

THE SUCCESSION CRISIS OVER THE ILLNESS AND DEATH OF KGOSI SEKGOMA II
OF THE BANGWATO, 1925: WESTERN VERSUS TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

by

Michael Crowder

The problem of choice of treatment by western or traditional medicine was one faced by Africans who had access to both healing systems during the colonial period. The dilemma is not, however, one for which contemporary evidence is readily available, or even one that was often openly admitted. In the case of Sekgoma II, Kgosi of the Bangwato from 1923 to 1925 in what was then the Bechuanaland Protectorate, we are fortunate in having a transcript of a kgotla meeting held at the end of October 1925 to discuss the serious illness that had befallen him three months before and to decide whether or not he should be transferred from the hands of the British doctors by whom he was being treated to those of traditional Bangwato healers. (1) Furthermore, we have access not only to the detailed records of the course of Sekgoma's illness kept by his European doctors but also their own recorded reactions to the threat, as they saw it, of his being handed over for treatment to traditional healers. (2)

The debate is significant not only in the context of current attitudes towards Western medicine in a traditional polity that had undergone a considerable degree of Westernization as a result of the conversion of Sekgoma's father, Khama III (1872-1873; 1875-1923), to Christianity in the late 1870s and consequent formal abolition of traditional medical practices; it was also of considerable importance for both the British administration and Sekgoma's immediate family to keep him alive since his heir, under the prevailing rule of primogeniture, was Seretse, a minor only four years old. For the British, his death would mean having to rule through a regent. This would be the next adult male in line of succession, Sekgoma's half brother, Tshekedi, who was only twenty, away at school, and quite unprepared for the task of administering the largest of the Tswana states that made up the Bechuanaland Protectorate. For Sekgoma's sisters and his daughter, Oratile, who was married into the powerful Ratshosa family, the accession of Tshekedi would mean the exclusion of Sekgoma's house from access to political power and the fruits of office until Seretse was old enough to take on the Chieftaincy. The crisis over Sekgoma's illness further widened existing rifts in the extended royal family, as factions jockeyed for position in the face of the possible demise of their monarch and crystallized into two main camps, with those most closely related to Sekgoma supporting his continued treatment by Western medicine, while their opponents advocated his transfer to the care of traditional healers.

* Kgotla = the forum where justice was dispensed, administrative decisions were made, and public meetings were held. It was presided over by the kgosi (chief) and, until the 1950s, was restricted in attendance to adult males.

Sekgoma and the Ratshosas

As the elder surviving son of Khama III, Sekgoma was his rightful successor. Until 1916, however, it seemed that he might not succeed because, after a series of bitter disputes with his father over matters both public and personal, he had been driven into exile at the turn of the century. As Neil Parsons has put it, the root of the problem was the effort of "a son, well into his maturity, to assert his independence of thought and action from a masterful father". (3) Among the many matters of conflict between the two wilful men that are crucial to an understanding of the dynastic rivalry that subsequently arose over Sekgoma's illness is the rise to power of Ratshosa Motswetle. Himself of distant royal descent, Ratshosa married Sekgoma's imperious full-sister, Bessie, who took advantage of her brother's estrangement from their father to seek the succession for herself and her children. For a while Khama entertained such a possibility, and even threatened Sekgoma with it (4), though there was no precedent either for the succession of a woman to the office of kgosi or of succession through the female line. Nevertheless, Ratshosa acquired great power and wealth, succeeding Sekgoma as Khama's Secretary. It was only in 1902, with the death of Bessie, that Ratshosa and his three sons ceased to be a major dynastic threat; their position was further undermined in 1905 when Semane, Khama's fourth wife in a series of monogamous marriages that had ended as a result of death or divorce, gave birth to a son, Tshekedi. In 1907 Khama publicly disowned Sekgoma in favour of Tshekedi, whom he also made legal heir to his own fortune. Although Ratshosa remained in office as Khama's Secretary, he began to offer support to Sekgoma's house, to which he belonged by marriage, against Tshekedi's house. By 1910 he had fallen out of favour with Khama, who replaced him as Secretary, but he further cemented relations with Sekgoma's house that year when his second son, Simon, married Oratile, Sekgoma's eldest daughter. (5)

In 1916, the elderly Khama was kicked by a horse and had to undergo several operations. Sekgoma took the opportunity to effect a reconciliation with his father and took up residence in his lolapwa. It seemed clear that Sekgoma would now take his rightful place as heir to Khama, though the latter did not officially present him to the British Administration as such until 1920, when Khama took him to see the Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Sir John Macgregor, who immediately telegraphed the good news to his High Commissioner, Prince Arthur of Connaught, who was also Governor-General of South Africa. Macgregor, apparently aware of the attachment of the Tswana to the rule of primogeniture as far as succession was concerned, said that he had never doubted that Sekgoma would succeed. (6) For the British, the reconciliation must have come as a relief, since Tshekedi was still a schoolboy and Gorewan, the next in line of succession, was known to be a weak man. Ratshosa, himself, had died shortly after the reconciliation, but still out of favour with Khama. However, in 1919, Khama appointed Ratshosa's eldest son, Johnnie, as his Secretary, while Simon, who was headmaster of the Khama Memorial School, also helped him with state affairs.

In 1921, Sekgoma's wife, Tebogo, daughter of Khama's most trusted brother, bore him his first legitimate son, Seretse, and two years later a second son. The succession now seemed doubly secure and the position of the Ratshosas entrenched with both the current Bangwato ruler and his heir. Tshekedi, once heir-apparent, now became third in line of succession. The rise to, and arrogant (7) use of, power by the Ratshosas inevitably evoked the resentment of less favoured branches of a royal family which, since Khama's own father had been polygamous, was very extensive. Among those most resentful of the Ratshosas was Phethu Mphoeng, Khama's nephew. Although Phethu's father, Mphoeng, who was Khama's half-brother, had gone into exile in 1895 over a dispute about Khama's position as head of the church in

* The British High Commissioner in South Africa was responsible for the administration of the so-called High Commission Territories - the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Basutoland, and Swaziland. Until 1930, the offices of Governor-General and High Commissioner were combined.

Gammangwato, Phethu was reconciled with his uncle in 1903, and in 1912 his father also was reconciled with Khama. Phethu subsequently married Khama's daughter, Milly, and was made headman over the important district of Mmadinare. The Ratshosas resented Phethu as a rival, while he in turn, as Parsons puts it, "stood in dread of losing the assurance of patronage on Khama's death". (8) This prospect was made the more fearsome in that Phethu was seen as a supporter of the London Missionary Society, Khama's church, which in a biography of their patron had not only injudiciously attacked the influence of the Ratshosas but described Sekgoma as "weak and easy-going". (9)

