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The History of the Bakwena of Moxopa.

The origin of the Bakwena is at Mokaditlase (North) at the river named Botletli which today, we call the Zumbesi. They crossed that river with other native tribes. They separated from these after crossing the Botletli river; their chief was Malope. The chiefs that were before Malope are not accurately known. Those who relate the Bakwena history always begin it with Malope who is regarded as the father of all the bakwena.

The Bakwena lived at Lowe. Lowe lies below the Marico and Notsane rivers towards the West. Later they removed their abode, and went down the Marico river to the place called Rathateng. When they went to Rathateng, Chief Malope was already dead. They went there with Mmangwato and Ngwaketse the sons of Malope. Later Ngwaketse and his elder brother Mmangwato separated.

Now we follow the generation of Ngwaketse. The child of Ngwaketse was Phogane. His children were Mphele and his younger brother Mphelane. Mphele beget Setlhare, Setlhare beget Mogope, Mogope beget Modise. The children of Modise are Ramoangwane, Sefike and Ramorola.

Modise removed his abode from Rathateng, he was then the chief of the Bakwena. He went to settle on the mountains which are now known as the mountains of Phalane, he lived at the foot of the mountain which to this day is called the little mountain of Modise or Malope. While Modise was chief at the mountains of Phalane, his eldest son Ramoangwane was spoiled by the Bakwena by showing too great a respect for him, and on one occasion when they had set out on a hunting party he hit his father with a thin stick, pretending as if he was hitting a dog. His father uttered a terrible curse upon him and said: "Are you making me your dog? You will never inherit my chieftainship, your younger brothers will rule over you, until

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you look sideways at the chieftainship like a hyena." The chieftainship was then given to Sefike his younger brother.

The children of Sefike are Dijwe and Mooketsi. Dijwe became chief over the Bakwena, as he was the eldest child. When Dijwe died, he left three sons that we know of. At this time the chieftainship remained with Mooketsi his younger brother since the children of Dijwe were still young. Amongst these three boys, the child of the great house, the wife of which was married to bring forth the chief of the tribe, was born last. The first who was born amongst them was More who was followed by Kau, and Tsoku the child of the house which was to produce the chief was born last.

Whilst Mooketsi was still the ruler of the tribe he called the Bakwena together as he realised that More the son of his elder brother was old enough and he said: "I cannot continue to feed on the cow's udder in the presence of my elder brother's child. Let More become chief since Tsoku is still too young to become a chief; when he comes of age, More will hand the chieftainship over to him." More became chief of the Bakwena, he won the people's popularity and they loved him, as he did great things whilst he was with them. When Mooketsi handed over Tsoku's chieftainship to More they were no longer living at the little mountain of Modise of Mogope, they had settled at Mabjanamatshwane. Mabjanamatshwane are black mountains which lie between the Kgowe and Legapane rivers (North East of Brits).

When Tsoku came of age, Mooketsi spoke to the Bakwena and the son of his elder brother and said: "Tsoku has grown up, let him be given his chieftainship." More and a section of the Bakwena refused with the chieftainship. Those Bakwena were:- Thebe of Mopala and Mmahuma of Lebethe and Radise of Kolanyane and their people, as they were sub-chiefs. Thebe of Mopala was chief of the Ramorola section, Mmahuma of Lebethe was chief of the Mogajana section and Radise of Kolanyane was chief of the Barolong.

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Since there was now a misunderstanding among the Bakwena, some in favour of More and others in favour of Tsoku who was the rightful heir to the chieftainship, their father Mooketsi called the chief of Phokeng, Sekete of Ramorwa to come and bring them together in friendship. Sekete came and said: "Let the Bakwena sit down and let Tsoku and More take their shields and spears and fight. The one who has killed the other shall remain as chief of the Bakwena."

This judgment did not please the Bakwena as well as Mooketsi their head. Mooketsi then said to Tsoku: "Do not fight with a dog which is yours, it may bite you."

More with Umahuma of Letethe and Thebe of Mopala and Radise of Kolanyana and their followers then went away and came to settle at Lengwatladi or Mwangwatladi on the west of Pienars river.

Tsoku remained chief of the section of the Bakwena which stayed behind with him at Mabjanamatshwane, together with his uncle Mooketsi. Tsoku was spoiled by the Bakwena through honouring him more than it was necessary.

