BNR Online ISSN: 2709-7374

The Emergence and Challenges of Post-Liberation Pan-Hurutshe Renaissance in Southern Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines the plight of the various Bahurutshe *merafe* (ethnic groups) found in the three neighbouring Southern African countries of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. It demonstrates how the groups split from the original *morafe* (ethnic group) into various entities which experienced varying vicissitudes of fate in the pre-colonial, colonial, and apartheid South Africa and Namibia. The end of apartheid and the post-liberation period in South Africa saw various ethnic groups in the three countries (and even Zimbabwe) engaging in a Renaissance movement characterized by holding annual festivals for cross-border unity and preservation of their culture with a view for cultural or heritage tourism. In this regard the Bahurutshe appeared on the scene by 2011, but before they could consolidate their cross-border movement they lost their pioneering, pivotal, and dynamic coordinator, the Botswana-based Moses Lekaukau who died in 2015, and this robbed the movement the force it needed going forward. Hence, it declined after a very short period.

Keywords: Post-liberation; Pan-Hurutshe Renaissance; *merafe*; cultural festivals; tourism; African Renaissance

Introduction

By the early years of the new millennium there were numerous annual cultural festivals or reunion events undertaken by several *merafe* in Botswana. A good number of these involved participants and invited dignitaries from the neighbouring South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Lesotho where sections of such *merafe* exist. In Molepolole there is a long running annual Dithubaruba cultural festival which involves Bakwena from Botswana and other Bakwena groups from South Africa and Lesotho. The Kalanga also have a long running annual festival that takes place at Domboshaba involving local Kalanga people and their kin from Zimbabwe. The Basarwa/San or Bushmen's Kuru festival takes place in D'Kar in the Ghanzi District. Other events include the Batlokwa Culture Day in Tlokweng, and the Sedibelo Cultural Festival organised by the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela in Mochudi. The Herero, Mbanderu and Nama, who originally came from Namibia, have also been involved in similar annual events. Some of the events are spread over a number of days with elders and other experts narrating oral histories of their *merafe*. Symposia are held, speeches are made by influential leaders, praise poems are recited, traditional songs are sung, games are played, and traditional food and beer are consumed during this merrymaking. Handicrafts associated with these *merafe* are also sold. Aspirations and challenges of the composite members of these associations are expressed. The idea is also to transmit culture to the young generations: therefore, they are important for indigenous knowledge systems even though some aspects of culture being displayed are heavily diluted. Perhaps, that explains the fact that culture is not static but dynamic.

The festivals are a form of ethnic unity among different groups from different countries, hence they can be described as cultural revival or Renaissance. The turn of the new millennium was

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also characterised by the call for African Renaissance championed and popularised by the then South African president, Thabo Mbeki (Makgoba 1999). Therefore, the development in Botswana had a wider continental context and appeal. Perhaps, it is worth noting that colonial rule had had an adverse impact on the languages of the Sotho-Tswana and others. Whereas, in colonial Botswana some local non-Tswana languages were part of the curriculum in their respective areas, in the post colony these were marginalized and supplanted by Setswana in the name of nation-building and national unity. Although Setswana became the national language and *lingua franca* it remained unpopular in the education system. For instance, the educationist Lydia Nyathi-Ramahobo writes that:

> It is spoken by about 90% of the population either as a mothertongue or as a second language. It is, therefore, the language of national unity and cultural identity. However, a decline in morale in the teaching and learning of Setswana at all levels has been observed in recent years. Many language teachers have opted to teach English rather [than] Setswana, and students' performance in Setswana has consistently deteriorated over time (Nyathi-Ramahobo 1999:xi).

