

PART A  
SEBATAKGOMO-FETAKGOMO HISTORY AND HERITAGE PROJECT  
&  
PART B  
MANCHE MASEMOLA PILGRIMAGE PROJECT  
Funded by Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority  
(LIHRA)



*The association names Sebatakgomo and Fetakgomo were inspired by the significance of cattles in the economic, social and religious life of the Bapedi ba GaSekhukhune*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

REPORT ON THE RECORDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
SEBATAKGOMO-FETAKGOMO HISTORY AND HERITAGE PROJECT &  
MANCHE MASEMOLA PILGRIMAGE PROJECT  
IN SEKHUKHUNELAND

2008



The gravesite of Manche Masemola at GaMarishane, Makhuduthamaga Municipality  
(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## Executive Summary of the Project and its Aims

Research on the above project was commissioned by Limpopo Heritage Resource Authority (LIHRA). Bohwa-Boeti Consulting (BBC), as the service provider entered into an agreement with the Authority to gather and package information in a manner that would uncover heritage potential in the identified areas. As reflected in the title, the project is divided into two segments viz. Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo History and Heritage Project, as well as the Manche Masemola Pilgrimage Project.

The first part of this report deals with the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo History and Heritage Project. Two municipalities in the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality have been named in honour of the resistance association launched in the late 1950's. Makhuduthamaga Municipality was named by the new government in recognition of the vital role played by the Makhuduthamaga<sup>1</sup> in the struggle against the Bantustan policy. Members of the community who supported the policy were labelled as Marantšere<sup>2</sup>, while supporters of the resistance movement were known as Makhuduthamaga (Central Committee sympathizers). Later the resistance association was renamed Fetakgomo, one of the two mentioned municipalities. The municipalities are part of the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality which also includes neighbouring municipalities like Greater Tubatse, Greater Marble Hall and Greater Groblersdal.

The aim of this project is to trace the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route; the chain of events born out of the tensions, uprisings and killings of the late 1950's in Sekhukhuneland. We focus on the hotspots of the activities of the resistance association and pay tribute to the leaders and activists who distinguished themselves as defenders of traditional leadership and the land against White domination. The Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route has the potential to attract tourists from far and near to the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> Supporters of the Sebatakgomo Central Committee

<sup>2</sup> Rangers, who like fence guards supported the Bantustan policy

The second part of the report is on the Manche Masemola Pilgrimage Project at GaMarishane village in the Makhuduthamaga Municipality. It is based on the life of a teenage girl who was born around 1913 called Manche Masemola. The young girl began attending the Anglican Church as soon as it was introduced in GaMarishane by Father Augustine Moeka in 1929. She later began attending classes twice a week with the aim of being baptized. Her parents objected to this and this conflict resulted in her death. Manche's commitment to her faith and the resultant death made international headlines and she was eventually canonized by the Anglican Church. Although a statue has been erected in her honour in London and a church built in Alexandra Township, Gauteng, her grave site in GaMarishane has yet to be officially recognized as a heritage site. The aim of this project is to identify heritage potential around this grave with the view to attracting tourists. Once the grave site has been declared an official heritage site, the expected tourism boom will create the much needed employment for the locals. The Marishane people are an off-shoot of the Batau ba GaMasemola group. They are part of the communities that form the vast area known as GaSekhukhune or Bopedi. Hence, they share most cultural aspects with the people of the Greater Sekhukhune District.

## Project Description

### *a. Introduction and Terms of Reference*

The value of this research project is informed and entrenched in the spirit of the new democratic South Africa and its Constitution which is based on the Bill of Rights. As we are part of the international community, it is also in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s International Heritage Programme to preserve exceptional areas of importance to humanity. In his address marking Heritage Day in 1996, former State President Nelson Mandela said: " When our first democratically-elected government decided to make Heritage Day (24 September) one of our national days, we did so because we knew that our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our new nation". A nation without a past, is a lost nation. Bohwa-Boeti Consulting holds the same view with its slogan, "Empowerment through Heritour" as heritage has the capacity to revive past glory, attract tourists, create employment and improve the living standards of the "heirs".

### ***b. Type of Research Project***

This research project seeks to facilitate the official declaration of Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route in the Sekhukhune District Municipality and Manche Masemola's grave site at GaMarishane village as provincial heritage sites. UNESCO defines heritage sites as places of natural or cultural inspiration that merit preservation for future generations. The selection of such sites is guided by criteria iii. viz. "To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared." The inspection, identification, conservation, protection and promotion of the heritage site for the present and future generation is the ultimate goal. This is done in terms of the South African National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No.25 of 1999). The process includes:

- Inspections
- Research
- Public participation
- Recommendations

### ***c. Scope/ objective and significance of the research undertaken***

This heritage study was conducted mainly in the Makhuduthamaga and Fetakgomo municipalities of the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa. The area lies between the Leolo mountains on the East, the Lepelle River to the North, Marble Hall to the West and Groblersdal to the South. The Sekhukhune District Municipality consists of five local municipalities viz. Makhuduthamaga, Fetakgomo, Greater Tubatse, Greater Marble Hall and Greater Groblersdal. The district is predominantly rural in lifestyle and mountainous in layout. In some cases, the events within the study area overlap into the other mentioned local municipalities.

As already alluded to, the objective of this research is to gather and package information in a manner that would uncover heritage potential in the identified areas. The overall aim is to facilitate the official declaration of the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route in the Makhuduthamaga and Fetakgomo municipalities, as well as Manche Masemola's grave site at GaMarishane village as provincial heritage sites.

#### Significance of Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route:

- Sebatakgomo was the premier activist movement in the rural areas of Sekhukhuneland. It was later renamed Fetakgomo.
- It created political awareness amongst the masses, most of whom were illiterate at the time.
- It placed Sekhukhuneland on the national political map as it was collaborating with the African National Congress.
- It led the whole former province of the Transvaal into a bigger and wider resistance movement.
- The leadership of the association was so influential that it can still be found in the Trade Union Movement of today.
- Young men of Fetakgomo joined the military wing of the national liberation movement, MK in droves in 1961.

- Sekhukhuneland became a breeding ground for future political activists like the late Peter Nchabeleng and others.

#### Significance of the Manche Masemola Pilgrimage:

- Faith knows no colour or culture; Manche, who grew up in a Bopedi cultural milieu committed herself to Christianity against all odds.
- Faith conquers all; her mother, Masegadike was finally baptized 41years later in 1969.
- The story of Manche Masemola placed Sekhukhuneland on the national and international religious map.
- Manche defied gender stereotypes of the time; though some vilified her, she made many women proud.

Through this research, awareness was created among the residents of the targeted areas about the value attached to their past. Villagers, especially the youth realized that through heritage, past glory can be revived while employment could be created as tourism grows. This research will also contribute hugely towards the marketing of the areas by their local municipalities. Schools could also tap into this work as learners study their history in order to set the record straight and correct some distortions of written history. It is a source of great pride for the people and will help expose the area to global tourism.

#### ***d. Stake-holders and Researchers Credentials***

As we present the final report on the Sebatakomo-Fetakomo History and Heritage Project as well as the Manche Masemola Pilgrimage Project, we look back with a sense of pride and accomplishment. The whole exercise was full of exciting moments and challenges. The project proceeded as planned due to the passion and co-operation of team members and stakeholders alike. Leaders and members of the community also showed keen interest during inspections and collection of data. However, there were some solemn moments as the revisit of the Sebatakomo storm brought back some vivid memories and trauma to the eye-witnesses. With regard to the Manche Masemola story, the Anglican Church in the GaMarishane village contributed immensely to the research, while her neighbours in the old village of Thuputlaneng assisted a great deal in untangling some myths and perceptions.

My background as a former radio personality from a credible media organization, the SABC also benefitted the research as most of the sources either knew me or had heard about me. My contribution to the development of local music, indigenous religions, traditional leadership and documentaries in general while heading Thobela FM also added to this warm reception and trust. The experience I gained in previous projects like the Malebogo-Boer War, Seabakgwana and Mutle was of great value in conducting this study. Research team members also understood the local social dynamics and knew the terrain very well. For example, one of them, Ms Leketele Linco Lethuba is a member of the Anglican Church, a member of the African National Congress, an official of the Independent Electoral Commission and her parents were neighbours of the late Manche Masemola. Among our sources were culture vultures like Koshe Mokwala who is a member of the Mashabela royal family, a herbalist and archivist who can without any fear of contradiction be described as a “walking cultural encyclopaedia”. Factors like these created the necessary confidence in the interviews and research in general.

**PART A**  
**SEBATAKGOMO-FETAKGOMO HISTORY AND HERITAGE**  
**PROJECT**

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# CHAPTER 1

## SITE DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 Assessment, survey and mapping of heritage resource

After the assessment of the heritage resource, the significant hotspots of the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo association were surveyed. They've been identified as the cornerstones of the proposed Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route. Some of the stalwarts and cadres of the association have also been identified.

### 1.2 Hotspots



Lepelle river flows at the foot of Sepitsi and Sepitsana mountains and marks the northern border of Sekhukhuneland

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Lepelle River** – Where the Minister in charge of the Department of Native Affairs, Dr H.F.Verwoerd met with the traditional leaders' council of the North and Eastern Transvaal Bapedi in 1954 to tell them about the government's intention of introducing the Bantustan policy.



*The King's palace at Mohlaletse in Sekhukhuneland. The Bapedi capital lies hidden in the bosom of the Leolo Mountains, This used to be the headquarters of Sebatakgomo, later to be known as Fetakgomo*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Mohlaletse** – The Bapedi capital during the reign of Kgoši<sup>3</sup> Morwamotšhe Sekhukhune. This became the headquarters of Sebatakgomo. After Morwamotšhe was exiled to Cala on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1958, his

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<sup>3</sup> king

substitute, 82-year-old retired policeman, Kgobalala was brutally attacked here on the night of 16 May 1958.



*Schoonoord accommodated the Native Commissioner's offices during the Sekhukhuneland Revolt. Today the complex has been renamed and serves as the magistrate court, police station and other government service points*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Schoonoord** – On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1958 the people gathered at the Native Commissioner's offices here to protest against the deportation of Kgoši Morwamotšhe Sekhukhune. The negative response of the Commissioner prompted them to take a decision to identify "sellouts" or Rangers and throw them out of the villages.



**Manganeng is home to some of the outstanding leaders and activists of the Sebatakomo association. This village of the Batau ba Nkadimeng is perched against the western side of the protective Leolo Mountains**

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Manganeng** – After the attack of 82-years-old Kgobalala Sekhukhune on the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> May 1958 at Mohlaletse, the police entered this village to arrest the main suspects – Phaswane Nkadimeng and Stephen Selwane Nkadimeng. When the crowd blocked the police vehicles carrying the suspects from leaving, the police fired bullets into the crowd, killing a man and a pregnant woman, whilst several people were left injured. This event triggered the killings of Rangers across Sekhukhuneland.



***Madibong, a village that made headline news during the 1958 Sekhukhune Revolt***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Madibong** – A village deeply divided after the death of its leader, Kgoši Morwamotšhe Kgoloko. The regent, Kgolane Kgoloko had the support of the Rangers, while the late ruler's wife, Mmadinoge Kgoloko enjoyed the majority support of Makhuduthamaga. In May 1958 Mmadinoge's group chased, attacked and killed the regent, Kgolane Kgoloko. Even his attempt of escaping into the Mokgwatšana home could not save him.



*Jane Furse Memorial Hospital served as a recruitment centre for the liberation movement. Today the entrance to the old facility is almost obscured by hawkers' shacks. The new facility has been built to the north of the small town of Jane Furse*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Jane Furse Hospital** – Named after Jane, only daughter of Bishop Furse. She got ill and died while he was stationed there and the missionaries saw the need for a healthcare facility. They named it Jane Furse Memorial Hospital in memory of Jane. Some important meetings were conducted from here. When Mogaramedi Godfrey Sekhukhune worked here, it was turned into the recruitment headquarters of the African National Congress. Elias Motsoaledi would collect the recruits to the joining points. Motsoaledi, a well-known MK operative was posthumously honoured

when among other public spaces, a municipality and the former Soweto Roodepoort Road were named after him.



*Part of Kgoši Sekwati's Mamone village, sprawled over the mountains to the north of Madibong village within the Makhuduthamaga Municipality*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Mamone** – Kgoši Sekwati's big village to the north of Madibong. His wisdom and vision as a leader were witnessed during the time of Tlala ya Mohlopi (the Great Famine of Bopedi). Prior to the famine he discouraged his subjects from selling their harvests to the White shop owners. The police traced "Pelepele" to this village after the killing of Kgolane

Kgoloko.



*The road leading to the Mphanama village meanders through the hills before reaching Kgoši Kgaphola's palace*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Mphanama** – The White government's carrot tactics were exposed here as they offered men and women free clothing in return for the Bantustan policy support. It was in this village where at the height of the killings Mangase Mashabela was identified as a Ranger, apprehended by an angry mob, but his life was spared when each of his four sons refused to assault him.

**GaMashabela** – The birthplace of Mmadinoge Kgoloko (née Mashabela) who later Married Morwamotšhe Kgoloko. Her grave is found at the royal palace in a kraal among those of her own people.