The first thing he did which spoilt his chieftainship was this:

There was a certain man who was chief of the Batlase and whose father was dead. This chief was wearing a string of beads called "bolokwane" that is to say "inheritance", which was taken off from his father after his death and before his burial. Tsoku asked this man to give it to him. This man who was the chief of the Batlase section refused saying, "It is an inheritance, it is never given away or offered to anyone, it will be taken off from me when I am dead, and given to one who is my relative." Tsoku asked him persistently, and it was on a Wednesday. On Thursday Tsoku called a public meeting. Whilst the people were gathered together, Tsoku stood up, and took a knife and cut off the string of beads from the chief of the Batlase. He then said: "Bakwena! Let the gathering

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disperse, I wanted you to witness my taking away of the string of beads from that man of the Batlase!"

Now, the people were astonished, they began to realise that Tsoku was their murderer if he dares take away an inheritance which nobody could risk to take away. This section of the Batlase then broke away from him and they went to join More at Lengwatladi.

The people continued to say bad things about him. This is his second misdeed. He ordered his servants to go to the veld and collect all the roan cattle no matter to whom they belonged, and bring them to him that they should be his without buying them. Now the Bakwena got displeased, even their father Mooketsi himself became displeased.

The Bakwena broke away in great numbers from him and went to More at Lengwatladi, and even the uncle of the chiefs got away. Here is his third and serious misdeed:

He asked the Bakwena a question and said: "When a person is pregnant, in what direction does the child face?" The Bakwena said: "In that case it is only God who knows." Then Tsoku ordered his servants to catch hold of a woman who is pregnant and cut her open so that he may see in what direction the child faces when it is in its mother's womb. Indeed the servants did this for fear of the chief and Tsoku satisfied his wicked desire. On account of this act, the Bakwena in great numbers broke away from Tsoku, who was left with a few remnants and they followed More at Lengwatladi. Later the few who remained with him, realised that they would be attacked by the armies of the Bapo tribe and made captives owing to their smallness in number. They said to the younger brother of Tsoku: "We had better follow the Bakwena to More at Lengwatladi." Indeed they packed up and followed their brothers, Tsoku being still with them.

7. On their arrival, they payed homage to More, and he received them. More devised a plan for him and conspired with

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Mmusi of Tagane. Mmusi sent some people to Tsoku and said: "Why, being a chief who has just arrived don't you come and greet me and ask for a woman to marry so that our blood may become one?" Tsoku sent some men to go and ask for a girl to marry from Chief Mmusi. They fancied a light-complexioned girl there and they were given her.

When they had been invited and had gone to pay a visit to the wife at her father's home, Mmusi the Bakgatla chief sent men to capture Tsoku's cattle and to kill the few people who were left behind when the others had gone to the chief's wedding at Mmusi's place.

(By the way Tsoku's village was built on one side where he lived with the people he came with from Mabjanamatshwane.)

Now when Tsoku realized that he only had a few people with him, he surrendered to his younger brother More. More and his son Segwati were planning to kill him. Eventually they killed him at the cattle post. He was killed by the son of his younger brother Segwati by strangling him with a thong.

The wives of Tsoku and their children entered. More ordered his army of the Bakwena to drive them across the Lepelle river and leave them in the Bapedi country. They were thus left in a cruel manner without anything to live upon. What happened to them eventually is not known. That was the end of Tsoku and his chieftainship.

More returned to Mabjanamatshwane.

After the death of Tsoku, More returned to Mabjanamatshwane with big tribe of the Bakwena together with his son Segwati and his younger brothers. He fought many wars whilst he was there, being feared by many tribes. He fought with the Bapo tribe, their armies meeting at the little river where Brits is situated today. The people of Mosetlha invited a very large army from Mmalekutu the Bapedi chief. The head of this army was at the Tsewe mountain near Kgabalatsane, and its tail was at the Letswai mountain.

/At dawn.....

... At dawn when the army appeared out of the forest near which the people of Rabokala live today, More said to his son Segwati: "I have never seen such a big army! Let us offer the "white cattle" of Mma-Segwati and pay homage". Segwati thereupon pull out a stubble of grass by the roots and threw it at his father saying: "Take this and clean yourself. I cannot take our cattle and give them to the Bapedi. I will fight". The attack commenced. The Bakwena resisted and fought until they drove it a long distance as their elder Segwati had said.