Nevertheless, this development does have its origins in the colonial system that entrenched divisions among the Sotho-Tswana and others, hence they are now less tolerant of their language varieties in favour of the colonial linguistic dispensations. Generally, Setswana has come to be despised by the educated elite or middle class who place a premium on English, which is even spoken with what some describe as the fake American accent common in elite English medium private schools. Setswana and other African languages in sub-Saharan Africa are even dismissed as useless to learners because they are seen as incompatible with modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) or the dictates of the certain sectors of the job market. For instance, in the Nigerian media industry Opeyemi Adewale observes that 'many radio presenters… adopt the use of fake accent and that the ability to speak with a foreign accent is seen as a major criterion for getting a media job in Nigeria' (Adewale 2019:31). Adewale's paper 'concludes by encouraging media professionals to appreciate the uniqueness of the Nigerian media and cultural terrain' instead of fake foreign accents. The concern we raise in Botswana and Nigeria, also widespread in many sub-Saharan Africa countries, on preference for colonial and imperial languages over local or indigenous ones gels with the observation by Dialo Diop's (1999:6) that 'No country in the world ever undertook its development through a foreign language'. Diop writes this in a chapter contribution to the book *African Renaissance*. Therefore, the festivals mentioned above are also meant to promote the use of local indigenous languages even though the impact of this is yet to be assessed.

Whereas in the 1970s Botswana's founding President, Sir Seretse Khama rubbished such revival of cultural rites as 'rampant tribalism' the which undermined national unity (Grant 1984), in the new millennium the government has embraced and promoted the development for nation-building. They are seen as important for fostering development through cultural diversity. The festivals are also heavily marketed as important opportunities for tourism. Tourists, who throng these festivals, are both local people and those from the neighbouring countries as well as overseas. Reporting on the Dithubaruba festival in Molepolole (headquarters of the Bakwena in Kweneng District), the journalist Emmanuel Tlale writes that 'Apart from festivities, the event would also promote cultural tourism in the district with a view to contributing to the upliftment of socio-economic development of Bakwena communities and invigorate active participation in management and conservation of local heritage sites found in the region' (Tlale 2 September 2016). Indeed, this form of "cultural entrepreneurship" is the widespread justification for the festivals held in different

parts of the country. Government entities such as the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO), and private companies are also involved as sponsors. This is in line with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which the government of Botswana ratified in 2010.

The cultural festivals and activities are also a form of formal and informal cultural diplomacy between the neighbouring countries in the Southern African region particularly in the post-liberation period since the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. However, Connie Rapoo questions whether the festivals are an act of 'cashing in or selling out' heritage by their practitioners or performers' in light of the mythologising Africa and colonial power dynamics hinted at above:

> Cultural heritage performances such as the Kuru Dance Festival of the Basarwa (Bushmen/San) and the Sedibelo Festival of the Bakgatla in Botswana trade on indigenous performance traditions by translating rituals, culture and heritage into economic activities for the consumption of tourists. This article examines what the potentials and pitfalls of such an exchange might be, and provides insight into the way cultural performers re-enact their perceived 'authentic' memories of 'African-ness' through performative acts that attempt to resist the long history of mythologising Africa. It further discusses whether such performances might perpetuate Euro-American patterns of 'consuming Africa', and thereby reiterate colonial power dynamics (Rapoo 2016:351).

While these cultural festivals were embraced and strongly encouraged by Botswana's fourth president, Ian Khama (2008–2018), while addressing a joint Herero-Mbanderu-Nama event in 2014 he also cautioned against the practitioners or activists using them as a front for 'tribalism' or ethnic chauvinism (Molefi 29 September 2014). Interestingly, Sethunya Mosime argues that Sir Seretse Khama, 'drew from the notion of culture – to invent a neo-liberalism friendly cultural hegemony that would help maintain British support for the newly independent and economically fragile state. It would also maintain the dominance of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party, and much later lay a fertile ground for the younger [Ian] Khama to be "culturally" accepted to take up the Presidency' (Mosime 2020:188). She further argues that:

> Culture, defined in varying ways by the two Khamas, has been useful for entrenching and normalising inequalities, where Botswana is one of the most unequal societies in the world, with high income inequalities, high levels of gender-based violence and some of the lowest numbers of women in political leadership in Africa. It has also been useful to entrench and normalise low levels of civic participation and resistance without any strong demands for decolonisation, a fertile environment for neo-liberalism and its economic growth without transformation of livelihoods….
>
> Historically, Botswana's stance towards the anti-colonial and decolonisation rhetoric has been to use the rhetoric of culture as a tool to manufacture consent towards Western liberalism and away from a Pan-Africanism, inspired by African Socialism.
>
> Culture, with its potential to be a resource for resistance, can and does become a site for legitimating power and control (Mosime 2020:188, 190 and 203).