### 1.3 Sebatakgomo cadres and stalwarts



**M.F. Boshielo**

(Picture: [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za))

#### **Marutle Flag Boshielo**

He was born in 1920, in Phokoane, in Sekhukhuneland. He grew up in the rural area of the former province of the Transvaal, but later went to work in Johannesburg. While working as a bakery driver, he recruited workers to join the Bakery Workers Union. His leadership qualities in the broader liberation movement saw him elected to the national leadership of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). In the 1940's Boshielo joined the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and the African National Congress (ANC). His commitment led to his election in the Transvaal Executive Committee of the ANC. He was part of the Difiance Campaign of 1952. The cadre who studied Kenya's Mau Mau tactics was later identified by the Apartheid authorities as a very influential and "dangerous" element of the liberation movement and barred from attending meetings while restricted to Johannesburg in 1955. His revolutionary role in the national liberation struggle became of great value to the Bopedi resistance movement, Sebatakgomo. According to Raymond Suttner, Boshielo "mixed Marxism with African belief systems and practices". It was the influence of people like him that the resistance in Bopedi turned to the armed struggle. In the early 1950's while training as a herbalist in Sekhukhuneland, he explored the possibility of rural guerilla warfare. On his return he agitated strongly for the armed struggle. The ANC sent him for political and military training in Moscow, in the

former Soviet Union whereafter he was posted to Tanzania to form part of Umkhonto we Sizwe's Congwa camp. While operating from Tanzania and Zambia, together with two fellow comrades they ventured crossing back into South Africa in 1972. It is believed that Boshielo was captured and imprisoned by the then Rhodesia forces, while his two comrades were killed on the spot. Though he was never seen again, he remains an inspiration to the nation and his name has been immortalized in various places including the Flag Boshielo Dam. The greatest honour from his people was when he was posthumously awarded a National Order for his exceptional contribution to the struggle for liberation and workers' rights.



**J.K. Nkadimeng**

(Picture: the presidency.gov.za)

### **John Kgoana Nkadimeng**

He was born in 1925, in Sekhukhuneland. He completed his primary school education here in Manganeng. It was after he had moved to Gauteng that he got involved in workers's unions and politics in general. Among the highlights of his activism were the following:

- 1949: Shop steward of the African Tobacco Workers' Union.
- 1952: Detainee during the Defiance Campaign
- 1956: Trialist in the Treason Trial
- 1958: Leader at the forefront of the ANC-linked Bopedi resistance organization, Sebatakomo.
- 1963: Detainee and issued with a banning order
- 1976: Fled the country into exile and served on ANC's political and military council. Appointed chairperson of ANC's political committee.
- 1983: General Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Worked tirelessly for the ideal of worker unity in a single national federation leading to the formation of the Congress South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

Nkadimeng served as the most vital link between the rural masses and the migrant workers in the Reef. He is quoted to have said that the ANC's M-Plan was put into use during the Sekhukhune land risings of the 1980's (R. Suttner). In the new dispensation beyond 1994 he was appointed South Africa's Ambassador to the People's Republic of Cuba. The greatest honour from his people was when he received a National Order from the State President of the Republic of South Africa for dedicating his entire adult life to the struggle for liberation, workers' rights and for the formation of a united federation of trade unions. At the time of this fieldwork he was a Member of the Provincial Legislature in Limpopo Province.

### **Elias Motsoaledi**

He was born in 1924 in Phokoane, Sekhukhuneland. Upon arriving in the Reef, he joined the trade union movement. Like Boshielo, he was impressed by “Mzee” Jomo Kenyatta’s Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950’s in Kenya. Raymond Suttner’s *ANC Underground in South Africa* credits Motsoaledi as the activist who saw political education as giving impetus to the movement in order to have “real members, not only paper members” and taught many members about the ANC. Motsoaledi was part of the covert structures that facilitated recruitment. Unfortunately, he passed away on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1994, hours after the inauguration of his former comrade, Dr Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected Black President of the Republic of South Africa. Here follow some of the highlights of his active participation in the liberation struggle:

- 1948: Joined the ANC and became member of the Transvaal executive
- 1949: Joined the Leather Workers’ Union and served as chairman of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions. Also served in the South African Congress of Trade Unions after its formation.
- 1960: Detained during the state of emergency
- 1962: Joined Umkhonto we Sizwe
- 1963: Detained under the 90-day detention laws and later sentenced to life imprisonment at the Rivonia trial.
- 1991: Elected to the NEC of the ANC at the July 1991 National Conference

### **Madimetja Lawrance Phokanoka**

He was born in 1938 in Sekhukhuneland. After matriculating, he enrolled with the University of Fort Hare in the late 1950's. His involvement in student activities attracted the attention of the White government of the time. Later, his insatiable passion for equality and justice placed him on the "wanted" list of the Apartheid regime. Eventually, "Phokes" as he was affectionately known, went underground. Like some of his comrades from Bopedi, the member and leader of the ANC and SACP joined the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) under the command of the late Walter Sisulu. It was during his time as Deputy Commissar of the late Martin Chris Thembisile Hani's Luthuli Detachment of Umkhonto weSizwe that he got involved in the Wankie and Spolilo Operation. This led to his arrest and sentence to 18 years on Robben Island. When he was set free, he participated in the peace negotiations with the security forces of the former White government in what was known as the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province). He later worked in the Department of Safety and Security in the Northern Province (now Limpopo). Later, he retired and went back to his people in Sekhukhuneland. The greatest honour bestowed on him by the State President was when in 2005 he received the Order of Luthuli in Silver for his excellent contribution to the struggle for democracy, nation-building, human rights and peace. At the time of his death on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the gallant soldier was a blind man.

**Mahwidi John Phala**

Leader of Sebatakomo who later joined the ANC's liberation army, Umkhonto we Sizwe. He was part of the Sekhukhuneland machinery that Turned Sebatakomo into a reservoir for MK recruits as he worked tirelessly hand in hand with men like Godfrey Mogaramedi Sekhukhune to build the military wing. At the time of this fieldwork he was a Member of the National Legislature in Cape Town.

**Godfrey Mogaramedi Sekhukhune**

An influential cadre of Sebatakomo from the royal family. When the association got a tight grip of the royal council, in March 1957 Dr Piet Koornhof visited Mohlaletse and subsequently recommended the deportation of influential counillors. The next month, Mogaramedi Godfrey Sekhukhune was sent to Mthunzini in KZN. Back in Sekhukhuneland, he became the key contact and recruiter for Umkhonto we Sizwe. As a male nurse at Jane Furse Hospital he collected volunteers in an ambulance for Elias Motsoaledi to transport to the joining points.

## CHAPTER 2

### NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION AND RESULTS



*Gateway to Sekhukhuneland. In between these two mountains, Sepitsi (Right) and Sepitsana (Left) is the gateway to Bopedi, using the Jane Furse road from Polokwane. It is about 22km from Lebowakgomo and at the foot of the mountains flows the majestic Lepelle River (Oliphants)*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## 2.1 Written History

### *2.1.1 Overview and brief histories of the origins of the Bapedi and neighbouring polities*

The most known, written and publicized historical theory about the Black communities of Southern Africa, is that they migrated southward from the area around the Great Lakes in northern and central Africa. Some historians say they came from the area near the Cameroon-Nigeria border and that in their migration, they displaced small pygmy and Bushemen tribes, approximately 2020 years ago.

One stream of these communities was the Sotho group which traces its origin to a place called Ntswanatsatsi. It was classified into three major branches – Western Sotho, Southern Sotho and Northern Sotho. The Western Sotho branch also known as Batswana, is composed of various sections like the Bakgatla, whose totem is a *kgabo*<sup>4</sup>. Within the Bakgatla there is a sub-section known as the Bahurutse. They were settled in the Pretoria district of the former province of Transvaal. A splinter group from these Bahurutse became the Bapedi ba Sekhukhune as we know them today.

The father of the Bahurutse group, Kgoši Diale had a number of wives including his favourite, Mmathobela. The other wives became jealous of her and started a smearing campaign against her. In trying to discredit the pregnant woman, they even alleged that her unborn baby was screaming from within the womb. When the baby, Thobela was born, they nicknamed him “Lellelateng<sup>5</sup>”, trying desperately to confirm their taboo stigma.

As Kgoši Diale was already an old man, he advised Mmathobela to save the life of her son by fleeing the Bahurutse area. She headed Eastward accompanied by her friends and supporters.

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<sup>4</sup> Monkey

<sup>5</sup> The one who cries from inside the womb

### 2.1.2 Adoption of a new totem

Along the way they came across a *mootlwa wa noko*<sup>6</sup> and changed their totem to *noko*<sup>7</sup>. It was around 1650 when they crossed the Leolo Mountains and settled in the area near the Tubatse River (Steelport). On their arrival they found groups like the Baroka, Bakwena, Bakone, Batau, Mapulana and others.



***This is the porcupine quill that inspired the Bapedi totem – Noko!***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

Thobela became the ruler of the *Bapedi babinanoko*<sup>8</sup>. He was later succeeded by leaders like Kabu, Thobejane, Moukangwe, Mohube, Mampuru, Morwamotšhe and Dikotope.

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<sup>6</sup> Porcupine quill

<sup>7</sup> porcupine

<sup>8</sup> Bapedi whose totem is a porcupine

### 2.1.3 The Marota Empire

It was the second son of Kgoši Morwamotšhe, Kgoši Thulare (1780 – 1820) who build the Marota hegemony into a powerful empire. Though in the beginning the Marota were a relatively small group, through a brilliant combination of diplomacy and military strategies they conquered and swallowed most of their Eastern-Central Transvaal neighbours. Their vision was driven by the motto, “*Feta kgomo, o sware motho gobane mafetakgomo ke moriri o a hloga*” which was used to build a strong and revered nation. They implemented it practically by bringing in small tribes, not slaughtering the weak and defeated people, by using cattle to marry as many women as possible from neighboring tribes, by admitting outsiders and refugees into the fold of the tribe and by conquering recalcitrant tribes. It instilled in people the spirit of togetherness; the individual makes the community and the community will create wealth, not the other way round.



***This chrome mine complex is sitting on top of the first known capital of the Marota, Mokororwane, near the current small town of Tubatse (Steelpoort)***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

It was during Kgoši Thulare’s visionary leadership at Mokororwane (Tubatse) that the Bapedi tribe became a force to reckon with in the whole former province of the Transvaal. His capital was the pride of the Marota who spoke affectionately about it as “Mokororwane, tlase gabo Mmamorongwana”. Thulare was declared the Bapedi king of the known Transvaal area. His empire covered the area between the Lekwe River (Vaal) in the South and the Lebepe River (Limpopo) in the North; Komati River in the East and the Kgalagadi in the West. The Empire included people of other origins like the Bakone, Bantwane, Bakgaga, Batlokwa, Batswako, Baphuthi, Bakwena, Bakgatla, BaMongatane, MaSwazi, BaMohlala and many others. Kgoši Thulare’s super royalty was also confirmed by the stars when he departed from this world. On the day of his death in 1824 a comet is said to have rocketed down from the sky!



**Granny Mmatau Maimela, a former resident of Mokororwane in Tubatse. After forced removals, she and other families settled at Stoking in 1972 while some moved to Magakala**  
(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

#### 2.1.4 The Arrival of the Voortrekkers

It was only in 1837 during the reign of Kgoši Thulare's son, Sekwati that the Bapedi first met the Voortrekkers under the leadership of Louis Trichardt. The second Voortrekker group arrived in 1845 under Hendrik Potgieter and established Ohrigstad. Though they twice attacked the Bapedi, Kgoši Sekwati who avoided war signed peace with them in 1857. The Bapedi expansion strategy entailed marrying their ruler's daughters to the conquered tribes' royalty and using cattle to marry as many women as they could from their neighbours. This created a network of blood relatives whose central bond was the Marota hegemony.

"The Pedi owned large herds of cattle and were skilful manufacturers of iron tools." (Van Aswegen, 1990:63) It is because of their dependence on cattle for their everyday livelihood, that cattle imagery dominated their language in idioms, praise songs, poetry and speech. Cattle represented a concrete expression of Bapedi wealth. They therefore dominated such ceremonies and intra- and inter-tribal matters as funerals, marriage, initiation, court fines, song, ancestor worship and traditional rituals.

This dominant role of cattle had a material background in that the Bapedi depended on them for almost everything from ceremonies to building relations, clothing (cow hide), shoes, meat, milk, go kgopha<sup>9</sup>. The Sepedi word for cow and cattle, kgomo and dikgomo, literally dominates the interactions of Bapedi life. No wonder when they formed a resistance association to fight the encroachment of Western life and domination in the form of Bantustans, the obvious name choice was Sebatakgomo. Later when the association name was changed, still the cattle featured in the new name, Fetakgomo. The empire grew in leaps and bounds as they systematically sheltered refugees and welcomed outsiders into the fold of the tribe, while conquering recalcitrant tribes. In fact Kgoši Sekwati is said to have had sixteen wives from tribes like GaMphahlele, GaMatlala, Kgautšwane, GaMashabela, Babinatau, Bakone and many royal daughters from rulers of significant status. After Sekwati's

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<sup>9</sup> To smear the floor as decoration and protection

death in 1861, his son from his wife, Thorometjane Phala who was born Matsebe in 1841 succeeded him. His skilful tactics as a warrior earned him his second name, Sekhukhune. Trouble in this vast land started when the Boers of the ZAR (Transvaal republic) planned to subjugate all the Black kingdoms and bring them under the authority of the new republic. On 16 May 1876 the Boers attacked the Bapedi and this was the beginning of many clashes.



***Male initiation schools took place on this hill near the Tubatse River during the reign of Kgoši Thulare I of the Marota dynasty***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

After fighting gallantly and building a stronger Bapedi empire, Kgoši Sekhukhune was assassinated by his rival half-brother, Mampuru on 13 August 1882. The latter was arrested and hanged in Pretoria on 22 November 1883. After various acting leaders, Kgoši Sekhukhune 11 was installed. After his death in 1943, Phatudi acted; but, it was King regent Morwamotšhe 111 whose reign would usher in a new era in the

Marota politics. It was during his tenure that resistance against White domination resulted in the formation of Sebatakgomo in 1956. Who was Morwamotšhe 111?

King Sekhukhune 11's son and heir, Thulare 11 died in 1941 and when his father passed away in 1943, the bakgomana (royals) installed Thulare's younger brother, Morwamotšhe111 as King regent. His main responsibility was to raise an heir for his brother.