Sekgoma's Accession and the Downfall of Phethu

On Monday 19th February 1923, Khama III died and was succeeded without dispute by Sekgoma. Born in 1869, Sekgoma was only 54 years old when he came to the Bangwato throne, apparently in good health and son of a man who had lived well into his nineties. There was no reason at the time for either the British Administration or the royal family to expect that there would be a further change in regime for some years to come. Indeed, there was every reason to hope that Sekgoma would continue the stable administration that had characterized the last fifteen years of Khama's reign. Within a few months of taking office, however, Sekgoma, egged on by the Ratshosas, fuelled a bitter dynastic feud by accusing his cousin, Phethu, of plotting to kill him. Phethu's close supporters were named as his younger brother, Oteng, and his cousins Lebang and Keletlokhile Raditladi, whose own father had gone into exile at the same time as Mphoeng in the dispute with Khama over the headship of the Church in Gammangwato. Like the Ratshosas, the Mphoengs and the Raditladis had prospered as a result of the penetration of the capitalist economy into the Bechuanaland Protectorate and owned extensive herds of cattle and a good deal of private property. They had also taken advantage of the opportunities offered by Western education. Oteng, for instance, was head of the local school at Mmadinare, of which his brother was headman, and ran a prosperous creamery. (10)

Phethu Mphoeng and his associates were accused of threatening to kill Sekgoma, either by assassination or through witchcraft. (11) Among his principal accusers were the Ratshosa brothers, and, in the enquiry that eventually led to the exile of both the Mphoengs and Raditladis to Crown Land, the bitterness of both families at the power of the Ratshosas surfaced time and time again. While the official who conducted the enquiry felt that there was no evidence to support the accusation that Phethu and his alleged associates had indeed contemplated assassinating their Chief (12), it was clear that Sekgoma himself was convinced that his life was in danger from Phethu, whom the administration believed had much wider support and a more powerful following than was immediately evident from the enquiry, where few spoke on his behalf. In everyone's mind was the recent assassination of the Bangwaketse Chief, Seapapitso, by his own brothers: one way of ridding a Tswana morafe of an unpopular chief was assassination, which would open up the succession to the next in line. But, as far as this was concerned, Phethu was not genealogically close. As Sekgoma himself stated: "There are none who can claim the chieftainship from me, they are of collateral branches and have no claim." (13) Much more to the point was Sekgoma's later remark that there cannot be two bulls in one kraal (14), for it does seem that Phethu in Mmadinare was very much a law unto himself. Concluding his indictment of his cousin, Sekgoma expressed surprise at Phethu as a Christian using witchcraft. "His wife is a Christian. I am surprised at my Sister. Where did she get the poisons? My Father, Khama, did not teach us these things." (15) In an attempt to avoid exile, Phethu and his associates petitioned the British Administration, and among other things accused the Ratshosas of monopolising education in Serowe. Even the Resident Magistrate at Serowe felt that the Ratshosas were trying to get control of money matters and had been gaining power ever since the death of Khama and that this was resented by many Headmen. Kelethokile, in particular, felt as a result of losing a case he had brought before Sekgoma against Simon Ratshosa that "whenever they wanted to do anything they were balked if it affected the Ratshosas - suggesting Chief Sekgoma always favoured the Ratshosas". (16) Phethu himself denied ever trying to dispute the chieftainship,

and time and again acknowledged that Sekgoma was his chief. "The talk of banishing us from the Country is not the Chief's words they are Simon Ratshosa's words." (17) Phethu also declared that "As for witchcraft I do not believe in it". (18) Nevertheless, the Mphoeng and Raditladi brothers were reluctantly banished from the Bamangwato Reserve by the British High Commissioner.

The Reconciliation between Sekgoma and Phethu

Phethu and his companions in exile seem to have accepted their fate without further demur. Apart from a lame attempt to get O D Schreiner, the Cape Town lawyer and champion of African causes, to take up their case with the High Commissioner soon after their banishment order was served, the Administration seems to have had no trouble from them. But back in Serowe the political situation had developed in such a way as to favour Phethu's later attempts to seek his ruler's forgiveness. Sekgoma himself was beginning to chafe under the excessive influence of the Ratshosas, in particular the two elder brothers Johnny, his Secretary, and Simon, his son-in-law. Though Sekgoma had been sent by his father to Lovedale for education (18), he was not much interested in the paper-work side of administration and had left this to John Ratshosa, who kept all the Chief's papers and dealt with all his correspondence. It seems Simon also had access to his father-in-law's papers. The growing rift between Sekgoma and the Ratshosas only came into the open when Phethu sought, in Sekgoma's words, "to come and give in". (19) Phethu met Simon Ratshosa in Francistown, just outside the Bamangwato Reserve, where he told him of his desire to make his peace with the chief. According to Sekgoma's letter to the Resident Magistrate, Simon asked Phethu why he did not go to Serowe anyway, since there was nobody to stop him as "there is no Chief in Serowe". (20) In view of this Sekgoma informed the Resident Magistrate that he could not use John Ratshosa to interpret for him when he came to see the Magistrate about Phethu's request to return to Serowe "because John, Simon and Obeditse are one thing". He therefore wanted to take "a fresh man" with him to Mafeking when he went to the Protectorate headquarters to see the Resident Commissioner about the matter. He also said he was quite restless about the fact that, against his wish, all his correspondence was kept at the Ratshosas' house. Sekgoma had learnt of Simon's treachery only a few days before he wrote this letter, when he was at Palapye Road to meet the Prince of Wales. Phethu had approached him and formally asked forgiveness, which Sekgoma did not refuse but insisted that it had to be sought properly in Serowe in the presence of all the people. (21) Of course, Phethu's statement about his encounter with Simon may have been mere calumny against a member of the family, whom he saw as responsible for his exile in the first place. If that is what it was, it certainly fell on fertile ground, for in a statement made on July 4th to the resident Commissioner Sekgoma declared "I do forgive Phethu" and that the troubles arose through people at whose insistence Phethu and his companions were banished.

I do not wish the Administration to intervene at this stage. I only wish His Honour to know how things were and when trouble does begin it will be through the Ratchosas (sic). When Phethu comes to apologise I will tell His Honour and tell him also the terms on which I have forgiven Phethu, which will be that he must not drink or brew beer and must come when I send for him. Simon Ratchosa is in the habit of reviling me to the people wherever he goes and wherever he writes to them from, but so far no trouble has arisen because I have taken no notice of his actions. (22)

Sekgoma also complained that it had been reported that certain "native leaders", among them Simon Ratshosa, were to see the Governor-General about the matter of incorporation into the Union and that he had not been "detailed by me to deal with such matters nor has he any right to do so". (23)

Sekgoma concluded his remarkable attack on his son-in-law by asking the resident Commissioner to take care lest messages purporting to come from him be in fact from Simon Ratshosa. In future all letters to him should be delivered personally by the Resident Magistrate at Serowe and not through Johnny Ratshosa or anyone else. Even so, he did not at this stage propose to call on Johnny or return his private and official correspondence until he had built a new office. Phethu duly made submission to Sekgoma and the Administration lifted the banishment order on the Mphoengs and Raditladis on the 24th July, so that they were able once again to take part in the political life of the Tribe. (24) The timing, from their point of view, could not have been better, for Gammangwato was about to be thrown into a three-month long crisis as a result of Sekgoma's increasingly serious ill health.

The Illness of Sekgoma II

At about 1.00 p.m. on 30 July, while he was looking at some horses at Parr's store in Serowe, Sekgoma II "suddenly got a peculiar staring look in his eyes" and walked away towards the BTA Store, "staggering like a drunken man". (25) Nevertheless, he acknowledged the greeting of a passerby. He then tripped over a log and collided with a pole. A white trader, Smith, helped him to his car, where he had two seizures. The Medical Officer at Serowe, Dr Drew, was called and reached him shortly after the second seizure. He then became comatose and he appeared to be unable to use his left arm and leg for about an hour. Then, at 4.00 p.m., he was assisted to his house, where he slept. At 8.30 p.m., just as Drew was coming into his room, he had a typical epileptic fit. The following morning he seemed quite recovered except for a bad headache, and informed Drew that he had had similar attacks at intervals of about a year though not every year. One of Sekgoma's attendants told the doctor that he had seen the Chief in two such attacks, one on the way up to Nata and one when he was out shooting near N'Kali.