However, the asertion that Botswana under Seretse Khama was only rhetorically involved in the anti-colonial liberation struggle or decolonisation misses the point that the then impoverished and

defenceless Botswana openly and strongly condemned racist white minority regimes in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), as well as Portugal's colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique. Botswana also did not spare the powerful apartheid South Africa, and even covertly assisted the liberation groups from Rhodesia and South Africa. In the process it incurred serious military reprisals from the two powerful countries but Botswana remained committed to the course (Mgadla 2008; Makgala and Seabo 2017). Moreover, for all its shortcomings, the Botswana government's pragmatic approach to economic development saw it progress whereas its fellow African states committed to socialist rhetoric stagnated or failed dismally. The evidence was in the form of significant numbers of professionals from Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya among other countries becoming well-paid expatriates in Botswana.

Botswana also hosted many refugees from the neighbouring countries, among whom were Bahurutshe. Incidentally, the Bahurutshe were some of the last to get involved in the post-liberation Renaissance around 2011 with the late Moses Lekaukau being the moving spirit behind the movement. However, his death in late 2015 seems to have led to the decline or non-hosting of the annual conference as it was called. Unlike others, which were held mainly in one place in Botswana, the pan-Hurutshe Renaissance festival/conference rotated between different Bahurutshe villages or centres in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia. Below we provide a brief historical background on the Bahurutshe diaspora in Southern Africa. In this piece the designation Tswana refers to Tswana-speaking *merafe* in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia while Batswana refers to the citizens of post-colonial Botswana.

The Bahurutshe Diaspora in Southern Africa

Several Tswana-speaking groups such as Barolong, Bakwena, Bangwato, Bangwaketse and others symbolically recognize the Bahurutshe as senior to them as they were originally part of the Bahurutshe before splitting from them or from subsequent groups that had split from the Bahurutshe while still in South Africa. A passage from the memoirs of Sir Ketumile Masire, vice president of Botswana (1966-1980) and then president (1980-1998), provides ample evidence of why Bahurutshe have a special place in the annals of Tswana origin and history:

> Our ward, Goo-Motebejana, was named after my great-grandfather, who had been part of the Bahurutshe people on the South African side of the border near the present town of Motswedi. My ancestors, the Batebejana, had first been of the Bahurutshe tribe and later the Batlhaping [an offshoot of Bahurutshe] and later the Baphiring. They migrated from South Africa and under the rule of Bangwaketse chiefs early in the 19th century. The ancestors of my chief, Bathoen II, had invited them to move to Kanye… We became members of the Ngwaketse tribe in Botswana by virtue of our settlement there.
>
> In the traditional hierarchy of tribes among the Batswana [Tswana], the Bahurutshe were the most senior…. We Batswana [Tswana] tend to follow our bloodlines back in our genealogy. I used to tease the late president, Sir Seretse Khama, by telling him that despite the fact that he was a chief, he was a Mongwato, and I, having ancestors who were Bahurutshe was therefore senior to him (Masire 2006:1).