They killed them until they reached Letswai mountain.

The people who were all fighting against the Bakwena at Mabjanamatshwane were (a) The Bapedi of Mmalekutu (b) The tribe of Motsha (c) The tribe of Seabe (d) The Bahaduba.

The country of Matlhare where the Batlase and Barolong lived had been given by Mmalekutu to five tribes. They are (a) Moletlane, (b) Mokopana (c) Maune (d) Letwebe (e) Laka. On their arrival they drove away the Batlase and the Barolong. They set fire to their village and they captured the cattle of the Batlase and the Barolong, which had been driven to safety before the war to Mengongobe (Brits district).

When the people of Mabjanamatshwane saw smoke rising from the place of Matlhare, the village which had been set on fire, they rushed to the rescue. They found the armies at their leisure and killed them. Now More remained ruling his people in a state of peace with nothing more to fear.

#### The Worship of God.

It does appear that the native people had some knowledge about the living God although they did not have a clear understanding about Him. When the Bakwena lived at Mabjanamatshwane, they had a certain place which they regarded as a holy one. There, you find a little mountain with flat stones. All the kinds of grass that are found in the veld have grown there. When there was distress such as scarcity of rain,

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people picked out a black sheep and took it to the chief and they would say: "Chief, we ask for rain". The chief would then order that it be taken to the Batlase who were regarded as priests. The Batlase took the sheep and went forth, men, women and children. On their way they would sing songs of asking. They slaughtered the sheep and placed its meat on a stone that resembled an altar and then returned home still singing the songs of asking. It would then rain.

The Gospel comes to the Bakwena.

The gospel was introduced to the Bakwena tribe by one man of the Batlase section whose name was Leekwe. This man was captured by the Zulus of Tshaka and he eventually fell into the hands of the Boers in Natal. Whilst he was with these Boers, he saw their children attending school. Those children told him about Jehova the living God and he got to love God very much. Always when the children of the Boers were at school, he would be seen sitting on his haunches outside the school and eventually the teacher noticed that he liked learning. He asked the parents of the children to allow him to attend ~~school~~ school with their children. The parents of the children allowed him and he learned with all earnestness. Some people say that he learned until he surpassed the children of the Boers and became their teacher. Some say that he knew the lessons by memory but he did not know how to read. But what we know is that he came from Natal with a Dutch Bible which he presented to the congregation of Bethanie, it is still there even today. It is kept to show visitors that it is the first Bible that came to the Bakwena (Bethanie).

Whilst he was in Natal, he remembered his bretheren at Bethanie and he brought the gospel of God to them. He taught them and even indicated to them where they could find a minister. That minister was at Lefurutshe (Linokana) where there was the first minister of Hermannsburg, amongst the Bakwena of Mogopa at Bethanie. He was followed by his son W. Behrens who is at Brits today.

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Those Bakwena who went to fetch the minister, are those who had lived at Mmantabole (Bethanie). The reader will know that the Bakwena we have been speaking about in this history, are the Bakwena of Mogopa, whose large village today is Bethanie. He is the man who went out from Bethanie to teach the gospel. The Dutch people baptised him by the name of David Modibane.

The men set out in wagons to fetch the minister at Lefurutshe. The name of those men who went to fetch the minister was Pudungwe, to whom in his baptism, was added the name of Petrus Sepeng.

The Bakwena who are at Mmantabole left Mabjanamentshwane and went to Matlhare, their chief being Tedi Mmamogale. After Mmamogale ran away from the Europeans to the country of Mosweswe, they removed their abode to Mmantabole. That is the history of the Bakwena of Mogopa.

#### Bakwena of Phalane.

The Bakwena of Phalane are also the children of Malope. Their father, the big Flame of Fire, is the father of the Bakwena of Setshele of Moteswale. Setshele's father is Legwale.