Drew sent a very detailed report to his Principal Medical Officer at headquarters, in "view of the importance of this ailment from an administrative point of view". (26) Drew was instructed by his superior to keep Sekgoma under medical observation, by the Principal Medical Officer of the Protectorate who had previously been an asylum officer and suggested trying out a new drug - luminol - rather than the conventional bromide, which in old people sometimes causes a great deal of mental confusion. He also suggested that he be checked for kidney disease and, later, cerebral syphilis. (27)

Meanwhile, the Chief seemed to have recovered and went about his business, including a trip to one of his cattle posts some thirty miles from Serowe. There, on Sunday 23 August, he had three fits - at 2.00 a.m., 5.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. A message was sent to the Administration, and Major Hannay, the Acting Resident Magistrate, asked Dr Drew to go and fetch him. Drew found Sekgoma in fairly good condition but complaining of difficulty in passing urine. The Chief was brought into Serowe on Tuesday morning. In the evening the Medical Officer at Francistown arrived and the two doctors gave the Chief a thorough examination. They both agreed that the epilepsy was not the Jacksonian or partial variety but was grand mal. The two doctors were fairly up to date in their reading because, in view of a recent article in The Lancet on modern techniques in treating epilepsy, they ruled against using luminol and stuck to the more conventional bromide treatment. They sent off his blood for a Wasserman test, and concurred with the recommendation of some - unfortunately - unnamed headmen that he be sent down to the coast for a holiday, where he would be relieved of all administrative worries, which had become particularly burdensome during the Prince of Wales' recent visit. Since it also appeared that he had an urethral stricture, he could have this operated on there. The Principal Medical Officer concurred with these recommendations, in particular with regard to the operation for the stricture, which apparently Sekgoma had had for many years and which if "unduly delayed the result may at any time prove disastrous" (28), especially if the Chief were out of reach of assistance, as, of course, he had been when he had the fits at his cattle post.

Sekgoma was finally persuaded to go to Cape Town for the rest from worries of office which the doctors and some headmen were convinced were precipitating the attacks. In particular, it was felt that the worries connected with the visit of the Prince of Wales had been too much for him. Gorewan Kgamane, Sekgoma's cousin, and third in line of succession, was appointed Acting Chief. Dr Drew volunteered to accompany him as Sekgoma's own attendants "get into an absolute panic when there is anything wrong with the Chief". (29) Meanwhile, as preparations for Sekgoma's departure were being made, his condition was causing increasing anxiety among his people. He became very excited whenever discussing tribal politics and was suffering from frequent amnesia, no doubt brought on in large part by the bromide treatment. Arrangements were made for him to stay at the Monastery Nursing Home at Seapoint, but there was some consternation as to whether he would be accepted by the Reverend Mother since it was suspected that the cause of his stricture might be venereal in origin.

In the meantime, Dr Targett-Adams, the Medical Officer at Francistown, sent in a five-page, handwritten report outlining all the possible causes of Sekgoma's state over and above epilepsy. (30) Targett-Adams clearly saw himself as something of a psychologist of the African, for over and above attributing Sekgoma's condition to "worry and anxieties concerning his duties as chief", "fears of 'witchcraft'" were a contributing stimulus to his epileptic fits. Furthermore, there were at Serowe at least three factions pulling in contrary directions. The first comprised those "(like Sekgoma himself) who believe in (the folly) of bewitchment - a very real belief indeed in Natives". The second comprised Khama's widow, Semane, who was Sekgoma's immediate "nurse" and attendant, who, together with some of his relatives, was very reasonable and immediately agreed to the treatment suggested by Targett-Adams and Drew. A third party favoured getting a "native doctor or doctors to see him". This course, Targett-Adams suggested, must be avoided at all costs since, in his experience, "it adds to the unfortunate patient's and friends' troubles", since traditional doctors were not only concerned with the physical treatment of a malady but "Smelling out" the one who bewitched the patient. "Sekgoma is now in mortal terror of these superstitions." It was therefore essential to get him to Cape Town as soon as possible. Targett-Adams's ultimate prognosis was gloomy in the extreme: "Bad, he will probably last some time, but gradually become and perhaps slowly a physical and mental wreck." In forwarding his comments on traditional doctors to the Principal Medical Officer, Targett-Adams suggested that these were beliefs "from which we have not parted so very many years ago; & in Scotland even later than in England".

Sekgoma in Cape Town

Sekgoma finally left by train for Cape Town on 9th September, accompanied by Dr Drew and Headman Mathiba, the Chief Hut Tax Collector. Before leaving, Drew wrote to the Principal Medical Officer that he was not very optimistic about "Sekgoma's being able to take a very active part in tribal matters in the future". The headman and people took the attitude that "their chief is in my hands and that what I consider best, must be done ... if I fail them ... I am afraid I shall loose (sic) their confidence to a very great extent. The loyalty of these natives to their Chief in his illness is quite pathetic and charming." (31) Sekgoma proved a very difficult patient in Cape Town, where he was admitted to the Victoria Hospital at Wynberg rather than the Monastery. The doctors agreed that, apart from the epilepsy, his major ailment was his urethral stricture, on which it was advisable to operate as soon as he was fit enough. (33) A negative Wasserman test confirmed Dr Drew's earlier opinion that Sekgoma's condition was nothing to do with syphilis, which Robertson incorrectly says was their diagnosis. (32) But the problem was, even if they persuaded him to undergo the operation, whether he would co-operate in the long after-treatment. He hated being in hospital, was homesick, and could not understand why so many different doctors were attending him. It seemed to him that "all the doctors in the country were gathered around him to bleed him of what money they

can". (33) The Administration tried their best to reassure him through a carefully worded letter from the Resident Commissioner and by visits by Sir Herbert Sloley, Chief Secretary at the High Commission, who helped him with his financial affairs.

By the end of September, Drew was beginning to think that Sekgoma ought to return to Serowe. Sekgoma had accepted the idea of the operation but could not be made to understand the post-operative pain that would be involved and the extent of the after-care required. There was also the problem that the Chief might succumb under anaesthetic and Sir Herbert Sloley considered that, from a political point of view, it would be most undesirable for the chief to die in Cape Town. Further, since his co-operation in after-care could not be guaranteed, he might in the event receive no benefit from the operation. The best thing, Drew felt, would be for the Chief to return to Serowe and let the illness take its course, which effectively meant that he would die within six months. (34) The Principal Medical Officer felt that his subordinate was being unduly pessimistic and that, provided the Chief agreed, he should be operated upon. The Resident Commissioner therefore instructed that the operation should go ahead, political and other consequences notwithstanding. However, the specialist in Cape Town, soon after the Resident Commissioner had cabled these instructions to Drew, suggested that, in view of Sekgoma's general disposition, it would be best to dilate the stricture as much as possible in Cape Town and then send him back to Serowe for the full operation which would be performed there by Dr Drew, provided the Headmen accompanying Sekgoma agreed. Matters were in fact settled not by the Headmen but by Sekgoma's daughter, Oratile, who had arrived in Cape Town with her husband, Simon. She expressed the wish that the operation take place in Serowe and the two headmen agreed with her. (35) Slyly, the Resident Commissioner instructed Drew to make it clear to Oratile and the Headmen that "they must accept responsibility for any unfavourable consequences of refusing the operation in Cape Town". (36) On 15th October Dr Drew set off for Serowe by train, accompanied by two male nurses supplied by the Union Defence Force. There was some concern in Serowe as to how they were to be accommodated since Drew had not made it clear whether they were European or Coloured. (37) The former being the case, they were accommodated in the local hotel.