The Bahurutshe groups are 'independent' *merafe* in South Africa while in Botswana most of them are subject or tributary groups in villages such as Manyana in the Bangwaketse tribal territory. Mmankgodi in the Kweneng District is also a village of the Bahurutshe and so is Gabane which has

a small group of Bahurutshe among Balete. Another group, which is now called Bakhurutshe, settled in Tonota in the Bangwato territory (Mpotokwane 1974). The Batlharo, who are an offshoot of Bahurutshe in South Africa, settled in several southern Kgalagadi villages such as Tsabong, Maubelo, Bogogobo, Middlepits, Khuis, Kisa, Mmaleshe, Kolonkwaneng, Gakhibana and Maralaleng among others. In northern Kgalagadi there are Batlharo families in Lehututu, Tshane, and Lokgwabe. A few others can be found in Ghanzi township, Karakubis and Ncojane villages in the Ghanzi District. However, the Batlharo are the least known Tswana-speaking group in Botswana and in most cases they have been assimilated into the language and culture of the local Bakgalagadi groups such as Bangologa particularly in northern Kgalagadi. Other Bahurutshe are found in Magoriapitse in the Southern District (Bangwaketse territory), Makaleng in the North East District (Bakalanga territory) and also Boteti in the Central District or Bangwato tribal territory.

Among the Tswana there is a saying that '*Tlou ga e tlodile noka ke tlowana*' ('when an elephant crosses a river it becomes a small elephant') (Ngcongco 1977). This means that when a king seeks refuge in another king's domain he automatically becomes subordinate to his host no matter how much power or prestige he had in his original domain or empire. This is the situation of Bahurutshe in many districts mentioned above in Botswana.

In South Africa different Bahurutshe groups are found in various villages under different *dikgosi* (chiefs/kings). The area came to be known as Lehurutshe starting after the 'independence' of the Black homeland or Bantustan of Bophuthatswana in 1977. These villages include Motswedi, Gopane, Dinokana, Mokgola, and Supingstad among many others in the Zeerust area of what is now the North West Province of South Africa. There are also Batlharo villages in South Africa where they constitute larger numbers than in Botswana and these are Coe (Heuningvlei), Batlharos, Tsineng and others mostly in the Kudumane (Kuruman) and Postmanburg areas of the Northern Cape Province. There is a Batlharo village of Disaneng in the tribal territory of the Barolong-bo-Ratshidi established in 1862 by Kgosi Masibi who was invited to the area by Kgosi Montshiwa of the Barolong-bo-Ratshidi for security reasons as they had guns (Breutz 1959 and 1963).

According to the historians Andrew Manson and Bernard Mbenga 'Generally speaking, however, the prominent Tswana personalities are less well-known and respected than leading figures among other African societies in South Africa such as amaZulu, amaXhosa and baPedi, and some of their contemporaries in Botswana. Of course, there are exceptions' (Manson and Mbenga 2014:3). This may explain an undercurrent or complaint among the Tswana in South Africa that the country's national leadership pays more attention to Nguni traditional leadership in undertakings such as attendance at enthronement or funerals of kings or chiefs (traditional leaders) among other activities. This real or perceived form of marginality could be part of the motivation for the promotion of cross-border relations which can also be seen in the case of the Tswana-speakers in Namibia as we show later.

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, some Tswana groups from what is now South African territory, including Bahurutshe, fled to Bakwena under Kgosi Sechele in what would later become Botswana for refuge following incessant demand of their labour without pay by the Boers of the Transvaal Republic (Mbenga and Manson 2010). In the Bakwena territory the Bahurutshe lived in the area of Dimawe Hill. As would be expected, the Boers did not take kindly to Sechele taking in refugees and building a strong and well-armed African kingdom neighbouring the Transvaal Boer Republic. The tension gave way to Boers attacking Bakwena in what came to be known as the Battle of Dimawe or the Batswana-Boer War of 1852-1853. Sechele, who was helped to secure guns by his resident Scottish missionary doctor David Livingstone, had mobilised numerous Tswana groups

in the region including Bahurutshe nearby, and tried to resist Boer commandos. The Bakwena and their Tswana allies suffered heavy defeat (Morton 2022), however, the battle has been regarded by some Batswana writers as having ended in a stalemate or even victory of sorts for Sechele. These historians also claim that this pan-Tswana military operation or alliance/coalition was the genesis of the modern state of Botswana (Ramsay 1991 and Magang 2008). We are even informed that 'Dithubaruba event [festival] was named after the last fortress of Kgosi Sebele I, a place where he repelled a commando of Boer attackers around 1852' (Tlale 2 September 2016).

