing with these chiefs in question. Negotiations and overtures were

of no value as they were meaningless to them. They fought to kill and conquer, that was the only language they understood or wished to understand. For his survival Moshweshwe had to outwit them to win them to his side.<sup>2</sup>

Realizing how belligerent they were Moshweshwe offered, wittingly, to play the role of a vassal to them, thereby convincing them that they were superior to him and that he acknowledged their credentials of being great chiefs. This was the kind of honour they could not refuse. He furnished them with gifts annually and they must have been content. In this way he succeeded in fostering a peaceful co-existence albeit a fragile one.<sup>3</sup>

Of these chiefs Matiwane was the first one he met. He apparently never met Dingiswayo and Zwide who died before he came into prominence and had nothing to do with them. He met Matiwane in about 1820 when he had just settled at Butha Buthe from Menkhoaneng. He was with his followers and was starting to lead an independent life. Matiwane was on a cattle raiding expedition from Natal. Matiwane attacked Moshweshwe at Butha Buthe and forced him to flee back to Menkhoaneng - which was his home - to rejoin his father

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2. D. Rafutho's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 11-04-1987.

3. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 14-12-1990.

Mokhachane.

Matiwane captured his (Moshweshwe's) cattle and those in the neighbouring areas and returned to Natal.<sup>4</sup> It was after this incident that "Moshweshwe's mind came to be filled with diplomatic ideas which he applied to turn enemies into friends and even formed a system of alliances."<sup>5</sup>

He met Matiwane again in 1822 when he (Matiwane) was chief of the Ngwane and had come to the highveld pursuing Mpangazitha, the Hlubi chief who after cheating him had fled to this region. The two had also come to settle on the highveld as they could not stand the horrifying life of the trouble torn and sanguinary Natal.<sup>6</sup> Mpangazitha settled at Maboletla and Matiwane at Senyotong. It was ironic of the two chiefs to flee from trouble to cause more trouble elsewhere. They were for the Homo Homini Lupus motto. Their presence turned the relatively quiet and peaceful highveld topsy turvy as they attacked innocent and unsuspecting Sotho-Tswana communities and forced the survivors to flee in circles. Moshweshwe was faced with a situation of this nature and had to live with it and endeavoured to make the best of it to survive and even save many lives of defenceless people who

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4. L. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, p.38.

5. E. Moshoeshoe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 17-05-1989.

6. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.

flocked to him for protection.<sup>7</sup>

Mpangazitha was the first of the Natal chiefs to move across the Drakensberg and settle among the Sotho-Tswana communities. He was fleeing from Matiwane whom he had wronged by refusing to return his cattle which were entrusted to him for safe keeping. Matiwane was having trouble with Dingiswayo and Zwide and had wished to save his cattle from capture. Instead of honouring the agreement Mpangazitha fled with Matiwane's cattle.<sup>8</sup> He had apparently hoped that he would lose the battle and perhaps even be killed. He lost the battle but was not killed.

Matiwane was unfortunate to have to face two formidable forces in the persons of Dingiswayo and Zwide. He was assailed and menaced on several occasions and suffered a lot from the attacks of Dingiswayo and Zwide. He tried to befriend Zwide by giving him his daughter to marry but Zwide drove the girl back saying that she had come to bewitch him. After a while Zwide attacked Matiwane.<sup>9</sup> After the death of Senzangakhona (Shaka's father) and Dingiswayo Shaka became a ruler of both these chiefs' subjects; he too joined the fray in attacking the unfortunate Matiwane. These attacks

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7. Rafutho's interview, 11-04-1989.

8. P. Becker, *The Rule of Fear*, p.104.

9. G. Theal, Basutoland Records Vol. 1, p.318.

deprived him of his cattle except those that were entrusted to Mpangazitha. His only pis aller was to pursue Mpangazitha to reclaim his cattle and at the same time be far from Shaka who was far more formidable than Dingiswayo and Zwide.<sup>10</sup>

There should be no doubt that the presence of Matiwane and Mpangazitha on the highveld occasioned the Difaqane in this region. What the two failed to do in Natal they did it on the highveld. Matiwane was not just coming to repossess or reclaim his cattle, he attacked Mpangazitha and his Hlubi subjects to vent his frustration on them.

As the two were fighting they preyed on the Sotho-Tswana communities and dislodged them from their homes. These communities had to flee for their safety as they were no match for either Matiwane or Mpangazitha. In their flight they also attacked any tribe or community they met. Eventually the tribes of the highveld were fleeing in circles and thousands of lives were lost and the whole area was in a turmoil. It was a bitter experience unprecedented in the history of these communities. A terror or horror had befallen the otherwise relatively peaceful area. Some tribes were annihilated without any trace of a single survivor.<sup>11</sup>

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10. S. Nkherehanye's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 21-07-1989.

11. Rafutho's interview, 11-04-1987.

At this time of Matiwane and Mpangazitha fighting each other Moshweshwe had returned to Butha Buthe after Matiwane had forced him to flee back to Menkhoaneng. At Butha Buthe he realized how folly it would be to take arms against either of the two fearless belligerent chiefs. He then decided to pay tribute in the form of gifts so as to discourage them from menacing him. It was a good plan as Mpangazitha decided not to trouble him any longer and Matiwane offered to be his protector.<sup>12</sup>

For sometime Moshweshwe led a trouble free life. He had turned possible enemies into friends by making them feel great and important. When Sekonyela, the Batlokwa chief, besieged Butha Buthe, Moshweshwe sent for Matiwane who drove Sekonyela by attacking him. But Sekonyela was not the type that would be deterred by merely being driven away. Whenever he found an opportunity he went for Moshweshwe. He wished to eliminate him. In 1824 Moshweshwe decided to leave Butha Buthe after realizing that Sekonyela meant to destroy him by his persistent attacks. He had to flee unnoticed. He went to his protector, Matiwane, and told him of his intension. Sekonyela's attention was to be distracted during his flight. Matiwane agreed to attack Sekonyela. Moshweshwe was able to

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12. Selatile's interview, 14-10-1990.

use a friend against an enemy. Of course Matiwane believed that Moshweshwe was subservient to him and responded accordingly to the request. He had a way of extricating himself from danger. So he fled from Butha Buthe to Thaba Bosiu without being pursued or intercepted by Sekonyela.<sup>13</sup> He had a safe flight to his destination of Thaba Bosiu.

It was during this flight that Moshweshwe's grandfather and mentor, Peete, was killed and eaten up by the cannibals of the notorious Rakotsoane.<sup>14</sup> The death of Peete proved his diplomacy, compassion and altruism. No amount of emotion blinded his reasoning. When Rakotsoane and his fellow cannibals were arrested and brought to him for execution Moshweshwe refused to have them killed saying that they were the grave of his grandfather. Executing them would be tantamount to desecrating the grave of his grandfather. This may sound irrational but in reality it is true. Killing sometimes does not help solve the problem as the killed person is not given a chance to change for the better. Many of the people who were looking forward to the death of the cannibals were stunned by his reply. He warned the cannibals not to indulge in activities of cannibalism any more. He gave them cattle to go and lead a humanlike behaviour and

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13. Moshoeshoe's interview, 17-05-1989.

14. D.F. Ellenberger, History of the Basuto, Ancient and Modern, p.146.

live amongst other people and not in the forest.<sup>15</sup> His behaviour was disarming but the cannibals were saved from a possible death and were exposed to the public. It is believed that Rakotsoane and his fellow man-eaters desisted from their inhuman activities after the warning they got from Moshweshwe.

In the meantime the clashes between Matiwane and Mpangazitha continued without any sign of abating and nobody was appearing to gain the upper hand. Many people in between had to bear the brunt as they were ceaselessly assailed. In March 1825 they met again with Mpangazitha more prepared to annihilate the Ngwane warriors and their chief. This turned out to be their last encounter as Mpangazitha was killed.<sup>16</sup> His death brought an end to the Hlubi on the highveld. The Hlubi disintegrated. Mpangazitha's sons, Mehlomakhulu and Sidinane, divided their father's subjects into two groups. Mehlomakhulu joined Mzilikazi and all his followers were incorporated to increase the Matebele population. Sidinane joined Moshweshwe at Thaba Bosiu. He remained there for a while and then returned to Natal where Shaka killed him.<sup>17</sup> That brought the Hlubi and their Chief Mpangazitha to an end and Moshweshwe was left with one problem - Chief Matiwane.

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15. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 08-06-1992.

16. Ellenberger, pp.154-155.

17. Leselinyana, 15-06-1892.

Matiwane remained being the supreme marauder on the highveld and had no match. Many of the minor Sotho-Tswana communities joined him to save themselves from being attacked. With nobody to challenge him (Matiwane) Moshweshwe felt uneasy despite the fact that he was his protector. Matiwane started to demand more cattle as tribute from Moshweshwe. The presence of Matiwane on the highveld prevented Moshweshwe from having friends in Natal. It was his wish to have allies in various parts of southern Africa. Matiwane, on the other hand, continued to make life uneasy for Moshweshwe by demanding more and more cattle.<sup>18</sup> However, he obliged and sent tributes albeit grudgingly.

Matiwane was pleased to be receiving tributes from his vassal and felt greatly honoured by a Mosotho chief. Moshweshwe met his protector and convinced him that there should be an ambassador at his (Matiwane's) court who would receive instructions and pass them on to him (Moshweshwe) instead of Matiwane sending his own messengers all the time. So a man called Khoho went to reside at Matiwane's court. Other than honouring his ambassadorial duties Khoho was briefed to secretly watch the plans of the Ngwane and duly pass the information to Moshweshwe. He carried out the instructions

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18. D. Moremoholo's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 21-07-1989.

without being suspected. Moshweshwe had a feeling that Matiwane would one day turn against him and wished to be in the know and not be caught napping. It was, however, Matiwane's generals who were conspiring to turn against Moshweshwe and attack him but Matiwane was against that and discouraged them from entertaining such ideas.<sup>19</sup> The generals disliked his quasi-independence; he was too free a vassal and was having too many cattle to be a vassal.