The Factions Gird Themselves

Just before leaving for Cape Town, it seems that Simon had sent a report to The Johannesburg Star about the deterioration in the situation at Serowe as a result of the absence of Sekgoma. Published on 8th October, it suggested that people in Serowe were taking advantage of the Chief's illness: "Khama's country, the only portion of South Africa that knew complete prohibition, has reverted to the debauchery of beer-drinking." The report further talked of "shameful and humiliating conditions which have arisen since his unfortunate illness". (38) The source of the accusation that Simon was the author of the despatch was Major Hannay and from confidential information he reported that the original article "was full of scurrilous abuse of Sekgoma and the acting Chief but was returned for amendment by the Press". (39) Simon was known to be the "avowed enemy" of the Acting Chief, Gorewan Kgamane. (40) Discussing the article with Gorewan, Major Hannay agreed that in future there would be no further official communication sent from his office to the Acting Chief by means of his Official Interpreter, Obeditse Ratshosa, younger brother of Johnnie and Simon, since Gorewan did not trust him. On the 18 October Secretary. Although Sekgoma's face lit up on seeing him, he gave "the impression ... that he will never again be able to resume duty as Chief". (42) Steps were also taken, on Dr Drew's advice, to remove all firearms from the Chief's house before his return.

No sooner had Sekgoma returned, looking much worse than before he left for the Cape, according to the local missionary (43), than a deputation of headmen, led by Gorewan, called on the Magistrate to discuss his future medical treatment with

Dr Drew. After hearing Dr Drew's report of what had taken place at Cape Town, they informed the Resident Magistrate that in the opinion of the Tribe the Chief's "present physical condition and general weakness debarred him from undergoing an operation". (44) It was then that they dropped their bombshell. Would the Administration sanction calling in a Mongwato doctor to attend the Chief? (45)

The Acting Magistrate said he would refer the matter to the Resident Commissioner but that they must realise that, once a Mongwato doctor was called in, all Government responsibility for their Chief would end and Dr Drew himself would have to withdraw from the case. Later that day the Magistrate saw the Chief, who, while he felt he had derived no benefit from his treatment in Cape Town, was perfectly satisfied with Dr Drew. (45) The Magistrate thought it wise not to raise the controversial issue of treatment by a traditional doctor at that stage, while Gorewan, who had accompanied him on his visit to the Chief, now "wished unreservedly to withdraw the suggestion he had made in conjunction with the other Headmen". (47) Major Hannay also reported that he had heard that Simon Ratshosa had "given it out to certain members of the tribe that to all intents and purposes the Chief is as good as dead". (48) Dr Drew was increasingly convinced that Sekgoma was becoming permanently deranged. Factions were jockeying for control of him and, if at any moment of temporary sanity, family or tribal business was raised he became very excited. He told Drew that people were trying to make trouble between himself and his brother, Tshekedi. (49) Furthermore, there was a concerted attempt to put him in the hands of traditional doctors. "I hope they will not get an opportunity, because if they overdo things, I shall get the blame." (50) On 28 October Drew finally came to the conclusion that the Chief's mental derangement "is permanent and that Sekgoma will never be able to take an active part in the affairs of the tribe. In the interests of the Chief, himself, and of the tribe, I would suggest that Sekgoma be relieved of the chieftaincy. At present Sekgoma is merely the centre for intrigues on the part of various factions, and it is not unlikely that some of them may try and do him harm while he is still nominally Chief, whereas if he becomes a private individual, these schemes will cease." (51) This, he reported, was also the view taken by Khama's widow, Semane. At the Chief's request she had taken charge of his house. Furthermore, rumours were rife, not only that the Chief was being bewitched by his own people but that the European doctors were trying to kill him. He was also talking indiscreetly, letting out family secrets, and to curb this unfortunate development was one of the aims of sending him for treatment by a traditional doctor.

The Resident Commissioner agreed with Dr Drew's recommendation and instructed the Resident Magistrate to suggest to Sekgoma, during a period of sanity, that it would be better from all points of view if he relinquished the Chieftainship and led the life of a private individual. If it were too much for him to make such an announcement in kgotla, he should at least make it to his headmen and tell them whom he wished to take over as Regent for his son. The Resident Commissioner also noted that in a lucid moment Sekgoma had told Major Hannay that, if anything happened to him, he would like Tshekedi, his half-brother, to act as Regent. "I do not want to force him on the tribe", the Resident Commissioner concluded, "but I think it will be generally admitted by the headman and people that in the circumstances he is the proper person to take charge of the tribe". (52) As it was, other pressures had been put on Sekgoma. His daughter, Oratile, no doubt urged on by her husband and anxious to keep power in her own house during her half-brother's minority, and following the earlier example of her aunt Bessie, had asked her father to name her as his successor. (53) Sekgoma had refused. Similarly, Baboni, Sekgoma's sister, had pressed the claim of his illegitimate son, Gasetshware, who had been born to him by the sister of an earlier and barren wife. (54) Again, Sekgoma had refused. So, in the event of his permanent incapacity, it looked as if Tshekedi would succeed him.

The Debate Over the Treatment of the Chief

The debate in the Tribe as to whether Sekgoma should continue to be treated by the European doctors, who seemed to have had conspicuously little success, or whether he should be put into the hands of traditional doctors came out into the open on Thursday 29 October when a kgotla to discuss the issue was held by Gorewan at 8.00 in the morning. Some eight to nine hundred members of the Tribe were present as well as Major Hannay, the Acting Resident Magistrate, Revd R H Lewis, the resident missionary of the London Missionary Society, Dr Drew and Mr Germond, the young assistant to the Magistrate. (55)

A full transcript of the proceedings of this kgotla was made in English by the Resident Magistrate's office. (56) The Magistrate opened the kgotla in a belligerent fashion, telling the assembly that he understood that, although there had been a Native Doctor, Mathobe, present at the Cattle Post on the second occasion when Sekgoma had suffered epileptic fits, and asking "Why, if you have so much faith in your Native Doctors, did you send for the White Doctor? I admit that some Native Doctors have a good knowledge of various herbal remedies and are able with the help of these to cure wounds, colds, stomach troubles etc. But I know your Doctor is going to make use of the "Bones" and in this I have no faith whatsoever and am strongly opposed to it." He repeated his earlier threat that, once a Native Doctor entered the Chief's house Dr Drew and the European nursing orderlies would leave. "Also please understand", he warned them, "that if anything happens while under the treatment of the Witch Doctor, you and you alone, Bamangwato, will be to blame."