The Bakwena of Phalane and the Bakwena of Setshele were separated from each other because of a dispute of a beast. When this beast grew up a horn came out only on the one side. On the other end hairs grew up where the horn should have been. The hairs grew up exactly as a horn and it took the exact shape of the other horn of that beast. Most of the people desired that this beast should have belonged to the eldest child who is the chief, so that when other chiefs came to see it they should find <sup>it</sup> in the chief's cattle kraal. This beast belonged to Mokoke the chief's younger brother. Mokoke and his followers refused with it. There broke out a war over this beast. Mokoke was conquered and he and his people fled.

When Mokoke fled, he crossed the Odi (Crocodile River) so that the army which drove him away should not close him in on /the flooded.....



the flooded river. True enough when they came there they found the river in flood. The Bakwena under Mokohe lived by killing roebucks at their calving time in the month of Maboye (November). There was an exchange of swear words between them since they were unable to cross the flooded river and close in with each other. The councillors of the chief said: "Get gone! You are no more Bakwena, you venerate as your tribal totem those roebucks that you are eating", those yonder also said: "Yes! We are the Baphalane". They accepted that curse with joy to become the name of the tribe, and they were called Baphalane as from that day.

After that the Baphalane called a meeting and said: "Let us look for a country that will be our own, and never again come together with any one who is a Mokwena." When they uttered these words, they were at Tlhapelabjale where the Thokwe river meets the Odi. The Baphalane then went away and passed through Botlhapatshwene's Nek which is towards the East of the big Thabaximbi mountain, and which the Europeans call Makisnek. They invaded the people of Modikele, conquered them and increased themselves with them. Secondly, they invaded the people of Nku, conquered them and increased themselves with them. Thirdly they invaded the people of Fule, they conquered them and added them to their number. At this time they were already a big nation. Each time they went out on an invasion they washed the baboon at Botlhapatshwene before they entered a village.

Now we shall see what it means to wash the baboon. When a man is dead and has been killed by another man, we call that dead one the baboon of the killer. The custom of the native people is this that if a person has killed another in battle, he must cut him open and let the entrails out.

Our fathers say: "If a person is not cut open, the person who has killed him will be constipated, now in order that he should not be constipated, he must cut him open, and take off a certain portion (limb) from the dead person, whether it be

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an arm, or an ear but what is required most is the private parts. This portion will be shown to the men and then it will be taken to a witchdoctor. The witchdoctor will take this portion and roast it and grind it and mix it with some medicines and then have the warriors washed with it. Now, it is then that the army can enter the home kraal, that is what is meant by washing the baboon.

After they had increased their number by these three tribes, they captured people who are regarded as strangers and they asked them and said: "Tell us where we can find a beautiful country, where we may go and settle". They told them about the country which is today the country of Laka. There they found six chiefs, they attacked them and took the country from them. In fact no battles took place there, they merely feared them as they had heard of their fame. One of these chiefs was R Ratime. Chief Mokohe died there, in the territory which belongs to Laka today.

When the chief died, the rightful heir to the chieftainship was Mafodi who was still a minor when these territories were captured. He was son of the great house from which the heir was to come. Now Kobete refused to give up the chieftainship as he was the one who was in command of the armies during the lifetime of his father, yet he belonged to the smaller house.

Just at this time, whilst the men were still having a consultation with Mafodi, a hunting expedition was undertaken. They killed a lot of animals, giraffe bulls, eland bulls and buffalo bulls. Their hoofs were cooked and pulled out, dried up, put in bags and carried to Mmalekutu in Bopediland. They were shown to Mmalekutu and they said: "Look! The reason why Kobete refuses to hand over Mafodi's chieftainship is that he is led to this contemptuous attitude by the cattle of the Baphalane whose hoofs you see here."

When Mmalekutu saw the hoofs of the animals, he invited other kix tribes to join him and he came and put an end to the  
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Baphalane and confirmed Mafodi as chief.

Kobete fled to Mmaleoko where the people of Laka originally lived. Mafudi ruled over the few remnants that were still with him. When Kobete arrived at Mmaleoko, he said to the people of Laka: "The Baphalane have been annihilated by Mmalekutu. Come along and take possession of their territory for yourselves." Indeed this they did, they killed the Baphalane and captured the territory which became theirs and to this day, it is the territory of the people of Laka.

Then the remnants which were the children of Mafodi fled back to the little mountains of Modise of Mogope. It is there where they are living even today.

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