*“Morwamotšhe was a mild man of limited education. He was reluctant to take a clear lead on any issue and was content to delegate decisions to his councilors. The consequence was that the affairs of the chiefdom were increasingly dominated by his more assertive brothers. The most senior was the tribal secretary, Motodi Sekhukhune but, the most influential and a man who later was viewed by many as the effective ruler at Mhlaletse was Mabowe James Sekhukhune.”*(P.Delius – Tortoise and The Spear)

### **2.1.5 The formation of Sebatakgomo and resistance against Bantustans**

As if the dispossession of land from the Black people through the Native Land Act of 1913 was not enough, in 1954 H.F.Verwoerd summoned the Bapedi traditional leaders to inform them about the Bantustan policy. By the time he arrived at Lepelle for the meeting, the ANC had already warned the rulers about the implications of the policy. Verwoerd's mission failed and the rulers dispersed. When he returned with the same agenda but new tactics, this triggered frustration and anger, especially among migrant workers. These workers who were treated like immigrants on the Reef called a big gathering at Jeppe Hostel in June 1956. Employed in places like Johannesburg, Germiston, Benoni and Pretoria, these workers from the former Eastern Transvaal wanted to warn people about the negative impact of the Bantustan policy on their lives. The meeting took a decision to form an association under whose leadership the policy would be opposed. The association was named Sebatakgomo, a call for men to take up arms and defend the people and property against the enemy. The African National Congress was represented at that gathering. Although the objectives of the newly-formed association were to confront and challenge the Bantustan policy in all its ramifications, its crucial component was to defend traditional leadership and join forces with magoši<sup>10</sup>. It was to put up vehement protests against the Bantustan policies and laws.

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<sup>10</sup> Traditional leaders



***Two mohlopi trees with the Leolo mountains in the background. The tree's roots saved the lives of thousands of the Bapedi people during the time of the Bopedi Great Famine commonly known as Tlala ya Mohlopi***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

Some of these policies included payment of taxes and the carrying of the *dompas* which created mistrust and tensions between the people and the White government. The demand for tax payments during the time of *Tlala ya Mohlopi*<sup>11</sup> and the arrest of many men created fear and tension the Bapedi and the White government. The prohibition of the digging of the *mohlop*<sup>12</sup> tree sowed more mistrust between the two groups. Tension was heightened when *dompas*<sup>13</sup> was used as a registration document to be on the food relief list while government was tempted to use tax as a condition for assistance in that crisis. Those laws and policies also enforced livestock

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<sup>11</sup> The Great Famine of Bopedi

<sup>12</sup> Name of a tree

<sup>13</sup> Reference book/identity document

control, re-demarcated land and sought to introduce inferior Bantu Education. Sebatakgomo was to mobilize resistance, provide financial support in the rural areas and serve as a link between the rural communities and the African National Congress. Its leadership included ANC veterans like John Kgoana Nkadimeng and Mahwidi John Phala. When the organization whose central committee was called Khuduthamaga grew bigger, its name was changed to Fetakgomo in 1957. The name was inspired by a Bapedi proverb, *Fetakgomo o sware motho gobane mafetakgomo ke moriri o a hloga* placing human life above property. In the community, supporters of the organization became known as Makhuduthamaga, while those who welcomed the Bantustan policy were labelled Marantšere<sup>14</sup>. This division deepened day after day as the struggle intensified and turned brother against brother, sister against sister.

Meanwhile, provocative actions of the government like the prohibition of meetings and information leakages convinced leaders like John Kgoana Nkadimeng that the activities of the association were to be run secretly. Bakgomana or advisers of Kgoši Morwamotšhe were immediately replaced with trusted members of the resistance organization. Phetedi Thulare and Morewane Motubatse were tasked with this transformation of the Mohlaletse advisory body. The first victim of this purge was businessman Mabowe Sekhukhune, who openly favoured the Bantustan policy for its lucrative potential. Together with his brother, Motodi and other councillors they were pressurized to leave the capital and replaced with Ntladi Mampuru, Phetedi Thulare and other pro-Sebatakgomo individuals. When Dr Piet Koornhof arrived in Mohlaletse in March 1957 to evaluate the situation, he recommended the deportation of influential councillors. The next month, Phetedi Thulare was arrested and sent to Mtubatuba, while Mogaramedi Godfrey Sekhukhune was sent to Mthunzini. This event angered the youth who demanded participation in council meetings and changed/accelerated the course of events.

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<sup>14</sup> Rangers or supporters of the Bantustan policy

The Bantustan imposers realized that the only solution to the mounting resistance of Sebatakomo was to remove Kgoši Morwamotšhe Sekhukhune from among his people. In March 1958 he was suspended and an 82-year-old retired policeman, Kgobalala Sekhukhune was appointed in his place. On 21<sup>st</sup> March 1958 Morwamotšhe was deported to Cala, Transkei with his family. This infuriated the community even more because their “sense of identity” was removed and they were left naked. The anger spread like wildfire and reached Johannesburg where activists like Kgoana John Nkadimeng (of Manganeng) addressed mass meetings. As anger reached pitch level, on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1958 the men from the Reef and the reserves gathered at the Native Commissioner’s offices in Schoonoord to demand the return of Kgoši Morwamotšhe Sekhukhune. The Commissioner’s arrogant remarks worsened matters and they decided to single out Rangers in the villages for expulsion. On the night of 16 May 1958 Kgobalala and another fellow Ranger were attacked.

### 2.1.6 The Uprising

The police went to Manganeng village to arrest the main suspects – Phaswane Nkadimeng and Stephen Selwane Nkadimeng. When the crowd blocked the police vehicles carrying the suspects from leaving, the police fired bullets into the crowd, killing a man and a pregnant woman, whilst several people were injured. This event triggered the killings of Rangers across Sekhukhuneland. These are some of the prominent killings of individuals whilst their families ran into the mountains to save their own lives:

- Dinakanyane Seroka, a witchcraft suspect Ranger was stabbed to death with a spear in a donga.
- At Madibong village, near Jane Furse Hospital Kgoši Kgolane Kgoloko was attacked and killed by a mob instigated by Mmadinoge Kgoloko.
- At Mphanama village, identified as a Ranger, Mangase Mashabela was attacked by an angry mob, but was saved by his sons.
- At Manganeng village, trader Motle Nkadimeng's house was surrounded and he was killed.

The killing spree had claimed the lives of nine men by the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1958, while the property of many had been gutted down by fire. As the police patrolled the villages, the attacks continued at night and more than three hundred suspects were arrested. With charges ranging from public violence to murder, the trial was challenged by lawyers Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu.

The role of women in this struggle is highlighted by the story of Mmadinoge Kgoloko (née Mashabela) of Madibong village. She was found guilty of instigating a mob to kill his late husband's younger brother, Kgolane. At the end of the trial the killers were sentenced to death.

## **2.2 The Paramountcy of Bapedi: A report of the Commission on Traditional Leadership disputes and claims**

This report is the official document of the Commission which was appointed by the State President of the Republic of South Africa.

The commission was established in terms of section 22 (1) of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 41 of 2003 (the Framework Act). This extract from the report helps shed light on the history of the Bapedi leadership.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1.1 The Bapedi community originates from Bakgatla baMakau, a Batswana clan, which resided near the Vaal river during the sixteenth century. They were led by Tabane who had five sons namely, Diale, Kgwadi, Kgetsi, Matsibolo and Mosia.
- 4.1.2 Diale was the heir and successor to Tabane.
- 4.1.3 Diale had a wife, Mmathobela. According to legend the child cried whilst in her womb. The community wanted to kill both mother and child, as they perceived this incident to be a bad omen.
- 4.1.4 Diale left with his wife and followers. He eventually settled at Fateng, close to the present Fort Weeber.
- 4.1.5 The Bakgatla who left with Diale were later to constitute the core of Bapedi.
- 4.1.6 Thobela, the son of Diale, founded the Bapedi traditional community round about 1650. He settled at Mohlake, at the foot of Leolo Mountain. His royal palace was at Tšate.
- 4.1.7 Thobela was succeeded by his son Kabu. Kabu had two sons, Thobejane and Thobela. Thobejane succeeded Kabu and he in turn was succeeded by Moukangwe.
- 4.1.8 The eldest son of Moukangwe, Leseilane, predeceased him. Moukangwe in his old age became blind, and Mohube his younger son, became regent.
- 4.1.9 When Mohube died his younger brother Mampuru I became regent for Morwamotshe I, the son and heir of Mohube.

- 4.1.10 A succession struggle ensued between Mampuru I and Morwamotshe I. Mampuru I was defeated and fled with his followers.
- 4.1.11 Morwamotshe I rebuilt his village along the Steelport River, where he died.
- 4.1.12 He was succeeded by his son, Dikotope. Thulare I, the younger brother to Dikotope assisted by Mampuru I fought and killed Dikotope. Thus Thulare I usurped the kingship.
- 4.1.13 Thulare I fought, conquered and subjugated several neighbouring communities, including amaNdebele of Moletlane.
- 4.1.14 Thulare I was succeeded by Malekutu who ruled for two years. Malekutu I was poisoned by his brother, Matsebe, and died without an heir. Matsebe in turn was killed by his brother Phetedi, who subsequently succeeded him as *kgoši*.
- 4.1.15 Phetedi, together with his followers and other sons of Thulare I, were killed by Matebele of Mzilikazi. Sekwati I was the only surviving son of Thulare I after the Mzilikazi invasion. He hid in the Leolo Mountains with a number of his followers.
- 4.1.16 Sekwati I later established himself at Phiring, in the north eastern part of the present Nebo district. He fought and ambushed Marangarang, a *kgoši* of Bakone who had asserted his authority over Sekhukhuneland. He also defeated the communities of Phaala and Makgala. He successfully defended himself against attacks by amaSwazi. He also conquered the traditional community of amaZulu, who were under the leadership of Mpande. Mpande posed a serious threat to Sekwati. He later made peace with AmaZulu by sending the latter gifts.
- 4.1.17 Sekwati I thereby expanded and consolidated the efforts initiated by Thulare I of establishing the Bapedi kingship. He died in 1861, and was Buried at Mosegokop.
- 4.1.18 After the death of Sekwati I, his son, Sekhukhune I, made his intention clear to succeed him. Sekhukhune I challenged his half-brother and claimant to the title, Mampuru II, to a fight, by throwing a spear towards him. Mampuru II declined the challenge. Instead he cowered and fled, taking the royal accessories with him.
- 4.1.19 Sekhukhune I went on to bury his father Sekwati I. He forcefully claimed the kingship. He killed all the supporters of Mampuru II. He gathered all the various traditional leaders who were under his father and challenged them. They all cowered. He then ascended the throne.
- 4.1.20 Sekhukhune I immediately started attacking communities that refused to pay allegiance to him.

- 4.1.21 He further consolidated the Bapedi kingship initially established by Thulare and Sekwati. He welded together several communities which had existed as separate entities.
- 4.1.22 Mampuru II later returned and killed Sekhukhune I on 13 August 1882, at his Great Place, Manoge. However, Mampuru could not rule as he was hanged for the murder of Sekhukhune I.
- 4.1.23 After the death of Sekhukhune I, the history of Bapedi kingship is characterized by successive regencies.
- 4.1.24 Kgoloko, the half-brother of Sekhukhune became regent as Sekhukhune II was still a minor, When Sekhukhune II became of age he ascended the throne.
- 4.1.25 Sekhukhune II was predeceased by his son and heir, Thulare II. The latter had no heir from his *timamollo*<sup>15</sup>, Lekgolane. Sekhukhune II died.
- 4.1.26 After his death, Morwamotshe III, a brother to Thulare II, was appointed as regent until his death in 1965.
- 4.2 There are different versions in relation to the status of Mampuru II and Sekhukhune I following the deaths of Malekutu I and the rest of his brothers.
- 4.2.1 According to the Mampuru royal family:-
- (a) Thulare I was the first *kgoši* of Marota a Mamone and was succeeded by Malekutu I. Malekutu I died without issue therefore, Sekwati I became regent.
  - (b) Sekwati I was a regent and as such he was expected to raise seed for Malekutu I.
  - (c) Sekwati I had a wife called Thorometšane who gave birth to a son, Sekhukhune I.
  - (d) Sekwati I later married Kgomomakatane (Lekgolane), as a *timamollo* to the late Malekutu I. She gave birth to a son, Mampuru II, who was to succeed Malekutu I.
  - (e) According to the custom of Bapedi it is irrelevant who fathers the heir, so long as he is born of *timamollo*.
  - (f) The power to decide on the marriage of *timamollo* for a deceased *kgoši* rests with *Bakgoma* and *Bakgomana*<sup>16</sup> not the regent.

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<sup>15</sup> Literally “the one who distinguishes fire”

- (g) Sekwati I recognised Mampuru II and gave him the royal insignia including *sefoka* (royal emblem) and *pheta ya thaga* (royal beads).
- (h) When Sekwati I died, Sekhukhune I usurped the kingship. Mampuru II fled with his followers.
- (i) Later Mampuru II returned to kill Sekhukhune I. Mampuru II was hanged in Pretoria in 1885 for the murder of Sekhukhune I
- (j) Malekutu II succeeded Mampuru II. He died in 1905 and was succeeded by his son Malekutu III, who died in 1958. He was succeeded by Mampuru III the current *kgoši* of Marota a Mamone.

4.2.2 On the other hand, Kenneth Kgagudi Sekhukhune and Rhyne Thulare Sekhukhune state the following:-

- (a) They do not dispute that Malekutu I died without issue and was followed by Sekwati I as regent,
- (b) However, they maintain that:-
  - (i) When Sekwati I became regent he already had a wife Thorometšane, the mother of Sekhukhune I.
  - (ii) When *Bakgoma* and *Bakgomana* suggested that Sekwati I should marry a candle wife to raise seed for Malekutu I, he refused and pointed out that he already had a son Sekhukhune I, whom he had identified as his successor.
  - (iii) *Bakgoma* and *Bakgomana* went on to marry a *timamollo*, Kgomomakatane, the mother of Mampuru II, despite the refusal of Sekwati I.
  - (iv) According to the Sekhukhune royal family, Sekwati I could not have fathered Mampuru as he was too old at the time Mampuru was conceived.
  - (v) Upon the death of Sekwati I, a succession war ensued between Sekhukhune I and Mampuru II, until the latter fled. Sekhukhune I succeeded Sekwati I.