Matiwane appeared content with what he received from Moshweshwe. But in the long run he too became jealous and envious of Moshweshwe's position. He wished to attack Thaba Bosiu and capture all the cattle of "that Mosotho chief"<sup>20</sup>, as they (the Ngwane) referred to him. Moshweshwe, through Khoho, knew what was going on at Senyotong (Matiwane's place) and prepared for any eventuality. What he would not do was to try to wage an open war against Matiwane. As mentioned earlier, Matiwane's method of fighting was such that the Basotho would be easily subdued.

One of Matiwane's sub-chiefs called Mateleka was accused of having an affair with one of Matiwane's numerous wives. Some warriors were sent to kill him. He fled and was pursued and

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19. Leselinyana, 01-07-1892.

20. Ellenberger, p.171.

overtaken at Thaba Kubu. He was killed and his corpse was left there on the ground uncovered. Matiwane sent his warriors back to have it buried. When they arrived there the corpse had disappeared. It was taken by Moshweshwe's people to him to use it in a ritual ceremony against Matiwane and the Ngwane.<sup>21</sup> This was a general practice amongst the indigenous people of South Africa to use a corpse of a rival or enemy tribe member to weaken the tribes' strength. When Moshweshwe was asked about Mateleka's corpse he denied knowing anything about it. He stated that probably the prowling cannibals took it. Matiwane could not buy that story and ran mad with anger and made war threats.<sup>22</sup>

Even though Matiwane made threats he did not invade Thaba Bosiu. On the other hand Moshweshwe had had enough of Matiwane and wished to end his vassalage. All other strategic methods he applied elsewhere to make allies and friends with other chiefs including marriages could not work with Matiwane and other southern Nguni potentates because they looked down on the Basotho and regarded them as inferior. Moshweshwe had to think of a different plan to rid himself of Matiwane who continued to expect cattle from "that Mosotho chief".<sup>23</sup>

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21. Leselinyana, 01-07-1892.

22. Leselinyana, 15-08-1892.

23. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1992.

King Shaka of the Zulu in Natal was far stronger and superior than Matiwane. Moshweshwe decided to use him against his protector who had become a menace. He made inquiries about Shaka's needs and interests. He was told of feathers - crane feathers in particular - was what he liked.<sup>24</sup> He started collecting them from various areas of the country and was even helped by some of his allies. He then dispatched his messengers (Maqosa) to Shaka. They told the Zulu king about "a Mosotho chief who lives across the Drakensberg who holds him in high esteem and wishes to serve him because of his greatness". They gave him the crane feathers and other regalia worn by his (Moshweshwe's) warriors on special occasions.<sup>25</sup> This was another method of his diplomatic strategies. It was a pleasant surprise for Shaka. He accepted Moshweshwe's overtures and offered to assist him whenever he needed help. Later Moshweshwe added cattle to the feathers as tributes. Shaka was more pleased.<sup>26</sup>

Early in 1827 Moshweshwe sent word to Shaka stating that he was unable to honour his obligations as Matiwane was blocking his way. Shaka responded to what Moshweshwe had planned. He sent a huge army under his half-brother, Dingaan, to attack Matiwane. A short while later Mzilikazi also attacked

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24. Rafutho's interview, 11-04-1987.

25. J.A. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath, p.91.

26. Moremoholo's interview, 21-07-1989.

Matiwane. In both encounters the Ngwane chief suffered heavy losses.<sup>27</sup> So Matiwane was so weakened that he ceased to trouble Moshweshwe. What we see here is that Moshweshwe used a stronger force to get rid of a strong force. Moshweshwe did not take advantage of Matiwane's vulnerable position and attack him. He left him in peace.

In July 1827 Matiwane's generals tried to vent their frustration on Moshweshwe and attacked Thaba Bosiu. Matiwane was against their plans. He warned them but they would not listen. Moshweshwe was a thorn in their flesh. The Ngwane's attack was repulsed with a great deal of human lives lost and Matiwane suffered a third consecutive defeat.<sup>28</sup> This defeat made Matiwane a less troublesome marauder. Moshweshwe stopped paying tribute to him and the Ngwane chief could do nothing.

Moshweshwe, as a man of peace and peaceful co-existence suggested to Matiwane, that they should be allies. He would have a strong ally in the Caledon River valley and the two would form a formidable force. He wished to turn his onetime protector into an ally. It was something Matiwane did not expect. But his pride and prejudice would not allow him to

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27. Selatile's interview, 14-12-1990.

28. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, Oxford History of South Africa Vol. I, p.399.

be told what to do by "that Mosotho chief" who was inferior to the Ngwane. He then left the Caledon River valley for the Cape Colony hoping to refurbish his name and position. He needed more followers, another military prestige and more cattle. He thought a new environment such as the Cape would provide all that.<sup>29</sup>

In the Cape Colony nothing was good. The Thembu and the British soldiers did not allow Matiwane to settle down. They harassed him. His future was doomed as nobody had compassion for him. Eventually he decided to return to the highveld. Being on the highveld Moshweshwe approached him again with a compassionate feeling of humanity and asked him to settle among his people. He again declined the offer. He would not be under an inferior or live within his jurisdiction.<sup>30</sup> In spite of his abject condition Moshweshwe did not think of doing away with him. He still wished to treat him with due respect of a fellow potentate. After a while - in the same year - 1828 - Matiwane returned to Natal where he found the ruler being Dingaan after the death of Shaka. In seeing Matiwane Dingaan recalled the past where the two fought and Dingaan was wounded. He arranged for the murder of Matiwane.<sup>31</sup>

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29. Ellenberger, p.186.

30. Mokhehle's interview, 18-06-1992.

31. Ellenberger, p.189.

Moshweshwe's offers to Matiwane was noted by his Ngwane followers. They saw a better place in the land of Moshweshwe. When he left for Natal most of them remained behind. These later intermingled with the Basotho and settled in various villages of Lesotho. Their descendants are today Sotho-speaking without any inclination of their southern Nguni background. The name "Matuoane" (Matiwane) is so common among the Basotho of Lesotho that some people use it as their family name while others have it as their first name. He had indeed established himself among the Basotho and was tacitly admired for being a great warrior. This was so, notwithstanding the fact that he declined to work with Moshweshwe. His feeling of superiority over the Basotho led to his untimely death. Had he agreed to be an ally of Moshweshwe the Caledon River valley would have been a very powerful state.<sup>32</sup>

Even though Moshweshwe failed in his ultimate long term aim of having Matiwane and Shaka as his allies he nevertheless succeeded in making them just friends and they in turn did not attack him. His diplomacy kept them at bay without their realizing his prime motive for befriending them. After all, this was, probably, the best way of dealing with such

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32. Moremoholo's interview, 21-07-1989.

powerful potentates.

In 1828 Shaka was killed before he and Moshweshwe could work together for a longer time. He was killed by three people and one of them was Dingaan who succeeded him as a ruler of the Zulu people.

After Moshweshwe had befriended Shaka by giving him presents there developed regular movements between Shaka's and Moshweshwe's states. These movements were the work of their messengers. Some of these messengers became ambassadors and resided at the palace of either ruler. Even though Shaka regarded the Basotho and their ruler as his vassals he conceded to the idea of exchanging ambassadors which was Moshweshwe's suggestion.<sup>33</sup> When Shaka was murdered in 1828 some of Moshweshwe's messengers witnessed the killing as it took place when they had gone there to pay tribute on his behalf.<sup>34</sup>

During the reign of Dingaan the relationship between the Basotho and the Zulus was almost at a standstill as Dingaan was indulged in internal problems of his people. He was trying to purge the royal family by eliminating aspirant

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33. Mokhehle's interview, 18-06-1992.

34. M. Makhetha's interview, Maseru, 13-04-1992.

contenders as he himself was a de facto and self-imposed ruler after the death of Shaka. Some of the one time quiscent communities became restive and pulled out of Dingaan's jurisdiction.<sup>35</sup> He tried to apply force against them but failed to bring them back. His problems were later compounded by the arrival of the Voortrekkers in Natal. He was too busy to work with Moshweshwe. What Shaka had built Dingaan destroyed as he was not succeeding in his campaigns. He was winning less battles than he was losing. Had he continued for a much longer period with his disastrous campaigns the whole of northern Natal (Zululand) would have become a moribund state. Looking at Dingaan's embroilment in various belligerent activities one can understand why there was not much Moshweshwe could do with him. Moshweshwe was still interested in maintaining good relations with the Zulu kingdom. He had to be patient.<sup>36</sup>

Dingaan had been a ruler for twelve years (1828-1840). There was no peace during this period. He also had a problem with his half-brother, Mpande. He conducted attacks against him after discovering that Mpande had taken a stand against him with a section of the population. Dingaan fled to Swaziland when conditions of a war torn country became unbearable. He

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35. Wilson and Thompson, pp.351-352.

36. Moshoeshoe's interview, 17-05-1989.

died there in 1840 under mysterious circumstances.<sup>37</sup> There is no concrete evidence concerning his death.

With Dingaan gone Mpande became his successor as king of the Zulu nation. He was formally installed as king by Andries Pretorius, leader of the Voortrekkers, with whom he had clubbed to defeat Dingaan.<sup>38</sup> Mpande became a friend and ally of the Voortrekkers in Natal as the two had worked together to stabilise the war torn Natal conditions.

Both Dingaan and Mpande wished to have fire-arms. Dingaan had managed to secure a few from some English traders who were based along the Natal shore. After a while they stopped the sale for their own reasons and Dingaan turned against them.<sup>39</sup> He was not able to procure any fire-arms anymore as the precarious conditions in his land kept possible traders away. Mpande came to realize that he would not get any fire-arms from the whites despite the fact that he was a friend of the Voortrekkers. He had to look elsewhere for assistance.