Gorewan, the Acting Chief, responded to the Resident Magistrate, trying to hedge his bets with both factions. Personally, he had nothing against Native Doctors, but he did not wish the Chief to be treated exclusively by one. As far as the Chief was concerned, all doctors, White and Black, were the same, "but if the Magistrate was not willing to have a Native doctor called he was quite willing to remain in the hands of Dr Drew". Other speakers were less equivocal. Headman Baipedi wanted to know who had "spoilt matters", for he had been under the impression that at their earlier meeting with Major Hannay the latter had agreed to the Chief being treated by a Native Doctor. The majority of Headmen supported Baipedi and only six stood out against the transfer. Interestingly enough, one of the first to declare himself against the treatment of Sekgoma by a Native Doctor was the senior member of the Raditladi clan, Headman Disang, who declared: "I have great faith in European doctors and very little in Native Doctors." In so stating he joined hands with his erstwhile family enemies, the Ratshosas, who, when the Magistrate called on those in favour of Sekgoma being treated by traditional medicine, were among the few to stand forward. Unfortunately, we do not have the names of the half-dozen headmen who stood with them and the Acting Chief.

What was clear was that the assembled Tribe was not impressed by the results of the treatment so far given by the European doctor, nor by the fact that the Chief's own daughter was against treatment by traditional methods, and, least of all, apparently, by the Magistrate's call on the memory of the great Khama, who had chased Native Doctors out of the country. As John Ratshosa bravely told the Tribe:

I do not know what has happened to us Bamangwatos. In Khama's time no Witch Doctors were allowed in the place but today not only are they allowed among us but they are allowed to practise. I have been brought up by Khama and know that he hated Native Doctors. As a boy when I fell ill he placed me in the hands of European Doctors.

To which Native Doctor Boiditswe replied:

Your words are false, for I, Boiditswe, was once called by Khama to treat the Chief's children who were suffering from ear-ache - the Chief's wife can bear me out in this. What is more, I am firmly convinced that I am able to cure the Chief himself. I have treated similar cases before and have been successful.

Sekgoma himself seems to have been persuaded by the majority feeling in the tribe, for shortly after this kgotla he dismissed the European orderlies and paid off Dr Drew. Undoubtedly, the stand taken by the two senior Ratshosa brothers in kgotla against the treatment of Sekgoma by traditional doctors brought further odium on this powerful group. (57)

The Death of Sekgoma

Under the treatment of the traditional doctors, Sekgoma appeared to make a rapid and amazing recovery. Captain Neale, the Resident Magistrate, accompanied by Major Hannay, visited him on 5 November and found him "sane and more or less normal"; only four days earlier Dr Drew had recommended that he be certified insane. He was now attending kgotla and carrying on his usual occupations. In view of this, it was decided not to discuss with him the matter of his abdication. (58) He was even alert enough to query some of Dr Drew's charges, in particular the fee of £5 a day for accompanying him to Cape Town. (59) He was also writing to other correspondents about cattle. (60) However, Drew was not as impressed by his apparent recovery as was the Resident Magistrate. He reported on the 8 November that he considered Sekgoma's condition was worse than when he had seen him three days before: he was walking very badly though he spoke quite rationally. Nevertheless, when questioned about the decision not to face Sekgoma with the question of abdication, he agreed that it should be deferred for the present, though he held to the opinion that the Chief would not be fit to undertake the duties of his office. (61)

From the point of view of the Bangwato, their decision must have seemed an apposite one, since Sekgoma did improve under the care of native doctors. Resident Commissioner Ellengerger attributed the sudden improvement to the fact that the "use of a native doctor to remove any spell which Sekgoma might think had been cast over him through witchcraft would naturally relieve his mind and this would produce a change for the better in his condition but it is very doubtful that such a change will be of a permanent character". (62) Very soon Ellenberger and Drew were to be proved correct in their prognostications. After nearly two weeks of treatment by Traditional Doctors, on Friday 13 Sekgoma sent for Rev Lewis, who found him "prostrate and in the condition in which he was before his visit to the Cape". (63) Semane had continued to nurse him, though the Traditional Doctors, according to Lewis, had made her life a misery. Sekgoma asked the missionary for medicine, which he gave him, but after its effect the traditional doctor returned. Next afternoon Sekgoma, taking a serious turn for the worse, discharged his traditional practitioners and called for Lewis and Dr Drew. But they arrived to find him in a critical condition. His kidneys had ceased to function and he suffered a further series of fits. At 2.45 a.m. the next day, Sunday, the doctor was called for by some headmen. Drew asked why they had not called their own doctor, but they did not reply. Nevertheless, he went with them and found the Chief in a fit. From then on until 11.40 a.m. one fit was to follow another in rapid succession until he died, having in extremis returned to the fold of western beliefs and western medical practice. (64) He was buried two days later, next to his father.

Reactions to the Death of Sekgoma

Despite the fact that Sekgoma had effectively died at the hands of traditional doctors - though there was clearly little they could have done to save him, beyond achieving a miracle - the distraught Bangwato took their grief and anger at their chief's death out on those who had been most closely associated with his treatment by western medicine. They punched, shoved and cursed Dr Drew and Rev Lewis, whom they accused of killing their Chief with medicine. Neither Drew nor Lewis was hurt, and Gorewan, himself, who was threatened with his life, fled to the police camp. Semane, who had nursed Sekgoma to the end but apparently stood most to gain by his death, was accused of poisoning him and her house attacked. She was saved from molestation at the hands of the women, led by Khama's daughters Baboni and Mmakhama who were bitter that she had not permitted them to see their brother, by the Ratshosas. As proponents of Western medicine, they, too, were objects of the mob's vengeance but saved themselves by firing rifle shots above the heads of their attackers. Worse violence was averted by a fortuitous downpour of rain, and Semane was able to take refuge in the Mission with the Lewises. (65) Thereafter, the resident Magistrate, Captain Neale, restored order. Meanwhile Resident Commissioner Ellenberger, alerted to the situation by telegram, took the next train up to Palapye Road to sort out the succession.

Despite the attacks on him, Dr Drew had managed to do the necessary to preserve Sekgoma's body for burial early on the morning of Tuesday 17 November. On the afternoon of the burial, the Resident Commissioner accompanied the frightened, one-eyed Gorewan into the kgotla. He then asked the people whom they looked upon as their Chief, and they "unanimously declared that, by virtue of his birth and rank, Gorewan was the proper person to lead them until Khama's son, Tshekedi, could take over from him and until Sekgoma's son (a boy of 5 years of age) could himself occupy the Chief's chair". Because he considered Gorewan a weak man, Ellenberger followed up Captain Neale's proposal that a council of the best men of the tribe be formed to assist him. This would be responsible to Government for the management of Tribal affairs and the maintenance of peace and good order in the Tribe "until Tshekedi could assume duty as Regent". (66) The twelve members of the Council included the two elder Ratshosa brothers, their enemy Phethu Mphoeng, and three other members of the royal family.