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<sup>16</sup> The king's council

## 2.3 Oral History

### 2.3.1 Direto tša magoši a Bapedi

#### Kgoši Thulare

Ke nna seithotledi sa ga Rakau  
Rakau a Modiše a dihlašana  
O re: Ka molamo wa tshipi  
Ka molamo ke hlatlogela Leolo  
Leolo la tšhupagadi 'a Mabeth'a Bokone.

Ge ke y'o bona Sethele Moetlane  
Sethele ke hwetša a tšhabile.  
Wene ngwanana tena a ga Dikgale tša Molapo!  
Ge ke go feta o le motswetši wa marankgane,  
Ka bowa ka tla ka go feta gape o le motswetši'a mmele boreledi.

Ke wa sepitl'a Mangana  
Sepitla Mmabatome'a Makwa.  
E a pitlilego mpa tša mogolonkwane  
A gobelanya le tša Ramapulan'a Tswetla.

Ke Thulare morekereke 'a Lebotša.  
Yo ba rego Lebotsa o tlotše motaga molomo  
Ebile e ke ke kgomo e tšhungwana,  
Kgomo e tšhungwana a Lebotša.

Ke Thulare ya mma-ke-etla-ke-etla  
Ya matsoga ka ditšu, wabo Mošian'a Moraka.  
A rego a tsoga a tsatsapela.  
Ke ngwanabo Mahlalole 'a ledimo

### **Kgoši Sekwati I**

Ke nna Sekwati sa Mmaboforohlo,  
Sekwatakwatiša motho botlakala.  
Ke Sekwati sehlwa le ngwanana ntlong,  
E le maano a go ja tatago ngwanana.

Ke Phaahl'a Bauba, kgatswatsw'a Majwana,  
Ke phalo 'a mmasefalo 'a mathoko,  
E ba rego gare ke šio thula kobo maroba.  
Ba phalo 'a morwedi a mokitlan'a Tšatši,  
Ba kgwadi 'a Mauba, ba thamaga abo Mmamabua a Maleka 'a Morolane,  
E ba rego kgwadi ka lenaka ke epolotše,  
Ke bile ke beile Meta metlaka 'a Rakgalake a madila.

Ba re: Marole ala! A tšwago Tswetla gaRamapulana,  
Ga se marole a dikgomo ke marole a batho.  
Ke mo go tlogo Motšhemogolo selaiwagale 'a Marota,  
Wabo Mmadinkwanyane 'a Mokgoko.

Ke nna sefeta methepa  
E ba rego o fetile banana ba bahubedu  
BoDitlapea 'a ga Mphela  
Le Maboloko 'a ga Maredi.  
Ke seitlhotledi sa ga Rakau a Modiše a dihlašana,  
O re: Ka molamo 'a tshipi!  
Ka molamo ke hlatlogela Leolo,  
Leolo la tšhupagadi 'a Mabeth'a Bokone.

Sekwati o re: Sepelang le yo botša Sethele Moletlane,  
Le re: Ke nna eno ke mmidibiding,  
Ke digukubjaneng tša ngwan'a Sehulabošego.

## **Kgoši Sekhukhune I**

Ke nna maphikološe'a matswaka le mabu Theledi'a Marota,

Theledi ka Borwa o tš'o senya, Theledi'a Marota.

Ke masenyeletše'a Matuba.

Masenya magadi a batho.

Tšhukutšwan'a mphatana lena madira tšhabang

Tšhabang mantšokodi a etla.

Ke Mantšan'a Lehlokwa sehvirihwiri se maano,

Mphiri moloma serethe, ke tatago Ngwana Mohube.

Ke sebolai sa Matuba ntšee ka manaka di a Ila,

Theledi'a kgalatlola 'a mešito

Theledi'a kgatlol'a Makwa.

Mašileagatiša abo Ngwakwane

Ke mogale ge a gatiša ka lekopelo.

Ke Mašile abo Diphale šibašiba sebatana,

Tloukgolo di a go gata.

Lena ba Mahlako a Makoro, ge le hloma nkutunkutu,

Lekutu k'eng mola lekutu e le nna?

Ke tiba ka hlako gwa tiba Nyekelele,

Kua ga Mahlako a Makoro?

Mmanaka-difetšaseatla Mašile abo Diphale,

O re: Gagešo ga re tsotsoropege, re a purankela

Go tsotsoropa ke go lahla marumo.

Ke matopo a Matšhoba ba ga Moselekatse.

Nokan'e ya Bakgatla ke nokana mang?

Ke nna. Ke Moretele a noka ke retetše,

Ke reteleletše maburu a ga Jubere  
Ke tlo retelelela le mašole a Ramapantana

Bošego nka robala boroko,  
Ga ke sat lo lora Ramapantana  
Gobane bjale tšhošane tše tšhweu  
Tše tšhweu bjaloka yena di a mo loma.

### **Kgoši Mampuru**

O re:

Ke nna mašišimale 'a gabo Mošiane tlou 'a Mabasa,  
Tloo ya manaka ke eme Marutle gabo Lekgolane,  
Ke šišimetše ke etša letlapa, leswika lapeng labo Matobole.  
Gale borangwane le fetiša batho batseta,  
Ge le tšea Sebape morwa Mmakhudu la etiša pele.

Ke sekitike se modumo,  
Ke ketiša mameriri e mentši,  
E ba rego meriri yaka e tšame e boolwa Matebeleng.  
Mapogo le Kwalepe 'a Mapulana la mpootše,  
Ba ntšhia meriri dikgofe.

Ba re: Kgarebe tša Makotopo dial la,  
Di re: Bauba ga se wa go hlwa le motho,  
O reng a enwa 'hlama tša rena a homotše?

Bauba mmoetšeng Lokase, ga gabo mogolo Matsha,  
O re: Ke ya le mme Matsha,  
Gabo šatall'a šata, šetla la nku le a betlwa,  
Môkô re gafela bašemane ba dipudi.

O re: Ke setike se modumo,  
Ke kgomo yabo Mmaselatole,  
E etše ge e re “phorohlo” e ragile kgamelo,  
Leleke la ga Mphahlele e weditše ka meetseng.

Ke mo go tlogo lethebeswane la noka ya Tubatse,  
O re: Ga ke thebose, ke theoša le melapo.  
Ke maramanyane a mmoto ‘a Tšate, Theledi a Marota.  
E a rego ke ba theletše ba šala ba swara ba šele,  
Ba šala ba swara Bapedi ba-epa-tšhoga ka legong.

### 2.3.2 The Story of Mmadinoge Kgoloko

Our local sources say Kgoloko I was the son of Thobejane. He became Kgoši Sekhukhune's secretary who travelled the length and breadth of Bopedi with him as he was buying various parts of the land. Kgoloko was impressed by the village of Madibong, near Jane Furse hospital. In order to turn his leadership of the people into a royal position, he got married to Kgoši Phaswane Mashabela's daughter. According to our source, Koshe Mokwala (born 1932), at that time this off-shoot of the Mashabela people had settled at Modupyanaga (Modupi wa naga). They were from Ntswaneng, near the Leolo mountains where Phaswane's father, Kgoši Nkgonyeletše I was based. He had advised his son to move away from the territory which was under continuous threat from Sekhukhune.

After Kgoloko's death, his son, Morwamotšhe also returned to Ga-Mashabela to get married to Kgoši Nkgonyeletše Mashabela II's daughter, Mmadinoge Ntungoa Sarah Mashabela as his senior wife. She was following in the bridal footsteps of her aunt. After the death of Morwamotšhe in 1953, his brother Kgolane was appointed as regent. Unfortunately, it was not long before the two would clash. It started with gender issues as she chose a relationship with John Makopole Kgolane instead of Kgolane, but later escalated into serious political decisions. Matters came to a head when Kgolane supported the White government's introduction of the Bantustan policy. The majority of the villagers supported Mmadinoge's Makhuduthamaga resistance while only a few were on the side of Kgolane and his Rangers/Manangane. The feud was taken to the capital, Mophalete and Kgolane was deposed in favour of Mmadinoge. When Kgolane rejected the verdict and turned to the Native Commissioner for support, he returned home in May 1958 to a brutal death. As his assailants followed him, he ran into a neighbouring house (Mokgwatšane's) and locked himself in, but the bloodthirsty mob dismantled the roof, stoned him and finished him off with an assegai. His headman, Ntona<sup>17</sup> Makoropetše Maphiri also met the same fate. Shetšang Johannes Maleka (born 1952) who was a goat herder at the time says even today he still gets nightmares about the event.

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<sup>17</sup> headman

*“It was in the afternoon, around 14h00 when we saw a group of axe-wielding men running down the hill in a half-moon shape from the Maswielong area. They shouted as they chased Kgolane who finally sought refuge in the neighbouring Mokgoatšana home. They followed him, climbed on top of the house, removed the corrugated irons and pelted him with stones. After killing him, they carried him to the royal kraal chanting and singing war songs. It was a harrowing experience and from that day we never slept in our homes as the police and later soldiers from Lance patrolled the village at night looking for the men. At sunset women and children would escape to Dichoeung village, near Jane Furse where there was no trouble. ”*

A woman called Pelepele Madihlaba from GaMoloi is said to have filled a horn with Kgolane’s blood and when the police came looking for her, she escaped to Mamone. The police found her still keeping that blood-filled horn suspected of war-muti making as in the practice of ritual murders and apprehended her. The Madihlabas, the Kgolokos and the Mashabelas are said to practice royal inter-marriages. Upon arrest, the suspects were found guilty and sentenced to death, especially the men as the women were exonerated as incapable of such heinous a crime. Mmadinoge insisted that she should be hanged first as she was the leader of the group. After checking their files, the prison authorities found that in the history of the South African prisons, a woman was never sentenced to death. Hence, she was sentenced to a life time in jail. She was with another brave woman, Mmapetla, a member of the royal family. Koshe told us that Mmadinoge was released in 1972 and went back to her Madibong community. Upon her arrival in the village, the bold and stubborn lady ordered men to turn-over the green fields of regent Morewane and planted her own royal crops! However, towards the end of the 1970’s when the *bakgomana*<sup>18</sup> requested her to step down in favour of her son, she refused. Due to the leadership dispute, the Madibong people sent her back to her people at GaMashabela. She died there on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1992 and was buried in the kraal amongst other members of the Mashabela royal family. When we paid a visit to her grave on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008, her

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<sup>18</sup> Royal councillors

tombstone stood taller than others, decorated with the colours and logo of the African National Congress.

Our sources concluded by saying that like Mmakgoši<sup>19</sup> Mankopodi Sekhukhune, she represents the powerful status of royal first wives among the Bapedi.



*This building in Jane Furse accommodates the offices of the Makhuduthamaga Municipality, named after the central committee of Sebatakgomo*

(Picture by TM Mojabelo)

According to our sources, these killings also spread to other villages in the Jane Furse area. The Government's tactics of enticing people to agree to the Bantustan policy by creating "jobs for pals" known to the locals as "kakaretšo<sup>20</sup>" or "moselatlala<sup>21</sup>" created tensions in neighbouring villages. The village of Makgane to the east of Jane

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<sup>19</sup> King's wife

<sup>20</sup> general

<sup>21</sup> Poverty relief

Furse Hospital is made of smaller ones like GaSenamela, GaMakgeru, GaMogashoa, GaMaphopha and GaRatau. Kgoši Marcus Senamela of GaSenamela who was a member of the Rangers was killed by men from GaRatau who were Makhuduthamaga.

## CHAPTER 3

### HERITAGE RESOURCES

#### 3.1 What is heritage?

The general meaning of heritage is anything that is or may be inherited. The new democratic government of the Republic of South Africa defines heritage as, “that which we inherit: the sum total of wild life and scenic parks, sites of scientific or historical importance, national monuments, historic buildings, works of art, literature and music, oral traditions and museum collections together with their documentation”(Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology on 17 September 1996). This takes account of all relevant cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems as well as material or cultural heritage value. The previous act, the National Monument Act, 1969 (Act No. 28 of 1969) and section 41 (2) of the Environment Conservation Act, 1989 (Act No.73 of 1989) were not inclusive of all communities and spaces of the Republic of South Africa due to the discriminatory nature of the Apartheid System. These have since been repealed and replaced by the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999). In South Africa the 24<sup>th</sup> September has been put aside as a national public holiday. Its significance rests in recognizing aspects of the country’s culture which are both tangible and difficult to pin down: creative expression, our historic inheritance, language, the food we eat as well as the land in which we live. The legislation empowers the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), in consultation with the Minister of Arts and Culture and the MEC of every province to grade heritage sites according to the following categories:

Grade 1: Special national significance

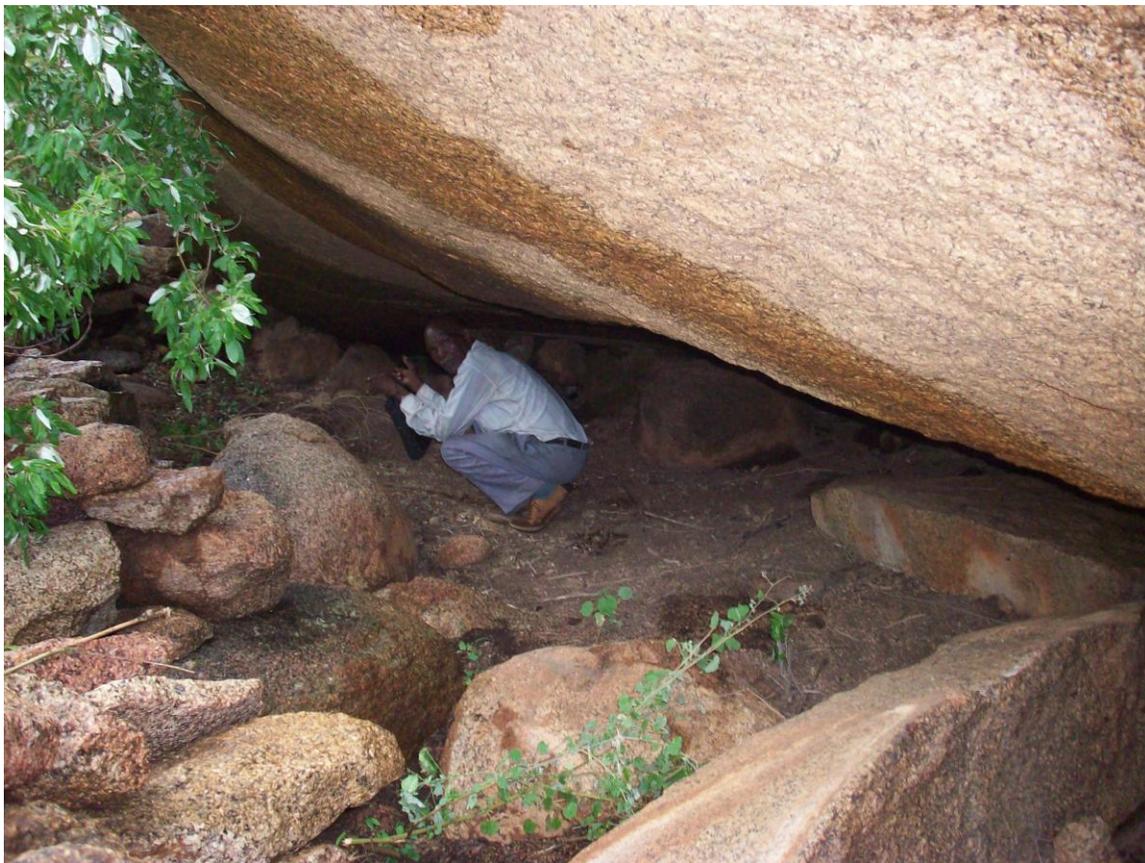
Grade 2: Special significance within the context of a province or a region

Grade 3: Other heritage resources worthy of conservation

### 3.2 Tangible Heritage

- Natural heritage

Generally speaking, this includes anything existing in or caused by nature; in other words, not artificial. According to the widely accepted definition of natural heritage, it pertains to all of South Africa's geological formations, landscapes, plants and animals. (Pearlson et al;1998) Places of natural heritage in Sekhukhuneland include the following : Caves, mountains, vegetation, rivers etc.



*This cave forms part of Fort Maditšhošane near Mmachacha village*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
FORT MADITŠHOŠANE	MAKHUDUTHAMAGA	LIMPOPO	24°.19.204'S 29°.28.318' E

Many caves are found in and around the mountains of Sekhukhuneland. They served as hiding places during times of war, arsenals and food storage. Almost every village at the foot of the mountain has caves at the top of it. This strategic set-up was in line with the times during which they lived. It is estimated that there are more than 200 caves and forts in Bopedi.



*Caves like this are a common site in the mountains of Sekhukhuneland and were used as places of refuge during times of war*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
KGARUTHUTHU CAVE	MAKHUDUTHAMAGA	LIMPOPO	24°.45.656'S 029°.42.368' E



*This evergreen “mohloko” tree is a common sight in Bopedi and is used as a fence around fields and homesteads*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)





*The royal section of Fort Maditšhošane at the mountain top with our tour guide sitting on the stone that used to be the king's chair*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

### 3.3 Living Heritage

According to the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 living heritage means the intangible aspects of inherited culture which may include: Cultural Tradition; Oral History; Performance; Ritual; Popular Memory; Skills and Techniques; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; and the Holistic approach to Nature, Society and Social Relationships. It also encompasses belief system, language, folklore and indigenous methods of safeguarding cultural heritage resources. This is the aspect of heritage that defines quality of the human identity, life experience and cultural expression throughout historical moments. The need to preserve this wealth cannot be over-emphasized due to its fragility and vulnerability. It also needs to be promoted because contemporary lifestyles threaten it with technological gimmicks. As already alluded to earlier, the custodians of this aspect of heritage are mostly the aged and frail who have become a rare species in the villages. The communities in the Sekhukhuneland still practice the following:

#### ***Traditional Music***

Traditional music is music passed on from one generation of the community to another and mostly uses traditional instruments. In as far as possible regalia is also traditional while the language used is rich with idioms. This music type is divided along gender lines.

- Males – *Kiba*<sup>22</sup>, performed by blowing pipes of different sizes with names like phalola<sup>23</sup>, tatedi<sup>24</sup>, lempo<sup>25</sup> as well as a set of three kinds of drums called

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<sup>22</sup> A Northern Sotho male traditional dance genre

<sup>23</sup> A pipe leading the rest

<sup>24</sup> A pipe that follows the leading one

sekgokolo/kiba/tiba<sup>26</sup>, phoisene/phoisele<sup>27</sup> and matikwane<sup>28</sup>. The lepatata<sup>29</sup> kudu horn is used to take the dance from one level to another. The leader or *malokwane*<sup>30</sup> is in charge of the dance. Traditional regalia includes animal skins, horns, necklaces and decorated belts.



***In the male traditional dance the se four drums form the complete kiba set - kiba,phoisele and matikwane***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>25</sup> A bass pipe

<sup>26</sup> Father drum

<sup>27</sup> Mother drum

<sup>28</sup> Small twin drums

<sup>29</sup> A kudu horn

<sup>30</sup> A seasoned dancer who directs the performances



*The hand-made musical instrument known as dipela<sup>31</sup> is made of flattened steel bars attached to a wooden base*

- Females – *Marašia*, mostly using one “moropa” (mother drum) and the dancers dressed in traditional regalia singing and stomping their feet on the ground. Rattles and other percussive instruments are used to enrich the

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<sup>31</sup> A traditional piano-like musical instrument laso known as “mbira”

music sound. The group leader blows a whistle to indicate the changing of dance steps. This dance is for middle-aged women.



*In colourful regalia – proud traditional female dancers of the Bapedi*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*The traditional musical instrument on top of the stone is known as lekope<sup>32</sup> and is usually played by ladies*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>32</sup> A traditional string instrument played by women with their mouths

### ***Indigenous Games***

The games have been played for decades while here and there some improvements or adaptations have taken place. A closer look at them reveal their objective of training the young minds, eyes, hands and feet as well as general motor co-ordination. They are also divided according to gender.

***Boys: Moruba*** - made of lines of holes ranging from 10 to 20 in length and 4 by breath, played by two contenders at a time.

***Morabaraba*** - square lines are drawn on the ground and objects like pips or stones are shifted along the lines during the game.

***Moswe*** - hopping while almost sitting on your heels in a frog-like position.



indigenous games played by boys include “moruba”

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



**“morabaraba” is another game played by young boys during the day**

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

**Girls:** *Kgati* - two girls swing a rope and one or more skip it in the middle. It is also known as *mpa*, from the sound the rope makes as it hits the ground.

*Diketo* - played by girls sitting around a hole with small stones inside.

While one stone is thrown into the air, the hand re-arranges the rest on the ground.

*Dibeke* - a cricket-like game played with a round object.

*Tsheretshere/Taletta/Masekoropose*- rectangular lines drawn on the ground and the players push a flat stone with their toes across the blocks.

*Banana/Mmasekitlana*- stones are used to portray family members in this world of make believe.

*Dinthwai*- Mounds of soil are built and the two participants close their eyes in turns and hide small stones in the soil for the other to locate.



*These young girls are playing a “diketo” game . while one small stone is in the air, the hand re-arranges the rest on the ground. this improves the eye-hand co-ordination*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*kgati is a rope skipping game enjoyed by young girls. it is laso known as “mpa”*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## *Initiation School*



***These stone heaps represent the number of regiments initiated at this location***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

Long before the introduction of the formal Western schooling system, boys and girls were initiated into adulthood through these “traditional learning centres”. As boys’ initiation centres or meroto<sup>33</sup> were conducted in mountains, they became known as

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<sup>33</sup> A kraal-like settlements where young male initiates are housed during their passage to manhood

mountain schools. Girls' centres called *šopo*<sup>34</sup> were usually built near the royal kraal. Activities at both institutions are regarded as top secret. Girls were taught and trained on womanhood, while boys were taught how to look after their families and wealth as well general community responsibilities. The age of initiates was very important so that they'd be at a stage of understanding, interpreting and implementing what they've learned in the the process. At the end of the training the graduates walk to the royal kraal proudly in the midst of a huge celebration. Their bodies are smeared with red oxide (*letsoku*) and they are dressed in traditional clothing made of animal skins and beads. Their names of yore are put aside and they assume new "respectable" names like Matsobane, Madimetja, Malesela (males) and Ramatsobane, Ramadimetša and Ramaesela (females). It is interesting to note that in Northern Sotho ordinary names that start with "Ra" belong to males, while those that start with "Ma" belong to females, but not these names of initiation school graduates. They are very important names and exceptions to the rule. Each clan welcomes its graduates whereafter they'll each go to their different homes. The practice does not substitute but supplements the formal modern learning centres. Unfortunately it has fallen prey to commercialization by fly-by-night chancers and the government was forced to intervene with the assistance of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA).

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<sup>34</sup> A kraal-like settlement usually built with reeds for female initiates



*The end of the initiation. This a young mountain school graduate on his big day*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*The female graduate of the traditional school which takes place in the village, normally  
within the royal kraal*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*various communities decorate their graduates differently. this one's regalia is dominated by beads*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## ***Religion***

Although many people in Sekhukhuneland have joined Western religions, traditionalists still worship the ancestors. Unlike other modern religions, traditional African religion is practiced every day, not on Sundays. Whenever a major step is taken, the gods are informed, eg. Long journeys, weddings, birth, death, harvest, initiations, as well as other life challenges. In such families the common feature that represents the worship spot is a wild onion-like plant known as *lehwama*<sup>35</sup> located at one corner of the lapa<sup>36</sup>. It is placed at the centre of a basin so that the sorghum beer or animal blood used in worship is easily contained.



***The worship spot is marked with this plant at a selected corner of the courtyard***

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<sup>35</sup> Wild onion-like plant

<sup>36</sup> courtyard

## ***Wedding ceremonies***

Marriage is the cornerstone of societal structures in a community:

- It brings two or more families together.
- It marks the end of youth and the beginning of adulthood for the individuals concerned.
- It is the source of children who are expected to carry the name of the family into future generations.



*song and dance accompany every facet of african life as seen here at a wedding ceremony*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

### ***Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)***

According to the Department of Science and Technology policy document, “The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Policy is an enabling framework to stimulate and strengthen the contribution of indigenous knowledge to social and economic development in South Africa”. Its drivers include:

- The affirmation of African cultural values in the face of globalization.
- Practical measures for the development of services provided by IK holders and practitioners.
- Underpinning the contribution of indigenous knowledge to the economy.
- Interfaces with other knowledge systems.

Among the instruments, tools, equipment and structures used by members of the Bapedi ba GaSekhukhune<sup>37</sup> communities even before the arrival of Western civilization include the following:

- Plant roots, barks, leaves as well as animal fat, blood and skins were used in the concoction of medicines.

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<sup>37</sup> Sekhukhuneland people commonly known as Bapedi



***This wild onion known as “sekgaga” is used as a purgative***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

- Circumcision also played a major role in the prevention of sexual diseases.
- Old women were skilled to act as midwives in the community in the days before clinics and hospitals were heard of.
- *Phalafala* is a horn blown to signal a crucial meeting or a danger warning.  
It is normally blown by a recognized member of the community closer to the royal family or council.
- *The Drum* was also used to carry messages across to community members. This instrument is a recognized form of

communication across the African continent, especially in West Africa where they have a very effective version known as the talking drum. The drum is also a major player in African traditional music.

## ***Skills and techniques***

- *Tšhilo*<sup>38</sup> *le lwala*<sup>39</sup> – the two stones are used to grind grains into meal. The former is a smaller roundish and flat stone pushed by the female forward and backwards with both hands on top of the big one resting on the ground. Grains are placed behind the smaller stone which presses them against the big one to produce meal which is pushed down to a *sethebe*<sup>40</sup>. The grains commonly processed are *mabele*<sup>41</sup> or *mabelethoro*<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> The small grinding stone that is moved back and forth on top of the big stone to grind grains

<sup>39</sup> The big grinding stone on which grains are placed for processing into meal

<sup>40</sup> A mat in front of the grinding stone on which the meal falls

<sup>41</sup> Millet

<sup>42</sup> Sorghum



*The traditional mill, “tšhilo” and “lwala” was used to grind various grains which formed part of the every day family meals*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*The complete mill set. The smaller stone at the top is called “tshilo”, behind it is a kgale<sup>43</sup>; in front of it is the bupi<sup>44</sup> just about to fall on to the sethebe, while on the side is the containing the grain still to be ground*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>43</sup> A pinch of grain

<sup>44</sup> Meal

- Lešaka<sup>45</sup> is built with logs skillfully fitted into and next to each other and dug deep into the ground to safeguard the herd of cattle. The structure also contain cowdung which turns into manure, a warm bedding for the animals. The manure is also used to fertilize the fields while the dung is used as fuel. Women were not allowed to walk into the kraal; even if they needed cowdung to smear the ground of the *lapa*, they'd have to ask boys to help them. You see, matters cattle and kraal are traditionally male stuff.



*These logs are skillfully fitted into and next to each other and dug deep into the ground to build the traditional lešaka. no ropes or wires are used to tie the logs together*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>45</sup> Kraal

- Huts were built with sticks/stones and mud while the roofs were made of logs and grass.



*This is an example of a traditional house built of mud and logs, with a thatched roof*

(Picture by J.Tlouamma)

- *Legora*<sup>46</sup>, made of logs formed the fence around the homestead.