After his coronation as king of the Zulu Mpande apprised Moshweshwe of his new position and status. He wished to

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37. D. Oakes, Illustrated History of South Africa - The Real Story, p.156.

38. L. du Buisson, The White Man Cometh, pp.246-249.

39. P. Maylam, p.23.

revive the old diplomatic relations Shaka had had with the Basotho ruler. He was aware that the relation between the Zulu and the Basotho had been in decadence during Dingaan's reign. As an ambitious man Mpande wished to regain the status quo where Lesotho was a vassal state of the Zulu kingdom. He needed Moshweshwe more than the latter needed him. At this time (1840s) Moshweshwe was militarily strong and could have easily ignored Mpande's message as the Zulu were just recuperating from Dingaan's imbroglio. As a man of goodwill and peaceful co-existence he was ready and willing to work with Mpande.<sup>40</sup> He acknowledged Mpande's position and accepted him as a new potentate.

Mpande made an appeal to Moshweshwe for fire-arms. The latter duly sent him some fire-arms and later he supplied him with some horses. This was to strengthen their newly established diplomatic ties. The relationship between Lesotho and Zululand resumed and regular visits by the rulers' envoys became noticeable.<sup>41</sup>

Basotho were - at this juncture - learning to fight on horse-back using fire-arms. They were also breeding horses. It was easy for Moshweshwe to distribute them among his friends

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40. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, Lesotho, 14-11-1992.

41. Mokhehle's interview, 08-06-1992.

and allies. Some of the Basotho men were sent to teach Mpande horse-riding.<sup>42</sup> In this way Moshweshwe was able to win Mpande to his side - albeit - being a vassal.

Thaba Bosiu became a rendezvous of political diplomacy and the Zulu, due to the old friendship Moshweshwe had established with Shaka, were given preferential treatment. They were pleased and believed that they were greater than Moshweshwe's other friends. Mpande found it easy to send his envoys to Thaba Bosiu to purchase fire-arms and horses. Whenever there was a "pitso" (a national political gathering) Mpande was informed and he sent his delegates to attend.<sup>43</sup>

At the "pitso" Moshweshwe acted differently from other chiefs. After a motion to be debated had been introduced all people were allowed to say what they wished to say without any fear of being reprimanded. After all had been said he was the last one to speak having taken into consideration what had been said by various speakers. That was the best system of government among his contemporaries. It was real democracy. Other chiefs called for a "pitso" to tell their subjects what is to be done and ought to be done.<sup>44</sup> It was rare for their subjects to state their opinions.

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42. Damane's interview, 14-11-1992.

43. A.B. Thoahlane's interview, Morija, 08-10-1990.

44. Mokhehle's interview, 08-06-1992.

Some historians and some people in Natal (at Empangeni and Nongoma) still hold the belief that Mpande was a cowardly ruler because he did not indulge in wars the way his predecessors, Shaka and Dingaan, did. This is far from the truth. He did not act irrationally or emotionally. He preferred to rebuild that which was nearly destroyed by Dingaan. He was more of a diplomat than a fighting king - to the dismay of the warlike people who were more interested in confrontation and belligerent actions. He was also not in any way subservient to the Voortrekkers as it is still alleged by his detractors. Having formed an alliance with them did not mean dancing to their music. It is true that he formed an alliance with the Voortrekkers against his unscrupulous half-brother but he and Dingaan had been quarreling before the arrival of the Voortrekkers. That he did not wage war against the whites during his reign is a fact. But that does not qualify him for a puppet and was never manipulated by any white group. On the contrary he managed to play off one group of white neighbours against another. In 1842 he even offered to assist the British to take Natal from the Voortrekkers.<sup>45</sup>

According to my informant in Lesotho (Mareka Makhetha) Mpande

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45. Maylam, p.74.

improved his diplomacy after meeting Moshweshwe and the two started working together. It was Moshweshwe's advices that helped him to become a far better ruler compared to his predecessor.<sup>46</sup> Some of his diplomatic manoeuvres were similar to Moshweshwe's.

Moshweshwe and Mpande remained friends until 1870 when the former died. Mpande, Shaka and many of their followers were made to believe that they were greater than the Basotho. This idea had been retained up to date. It must be remembered that Moshweshwe created this impression as a diplomatic strategy to lull the Zulu and thereby staved off possible attacks. It was a well calculated strategy that did Moshweshwe and his territory a world of good. This impression that the Zulu were superior to the Basotho and that they ought to be subservient to them was well shown by the son of Mpande, Cetshwayo. In 1873 after being crowned as successor to Mpande, Cetshwayo sent a message to Letsie (Moshweshwe's successor) that he had not been officially informed of Moshweshwe's death. He also accused Letsie that the traditional practice of sending twenty-five head of cattle accompanying the death message of a vassal ruler had not been honoured. He also wished to know the cause of the

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46. Makhetha's interview, 13-04-1992.

negligence of the traditional duty.<sup>47</sup>

A response came from the High Commissioner to Lesotho who informed Cetshwayo that during the times of Shaka, Dingaan and Mpande Lesotho might have been a vassal state of the Zulu Kingdom and was then obliged to honour traditional duties but as it was a British territory old rules were no more applicable.<sup>48</sup> There was nothing Cetshwayo could do and Letsie was saved from the trouble he might have encountered with the new Zulu king who was more belligerent than his father, Mpande.

In befriending the northern Nguni rulers Moshweshwe was succeeding in attaching himself to various great chiefs of Southern Africa. The realist and enigmatic Moshweshwe had proved to be having no competitor in diplomacy.

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47. Mokhehle's interview, 08-06-1992.

48. Damane's interview, 14-11-1992.

## CHAPTER 11

MOSHWESHWE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOUTHERN NGUNI CHIEFS

Moshweshwe's contact with the Southern Nguni people (Xhosa speaking tribes of the Cape Colony) commenced early in his reign - towards the end of the 1820s. The contact started as cattle raiding expeditions and later changed into diplomatic relations with the outstanding chiefs of great tribes.

His quest for owning more cattle to boost his political position and even secure it, was the driving force behind his actions of undertaking cattle raiding expeditions. His son, Letsie, was to go for circumcision and normally for a son of a great man some cattle are slaughtered to celebrate such an occasion. Chief Moorosi of the Baphuthi who was settled at Quthing led him into the land of the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape.

In 1828 Moshweshwe, in the company of Moorosi, undertook his first journey into the Cape. It was an adventure of cattle raiding. They went into the land of the Thembu whose chief

was Ngubencuka.<sup>1</sup> The unsuspecting and unprepared chief was attacked and many of his cattle were seized. The Thembu were helpless and failed to recapture their cattle. Ngubencuka had a belief that another cattle raid would follow and tried to prepare for it by fostering an alliance with Faku, the chief of the Pondo tribe through affinal ties. He married Faku's daughter who was named Nonesi.<sup>2</sup> It had been a general practice among the indigenous chiefs to form alliances by marrying a daughter, sister or a close relative of another chief.<sup>3</sup> It must be realized that these kind of marriages did not always work out according to expectation. Marrying another chief's daughter did not just guarantee or foster a concrete alliance. In the previous chapter we have seen how Zwide rebuffed Matiwane by refusing to accept his daughter given to him to marry. In another instance Sobuza I gave his two daughters to Shaka as wives but the latter later killed them. Moshweshwe was apparently the only man who indulged in such marriages with sincerity and his alliances were permanent. He looked at long term results of such marriages.

In 1830 Ngubencuka died and Nonesi remained in the land of the Thembu. The late chief was succeeded by his son, Mtirara. Faku, despite the fact that his daughter was still

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1. E.J. de Jager, Die Geskiedenis van die Ame-Xhosa en die Ama-Thembu, p.223.
  2. C.J. Beyers, Dictionary of the South African Biography Vol. I, p.56.
  3. J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo, p.43.

with the Thembu, attacked them and captured their cattle.<sup>4</sup> It was obvious that Faku's greed for cattle surpassed his interest for the safety of his daughter. Some of the potentates married for short term results after which they felt no obligation to show any respect to their affinal attachment.

Sometime after this attack on the Thembu by Faku he himself became the victim of attacks. Faku's enemies started to harass him. He was too weak to stave them off as his warriors were not well organized and could not wage a serious war. Faku thought of an ally. He preferred Sarhili (Kreli), the son of Hintsa, chief of the powerful Gcaleka tribe. He offered him his daughter, Qwali, to marry so as to bring the Pondo and the Gcaleka together and foster an alliance. Sarhili was not impressed by the offer of Faku and refused to associate with Qwali.<sup>5</sup> It was customary for such offers not to be rebuffed as it was viewed as a political affront which might even lead to war. Perhaps Sarhili was aware of what Faku did to the Thembu. He probably also had a dislike for Faku and did not care what his refusal would lead to.

In 1835 Moshweshwe undertook another cattle raiding ex-

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4. De Jager, p.224.

5. Peires, p.43.

pedition to the same land of the Thembu whose chief then was Mtirara. Many of his people were excited about the expedition and went along. What was supposed to be an easy collection of cattle led to a fearsome confrontation. The Thembu were prepared to fight to save their cattle from being captured and war broke out. Moshweshwe lost his brother, Makhabane, who was among the Basotho killed. Moshweshwe's sister's son named Mafa (alias Mili) was captured by one of Mtirara's men and when it was discovered who he was he was hidden in safety. The Basotho were forced to abandon their plans of capturing the Thembu cattle and returned home with whatever few cattle they could lay their hands on as they were retreating.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime Mafa remained in the land of the Thembu for three years. He was thought to have been killed. In 1838 Mafa was returned to Moshweshwe. His return changed Moshweshwe's attitude towards the Thembu. Mtirara and Moshweshwe became friends. Moshweshwe even thought of establishing diplomatic ties with the Thembu and after a while the two exchanged envoys to cement their newly formed friendship.<sup>7</sup>

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6. E. Moshoeshoe's interview, Thaba Bosiu, 06-10-1987.