Phethu's Revenge: the Rise of Tshekedi and the Downfall of the Ratshosas

Tshekedi was preparing for his Matriculation examination at Fort Hare Native University College when he heard news of his half-brother's death. He made arrangements to see the Resident Commissioner on 14 December. He was informed officially that he would be expected to be Regent for Seretse. Until his arrival, Gorewan was acting as chief and was being advised by a Council whose composition was communicated to Tshekedi. Ellenberger also informed him that his Mother wanted him to continue with his studies, and then to travel, before he assumed his duties as chief. (67) This hardly conformed with the picture her royal enemies had drawn of Semane, as one who was scheming to get her own son on the throne and had even gone so far as to poison Sekgoma to achieve this end. Apparently Tshekedi's own first inclinations were to return to Fort Hare, and the Resident Commissioner assured him that when he did eventually decide to take over, should he and the Tribe wish to abolish the Council, there would be no objection on the part of the Administration. (68)

The initial instinct of the Ratshosas was to try to ingratiate themselves with their new ruler, and with the intention of offering him the hand of friendship they waited for him at the station at Palapye Road, where passengers for Serowe usually alighted. But their opponents were more cunning and sent an escort to meet

Tshekedi at Mafeking and bring him back to the capital by way of Mahalapye, the stop before Palapye Road, which would, however, involve him in a considerably longer journey by car. (69)

Although the Ratshosas later argued that they wished the chief nothing but well, and indeed had not only joined with his mother, Semane, in insisting on Sekgoma being treated by western medicine, but had helped save her from attack by the Serowe mob, Tshekedi soon realised that, with regard to the Ratshosas, the majority of the Tribe had "decided that they were not to be trusted". (70) Undoubtedly he was influenced in this by Phethu, who, as a royal uncle, had right of access to Tshekedi. The Ratshosas certainly saw Phethu as instrumental in all their troubles with their new Chief, though Tshekedi denied that he had in any way been influenced in his attitude towards them by their enemy. (71) What does seem clear is that soon after his arrival Tshekedi began to see that, if he were ever to exercise the same control over his subjects as his father, he would have to take over without delay. No doubt he already knew of his half-brother's fear of the power the Ratshosa family were gathering to themselves. In Serowe it became clear that the Ratshosas saw the temporary council set up to advise Gorewan as something that could be manipulated to their advantage during the regency of their young and inexperienced Uncle, if only it could be made a permanent feature. Thus it was that The Times, no doubt inspired by Simon, who seems at a very early stage to have learnt the political uses to which the press could be put, carried an article that the Council was inspired by incipient democrats seeking to curb the powers of Chiefs. (72) This has led two scholars to believe that the Council really was the inspiration of Simon Ratshosa (73) rather than an administrative device - albeit one that the British would ideally have liked to keep - to assist the weak Gorewan, who had already behaved in a cowardly fashion at the first sign of difficulty, until Tshekedi took up office.

On oath, later, both John and Simon denied that the Council had been any other than the Resident Commissioner's idea. Johnnie even said that he had suggested to the Resident Commissioner that "the Council should not be formed, but the people then said it must be formed". He alleged that it was a calumny against the Ratshosas that their subsequent support of the Council "was a trick to break down the Chief's power, and that he would not have the same power as his forefathers, and that power would be in the hands of the white men". (74) Simon himself asserted that even when he was elected to the Council "I objected to be a member. I did not like to be among untruthful people." (75) But Simon later became reconciled to it and increased his unpopularity by supporting it in the first kgotla presided over by Tshekedi on 19 December. There the young Chief found that "not only was the majority of the Tribe opposed to this council but all the Members save three were dissatisfied with it". Accordingly, Tshekedi, his predecessor, Gorewan, members of the Council, and some other headmen adjourned to the Resident Magistrate's office to inform him of their wish to disband it. Without trying to bully the delegation into retaining the Council, the Resident Magistrate did stress what he considered were points in its favour. It was purely advisory in nature and only differed from the informal advisory council of the Bangwato chiefs in that its composition was known to and recognised by the Government. Second, the new chief "is young and inexperienced and is therefore in need of such a Council from which he could obtain reliable advice". (76)

In the discussion that followed, only one speaker supported retention of the Council: Simon Ratshosa declared that he was a strong supporter of the Council "because it answers my every wish and desire, and also because I am convinced that if run on the right lines it would prove a great help in the government of our country ... The council does not as some of you seem to think eliminate the Chief's power, but, in my opinion, strengthens it." (77) The other speakers merely conceded that, if the Council had been established after the arrival of Tshekedi, their attitude might have been different. Mathiba, the Chief Hut Tax Collector, asked them to remember why the Council had been formed in the first place: "in a hurry ... under the pressure of the grave events which followed the death of the late

Chief. At the time the idea was, and still is, that the Council was to protect and advise the Acting Chief Gorewan. Gorewan as we all know is a weak Chief and was in dire need of such a Council." (78)

Among the strongest critics at the meeting was Phethu Mphoeng, who called for Tshekedi's opinion on the matter. Tshekedi was told by the Magistrate "that it depends on you whether there shall be a Council or not". Though his own view was clear, Tshekedi asked for time to think the matter over. Meanwhile the Ratshosas had been isolated and Phethu, as leader of the other most powerful faction in the Tribe, staked out his position as a supporter of Tshekedi. (79) Tshekedi, in fact, did not have to think over the matter of retaining the Council. All its members, with the exception of the two Ratshosa brothers, resigned. Tshekedi cunningly informed the Magistrate that he personally had nothing against the Council but that he was merely following the wishes of the Tribe. (80) Reporting the dissolution of the Council, the Resident Magistrate regretted its demise. "There are many progressive natives in the Bamangwato Reserve, who, apart from the Ratshosas, wish the old style of autocratic rule to be definitely finished with. There seemed to be an excellent chance for a more progressive system to be tried upon the young Regent's accession." (81) The Resident Commissioner, who had believed Tshekedi would indeed return to Fort Hare, was now requested to sanction his installation and the abolition of the Council.

Tshekedi was duly installed by him on Tuesday 19 January, with Phethu being one of the main speakers. This time Phethu did not make the mistake of falling foul of the chief he had just helped install. Instead, he watched with satisfaction the downfall of those who had been responsible for his exile two years before. The Ratshosas accepted Tshekedi's accession without their influence with bad grace. Simon's "attitude towards the Chieftainship is one of open defiance", which caused a good deal of ill-feeling among the Tribe. (82) Tshekedi therefore set about dismantling their principal source of power: Johnnie. He organized the removal of Johnnie as Tribal Secretary, even though Captain Neale believed he did not support his bother Simon in his attitude toward the young Regent, "but of course the family more or less pull together. This attitude of Simon of course gives Phethu the chance he has been waiting for and the latter has come back with the fixed intention of getting his revenge if possible against the Ratshosa family." (84) Phethu, who, Neale reported, had a great deal of influence with Tshekedi, did not have long to wait before he witnessed their total destruction. Despite pleadings from the Administration that Tshekedi keep Johnnie on as Secretary, or at least relieve him of office graciously, he dismissed him publicly and peremptorily. Tshekedi countered Simon's openly defiant attitude - which was goaded on by his formidable and embittered wife, Oratile, who along with Sekgoma's sisters had declared that they would never recognise Tshekedi, who was merely their servant - by provoking him into an open act of defiance. He summoned Simon and his brothers to a kgotla taking place when they were attending a wedding. (85) They refused to come and were then brought forcibly in and sentenced to a flogging by Tshekedi for their disrespect. Their protests that, as sons of chiefs, they could not be so treated were to no avail. Johnnie was publicly flogged, but Simon and Obeditse in fury escaped to their house and got guns with which they then tried to assassinate their chief. They failed in their attempt, paying for it, according to tradition, with the complete destruction of their property, including of that Johnnie, by regiments led by Phethu, and only narrowly escaped with their lives by seeking sanctuary at the Resident Magistrate's compound. Simon and Obeditse were sentenced to imprisonment. Johnnie, Oratile and Tshekedi's aunts were exiled, and the Ratshosas ceased to be a force in Bangwato politics which they had dominated for so long. Phethu was now in the ascendant and continued for the next twenty-five years to be Tshekedi's closest supporter; only at the last minute, when old and blind, did he make his final political gamble by supporting Seretse against Tshekedi in the dispute over the former's marriage to a white woman.