*The traditional kgoro*<sup>47</sup> where men spent their evenings sharing their life experiences with boys

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>46</sup> A wall made of logs

<sup>47</sup> A traditional kraal-like fireplace enclosure for men, also used as a court



***Morako, made of stones formed a strong defence around a fort; also used in the building of kraals***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## Arts and Crafts

Art is the human creative skill or the application thereof embracing various branches of creative activity concerned with the production of imaginative designs, sounds or ideas. Examples of this include painting, music and writing.

On the other hand, craft pertains to skill, especially in practical arts. Standard materials include beads, grass, leather, fabric and clay.

A variety of articles have been hand-manufactured by the Bakgaga for decades. These articles are products of natural raw materials as seen in the following examples:

like wood, grass, reeds, clay etc. is used to manufacture articles of quality and beauty.

## Wood

- carved wood produces *mogopo*, a bowl that contains food meant for the head of the family and keep it fresh and warm.
- skillfully cut wood's barks are peeled off and shaped into big spoons like *lehuduo*<sup>48</sup> and *leho*<sup>49</sup> which help in the preparation of porridge and samp.
- skillfully cut stick's barks are cut off to make a *lefehlo*<sup>50</sup>.
- a *mogaletlwa*<sup>51</sup> tree branch is cut and barks peeled off. It is then cut in the middle whereupon pieces are vertically peeled off to produce thin belts used to

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<sup>48</sup> A long wooden spoon for mixing cooked food

<sup>49</sup> A shorter and broader wooden spoon for dishing out food

<sup>50</sup> A long stick with wires or thinner sticks attached to it for the stirring of soft porridge

<sup>51</sup> Name of a yellow tree that doesn't break easily, mostly found on river banks

weave shallow bowels known as *leselo*<sup>52</sup> or *tshelwana*<sup>53</sup>. The bowels serve as dishes that hold meal or grain.

- pillows, knobkiries and stools.

- handles of many tools are made of wood including assegais.

- other household containers include *kgamelo*<sup>54</sup>.



***This traditional wooden spoon was used in the final mixing and dishing out of porridge into the calabashes. Covering the table is the legogw<sup>55</sup>a sitting or sleeping mat***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>52</sup> A big shallow bowl used mostly in the grain purification process (by shaking it)

<sup>53</sup> A small shallow bowl used to hold some seed or cover food

<sup>54</sup> A tall and deep vessel used to contain milk during the milking process

<sup>55</sup> A sleeping or sitting mat made of grass

## Grass

- a mat known as *legogwa*<sup>56</sup> is made of grass or reed.
- woven grass produce hand-made kitchen utensils like deep bowels known as *seroto*<sup>57</sup> or *serotwana*<sup>58</sup>.
- it is also used in the making of big baskets known as *sešego*<sup>59</sup>. used to store grains for longer periods of time.
- the strainer used in the brewing of home-made beer, *mohlotlo*<sup>60</sup> is also grass-woven.



**The grasswoven homebrewed-beer strainer is displayed by a collector** (Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>56</sup> A grass-woven mat used for sitting or sleeping

<sup>57</sup> A grasswoven deep bowel used to keep grains or meal

<sup>58</sup> A smaller version of the above kitchen utensil

<sup>59</sup> A big basket used for long-term storage of grains

<sup>60</sup> A traditional beer strainer



*behind the dipela made of wood and steel is a lefelo<sup>61</sup> made of grass;it is used to sweep the floors.*

*The white wooden bowl to the left is called mogopo<sup>62</sup>*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>61</sup> A short broom made of a bunch of grass

<sup>62</sup> A wooden bowl used to keep the food of the family's head fresh and warm

## *Hide*

- animal hides were used in the making of a lethebo<sup>63</sup>, kotse<sup>64</sup>, sandals and general clothing.
- Also used as ropes and belts.



*This shield is made of cowhide. it was used by warriors to protect themselves from the spear of the enemy*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>63</sup>A traditional blanket made of animals hide/skins

<sup>64</sup> A shield

## Vegetables

- most traditional beer brewing utensils like *kgapa*<sup>65</sup>, *morutlo/mokgopu*<sup>66</sup> as well as *sego*<sup>67</sup>, *ntšhetha*<sup>68</sup> and *sefagwana*<sup>69</sup> are made from the product of a vegetable of the pumpkin family.



*At bottom and top are the big shallow bowl (leselo) and small shallow bowls (ditshelwana) made from wood.*

*in the middle are the following utensils from bottom to top: scoops (merutlo), shallow calabashes for women's meals (digo) made from vegetables*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

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<sup>65</sup> A big round calabash with a small mouth for the preservation of drinks like milk

<sup>66</sup> A scoop used to pour liquids into containers, especially homebrewed beer

<sup>67</sup> A wide-mouthed calabash used in the same way as a plate

<sup>68</sup> A big round calabash cut in the middle making it half of the “kgapa”

<sup>69</sup> A small calabash used to shovel meal out of a bigger container

## Clay

Most of the pots were made of clay. The clay would be heated and hardened for longevity. The pots are known as *pitša*<sup>70</sup>, *moeta*<sup>71</sup> or *motšega*<sup>72</sup> and differ in shape and size.



***A claypot was used to contain water, beer, milk and other drinks due to its rust-free and heat-resistant nature***

(Picture by J.Tlouamma)

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<sup>70</sup> A widemouthed claypot used for cooking family meals

<sup>71</sup> A claypot used to contain drinks and keep them cool

<sup>72</sup> Same as above

## CHAPTER 4

### CONSULTING LOCAL OPINIONS

#### List of sources

- i. **Prof. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana** – Head of Department: Folklore Studies,  
University of Limpopo
- ii. **Mr Maloko Simon Tebele** – Head: Corporate Communication, Anglo  
Platinum
- iii. **Mr Koshe Mokwala** – Member of the Mashabela royal clan, cultural  
activist, historian and herbalist, aged 76
- iv. **Ms Mmatau Maimela** – Former resident of the first known  
capital of Kgoši Thulare of the Marota,  
Mokororwane in Tubatse, aged 90.
- iv. **Mr Radihubane Makgwale** – Expert on the Bapedi culture, tradition and  
Origins of the early groups which settled in  
The area today known as Sekhukhuneland,  
aged 65
- v. **Mr Shetšang Johannes Maleka** – Eye-witness of the 1958 mob killing of  
regent Kgolane in Madibong village,  
aged 56
- vi. **Mr Phaahla Ntwampe** – Member of the Magakala royal house at  
Mmadifahlane, aged 57
- vii. **Mr Thomas Phala** – Member of the Kgoši Sekhukhunel's maternal clan.
- viii. **Mr Madise Ephraim Sefoka** – Retired school teacher who grew up in  
Sekhukhuneland and taught in various  
communities in the area.

## 4.2 Sources of Reference:

- i. Delius Peter, Lion Amongst the Cattle, Ravan Press, 1970
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- iii. Maredi H.P, Tlala ya Mohlopi, J.L.Van Schaik, 1963
- iv. Ramaila Epafra Mogagabise, Seriti sa Thabantsho, Bona Press Ltd, 1953
- v. Ramaila Harry Segome, Thalabodiba, Maskew Miller, 1995
- vi. Suttner Raymond, The ANC Underground in South Africa, Jacana Media, 2008

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Route to be declared a Grade II heritage site which has special qualities making it significant within the context of a province in terms of the heritage assessment criteria set out in section 3 (2) and prescribed under section 6 (1) and (2).
2. The route to be created using the hotspots of the uprisings. This to start from Mohlaletse , followed by Manganeng, Schoonoord, Madibong, the old Jane Furse Hospital, Ga Mashabela and Lepelle River.
3. The heritage site to be resourced through funds from the local municipalities. Sponsorships to be secured from government departments and the private sector, especially the mining industry. Fundraising campaigns and donations from members of the society also to be considered.
4. A wall of remembrance to be erected in front of the old Jane Furse Hospital on which the names of the heroes of Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo should be written. The wall to be shaped like a bull to symbolize the significance of cattles in the lives of the Bapedi.
5. Sign boards to be erected along the Polokwane/Jnae Furse road to Sekhukhuneland - including at the Appel Cross - to guide tourists on the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo route.
6. Sebatakgomo Day to be commemorated annually during the month of May. Such commemoration to include the Sebatakgomo-Fetakgomo Marathon from Mohlaletse to Schoonoord.

7. Revenue generated from tourism to be used for maintenance and stipend payments to the locals involved in the project.
8. A website to be created through which the route is marketed in order to attract even tourists from foreign countries.
9. A well-resourced library to be established at the Makhuduthamaga local municipal offices near the Jane Furse shopping complex. Literature about the history of Sekhukhuneland and the different neighbouring communities to be housed in here for easy access to all. The history to include origins and leaderships of the communities; images of events like Tlala ya Mohlopi, the Sebatakomo-Fetakomo uprisings and the Sekhukhune Wars of Resistance. Books written by GaSekhukhune writers could also be part of the collection.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **APPENDIX**

Transcript and Translate  
Programmes of important cultural days



# CHAPTER 1

## SITE DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 Assessment, survey and mapping of heritage resource

Almost hidden in the mountains of GaMarishane, the grave of Manche Masemola lies next to that of her sister, Mabule at the ruins of the old small village of Thuputlaneng. The village was part of the western section of GaMarishane known as Mašemong. Accessed mainly through the village of GaPhaahla, a stranger to the area may mistake it to fall under this village, but the locals know that it is under GaMarishane through the invisible boundary between the two. This is the power of the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). Though various trees form the vegetation around the site, euphorbia trees are dominant. Huge rocks form the backdrop while the walls of the old Thuputlaneng village ruins are still standing to the west of the site. Interestingly, only soil was used in the building of the walls of the houses where the virgin martyr grew up and died at a tender age. The gravel road to the site has to be graded every year, while Summer rains erode the soil around the graves. Although there is no fence around the graves, the locals seem to respect the sacred site.



*The main road that leads to Manche Masemola's sacred grave site at what used to be the village of Thuputlaneng, GaMarishane*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

***Direction to the heritage site:***

*From Polokwane, follow the Lebowakgomo/Jane Furse road. Go through Lebowakgomo township and travel for about 55km. Just after crossing the Ngwaritsi River bridge, turn right into GaPhaahla Village (Road D4263) and follow the road to Mamatjekele. Turn off to the left when you see a short white corner wall, with Dihlabeng mountain to the right. Before you know it, you are facing the sacred site.*

## 1.2 Visual Characteristics of the heritage resource



*Manche Masemola's grave at Thuputlaneng, GaMarishane. Next to her tombstone is that of her sister, Mabule. Both tombstones and the plaque that carries her story were erected by Polokwane-based businessman, Joe Mogodi of Mogodi Memorials*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
MANCHE MASEMOLA'S GRAVE SITE	MAKHUDUTHAMAGA	LIMPOPO	24°.42.316'S 029°.40.300' E



*A broader view from the cliff: The ruins of Manche Masemola's village, Thuputlaneng only a few metres from her gravesite*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*This is but one of the many euphorbia trees found in the neighbourhood of Manche Masemola's old village of Thuputlaneng*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*A closer look at the ruins. Some of the walls are still intact at what used to be Thuputlaneng village*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



***Member of research team, Leketele Lethuba stands near round stones, with Dihlabeng mountain in the back-ground. The mountain near the heritage site is known for its sought-after unique, dark-brown and round-shaped stones***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)



*The Phakakang cave, just a few metres south of the Manche Masemola gravesite*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

### **Phakakang Cave**

This cave is deep and wide and in times of war it became a place of refuge to many. While it has one big mouth, it has several small pockets. Oral history has it that long before people settled in Vlak, Phakakang, Thuputlaneng and Mašemong in general, this area teemed with wild animals. According to 65 year-old Joel Thaole Masemola, two hunters from Hlako village, Maseeme Matlebjane and Matjekane Sereko met the king of the jungle here. They were tired and thought they could rest in the cave. The first to enter was Sereko and he found a lion in there. When it attacked him, Matlebjane ran to the village to ask for help. Seventy three years- old Mantaneng Masemola concluded the story by saying that by the time the villagers arrived at the cave, only the head and arms were left. The lion was hunted down and killed. When we visited the cave, we were told that there is a leopard roaming the premises.

## CHAPTER 2

### NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION AND RESULTS

#### 2.1 Written History

##### 2.1.1 Overview of missionary history in Southern Africa

The arrival of missionaries in Southern Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of a revolution in the Black communities of the southern tip of the African continent. Though the missionaries introduced themselves as Emancipationists, Humanitarians, Philanthropists and Evangelicals, it was ultimately realized that in fact they were part and parcel of a well-oiled colonization machinery. One of their major tasks was to pacify the rulers in preparation for subjugation – “the missionary and the military were never far separated” and “the glory of God and the profit of England had always been synonymous terms” ([www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za))

Emphasising the need for co-operation between the Church and the Government, Stokenstrom wrote the following in his Autobiography:

“The two forces combined will not civilize unless they make the Native chiefs the principal levers in the operations on their people. ... if we gain the confidence of the chiefs, they, with the power of the Government and the efforts of the missionaries, will influence the masses...”

Of course, where missionary influence failed, the military took over as “the assegai had to yield to the gun”. If the Bible can’t, the rifle can.

The first of these agents were the **Moravians**. The Moravian Church originated in 1457 in Moravia (now Slovakia). In 1737 a young bachelor missionary, George Schmidt was sent to Cape Town where he worked among the Khoikhoi people. It was on 23rd April 1738 that he settled at Baviaanskloof in the

Riviersonderend Valley. Here, established a mission which was named Genadendaal, the oldest mission station in South Africa.