7. M. Damane's interview, Mafeteng, Lesotho, 15-02-1992.

As a man whose ambition was to eventually win over all the indigenous chiefs to his side, exchanging of diplomatic agents with Mtirara gave Moshweshwe an opportunity of studying the political situation of the Xhosa speaking tribes of the Cape Colony. While other chiefs preferred to be the only ones who would officially marry women of other tribes Moshweshwe freely allowed his people to inter-marry with the people of the chief he had befriended. His friendship with Mtirara led to inter-tribal marriages taking place between the Basotho and the various Xhosa speaking tribes.<sup>8</sup>

What commenced as cattle raiding expeditions led to a peaceful co-existence between Moshweshwe and Mtirara and later other Xhosa potentates also became attached to the Basotho ruler. In addition to the Thembu the other tribes whose chiefs he befriended were the Gcaleka, the Pondo and the Rharhabe. It should be observed that whoever Moshweshwe associated with became an affair between the two of them. His other allies were not ipso facto allies to one another because they were attached to him. The idea that a friend of my friend is my friend also did not apply to him. He preferred to work with different chiefs as individuals and on a personal basis. Whatever they did between and among

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8. S. Mpopo's interview, Quthing, Lesotho, 15-02-1992.

themselves was not his concern.

Rharhabe was a chief of people who came to call themselves by his name. They were his followers. He was the son of Phalo and his half-brother was Gcaleka. These two quarrelled for leadership but Rharhabe was beaten and together with his followers (they) left the main core of the tribe with Gcaleka to start their own independent life as the Rharhabe clan. Those who remained with Gcaleka called themselves the Gcaleka. In the 19th Century Moshweshwe established diplomatic ties with their descendants Sarhili of the Gcaleka and Sandile of the Rharhabe.

Other than befriending Moshweshwe Mtirara's reign was not so eventful. His people were not so popular with other Xhosa speaking clans. He was disliked by other Xhosa tribes. His reign was not so long and he died in 1850 having achieved very little for the Thembu (from 1830 to 1850). He was succeeded by his half-brother, Joyi, who acted as regent as the heir to the Thembu chieftainship, Ngangelizwe (Mtirara's son) was still too young to rule. When Ngangelizwe was old enough to rule Joyi relinquished the Thembu leadership.<sup>9</sup> Both Joyi and Ngangelizwe retained the diplomatic ties

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9. J.H. Soga, South Eastern Bantu, p.479.

Mitrara had established with Moshweshwe. They viewed Moshweshwe as their "father" and sent for his advices as they were faced with a hostile environment. The Thembu were accused of being friendly to the white people of the Cape Colony particularly the government authorities. Being friendly to whites meant being an outcast among the other black tribes.<sup>10</sup> Even though Moshweshwe would not help them militarily if they were attacked they felt safe to have a man of his calibre as a friend.

He was not all the time making overtures to other chiefs, other people also made some advances to him to win his friendship. A son of Chief Rharhabe named Nzwane (alias Danster) gave Moshweshwe what could be called his first fire-arm. To show his gratitude and appreciation Moshweshwe gave him a piece of land which was later called Danster's Nek.<sup>11</sup> He never appeared to be interested in losing friends no matter how treacherous some of them appeared to be. He also tried to avoid making permanent enemies. He wished to be on friendly terms with all who would accept him.

Moshweshwe's defeat of Cathcart's forces at the Battle of Berea in 1852 endeared him to many Xhosa speaking potentates

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10. N. Mokhehle's interview, Maseru, 12-10-1990.

11. Peires, pp.117-118.

including their followers. It was viewed as a great feat unprecedented in the black communities of that time. As an astute politician Moshweshwe realized that of all the Xhosa potentates Sarhili (Kreli) and his Gcaleka followers were better than the rest including the Thembu whom he had befriended first. He preferred them to the rest and offered to work with them more than with the rest. He duly informed Sarhili of what happened at the Battle of Berea. Many Xhosa people came to believe that he had the best efficacious charms among the black tribes. The Xhosa had been fighting the white forces over and over again without attaining a single victory worth remembering. From their reaction of the Berea battle it is quite obvious that they had used muti or charms and lost despite that. Some of the chiefs sent their messengers to Moshweshwe to inquire about such charms where and how to acquire them.<sup>12</sup> Within a short time Moshweshwe was transformed into a "demi-god". All sorts of impossibilities were said about him. It was even believed that the Basotho had charms that helped them to control lightning and win battles.<sup>13</sup>

The Basotho came to be revered by the Xhosa speaking tribes of the Cape Colony and began to believe that they were far

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12. Cape of Good Hope correspondence with the Governor of the Cape, of Good Hope relative to the Kaffir Tribes and Further Papers Relative to the State of Kaffir Tribes, p.73.

13. Mpopo's interview, 15-02-1992.

superior to them in the usage of charms. This notion gave Moshweshwe's traditional doctors an opportunity to spread the propaganda that they were better than the other traditional doctors. Many Xhosa people believed all sorts of this kind of propaganda and associated Moshweshwe's name with anything great.<sup>14</sup> As superstition was still rife and unchallenged people believed any piece of news that sounded sensational. Moshweshwe, in turn, made no attempt to disprove this rumour. It was not only the Xhosa people who appeared impressed by this victory but some chiefs in the Orange Free State and Natal were highly impressed and came to regard him as a great man of their time.<sup>15</sup> This also granted him the opportunity to command respect in various parts of Southern Africa.

As a shrewd politician Moshweshwe took advantage of the excitement this victory had elicited among the Xhosa chiefs and their followers and tried to win them to his side. He sent his special messengers (Maqosa) to make overtures to Sandile, the Rharhabe chief. He wished to establish diplomatic ties with the Rharhabe chief. Sandile was too willing to work with Moshweshwe. The latter was interested in dealing with the English of the Eastern Cape and wanted Sandile to act as a guide and introduce him to the Assistant

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14. Damane's interview, 14-11-1992.

15. D.A.M. Motshumi's interview, Mafikeng, 21-04-1991.

Commissioners.<sup>16</sup> Sandile and Moshweshwe established diplomatic relations and exchanged ambassadors.<sup>17</sup>

As mentioned earlier that Moshweshwe was more interested in Sarhile, the Gcaleka chief, because he appeared better than other potentates among the Xhosa speaking tribes; Sarhile was just as interested in establishing diplomatic ties with the Basotho ruler. Sarhili sent his special envoys : Matomela and Cata to Moshweshwe to convey his wish of befriending him. The two became close friends and allies and started exchanging gifts. Sarhili did not approve of the British imperial encroachment in his land. His father, Hintsa, was even killed by them (it was Sir Harry Smith who killed Hintsa in 1835) and he disliked them. He needed an ally to help him drive the British out of his land. Moshweshwe appeared to be the ideal choice. The two potentates needed each other for various reasons. After the Battle of Berea Sarhili sent his brother, Xoxo, to Moshweshwe to make a request for a medicine or charm that could be used against the British in the Eastern Cape and drive them out of his territory.<sup>18</sup>

One can't tell what Xoxo brought from Moshweshwe as Sarhili

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16. Further Papers, p.73.

17. A. Ncayi's interview, Rini, Grahamstown, 07-01-1993.

18. J.B. Peires, The Dead will Arise, p.43.

did not wage war after his brother's return. After Xoxo's return there followed regular visits between the envoys of Sarhili and Moshweshwe. Ambassadors were exchanged between Gcalekaland and Basotholand. Ill feelings and acrimony against the British continued all the time with much ado.<sup>19</sup> Sarhili evidently had no means of starting a war against the British.

Moshweshwe was an ambitious politician who wished to continue expanding his sphere of influence by increasing his number of friends and finding better homes for his stranded people. On the south-eastern side of the Drakensberg there had been an area which was scantily occupied by people and was the jurisdiction of Faku, the chief of the Pondo. Moshweshwe had a friend known as Makoai who was once settled at Siloe (a village between Mafeteng and Mhaleshoek in Lesotho) who had a clash with the Orange Free Staters and was forced to flee from Siloe. Makoai went beyond the Drakensberg to settle in this area which could be called "No man's land" as it was almost empty and theoretically it belonged to Faku. Moshweshwe sent his Maqosa to Faku requesting him to cede this area to the Basotho. Faku had no objection.<sup>20</sup> Sometime later Adam Kok left Philippolis to resettle in this "No man's

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19. Mokhehle's interview, 12-10-1990;

Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

20. Damane's interview, 14-11-1992.

land". As he was a Griqua the whole region was named Griqualand-East and it was officially detached from Faku's territory (Pondoland).<sup>21</sup> It became an area of the Basotho, the Xhosa (Pondo in particular) and the Griquas. Matatiele was the centre of what was the "No man's land" then.

Moshweshwe and Faku became friends then (1860s). They became allies and Faku regarded this friendship as a blessing. The Zulu who had appeared as a threat for sometime would not find the Pondo alone but with a formidable ally and Faku was ready for them. The Zulu threat emanated from the defeat of Dingaan by Faku during the reign of the former after the death of Shaka in 1828. Dingaan died in 1840 and his successor, Mpande, made unending threats to avenge the defeat of Dingaan by Faku. Sarhili had refused his daughter when she was given to him to marry. He had hoped the marriage would help to foster an alliance. In Moshweshwe Faku had found a far better ally and more reliable. Moshweshwe and Faku exchanged ambassadors.<sup>22</sup> Matatiele became a home of the Basotho in Griqualand-East. The Basotho there are presently interspersed among the Xhosa speaking people. The language Sesotho is still spoken to date.

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21. K. Shillington, History of Southern Africa, p.77;  
J.M. Mohapeloa, Government by Proxy, p.8.

22. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 12-10-1990.