Conclusion

The succession crisis that developed during the illness of Sekgoma II is instructive at several levels. In the first place, the series of enquiries that took place before and after the death of Sekgoma involving the various protagonists in the dispute enables us to trace the growth, alignment and realignment of factions with rare precision, even for the colonial period. In the second place, their rivalry focussed on a crucial area of change in Bangwato society, where the new colonial, Christian world interfaced with the traditional Tswana world in the field of healing. And yet, though the dispute was in essence one that pitched tradition versus change, the protagonists did not conveniently divide into adherents of the Western way of life and those still attached to their pre-colonial, pre-Christian culture. Members of both factions had received Western education in South Africa. Indeed, it was a complaint of Phethu and his supporters that the Ratshosas were "a blockade in the way of education; that teachers were being turned out of schools without wrong being committed by them, that the missionaries had "no means of progressing in education", and that the tribe had "no voice in education". "But we want progress and education", they declared in their petition to the Resident Commissioner against their banishment. (85) Again, the alignment of the two groups cannot be seen in terms of support for or antagonism towards the Christian religion. The Ratshosas were perceived by the LMS as enemies, while Phethu was seen as a supporter, yet over the question of treatment the Ratshosas found themselves on the side of the missionaries and Phethu against. Even so, in their petition, Phethu and his followers had spoken out roundly against traditional medical practitioners: "Whereas the power of the witchdoctors is growing a good deal now among the tribe, and our chief and tribe believe in them, and we have found that they are the cause of this trouble, we therefore humbly beg to ask the Government to enforce a law against them as in all civilised countries." (86)

The guiding motive for opposition to the continued treatment of Sekgoma by the European doctors seems to have been twofold: first, it was clear to all after Sekgoma returned from Cape Town that western medicine had been conspicuously unsuccessful in improving his condition but rather that this had deteriorated dramatically; second, this development became a convenient stick with which to beat the Ratshosas, since they had staked so much on treating him with western techniques. It was an opposition that was certainly likely to gain support from the Tribe, which had little access to Western medicine and which, despite Khama's outlawing of traditional doctors, continued to use them and believe in them. The Ratshosas had most to gain by keeping Sekgoma alive, and no doubt Simon, a man of formidable intelligence, and his wife Oratile were aware of the implication of the prognoses as reported by the European doctors, and realised that continued treatment by them was their only hope. But even Simon hedged his bets and hoped to curry favour with the young Regent to be. As it turned out, Phethu and his allies were able to win a considerable moral victory over their opponents when Sekgoma died, since they were able to impute that it was their tenacious support of continued western treatment that had led to his death. We know that, without the operation to relieve his stricture, there was little hope of his surviving, and the fact that Oratile was so reluctant to authorise it is comprehensible in terms of the likelihood of her father succumbing on the operating table, quite apart from his own reluctance to undergo surgery.

We come, finally, to the two involved in the succession - Sekgoma and Tshekedi. It is clear that, unlike his father, Sekgoma had not the single-minded faith in the missionary dispensation. While his instinct was to trust the Western doctors - and, indeed, even on his death-bed he was writing to his friend, Dr S M Molema, to ask him why he no longer came to check his patients in the Serowe area (87), and had not long before sent his daughter, Oratile, for an examination by Dr Targett-Adams in connection with her apparent barrenness (88) - he also had respect for the traditional medical practitioners. Even Khama's much better educated second son, Tshekedi, shared his half-brother's belief in the efficacy of traditional doctors, accusing his own first wife in 1937 of trying to bewitch and poison his mother and having her condemned as a witch. (89)

It is clear that the root of the Ratshosas downfall did not necessarily result from a structural enmity between them and Tshekedi, since they were prepared to offer him the friendship they had to his mother, Semane, provided, of course, that they retained their privileged position as chief advisers to the royal family. Nor did it necessarily result from the feud between them and Phethu, who was initially largely an unknown quantity as far as Tshekedi was concerned. Clearly what clinched the Ratshosas' eclipse as far as Tshekedi was concerned was the fact that he soon realised just how unpopular they were with the Tribe and that, if he were to rule successfully as a Regent with so little experience of his people, he had better seek the support of those who commanded the respect of the majority of the Tribe. The Ratshosas had alienated themselves from the bulk of the kgotla not only through their arrogant ways but by the gamble they had taken on Western medicine, which failed. Simon sealed their fate, along with Oratile and her aunts, once it became apparent that power was slipping from their hands, by his desperate bids to cut Tshekedi down to size.

In all this, the European doctors were helpless bystanders, doing their best in a situation in which decisions were being made not in the best interests of the patient, in western medical terms, but to ensure victory for one faction over another.

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Notes

- (1) B(otswana) N(ational) A(rchives), D(istrict) C(ommissioner) S(erowe) 4/1, "Tshekedi Khama": Minutes of a meeting held at the Resident Magistrate's Office, Serowe, at 10 a.m. on 19th December 1925; 34 ibid., Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 30 September 1925.
- (2) See, in particular, BNA S(ecretariat) 11/4, "Chief Sekgoma Khama, Illness of: - 1925".
- (3) Quentin Neil Parsons, "Khama III, the Bamangwato and the British with special reference of 1895-1923", PhD thesis, Edinburgh, May 1973, p 211.
- (4) Ibid., p 217. Khama's words were: "And to you Sekgoma I swear that you will never get the chieftaincy ... I must warn you that I can deny you the chieftaincy and pass it to the Ratshosas if I like.
- (5) Ibid., p 376.
- (6) BNA S 25/8, "Khama and Sekgoma: resumption of friendly relations between", Macgregor to High Commissioner, 18 August 1920: "I was never in any doubt about the succession, as that, in the last resort, is always decided by the people the bulk of whom would surely support the heir ..."
- (7) BNA DCS 8/6, "Rev S and O Ratshosa" Trial before Capt Robert O'Malley Reilly, 22 June 1926. Many of the witnesses alluded to the high-handed ways of the Ratshosas in the heyday of the power.