At the end of the century the **London Missionary Society** (LMS) arrived in South Africa in 1799. It was founded in 1795 by a group known as the Evangelicals in London and its arrival in this country coincided with the British occupation of the Cape. Superintendent of the South African LMS was Dr Phillip, who became adviser to the Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban. His strategy included pacifying the Black rulers by "having small salaries paid to them." His plan also involved the undermining of the authority of the ruler by placing beside him a resident agent. The resident agent would be his guide and advisor who would later fill the position of Bantu Commissioner (Magistrate) and gradually usurp his functions as head of his tribe.

Among the missionaries was the Wesleyans. Under the capable leadership of Rev. William Shaw they befriended various rulers including Khama of the Batswana and Moshoshoe of the Basotho.

In 1812 a Presbyterian minister, Rev George Thom arrived at the Cape and after meeting with the **Calvinist Society** he established the first Presbyterian Church. After his resignation in 1818, due to the growing number of Presbyterians, later in 1827 the congregation completed the building of a church in Cape Town and named it the "Mother Church".

In 1821 the **Glasgow Missionary Society** sent its missionaries, Rev. John Bennie and the Rev. William Thomson to work on the Eastern Frontier. In 1924 they established the most famous Presbyterian institution in South Africa – Lovedale.

Other Reformed churches were the Reformed Church in Southern Africa, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church. The latter was established in 1652 at

the Cape of Good Hope by Jan van Riebeeck and spread in-land side by side with the Great Trek. It became part and parcel of the divide and rule machinery of the White Nationalist regime's Apartheid System. Hardly surprising, most of the Prime Ministers of the Republic of South Africa were produced by this church. In line with the master race philosophy of the architects of Afrikanerdom, they also had to be sworn members of the Broederbond.

The **Paris Evangelical Missionary Society** (PEMS) became known for its work among the Basotho of Kgoši Moshoeshoe. Eugene Casalis, Thomas Arbousset and their assistant Constant Gosselin arrived at the capital, Thaba Bosiu in June 1833. The mission was so effective that by 1848 about 1,5% of the Basotho had been converted to Christianity. The mission also spread its wings to Botswana.

Another mission which grew rapidly was the **Catholic Mission**. Its effectiveness was attributed to the many schools and hospitals it opened within the Black communities. Due to its financial resources, it gained support of the rulers and by the 1930's it overtook the Evangelical Mission in appeal.

The **Berlin Missionary Society** was founded on 29 February 1824 in Prussia. With the support of Prussian Lutheran churches, it sent its first missionaries to work in South Africa. The first mission was established on the banks of the Riet River on 24 September 1834 and was named Bethany.

Other missionaries of note were the Rhenish, the Swiss as well as the American . With this formidable partnership, the assegai had to yield to the Bible and the gun.

### 2.2.1 Missionary activities in the former Northern Transvaal



*The headquarters of King Sekwati, the capital – Thaba Mosego. This small mountain is where the secrets and treasures (tša moseo) of the Bapedi royalty were and are still hidden. The Motsé river flows past the hill from the Leolo mountains*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
THABA MOSEGO	GREATER TUBATSE	LIMPOPO	24°.19.204'S 29°.28.318' E

Before we look at the activities of the missionaries in the former Northern Transvaal, it is important to note that even before their arrival in the province, some converted migrant workers had already started with the spadework. Individual migrant workers who had travelled to the Eastern Cape, Natal and Lesotho embraced Christianity. According to historian Peter Delius,

*“Probably the first missionaries encountered by the Bapedi were those from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society who settled within Moshoeshoe’s domain. The party of “Baperi” met by Arbousset at Morija in 1836 regularly attended services.”*

Jan Mafadi who travelled to Port Elizabeth in 1857 was eventually baptized in the Methodist Church which had a long and deep hold in the Eastern Cape. Jacob Mantladi was also profoundly influenced by missionary teachings. On their return to the Transvaal, together with another convert, Martinus Sebushane they persuaded others of the virtue of the Christian faith. According to missionary Albert Nachtigal’s report in 1870 there was already a marked development of Christian groups in the absence of local missionaries. In Bopedi the first group of Christians lived in the area around Thaba Mosego, the capital.

It should be understood that it was the intention of the colonizers to move deeper and deeper into Black Africa until they eventually controlled the whole continent. Automatically, their partners had to keep pace with the ambitions. Much as the focal point of the military was the ruler, he was also the focal point of the missionary.

The Berlin Society missionaries, Heinrich Grutzner and Alexander Merensky had earlier arrived at Emmaus, Natal with the instruction to first work among the Swazi people. Although Kgoši Hoho welcomed their arrival, he expelled them in 1859 when they failed to secure guns for him in Lydenburg. After the fall-out, they turned to the government of the former Transvaal. It allowed

them to settle among the Bakopa of Kgoši Boleu near Lydenburg. They were accompanied by Rev. van Heiniger of the Dutch Reformed Church and two White soldiers, Piet Nel and Veld Kornet Holtzhausen. On arrival at Thabantsho they founded the Gerlachsoop mission station. Though the two later fell ill, some converted migrant workers like Rev. Andreas Sekoto continued with missionary work. Later Merensky targeted the Bapedi of Kgoši Sekwati. After bidding farewell to the Thabantsho congregation on 21 August 1861, he settled at Schoonoord assisted by a young reverend, Albert Nachtigal. Although he managed to establish stations like Kgalatlou (1861) with the help of the blind evangelist, Joseph Kathedi, Phatametsane (1863) and GaRatau (1864), the success story was shortlived. The interference of the church with tradition, culture and rituals resulted in the expulsion of the missionaries to Botšhabelo, where they operated from.

From this point, the gospel was spread to other parts of the province. Well-known mission stations founded include: GaMatlala, Chakhuma (Venda), Pretoria (Tshwane) as well as Medingen (GaModjadji). In Blauwberg (Ga Malebogo) the Sekhukhune-Merensky scenario played itself out when Christoph Sonntag tried to soften Kgoši Kgaluši Malebogo and opened the way up the mountain for the white ZAR forces. German missionaries played a vital role in the development of African languages. Their dream in this regard was realized when the Bible was translated into Northern Sotho in 1904.



***One of the early German missionary stations, Lobethal near GaMarishane still serves the Lutheran community surrounding it***

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

SITE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	PROVINCE	MAP POINTERS
LOBETHAL MISSION STATION	MAKHUDUTHAMAGA	LIMPOPO	24°.19.204'S 29°.28.318' E

Other missions also established their own stations in various parts of the province. They built schools to enable people to read the Bible and improve their general knowledge and skills. Some of them established special learning centres for the disabled, girls only, boys only, trade etc.

The early nearest mission station to the Marishane people was the Berlin Missionary Society's Lutheran Church at Phetametsane under Reverend Endemann. He started visiting the Marishane people who lived at Hlako in

1862 and converted many of them. Among the converts were members of the royal family who were inspired by reports that Kgoši Sekhukhune 1's wives and his brother Johannes Dinkwanyane had been baptized. Kgoši Tseke III Marishane allowed the missionaries to preach freely among his people. Church Services were conducted at Magokubu or in caves during the rainy season. German missionaries travelled on horse-carts.

Later, the ruler sent men to Pretoria to look for another church denomination. The Wesleyan church arrived under Reverend Watkins who was accompanied by an evangelist from Kimberley, Lord. Other missionaries arrived later including Father Augustine Moeka of the Anglican Church who arrived at the current settlement in 1999.



*St Mark is one of the schools established by the Anglican Church in Jane Furse to contribute towards the educational development of the area*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

### 2.1.3 Conflict between missionary teachings and African systems

In approaching and encroaching into Black African societies, most missionary societies took “moral” stances which generally held that:

*“Their bottomless superstitions, their vile habits and heathen customs – their systems of polygamy and witchcraft – their incessant beer-drinks and heathen dances which are attended by unspeakable abominations – these present a terrible barrier to the spread of Christianity and civilization”*  
(Wilkinson 1898)

After Kgoši Sekwati’s death on 22 June 1861, his son, Sekhukhune would turn against Christianity and ban all its religious activities on his soil. Though the baptism of the first converts on 14 January 1862 was celebrated with pomp and ceremony, the events that unfolded later on created problems for the Christians. When Sebushane converted Kgoši Sekwati’s wives Tlakale, Mankone and Modikisheng, it was the beginning of a series of confrontations between the Bapedi leadership and Christianity.

*Amongst the community there were complaints that converts did not perform appropriate rituals on the death of relatives, and so endangered the land and its inhabitants.*(The Land Belongs to Us – P. Delius)

This “holier than thou” attitude of the missionaries had already been experienced earlier in 1891 when the church at Nqumba, Natal had adopted these rules:

- No polygamist shall be allowed to become a member of this church.
- He who sells his daughter or sister treats her like a cow and cannot be received into this church.

- No member of this church shall be permitted to attend a wedding if beer is drunk there, although he may have been invited to it.
- No member of this church is to go where there is slaughtering for the departed spirits.

Africans regarded rules like these as disrespectful and insulting of their way of life. It was difficult for them to accept negative impositions from strangers. In African culture newcomers tread carefully as they say, “*Moeng o naka di maripa*”. But this was not the case with the missionaries. These conflicts and transgressions increased on a daily basis and the Bapedi leadership had no choice but to address them.

In June 1864 one of the converts died and his family refused to bury him according to tradition. This angered many people. A forced *piitšo* (general meeting) was called at Thaba Mosego where Christians were publicly reviled and relations deteriorated. However, it was the baptism of Tlakale in November 1864 which worsened the situation. In the determination to force converts to withdraw and renounce Christianity, Kgoši Sekhukhune forbade them to till their fields or cut wood. After confiscating their livestock, guns and supplies, the village people gathered at the palace on 14 November 1864 and agreed that all Christians should be killed. Many of them were beaten and threatened with death. After many terrible ordeals, they fled Thaba Mosego, with warriors in pursuit. Merensky left Sekhukhuneland in 1865 to live in the Middleburg district where he established the Botšhabelo Mission Station. The mission station which later boasted a school, a seminary, workshops, mill and printing press became the most important station of the BMS. One of the converts who fled to Botšhabelo was Segome Ramaila who settled at Lehlakaneng. His son, Kedikedi Nathaniel Ramaila was blessed with a son, Rev. Epafra Mogagabise Ramaila. Rev. Ramaila became a prolific Northern Sotho writer whose books include the biography of his uncle, Rev. Abraham Serote who played a paramount role in first translation of the Bible into

Northern Sotho . Together with other stalwarts like Rev. Amos Damphe Mamogobo and Rev. Manas Mminele they were the products of the Lutheran Church in Botšhabelo.



*A view from Tjate. Thaba Mosego (Left), Modimolle (Right) in the back-ground of Ntswaneng village*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

#### 2.1.4 The Anglican Church at GaMarishane



*The St Peter's Anglican Church in GaMarishane village was established in 1929. The young Christian, Manche Msemola walked a distance of about seven kilometers twice a week to attend services and classes here*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

Approximately 55km from Lebowakgomo on the road to Jane Furse lies the GaMarishane village. It is constituted by sub-sections like Kgaruthuthu, Mathapisa, Vlakplaas, Motseleope, Semahlakole, Sehuswane, Kome, Masakeng, Ntshong, Mangwanyane, Moomane, Makhutšo, Soetveld and the capital, Sehlakwane. After crossing the Ngwaritsi River bridge, the first village is GaPhaahla (Sekabing), followed by GaMarishane on the right. According to oral history, the Batau of Marishane arrived here in 1904 from Ntswelemuši, a mountain pass with misty waterfalls. It earned its name from its Victoria False-like phenomenon in the mountain pass. It is situated between Phokoane and GaMoloi a Madihlaba and there are still a few

villages around the place like Ntswaneng, Seruleng and Polaseng. Originally, the Marishane people were part of the group under Kgoši Masemola, the son of Matlejoane I. The GaMasemola village lies 31km to the South of Lebowakgomo, just across the Lepelle River.

This table documented and displayed at the royal place shows the leadership lineage of the Marishane group from its early days under Kgoši Masemola:

Leader	Year of Death	Settlement	Initiation Group
Matlejoane II	1824	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kgapu</li> <li>• Difaswe</li> </ul>	
Tseke II	1855	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GaMphahlele</li> <li>• Sepitsi</li> <li>• Botele</li> </ul>	
Matlejoane III	1868	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masetlwe</li> <li>• Honokwane</li> <li>• Hlako (thabeng)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matšedi (1861)</li> <li>• Masoene (1868)</li> </ul>
Tseke III	1891	Hlako	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathamaga (1874)</li> <li>• Malema (1880)</li> </ul>
Matlejoane IV	1890	Hlako (molaleng)	Madisa (1887)
Titus Mogaletlwa (Acting ruler)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marulaneng</li> </ul>	Matlhwana (1894)
Mohumagadi Mmakgatsike		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sehlakwane</li> <li>• Ntswelemuši</li> </ul>	
Tseke IV	1957	GaMarishane	
Matlejoane V	2003	GaMarishane	
Mohumagadi Mmakau		GaMarishane	

Originally, this group was part of the Bahurutse who were under Kgoši Malope in Botswana. At that time their totem was the crocodile. His son, Ngwato later clashed with his own son, Mathibi. Ngwato fled from one place to another with his followers, changing totems from *kwena*<sup>73</sup> to *phuti*<sup>74</sup>, *letšatši*<sup>75</sup>, *nong*<sup>76</sup>, and finally to *tau*<sup>77</sup>. Some of the places they settled at include Wakkerstroom, near Volksrust and Letsheng la Kubung (Lake Chrissie), near Ermelo where he lived with Kgoši Mlangeni of the Swazis. After their departure from “Seokodibeng”, they settled at Kgaditsi where they changed their totem from *letšatši* to *nong*. Ngwato died here and his son, Mogale succeeded him. After Mogale’s death, his son, Matlebjane 1 led the group to the eastern mountains of Tswako. After conquering a Mapulana group known as Batswako, the BaNgwato, Matlebjane’s group adopted their totem, the lion and became known as Batau. Today’s descendants of this group include: Masemola, Nchabeleng, Phaahla, Ramaila, Ratau, Mogashoa, Selwane and others. As already alluded to, the Marishane people are an off-shoot of the Masemola group.