In addition to having Moshweshwe as an ally and friend Faku befriended some white people. Some of them were British Cape government officials and these were W. Harding and H.F. Fynn and some were the Wesleyan missionaries : the Rev. W. Shaw who visited Pondoland in 1829; the Rev. W.B. Boyce who in 1830 established the first mission station in Pondoland at Bantingville and remained there between 1838 and 1868; the Rev. T. Jenkens who became Faku's confidant.<sup>23</sup> The presence of these white people did not affect his diplomatic ties with Moshweshwe. Although Faku was not as astute as Moshweshwe in politics he was not so meek as to be manipulated by them. Like Moshweshwe he lived in harmony with his missionaries. He did not become a Christian despite their sincere preaching and coaxing. When he was questioned on why he was not a Christian his answer was : "It will not do for me to alter; if I did the whole nation (Pondos) would go wrong".<sup>24</sup> He died in 1867 as an octogenerian. During his last years, due to senility, he was assisted by his sons Mqikela and Ndamase. The former became his successor.<sup>25</sup>

At the time of Faku's death Moshweshwe was also too old to be the active politician he used to be. He did not have many years to continue ruling. A spirit of goodwill remained

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23. Beyers, pp.283-284.

24. G. Callaway, Pioneers in Pondoland, p.35.

25. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993;  
Beyers, p.283.

between the Pondos and the Basotho. Pondo visitors found a home in Lesotho whenever they visited this place.<sup>26</sup>

Moshweshwe had succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with the main Xhosa tribes in the persons of Faku, Mtirara, Sandile and Sarhili. He had more to do with Sarhili, chief of the Gcaleka. Sarhili's chief envoy, Matomela, was a frequent visitor at Thaba Bosiu delivering and collecting messages as well as gifts - more than envoys of other chiefs.

Moshweshwe's influence and the respect he commanded among the Xhosa potentates was so strong and noticeable that John Maclean, the Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria was prompted to state that he (Moshweshwe) was the potential mastermind of a united black combination against the white man's domination in Southern Africa.<sup>27</sup> It was obvious that Maclean felt threatened by Moshweshwe's dealings and association with the Xhosa rulers who were not happy with the presence of the whites in their territory. The relationship between Sarhili and Moshweshwe was showing symptoms of hostility towards the British authority and encroachment in the Eastern Cape.<sup>28</sup> The British authority regarded this as cause for concern. At the centre of this incertitude was Sir

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26. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

27. Peires, *The Dead*, p.109.

28. Further Papers, p.74.

George Grey, the Governor of the Cape Colony.

What Maclean said about Moshweshwe was true. It was his main aim to unite all the black chiefs against white encroachment in their territories. He was not belligerent and provocative and did not call for arms to wage war against the whites. He wanted justice and fair treatment. He always weighed the pros and cons before engaging in a war. In short he allowed reason to guide his actions. He could be hurt but did not like hurting others. If he had the means he probably would have done what Maclean feared he would do.

It was unfortunate and regrettable that during this time (1855-1857) of frequent visits between Sarhili's territory and Moshweshwe's land by their emissaries there emerged a terrible rumour in the land of Sarhili which later led to the detriment of the general welfare of the Xhosa populace. A young woman named Nonqausa, a close relative of Sarhili had a vision in the form of a strange voice that she heard at the river. She informed Sarhili who in turn brought the local traditional doctor, Mhlakaza into the picture by saying he should interpret Nonqausa's vision. Mhlakaza took up the story and made a propaganda of it. He played the role of a

prophet and prophesied that Nonqausa's vision was a true message from the spirits of the dead.<sup>29</sup>

He "prophesied" that all the Xhosa people ought to kill their cattle, burn their crops and be left with no property. There after new fresh and fat cattle would emerge from the sea to replace the killed ones; there shall be plenty food; their dead chiefs would resurrect and a strong wind would blow all the white people into the sea. Life would change for the better.<sup>30</sup> It was a terrible delusion and a fantasy at its worst.

Sarhili had failed to win any war against the whites and had even sent Xoxo to collect some charms from Moshweshwe to help him subdue the whites - he came to believe this fantasy and some minor chiefs believed it too. The whites would disappear without Sarhili raising a finger against them. No where had such a thing ever happened and would ever happen in a stern world of reality. But Sarhili believed it and many people were encouraged to believe this "prophecy" of Mhlakaza.

Knowing how influential Moshweshwe was among the Xhosa, his

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29. C.J. Beyers, p.687.

30. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

name was added to the message of Mhlakaza. It was rumoured that Moshweshwe had already killed his cattle and had been rewarded with new cattle and those who did not believe and did not heed the message were killed.<sup>31</sup> Their cattle, according to Mhlakaza, were to come from the sea and yet nobody took the trouble of asking where Moshweshwe's cattle came from as Lesotho is land-logged and is far from the sea. It was a crazy and sensational delusion.

It is quite obvious that most of the Xhosa speaking chiefs were of the opinion that their white neighbours were invincible until the Berea battle shattered that opinion. It is also true that Moshweshwe did not have the charms to help the Xhosa chiefs defeat the British in the Eastern Cape. Then a general war was to be planned between the blacks and the whites and Moshweshwe's involvement in such a war would turn the tables against the whites. Preparations were made and the question was : Who was to start this war? Moshweshwe wanted the Xhosa chiefs to be the first to be involved and he would come to their assistance and they in turn wished that he should start first. They were distrustful of each other.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Further Papers, p175.

32. Ibid., p.22.

While still hesitant Nonqausa and Mhlakaza came with the cattle-killing "prophecy" which appeared to offer a better option than going for war against the white neighbours.

Those who believed this "prophecy" were stupidly optimistic to expect such a miracle to occur.

Whoever was behind it must have been a desperate, cunning and treacherous person.

There are three people who appear to have played important roles in this plan : Grey, Moshweshwe and Sarhili. Sir George Grey had in 1855 informed the Cape Parliament of his intention of destroying the stubborn independence of the Xhosa nation by breaking the political and judicial powers of their chiefs, by encouraging its ordinary common people to abandon their communal and pastoral ethos in favour of wage labour and by disrupting its territory integrity by settling some white people among the Xhosa.<sup>33</sup> If this was to be achieved something great must happen. Sarhili, after realizing that his people were hesitant in declaring war against the Whites, felt something great must happen that would make them act without flinching.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand,

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33. Peires, The Dead, pp.218-219.

34. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

Moshweshwe who would have been glad to see the Xhosa getting rid of their white neighbours would support any great action that could lead to such an achievement.

Sarhili had realized that anything Moshweshwe did or said was accepted without doubts, so he brought him into the picture. But the gist of the argument here is the belief in superstitions. Whoever was really responsible for the idea of cattle-killing took advantage of this and exploited this belief to his advantage. It will be wrong and unwise to shift the blame altogether from Grey and even exonerate him from the matter. His heartless and brutal policies continue to point an accusing finger at him. Maclean who worked well with Grey need not be left out. There is a strong opinion that Moshweshwe's association with Sarhili and other Xhosa speaking chiefs made him uneasy as he feared that Moshweshwe might enlighten the Xhosa to the dismay of the British authorities.<sup>35</sup>

When Moshweshwe realized how much his name was being dragged in the mud over the cattle-killing issue and the frightening possible results of this delusion, he made a complete volte-face of the matter by asking his missionary Theophile Jousse

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35. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

to write a letter to the governor of the Cape, Sir George Grey. The letter was long and written in French but the gist of it was this denial : "... Kreli (sic) est un noir comme moi, mais il est mon ennemi; dans une guerre il a tué l'un de mes frères, et je n'ai pas eu de relations avec lui depuis plus de trois ans ...." <sup>36</sup> \* This letter was written four months before the catastrophic day of 18th February 1857. This was a denial of their diplomatic relations and probably Moshweshwe did not wish to be implicated in the Xhosa affairs any longer. It was a subterfuge. In all fairness Moshweshwe was trying to pledge himself to the English as their sincere friend. He was not to be involved should war break out between the British and the Xhosa. <sup>37</sup>

Moshweshwe continued to work with Sarhili and exchanged gifts in spite of what he wrote to Grey.

The Rev. T. Jousse wrote a letter as a follow up to the one he wrote on behalf of Moshweshwe. He stated that : "... But, if my testimony could be of any use, I should not hesitate to say that Moshesh appeared to me to be perfectly sincere in the answer which he has given to your Excellency." <sup>38</sup>

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36. Further Papers, pp.50-51.

\* Kreli (Sarhili) is a black (man) like me, but he is my enemy. In a war he killed one of my brothers and I have not had any relations with him for more than three years.

37. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

38. Further Papers, p.49.

Jousse had only been at Thaba Bosiu since 1855 and spoke well of his chief and had probably not seen enough of Moshweshwe. He was supporting Moshweshwe in his stand against Sarhili.

While various documented information point a finger at Sarhili as being responsible for cattle-killing and burning of crops of the Xhosa by the Xhosa themselves, Grey's action and reaction after the deed do not make him an innocent man either and oral tradition points a finger at him (and Maclean).<sup>39</sup> For the moment we do not have enough evidence to substantiate each allegation to determine who was responsible for such a despicable and horrifying deed.

Many people went on to kill their cattle and burnt their crops. They were expectantly looking forward for miracles to take place on 18th February 1857. On that day nothing occurred and neither on the subsequent days. Eventually their hopes and expectations turned into despair and frustration. Starvation ensued followed a little later by death. People died as if they were assailed by an epidemic ailment.<sup>40</sup>

As if the suffering of these people was not enough Grey sent

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39. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

40. Ncayi's interview, 07-01-1993.

the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police to drive away the survivors of the Gcaleka and their chief, Sarhili. More suffering followed. The Thembu whose leader then was the regent, Joyi, joined the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police in driving the Gcaleka out of their territory. The Gcaleka were kept out of their land for seven years and only allowed to return in 1864.<sup>41</sup>

Notwithstanding all these sufferings Moshweshwe remained a friend of Sarhili. Some of the Gcaleka fled to Lesotho - to avoid more harassment - and were given shelter.<sup>42</sup> He did not abandon Sarhili even though he was in trouble with the Cape Colonial authorities.