- (8) Parsons, op. cit., p 425.
- (9) Ibid., p 428.
- (10) BNA S 3/6, "Phethu Mphoeng: Disturbances, 1923", O D Schreiner to H J Stanley, High Commissioner's Office, Cape Town, 7 February 1926.
- (11) See the transcript of the Enquiry held by the Assistant Resident Commissioner from 20 December 1923 to 2 January 1924, in BNA S 3/6, "Phethu Mphoeng: Disturbances 1923".
- (12) BNA S 3/6, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 10 January 1924.
- (13) BNA S 3/6, Evidence of Chief Sekgoma, 21 December 1923.
- (14) Ibid., Evidence of 1 January 1924.
- (15) Ibid., Statement of Sekgoma II in kgotla, 17 December 1923.
- (16) BNA S 3/6, Acting Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 26 November 1926.
- (17) Ibid., Evidence of December 1923.
- (18) Ibid., Evidence of 1 January 1924.
- (19) BNA S 3/7, "Simon Ratshosa: Question of Phethu and others returning to the Manangwato Reserve". Sekgoma to Resident Magistrate Serowe, 30 June 1925.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) BNA S 3/7, Statement of Sekgoma of 4 July 1925, recorded by Resident Magistrate.
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) BNA 3/7, High Commissioner to Resident Magistrate, 24 July 1925, Telegram: "Request that you will express to Chief Sekgoma my satisfaction at learning that these natives have been forgiven."
- (25) BNA S 11/4, Minute by Dr D Drew, Medical Officer, Serowe, to Principal Medical Officer, Mafeking, 31 July 1925.
- (26) Ibid.
- (27) BNA 3/7, series of minutes exchanged between Principal Medical Officer and Drew. The account that follows is based on Drew's reports and the evidence of John Ratshosa at the trial of his brothers, BNA DCS/6 p 263.
- (28) Ibid., Principal Medical Officer to Drew, 29 August 1925.
- (29) Ibid., Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 1 September 1925.
- (30) Ibid., Targett-Adams to Principal Medical Officer, 30 August 1925.
- (31) Ibid., Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 8 September 1925.
- (32) Ibid., Report of Dr W P Mulligan of 18 September 1925: "Wasserman reaction: completely negative." Harold H Robertson, in his thesis "From Bechuanaland Protectorate to Republic of Botswana", PhD thesis, Dalhousie, 1979, states (using this same file) that the Principal Medical Officer diagnosed Sekgoma s having cerebral syphilis, whereas in fact he merely suggested that it might be a possibility. See Robertson, pp 40-1.

- (33) BNA S 11/4, Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 21 September 1925.
- (34) Ibid., Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 30 September 1925.
- (35) Ibid., Telegram from Government Secretary to Drew, 12 October 1925.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) Ibid., Government Secretary to Drew, Telegram 15 October 1925.
- (38) The Johannesburg Star, 8 October 1925: "Beer Drinking in Khama's Land. Taking Advantage of Chief's Illness."
- (39) BNA S 11/4, Hannay, Ag Magistrate, Serowe, to Government Secretary.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) Ibid.
- (42) BNA S 11/4, Government Secretary to High Commissioner. It is not clear from the letter whether in fact it was the Resident Commissioner rather than the Government Secretary who went to the station.
- (43) Rev R Haydon Lewis, "The Death of Sekgome (sic)", The Congregationalist, February 1926, p 7.
- (44) BNA S 11/4, Hannay to Government Secretary, 20 October 1925.
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) Ibid.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Ibid.
- (49) BNA S 11/4, Drew to Principal Medical Officer, Mafeking, 28 October 1925.
- (50) BNA S 11/4, Drew to Principal Medical Officer, 22 October 1925.
- (51) BNA S 11/4, Separate minute of 28 October 1925.
- (52) BNA S 11/4, Resident Commissioner to Resident Magistrate, Serowe, 6 November 1925.
- (53) See Theophilus Mooko, "The Role of Royal Women in Bangwato Politics under the Regency of Tshekedi Khama, 1926-1949", Research Essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the BA Degree, History Department, University of Botswana, 1985, p 7.
- (54) Ibid., pp 12-13.
- (55) BNA S 11/4, "Minutes of Meeting held at the Kgotla, Serowe, at 8 a.m. on Thursday 29th October, 1925".
- (56) Ibid. (See Appendix.)
- (57) See the evidence in the trial of Simon and Obeditse Ratshosa, BNA DCS 8/6.
- (58) BNA S 11/4, Resident Magistrate, Serowe to Government Secretary, 10 November 1925, and Drew to PMO, 1 November 1925.

- (59) BNA S 11/4, Sekgoma Khama to Resident Magistrate, 6 November 1925.
- (60) Sekgoma Khama Papers, Pilikwe, Letter Book.
- (61) Ibid. Drew to PMO, 8 November 1925, and 10 November 1925.
- (62) Ibid., Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 14 November 1924.
- (63) "The Death of Sekgome Khama", p 8. See also the report of his death in The Argus, 19 November 1925: "Dramatic Scene at Death Bed of Sekgoma".
- (64) Ibid., and report of Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 21 November 1925, in BNA S 11/4.
- (65) Lewis, "The Death of Sekgome Khama", pp 8-9; The Argus, 20 November 1925: "New Order for the Bangwato? Council of Headmen in Place of Paramount Chief. Scene after Death of Sekgoma. Danger of Bloodshed and how it was avoided."
- (66) BNA S 11/4, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 21 November 1925.
- (67) BNA S 11/5, Resident Commissioner to Tshekedi Khama at Fort Hare, 24 November 1925.
- (68) BNA S 11/5, "Tshekedi Khama": Resident Commissioner telegram to Resident Magistrate, 24 December 1925.
- (69) Evidence of Simon Ratshosa, BNA DCS 8/6, pp 313-14.
- (70) Ibid., Evidence of Tshekedi, p 71.
- (71) Ibid., p
- (72) The Times, 23 November 1925. See also The Argus, 20 November 1925, whose "special correspondent" asserts that the Council is the idea of "democrats" within the Tribe.
- (73) Q N Parsons, "Shots for a Black Republic? Simon Ratshosa and Botswana Nationalism", African Affairs, and Robertson, op. cit., pp 41-42.
- (74) BNA DCS 8/6, Evidence of John Ratshosa, p 266.
- (75) Ibid., Evidence of Simon Ratshosa, p 313.
- (76) BNA DCS 4/1, "Tshekedi Khama": Minutes of a Meeting held at the Resident Magistrate's Office, Serowe, at 10.00 a.m., 19 December 1925.
- (77) Ibid.
- (78) Ibid.
- (79) Ibid.
- (80) BNA DCS 8/6, Resident Magistrate, Serowe, to Resident Commissioner, 21 December 1925.
- (81) Ibid.

- (82) BNA DCS 4/1, Resident Magistrate to Government Secretary, 25 January 1925.
- (83) Ibid.
- (84) See the account in my joint article with Suzanne Miers, provisionally entitled "The Politics of Slavery under British Colonial Rule: aristocrats, missionaries and the plight of the Basarwa in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1926-1940", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (eds), The End of Slavery in Africa (Wisconsin University Press: forthcoming).
- (85) BNA S 3/6, Petition of Phethu Mphoeng and his Followers to the Resident Commissioner, dated 21 January 1924.
- (86) Ibid.
- (87) Sekgoma Khama Papers, Pilikwe, Letter book: Sekgoma to Dr S M Molema, 9 November 1925. Sekgoma was still clearly optimistic about his recovery since he enclosed a cheque for £360 for the purchase of a motor car.
- (88) Sekgoma Khama Papers, Pilikwe, Miscellaneous: Dr P Targett-Adams to Sekgoma, 19 July 1925.
- (89) BNA Bamangwato Tribal Administration: "Statement by Tshekedi Khama before a meeting of the Banwato (sic) Tribe held at the Kgotla, Serowe, on the 10th May, 1937".