When the Marishane people split from the Masemola group, they were a fewer group which could not claim the male lion as their totem; hence the surname as they were said to belong to the female lion with a smaller main (marišane). Presently, there are churches of various denominations including Methodist, Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Uniting Reformed, Zion Christian Church and International Pentecostal Holiness Church.

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<sup>73</sup> crocodile

<sup>74</sup> duiker

<sup>75</sup> The sun

<sup>76</sup> eagle

<sup>77</sup> lion

### 2.1.5 The story of the virgin martyr, Manche Masemola



*The demure stone statue of Manche Masemola, above the western entrance of Westminster Abbey, London*  
(Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster)

The Anglican Church which arrived in South Africa in 1870 also found its way to Bopedi. It was introduced to the village of GaMarishane in 1929 by Father Augustine Moeka of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection. During that

time English and German missionaries were permeating the strongholds of traditional leadership and establishing churches in the former province of Transvaal. Against the background of a community still deeply rooted in African tradition, suspicion and mistrust, some embraced Christianity and expressed their wish to be baptized. Amongst them was a teenage girl who was born around 1913 called Manche Masemola. Her parents had arrived in the village from the Tubatse (Steelpoort) area. Masemola had two older brothers and a younger sister, Mabule. According to the Westminster Abbey website, she also grew up with her cousin, Lucia.

The lass whose age estimation ranges from 14 to 16 attended the Anglican Church with her cousin, Lucia. She later began attending classes twice a week with the aim of being baptized. Her parents objected to this due to among other reasons, that she would train to become a nun. They feared that they would lose her labour to the household; that she would not marry and they would lose out on lobola. It is also clear that they also feared the “scandal” of being associated with Christians.



**This plaque on the wall of St Peter's Anglican Church in GaMarishane gives one an idea of Manche's age at the time of her death**

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

Though her parents beat her thoroughly in order to stop her from going to church, she continued with her attendance of the classes twice a week. To intensify their measures, they took away her clothes in order to keep her indoors. The young girl ran away naked and hid in the bushes. According to the Westminster Abbey website, when they finally found her on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1928, they beat her to death.

In fact, according to other written versions of this event, "they led her to a secluded place in 1928 and killed her with a hoe."

Subsequently, in 1975 the name of Manche Masemola was placed on the church calendar as she was canonized. Today her stone statue stands among other statues of martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Westminster Abbey, London. The Anglican church regards the century as the most violent era in the history of Christianity.

In Alexandra township, Gauteng Province work started on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008 to build a multi-lingual and multi-racial church in her name. It is situated at 21, Burns Avenue, Lombardy East to serve the residence of East Bank. On completion it will seat 250 and be known as St Manche Masemola Anglican Church.



***Land measuring 18 metres by 8 metres in size was cleared on the banks of a stream feeding the Jukskei River in Alexandra township, Gauteng Province for the building of the St Manche Masemola Anglican Church***

(Picture by [www.joburg.org.za](http://www.joburg.org.za))



*At the end of 2008 the building of the St Manche Masemola Anglican Church which was started on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008 in Alexandra Township was completed*

(Picture by TM Mojapelo)

## 2.2 Oral History

### 2.2.1 Direto tša Batau le magoši a bona

#### Ba Masemola

Ba re:

Re ba Masemol'a Pôô le Mokwene,  
Bana ba nong e kgolo Matlebjane,  
Ngwato 'a Nkwana e tšwa Tswako,  
E re ka re: ke a fofa, phofa di a gana.

Re Batswako batšwa-Mphanama  
Batho ba ba boago Seoko,  
Seokodibeng se se meriti mebedi,  
Mong wa maloba.

Gabo Mmaselepe Mahlako,  
Selepe maeka-ekê, selepe gomela mere o remile,  
O se tla ba wa rema le mehwelere-mpa,  
Mehlare e ilago.

Re Malaka maso, mašweu ka dikala,  
Malaka abo Mmasefiše sa Mahlaba,  
Maefadu maganwa ke bohulwana,  
Madumela boswana.

Malaka bana ba mosadi yo moso Kgaladi,  
Masommele, mašweu ka dikala,  
Maefadu a go ganwa ke bohurbedu,  
Rena le ba maefatšwana a maoto a kgomo.

### **Kgoši Mokwene**

Mokwene 'a Mmadire 'a marumo a mantši,  
Marumo malala kgotla,  
Mahloka ntlo ya go lala,  
Ntlo e letše dikgwaletšo  
Kgophe se letše tšhidi ya marumo.

### **Kgoši Tsêkê**

Tsêkê a Bapela 'a Mokwene'a Mmadire,  
O Ile 'bete sa kgomo 'a bogale,  
O Ile 'bete sa kgomo 'a Matebeleng,  
A tšama a betologela ditšhaba.  
Tsêkê o ile tsêke go metswitswana,  
A tšea o mong a ntšha potlana.

### **Kgoši Mabowe**

O re:  
Ke Mmakgati ya mafarafara kumodi,  
Kgati itiya bagwera ba rrago.  
Ke šabašaba la noka ya Ngwaritsi,  
Le se nago mpy'e lebelo.  
Na ga le re: Nape mošito ga owo?  
Hleng go kwala mošito wa go lelekiša tšhegane  
Le Matisa a dimpana?  
Tlošana nabo Mabowe 'a Kau, swan'a segôlô.  
Mmakgati ya mafarafara komeng,  
Kua Mankgabane 'a kgati seitiya balata,  
Seitiya ba malapa a manyane,  
Ba malapa a magolo ba fela ba ituletše,  
E lego boratswalake Lehlagare la ga Masemola.

### **Kgoši Tsêkê (Molomo'a tau)**

O re:

Ke molomo'a tau kotwana,  
Molomo'a tau sewela matôta,  
Sewela le majabele a magoro ka gofela.

Ge ke tšea kôtse, ke tšea selepe,  
Ke hlabana ntwā Maroteng,  
Kua Bopedi ga Mmapitšane 'a Masoka.  
'Lepe sa Makwa ga se reme,  
Se rema kutu tša mesehla le mehwelere.

### **Košana ya go reta dithaba tša GaMasemola**

ThabaPshiring ke ya mošate  
ThabaHunoto ke ya dikome  
Thaban'aMalope ke ya ditšhwene  
Tswanalentlhana le Morwamaraile.  
Nna nkabe ke tseba go fofa  
Le nna ka fofela godimo ga dithaba.

### 2.2.2 The local version of the Manche Masemola story

Interestingly, the local version of events that led to Manche's death is different. The girl who was the first daughter of Masegadike and Marobe Masemola was not killed by her parents! Oral evidence by the villagers has it that her mother was surprised that even though the young girl attended classes on Wednesdays and Sundays, she managed to till the fields as expected. According to 90 years-old Rev Seporo Dolamo, Masegadike's fears were fuelled when Father Moeka organized seven girls to train for sisterhood. Manche told Father Moeka that if her parents insisted that she should not be baptized, she'd be baptized with her own blood. Her parents beat her every time she went to church. She'd run away and go sit on top of a big rock. According to Letebele Masemola whose mother was Masegadike's neighbour, in those days girls wore *lebole*<sup>78</sup> and *ntepa*<sup>79</sup> from the waist down and *semabejane*<sup>80</sup> to cover the breasts, while a kanga would cover the body. One day she arrived at the church service without the top garment. She explained to the sisters that her mother thought without the *semabejane* she'd not be able to come to church and the sisters gave her clothes to wear. One day after Manche had finished her tilling for the day, she hid the hoe under some grass. The next day her mother and her sister continued from where she had left off and in the process covered Manche's hoe even deeper into the soil. When Manche arrived in the field, she could not find her hoe. Long after this incident during harvest time, the hoe re-surfaced from underneath the grass and soil. Even though Manche tried to explain to her mother that it was exactly where she had hidden the hoe, her mother did not believe her and forbade her from touching it. The mother thought it had been taken away by wizards who wanted to harm her daughter. Due to mistrust and suspicion, her mother discussed the matter with her husband. According to 66 year-old granny, Letebele Diale whose granny Letebele's grave is a few metres from Manche's,

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<sup>78</sup> apron

<sup>79</sup> Back skirt

<sup>80</sup> Top garment covering breasts

Masegadike asked Marobe to take the hoe to a traditional doctor so as to fix the witch. The mutiman warned him not to continue with the fatal trap as he would regret the consequences, but his wife was adamant. Unfortunately, when her daughter took hold of the hoe, she was struck by a debilitating pain which caused her death at the age of 14. Some go on to say that her younger sister, Mabule who knew about the plan died from the shock a few months later in May. She was buried alongside her younger sister. Some say the place where they are buried was their *mafuri*<sup>81</sup> while others say it was in the kraal. Their father planted euphorbia trees beside their graves near their home in Thuputlaneng (near the current Vlak village). Even after Masegadike was baptized in 1969, she refused to discuss the vents around Manche's death and always responded by saying it was a secret between her and her daughter. After their deaths, the family moved to Makgapeng. Both Thuputlaneng and Makgapeng are part of GaMarishane village's section known as Mašemong. This was the part of the village reserved for the fields. Later, some villagers erected temporary structures near their fields which later became their homes.

At the time of our research visit to the graves, the euphorbia trees which served as grave markers had been replaced by tombstones. There are still many euphorbia trees in the area. Due to the traditional unmarked/unfenced village boundaries, some outsiders sometimes mistake Thuputlaneng to be part of the GaPhaahla village. This is also caused by the fact that the main road to the site is accessed through the GaPhaahla village (Road D4263). However, from the village of Vlak, GaMarishane there is an alternative narrow road used by the locals.

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<sup>81</sup> backyard

According to Rev Seporo Dolamo the following were in charge of the Anglican Church since its inception at GaMarishane:

- Father Augustine Moeka
- Rev. Mashilo Masemola
- Rev. Mosodi Matlebjane
- Rev. Alfred Matladi
- Rev. Seporo Dolamo
- Rev. Frans Nemakhavhane

I want to believe that the written version is not the result of mischief, but interpretation in translation. In Sepedi, *ka mogoma* can mean with a hoe or by means of a hoe. By means of a hoe can mean that “the hoe was a means to an end”. So, whoever narrated the story to the researcher/writer was not wrong to say *o bolailwe ka mogoma* because it was after holding the bewitched hoe that she died. But, on the other hand it suited Christian denialism not to credit a “heathen” doctor with the ability to take life.

Whatever the real cause of her death was, but she died for her faith as she is quoted to have said: *I shall be baptized with my own blood*. It happened and she became a very young virgin martyr. Africa’s only saint!

To the annoyance of her mother, in 1935 a small group of Christians made a pilgrimage to her grave. When other groups followed in 1941 and 1949, it was clear that the spiritual wave was unstoppable. The pilgrimage turned into an annual event undertaken on the first weekend of August. It attracts hundreds of Christians from far and near to the village of GaMarishane in the Limpopo Province. 41 years later in 1969 many villagers could not believe their eyes when her mother, Mmasegadike was baptized!

## CHAPTER 3

### CONSULTING LOCAL OPINIONS

#### List of sources

- i. **Rev Seporo Dolamo** - Retired priest of St Peter's Anglica Church, GaMarishane, aged 90
- ii. **Rev Dr Mphakane Kupa** - A Uniting Reformed Church priest; a scholar in Media Studies and Evangelism; a lecturer at the University of Limpopo
- iii. **Rev Segome Harry Ramaila** – Author of documents and books on the Origins of the Batau; priest of the Lutheran Church and recipient of the Order of Ikhamanga
- iv. **Ms Letebele Diale** – Granny whose mother was a neighbour of Saint Manche Masemola's family at the old Thuputlaneng Village, aged 66
- v. **Ms Lucy Masemola** - Old historian of GaMarishane, aged 78
- vi. **Ms Letebele Masemola** - A relative of Manche whose parents lived at Thuputlaneng village, aged 61
- vii. **Mr Mantaneng Masemola** - An old village hunter and mountain Climber, aged 73
- viii. **Mr Thaule Masemola** - Aged 65, headman of neighbouring Mathapisa village, a sub-section of GaMarishane.

### Sources of Reference:

- i. Makgaleng M.M, Tswala e a Ja, J.L. Van Schaik, 1964
- ii. Ramaila Epafra Mogagabise, Setlogo sa Batau
- iii. Ramaila Epafra Mogagabise, Seriti sa Thabantsho, Bona Press Ltd, 1953
- iv. Ramaila Harry Segome, Thalabodiba, Maskew Miller, 1995

## CHAPTER 4

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Manche Masemola grave site to be declared a Grade II heritage site which has special qualities making it significant within the context of a province in terms of the heritage assessment criteria set out in section 3(2) and prescribed under section 6 (1) and 2.
- The heritage site to be resourced through the securing of sponsorships from government departments and private sector. Fundraising campaigns and donations from members of society also to be considered.
- Advantage should be taken of the already existing recognition of her international and national status in the form of institutions established in her honour viz. the Westminster Abbey statue in London and the St. Manche Masemola Anglican Church in Alexandra township, Gauteng Province.
- A fence or wall to be erected around the heritage site for security reasons and access control.
- A museum or heritage centre to be created within the site housing relevant artefacts. These would include a hoe, traditional garments for young girls of her age, the Bible etc.
- Submission to be made to the provincial government for a tarred road from major road to the site, eg. Tarring Road D4263.

- Arts and Crafts articles to be exhibited and fairly traded at the heritage centre to create employment for villagers and eradicate poverty.
- Erection of big nameboard at entrance to the site.
- Erection of signboards along the major roads to the site eg. Polokwane/Jane Furse road.
- Negotiation with the church to move Manche Masemola Day from the current first week of August to the 4<sup>th</sup> February, the date of her death.
- Creation of a website for the heritage site to reach international tourists and promote the St. Manche Masemola Day.
- Introduction of a shuttle service between the site and Polokwane.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**APPENDIX**