At the time of Moshweshwe's death, in 1870, his country (Lesotho) was under British protection and his successor, Letsie, could do almost nothing to retain the diplomatic ties of his father and Sarhili as the foreign affairs matters were subject to British approval. Having seen the sufferings of the Gcaleka he was not keen to involve himself in the affairs of the Cape Colony; he was also not an astute politician as his father. Nevertheless the Basotho and the Gcaleka have remained friends which was Moshweshwe's *raison d'être* for

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41. Beyers, p.687.

42. Selatile's interview, 12-10-1990.

fostering diplomatic relations and having a peaceful co-existence with all the indigenous chiefs of Southern Africa.

Sarhili lived to be a septuagenarian when he died in 1892.

The Southern Nguni had found a home in Lesotho and Moshweshwe had proved to be more reliable to them than they were among themselves. He had proved to be a true friend. It was a pity that when more serious events cropped up he was too old to solve them to the advantage of his people. He had done Lesotho and his people as well as his friends and allies a tremendous amount of goodwill. He had no competitor. He was the unique statesman of the 19th Century among the indigenous chiefs of his time.

Having diplomatic ties with the Xhosa chiefs Moshweshwe was then surrounded by friends on all sides. The Zulu in the east, the Xhosa in the south, further west the Batswana of Chief Sechele, in the north were the Ndebele, the Makololo, the Bapedi and the Swazi. All these people were outside the Caledon River valley except for Moletsane and Moorosi who were within this valley. He had done what no one of his contemporary fellow potentates could do.

Through his diplomatic relations Moshweshwe turned his country into a centre of political activities for the indigenous chiefs and their followers. His country also became a home and refuge for the afflicted, the homeless and the leaderless people - it was a sanctuary for all.

## C O N C L U S I O N

It is quite obvious that Moshweshwe had no match amongst his contemporary fellow rulers. Whatever Mohlomi taught him he became a changed personality for the general welfare of his people. He was neither avaricious nor self centred. He knew how to play safe and survive in a dangerous and trying situation. His kindness sometimes baffled both friend and foe.

After Chief Matiwane, of the Ngwane tribe, had attacked him and failed Moshweshwe did not try to end the Ngwane by annihilating the survivors, on the the contrary, he offered Matiwane a home to settle as a neighbour. He even adopted Matiwane's son, Izikale, and offered to bring him up as a Mosotho (Sesotho speaking person).<sup>1</sup> Despite his pride Matiwane eventually realized the sincerity of Moshweshwe and when he eventually decided to return to Natal he left his chief wife behind in the care of Moshweshwe.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his life span Moshweshwe tried to please his friends and enemies. He went out of his way to help the needy and did so without expecting to be thanked in one way

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1. J.G. Williams, Moshesh the Man on the Mountain, pp.50-51.
  2. N. Grant, Moshoeshe Founder of a Nation, p.26.

or another except loyalty and peaceful co-existence.

The coming in of the Whites in his territory and environs alarmed him. They were of a different culture and their way of doing things differed from the general trend of the Blacks. His problem with them was the land question. It was for the first time in the history of the Blacks to learn of land having to be bought and owned as private property of a particular individual. The Blacks regarded the Whites as land-grabbers<sup>3</sup> while the Whites looked at the Blacks as people who have no respect for another man's property. As both Blacks and Whites were pastoral farmers and agriculturists they were bound to clash and their conflicts led to wars. Boundaries were meaningless to the Blacks and no amount of warnings concerning the boundaries were of any significance to them. To them land is a communal property distributed proportionally to all members of the community by the chief.

When he (Moshweshwe) realized how formidable and patient the Voortrekkers were and the land issue continued to be a burning issue he brought the English into the picture to solve the boundary question.<sup>4</sup> This led to the Napier Treaty

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3. A British Officer : Basuto at Arms, p.4.

4. M.L. Hodgson and W.G. Ballinger, Indirect Rule in Southern Africa, pp.6-7.

signed on 13th December 1843 between Moshweshwe and James Walker who was the representative of the governor, Sir George Napier, and the signing took place at Thaba Bosiu.<sup>5</sup> This treaty was a prologue of friendly ties between Moshweshwe and the British authorities. It was a pity that the treaty pleased only Moshweshwe and his followers. There was so much negative reaction that in 1849 the Warden Line was promulgated to replace it to the detriment of Moshweshwe and his Basotho. As discussed earlier the Basotho reacted so negatively that on two occasions war broke out between the British and Moshweshwe.

For the welfare of his people Moshweshwe acknowledged the European military tactics and their techniques. He had to have the kind of weapons they had. He sent his emissaries to the Cape to acquire fire-arms, ammunition and even horses<sup>6</sup> - even though it was a limited supply. He obtained others elsewhere. In 1852 some of his fighters in the Battle of Berea (against Cathcart) were mounted and using fire-arms. He realized the value of formal education hence he sent his sons to the Cape to be better educated and the local schools at Morija and Thaba Bosiu were open to everybody including non-Sotho speakers.

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5. J. Halpern, South African Hostages, p.67;  
Williams, p.75.

6. E.J. Murphy, The Bantu Civilization of Southern Africa, p.214.

During his reign he continued to receive strangers, refugees and all sorts of people in his kingdom and tried to amalgamate them with his people to increase the population of his followers.<sup>7</sup> Not only Blacks flocked to his land for protection from all sorts of hazards and afflictions of their countries but some Whites as well. Some came to visit him in his land and others came to stay. In 1833 a German man, Seidenstecher, visited him for a while and left him some horses as gifts. He was soon followed by David Webber who was a deserter from the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders. He had come to seek employment and was a mason. In 1837 he built Moshweshwe a stone house on Thaba Bosiu. Then came John Wilks from the Royal Artillery; Webb from a Line Regiment and then Siggs. All of them had some knowledge of armoury trade. They became his armourers.<sup>8</sup> Moshweshwe had no problems of repairing his guns as these armourers attended to that. He was also visited by traders, hunters and British officials. Thaba Bosiu became the most known place in the hinterland.

Moshweshwe had also realized the advantage of winning people over to his point of view by using gentle means. This was his strategy which gained him friends and allies. As a

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7. H. Goiran, Une Action Créatrice de la Mission, p.17.

8. T. Tylden, A History of Thaba Bosiu, pp.8-9.

result of this he was never resented,<sup>9</sup> except by Chief Sekonyela who was determined to regard Moshweshwe as his arch-enemy as we have observed by now.

It is surprising to find that the same Sekonyela once found it necessary to apprise Moshweshwe of the presence of Mzilikazi in the Caledon River valley and to alert him of the latter as Mzilikazi was an invincible terror amongst the black communities of the highveld.<sup>10</sup> One may wonder why Sekonyela did what he did when he had perpetually menaced Moshweshwe. Perhaps he was trying to lull Moshweshwe and prepare for another attack.

M.C. Eksteen describes Moshweshwe in this manner : "Hy was die enigste onder sy tydgenote wat vir sy mense 'n posisie verkry het wat veel hoër was as enigiets wat die wreedaardigheid en vernietiging van die swaarheersers ooit kon bereik."<sup>11</sup> This confirms what was said at the beginning that he had no competitor and did so much for his people. It must always be remembered that Moshweshwe's rise emanated from the Difaqane episode.

Unlike other rulers of his time who abused their positions,

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9. A.J. Guillardmod, Flora of Lesotho, p.3.

10. Grant, p.31.

11. M.C. Eksteen, Lesotho Uitwaartse Beweging, p.3.

he was a ruler with effective power but never used that power to the detriment of his people by being a despot. He preferred to call a pitso where his councillors and other people debated the matter until all the pros and cons had been stated, and only then did he take a stand which was mostly supported by the majority of the people at the pitso.<sup>12</sup> Even though the term "democracy" was unknown to him and his people it was fully practised. In this way he endeared himself to his people who gave him their loyalty.

Moshweshwe was an extremely receptive ruler and allowed criticism and constructive advice from all his people. He did not object to any criticism from his subjects. He relied more on the opinion or advice of his councillors and he also sought the suggestions of his territorial chiefs. Sometimes he allowed his subjects to appeal against his decision by going to their local chief's courts.<sup>13</sup> How many chiefs would have done that? He was a shrewd diplomat and yet he was fair-minded and even-handed.<sup>14</sup>

Chief Sebetwane of the Makololo (or the Bafokeng of Patsa) who went to settle in Zambia after playing an active role in the Difaqane wars did what Moshweshwe did in marrying many

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12. B.M. Khaketla, Lesotho 1970 - An African Coup under the Microscope, pp.109-110.

13. R.W. Hall, Southern African Civilization in Turmoil, pp.57-58.

14. T. Selatile's interview, Roma, Lesotho, 14-02-1990.

women from various tribes to gain their people's support and loyalty. He married several women of Bulozhi and encouraged intermarriages between his people and the Lozi and he eventually incorporated the Lozi and ruled them without any fear of insurrection as he had appointed the Lozi élites as his councillors and headmen.<sup>15</sup> It must be stressed that Sebetwane was an old acquaintance of Moshweshwe and the two had established diplomatic ties. Sebetwane's internal policy was similar to Moshweshwe's. Moshweshwe's influence went far beyond the borders of the Caledon River valley. The various communities from whom Moshweshwe got his wives were also encouraged in intermarriages between his followers and such communities offered him loyal support at all times.

Moshweshwe had proved to be a man of patience and foresight. On several occasions he tried to ally his country to Britain and he was not succeeding as promises made by the Cape Colony British authorities were not bearing fruit. When he heard that Prince Alfred, the son of Queen Victoria, would be visiting Aliwal North he gathered an entourage of about 300 men to accompany him to meet the Prince on August 20th 1860. There he gave Prince Alfred a letter to pass on to his mother - it was a request for an alliance with Britain.<sup>16</sup> Eventually

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15. W.F. Lye and C. Murray, Transformation on the Highveld - The Tswana and Southern Sotho, p.46.

16. T. Aronson, Royal Ambassadors, p.26.

(1869) Britain agreed to protect Lesotho and it had been the case up to date. Moshweshwe had realized the significance of fostering relations with Britain.

The sagacious Moshweshwe's *raison d'être* for having missionaries in his state was more for political than religious reasons. He needed them to assist him in managing the prevailing political affairs.<sup>17</sup> It is a fact that their main task was to Christianize the people and they could not be detached from their missionary duties but Moshweshwe needed them for something else. The missionary E. Casalis was his confidant and also played the part of a foreign secretary.<sup>18</sup> One of his strategies of winning allies or friends was to use missionaries. For instance he sent the missionary C. Schrupf to "tame" Moorosi, Chief of the Baphuthi. He had Moletsane, Chief of the Bataung, working with F. Daumas. There is so much Moletsane learnt from his missionary Daumas in political matters. It should not surprise anybody to see how Daumas fought relentlessly for the retention of Moletsane's Mekuatleng when it was to be annexed to the Orange Free State at the Second Treaty of Aliwal North in 1869.<sup>19</sup> There was nothing Daumas could do for Moletsane any more as the Orange Free State would rule

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17. W.J. Vogt, Christianity in Basutoland 1833-1862, pp.347-348;

D. Denoon and B. Nyeko, Southern Africa Since 1800, p.43.

18. M. Makhetha's interview, Maseru, 23-09-1990.

19. R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, pp.309-310.

Moletsane's area. It was sad and disheartening for them to part ways and took different directions as the mission station at Mekuatleng had to close down.

Moshweshwe realized the invaluable contribution of other missionary societies to the black people of Southern Africa. It would have been selfish and naive of him to have confined his people to the doctrine of the French Missionary Evangelical Society only. He exposed his people to other doctrines by allowing the Catholic (and later Anglican) priests to establish their mission stations in his country and do their missionary work.<sup>20</sup> Moshweshwe was interested in the general welfare of his people and was doing everything possible to advance their course.

South Africa of his time was undergoing change socially and politically and his Basotho were not to be left behind and remain primitive. In fact he was linking the past and present; primitive and modern Africa.<sup>21</sup> He had seen the worst and the best of the primitive world and before he died he had witnessed the worst and the best of the modern world. In both periods he led his people successfully.

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20. E. Rosenthal, African Switzerland, Basutoland of Today, p.17.

21. A. Coates, Basutoland, p.38.

Life was not all the time rosy for Moshweshwe in spite of his good disposition. We have seen how the madly warlike Sekonyela tormented him throughout his life. In addition to Sekonyela's belligerent behaviour there was Moroka of the Barolong who became hostile towards him (Moshweshwe) after the warm reception he had received when he arrived in Thaba Nchu.<sup>22</sup> Both Sekonyela and Moroka maintained their dislike for Moshweshwe until their death. However, some of their people realized how wrong they were; and some of the Batlokwa of Sekonyela defected to Moshweshwe's side. What is surprising is that Moshweshwe did not ever regard them as his enemies and did not relent from being friendly towards them. On several occasions Sekonyela over-stretched his patience and only then did Moshweshwe retaliate and gave him a beating. But Moshweshwe did not think of destroying Sekonyela once and for all. He preferred to warn him to desist from bellicose activities. Chiefs Moroka's and Sekonyela's behaviour failed Moshweshwe to establish what could have been a pan-African Federation or Confederation in South Africa. Their attitude signified that there was no harmony amongst the black communities and groups in the Caledon River valley.

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22. A Sketch of Principal Occurrences Relative to the Government of Basutos Since 1833, p.6.

The other sad event that shattered Moshweshwe's plans was the resignation or the dismissal of J.P. Hoffman from office as President of the Orange Free State Republic. Hoffman had been friendly to Moshweshwe and the Basotho long before he became the President. His choice was the best thing Moshweshwe had expected. He was looking forward to a good working relation and peaceful co-existence with the Orange Free State. Ever since the promulgation of the Warden Line (1849) there had been accusations and counter-accusations between the Basotho and the Voortrekkers over the land issue. Hoffman was the man Moshweshwe and his Basotho believed could solve their problems amicably. His successors (J. Boshof, M.W. Pretorius and J.H. Brand) were not as sympathetic and understanding as he was. The situation deteriorated and wars followed. There was a possibility that had Hoffman remained long in office as President some good neighbourliness would have developed between the Orange Free State and Lesotho.

As the Southern Nguni chiefs : Faku, Mtirara, Sandile and Sarhile (Kreli) admired and revered him (Moshweshwe) he had nothing to fear compared to the Northern Nguni chiefs : Shaka and Mpande. Moshweshwe treated them diplomatically different and they remained attached to him. He was a consummate

diplomatist of considerable intellect and political skill<sup>23</sup> in spite of his lack of formal education and had remained illiterate for the rest of his life. Moshweshwe's tact and skill in handling political matters made him gain support and admiration from both black and white people<sup>24</sup> except those who were jealous of him.

The citadel of Thaba Bosiu which had been beleaguered on numerous occasions but never surrendered to a foe was described by Moshweshwe himself thus : "This mountain is my mother, had it not been for her you would have found this country (Lesotho) entirely without inhabitants."<sup>25</sup>

As a politician Moshweshwe could not detach himself from nepotism. He placed his kinsmen (his sons and brothers) in strategic areas as supervisors.<sup>26</sup> There were some people in Lesotho who were better skilled than some of his kinsmen and yet they were ignored. He probably did this to safe-guard his own position though it was well secured to fear any possible insurrection. On the other hand he might have thought of placing them at such places to forestall possible wrangles after his death and perhaps to placate them and make them feel he was not neglecting them in the affairs of the

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23. A. Nutting, Scramble for Africa, p.67.

24. E. Rosenthal, Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, p.348.

25. N. Mokhehle, Moshoeshe I Profile Se-Moshoeshe, p.37.

26. W.D. Hammond-Tooke, The Bantu Speaking People of Southern Africa, p.74.

state.

At the end of his life Moshweshwe probably thought with some amount of satisfaction that he had attained his ambition of being the greatest ruler among his fellow potentates. His Basotho were relatively the best ruled nation between 1820 and 1870 as they led a far safer life than other nations. He might have not achieved or realized all according to his plans and wishes but he nevertheless attained most important objectives.

The Kingdom of Lesotho survived all trying times and hardships through his statemanship.<sup>27</sup> The people of Lesotho owe their present day independence and their many friendly countries to him due to his extra-ordinary intelligence and resourcefulness<sup>28</sup> which made all this possible.

Moshweshwe had been such a great king to the Basotho that ever since 1972 every year in March Moshoeshoe Memorial Lectures are conducted with an aim of re-evaluating the effectiveness of his principles and values upon which he had built the Basotho nation.

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27. S.M. Willet and D.P. Ambrose, Lesotho : A Comprehensive Biography, p.XI.

28. H.J. de Blij, Africa South, p.38.

In spite of all what had been said about Moshweshwe in personal interviews and documented information, the challenge posed by Julian Cobbing that the Mfecane was a myth or an alibi to hide the Europeans ulterior motive of having pushed the Blacks out of their land needs to be still debated. There is so much against what he had said but he (Cobbing) must not be ignored. More research ought to be done to have more and better answers to Cobbing and those who support him.

As far as the Basotho are concerned and the research work conducted by the author, Moshweshwe built the Basotho nation from the Difaqane horrors and his diplomatic handling. The Difaqane/Mfecane was no myth or alibi but a reality.

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### A.4 ORAL SOURCES (PERSONAL INTERVIEWS)

CHIEF BATHOEN II of the Bangwaketse of Kanye in Botswana. I interviewed him on 13-08-1989 at his palace in Kanye. He knew a lot about Moshweshwe's relation with Sechele. He is now late.

REV. A. BRUTSCH is based at Morija in Lesotho. He has been in Lesotho since 1942. I met him on two occasions : 12-01-1991 and 11-07-1992. He is well acquainted with the activities of the French missionaries who laboured in Lesotho during the reign of Moshweshwe. Together with Dr D. Ambrose of the National University of Lesotho have translated some of the writings of the French missionaries into English.

DR M. DAMANE is the best known historian in Lesotho. He is an authority in oral history. He has read his papers on Moshweshwe during Lesotho seminars. His knowledge on Moshweshwe's history can't be fathomed. I met him on numerous occasions at Mafeteng and Maseru.

S. GILL is presently the archivist of Morija archives and has acquired enough information on Moshweshwe's history.

G. KHAPWALE is with the library department of the National University of Lesotho. He is a Lozi from Zambia and his people were the victims of Sebetwane and there is a lot he knows about the Makololo history in Zambia.

R. KUKUBO is an archivist at Gaborone in Botswana and related to me the little he knew about the Balози and the Makololo in Zambia.

M. MAKHETHA is a great descendant of the legendary Mohlomi. I interviewed him five times in Roma and Maseru. He knows so much of the history of Mohlomi and Moshweshwe. A lot was learnt from him.

N. MOKHEHLE is now an old man and his grandfather who died in 1941 had met Moshweshwe personally. He has written a book on Moshweshwe and he knows so much about the Rise of Moshweshwe. He is presently (1994) the Prime Minister of Lesotho. I interviewed him in Maseru on four occasions.

M. MOFOKENG is an old man in Senekal's township of Matwabeng. He is a Mofokeng whose people remained behind when Sebetwane moved out of Kurutlele during the Difaqane period. I interviewed him on 20-03-1991.

S. MOHALE is also an old man of Quthing and is a neighbour of Setati Mpopo. He related the history of Moorosi : Chief of the Baphuthi.

M. MOKOTJO is presently (1993) working for the S.A.B.C. in Bloemfontein. He is a Matlokwa. I talked to him at Mafeteng (in Lesotho) at Dr Damane's home. He enlightened me more on Sekonyela and his mother Manthatise.

D. MOREMOHOLO is a minister of religion of the Paris Evangelical church in Lesotho. I interviewed him at Thaba Bosiu. To him Moshweshwe was a great statesman and he told me what he knew about him.

DR J. MOROKA of Thaba Nchu (died at the age of 95) was the grandson of Chief Moroka of the Barolong of Thaba Nchu. He knew a lot about the history of Chief Moroka and his missionaries. Other than being a medical practioner he was an active politician during his hey-day.

E. MOSHOESHOE the present (1993) curator of Thaba Bosiu was a teacher before becoming a curator. He is a man for Moshweshwe's social life.

W. MOTA is late. He was chief minister of Witzieshoek (Qwa Qwa). I interviewed him after he had retired from politics. He was a Matlokwa who knew the history of Sekonyela.

D.A.M. MOTSHUMI is a retired Methodist church minister of religion. He was in Thaba Nchu for a long time before retiring to Mafikeng where I interviewed him. There is a lot he related about Chief Moroka and his sons. I interviewed him on two occasions.

S. MPOPO an elderly man of Quthing (Lesotho) near Mount Moorosi. He is for the history of Moorosi, the Baphuthi chief. I met him at his home in Quthing. His neighbours call him Ntate Setati.

S. NDABA I met him at Mahwelereng near Potgietersrus. He is a Ndebele and 75 years old (1992). He told me the history of Mapela and how he was attached to Moshweshwe.

A. NCAYI - an old man of Rini (Grahamstown) in the Cape. He told me a lot of what happened during the reign of Sarhili (Kreli) including the 1857 National suicide occasioned by Nonqause's and Mhlakaza's prophecy.

E. NKOMO of Mpopoma Location in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) was my informant on the relationship between the Matebele and the Basotho. He is the descendant of the Matebele who migrated to Zimbabwe in 1837.

Z. NKOSI lives at Lobamba in Swaziland. We had discussions on the history of the Mahamba Mission Station and Mswati II.

S. NKHEREHANYE is a Reverend of the French Evangelical church. I met him at Thaba Bosiu and there is so much he knows about Moshweshwe's early life and flight to Thaba Bosiu.

N. NOTO is late. He was living in Soweto (Johannesburg) having come from Lesotho. He was a descendant of the Bapedi who settled in Lesotho during the Difaqane era.

D. RAFUTHO was the former curator of Thaba Bosiu. He has passed away. I interviewed him on several occasions on what he knew of the history of Moshweshwe and the Basotho.

F. RAMAKABANE is a government official of Lesotho based in Mophale'shoek. He related so much about the Bataung of Chief Moletsane.

F.J. RAMSAY is a young man in his late thirties and had been involved in research work on the old chiefs of Botswana of all important tribes. He has recently (1991) obtained a Ph.D. degree on the history of the Bakwena. His thesis is entitled "The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South Central Botswana 1820-1940". We had a lengthy discussion on his thesis. I met him at Mochudi in Botswana and is presently (1993) at Tonota in Northern Botswana.

W. SEKHUKHUNE of Soweto is a descendant of Chief Sekhukhune of the Bapedi of eastern Transvaal. So much I learnt from him, during the interview, about the relationship between Moshweshwe and the Bapedi chiefs (Sekwati and Sekhukhune).

DR T. SELATILE is a doctor of economics at the National University of Lesotho. He is a descendant of Mohlomi and there is so much he knows about the history of Moshweshwe and Mohlomi. I interviewed him on three occasions and I learnt a lot from him.

B. SETLHAKO is an old man of Molepolole in Botswana. Molepolole was Chief Sechele's capital village. He is a Mokwena and we discussed a lot about Sechele and his Bakwena.

T. TLOU is the rector of Botswana University in Gaborone. He is a historian and has written a history book entitled "History of Botswana" - his co-author is A. Campbell. I interviewed him on the relationship of the Batswana and the Basotho.

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## S U M M A R Y

Moshweshwe's diplomatic relations with the indigenous chiefs of Southern Africa was an idea he adopted from the teachings of the legendary Mohlomi. The latter believed in fostering friendships with everybody else throughout the country and far beyond its borders. He also believed in polygamous marriages with daughters of other chiefs to form strong alliances. When Moshweshwe came into prominence as a leader he fostered peaceful co-existence with his neighbouring chiefs in the Caledon River valley and in other parts of Southern Africa.

The friendly manner in which he approached or made overtures to other rulers to form diplomatic ties made him the greatest statesman of his time. His possible enemies became his friends and allies. Warlike chiefs became his friends and some even offered to be his protectors against his other enemies.

He had patience which made him different from other rulers. Provocations did not make him react immediately. On the contrary he would offer a hand of friendship instead of hitting back. It was only after trying on several occasions to ignore provocations that he took up arms to fight as he

did in the case of Sekonyela, Chief of the Batlokwa and Moroka, Chief of the Barolong. He was the only potentate in Southern Africa among the Blacks who had more fire-arms and horses and knew how to use them more than any other chief and yet he did not worry his neighbours or moved about provoking other communities. He did not even make threats but preferred to be respected instead of being feared.

He had three types of messengers who were trained for their various duties as we have seen in the Introduction : the Lihloela, Lititimi and the Maqosa. Both the Lititimi and the Maqosa carried Moshweshwe's insignia for recognition wherever they went. For a man who had not received formal education this was a tremendous achievement in developing his nation. Maqosa, as stated earlier, were the messengers who were sent to win friends for him in places where he himself was unable to go.

Moshweshwe also made his country a place of learning. Morija and Thaba Bosiu had schools which were run by missionaries and Moshweshwe allowed people in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to come and study at these places. Even though they were not offering high education they were good enough for a blackman's needs in the 19th Century.

He turned his country into a haven for refugees and the homeless. It was also a centre of political activities as various people went there for help to solve their political problems - chiefs and ordinary people.

His diplomatic relations have stood the test of time : the relationships established have kept Lesotho attached to those countries up to this day. Whatever he did was for long and short term results. He had insight and foresight of events.

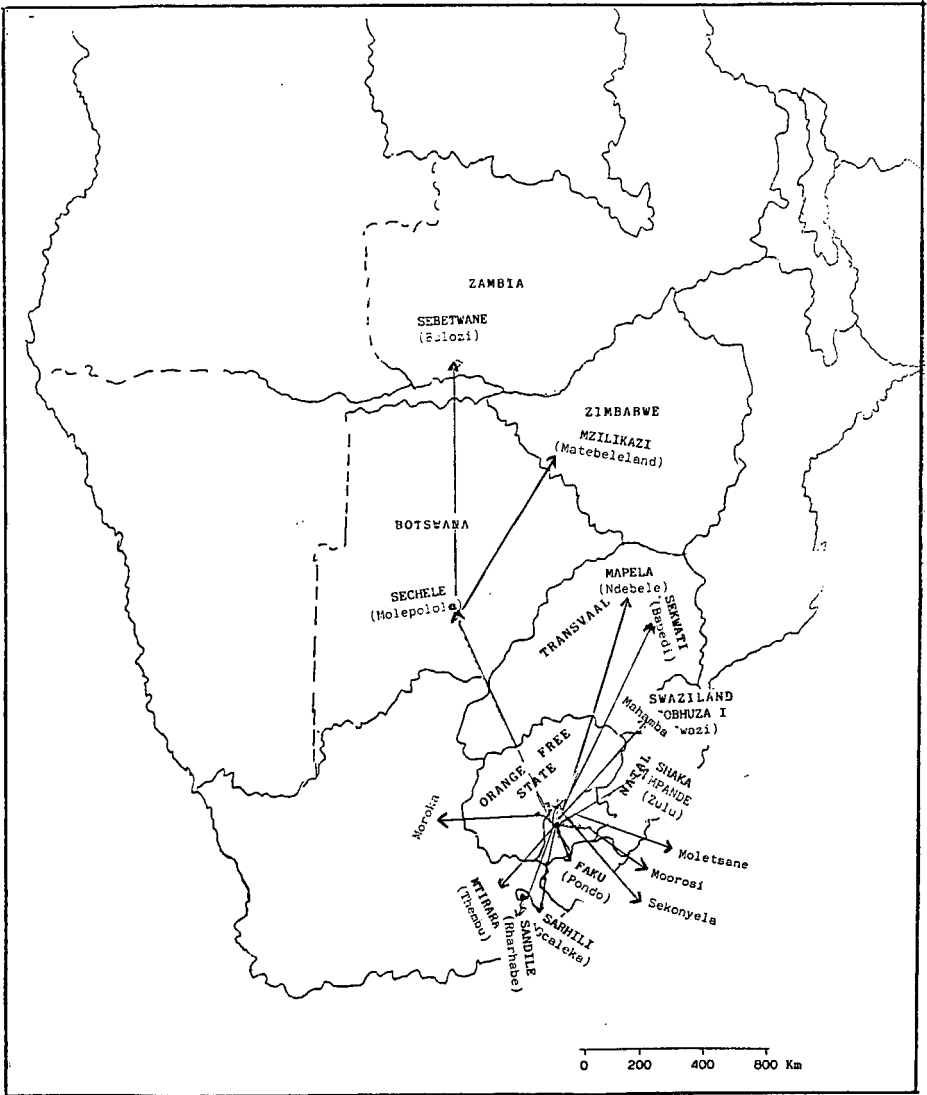
Even if he himself did not become a Christian he had realized the value of Christianity and unselfishly allowed his subjects to freely adopt the Christian faith. He granted missionaries free access into his country. He also worked with the missionaries to understand the outside world; they wrote letters for him and interpreted for him. He later sent his sons to institutes of higher learning to help him also instead of relying on the missionaries all the time.

He wished to create a Pan-African federation and be the man above all other heads of states to realize his old ambition of being a great chief when he was still young. Unfortunately circumstances occasioned by the events of the 1860s failed him.



MOSHWESHE IN 1833

MOSHWESHE'S DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH THE INDIGENEOUS CHIEFS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA 1822-70



Countries and chiefs with whom Moshweshwe established diplomatic relations