In 1885 the British colonialists split the territory of the Tswana groups into two parts along the Molopo River which became a boundary between the two territories. They named the area to the south of the river British Bechuanaland while the northern part became Bechuanaland Protectorate (Shillington 1985), now called Botswana. In 1895 British Bechuanaland became part of the Cape Colony, and with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 it came a province of the new political entity. Historian Kevin Shillington's 2011 publication *LukaJantjie: Resistance Hero of the South African Frontier* demonstrates how Luka Jantjie as *kgosi* of Batlhaping tried resisting British colonization of his land but was captured and killed by the British army. Shillington also discusses the fate of the Batlharo and their leader Kgosi Makgolokwe Toto who was imprisoned at Robben Island in 1897 for granting sanctuary to Kgosi Galeshewe of Batlhaping, who had led an armed resistance against British colonization of his territory in Kimberly, and refused to hand him over to the British. Kgosi Toto died at Robben Island in 1901. In the late nineteenth century a small group of Batlharo under Kgosi Morwe left Kudumane in South Africa and settled in eastern Namibia.

The Batlharo proudly regard themselves as Bahurutshe and they are part of other small Tswana groups namely Batlhaping and Bakgalagadi found in the Gobabis district of eastern Namibia and had arrived there before 1850. We are told that during the 1890s, 'the German government welcomed the settlement of the BaTswana in the country, mainly to serve as a counterweight to other "hostile" groups. Throughout their history of settlement in Namibia, the BaTswana have been strongly marginalized, first by the Kai/khauan during the 1890s, and later by the South African administration and the OvaHerero in the Aminuis Reserve and the Corridor. Through the influence of the Roman Catholic Mission Church they lost most of their traditions' (Antje 2011:15). The severe marginalization mentioned above is often the driving force for the marginalized minority groups to find solace in their international tribesmen or the pan-Bahurutshe movement. For instance, another observer of the Tswana minority in Namibia writes that 'Totemism is a major feature of the Tswana belief system and each member of the nation associates themselves with a specific animal, plant or object adopted in accordance with ancient myths and legends. This carries with it responsibilities and rituals which must be obeyed. Anyone contravening these rules has to undergo ritual purification to prevent bad luck. Although tribal alliances have almost disappeared, the Tswana people do acknowledge the ancestral relationship they share with others of the same totem' (Arebbusch nd).

It is worth stating that following the defeat of Germany in the First World War (1914-1918) Namibia, then called South West Africa, was taken over by South Africa on behalf of the League of Nations (predecessor to the United Nations) as a Mandate territory. When the apartheid system was introduced in South Africa in 1948, the resultant racial policies and its indignities as well as loss of land by the Africans were applied to Namibia, and the Tswana groups there such as Batlharo were no exception. Therefore, for them it was double marginalization from the local Herero and the brutal apartheid government.

Between 1975 and 1977 there was the controversial 'Turnhalle Constitutional Conference' under South African auspices which took place in the Namibian capital Windhoek for discussion of

the future of the territory under South Africa. The minority Tswana participated in the conference through their political formation called Tswana Alliance which was renamed Seoposengwe Party in 1978 under the leadership of Kgosi Constance Letang Kgosiemang, a descendant of Morwe from Kudumane. The name Seoposengwe, a Setswana term for 'unity', may have been influenced or inspired by the National Seoposengwe Party (NSP) which was an opposition party in Bophuthatswana (South Africa) around that time. The South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO), the main Namibia liberation group, condemned the Turnhalle constitutional conference and its subsequent elections as a South African design to keep its stranglehold over Namibia.

In 1980 the Seoposengwe Party in Namibia joined the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) which operated along ethnic lines (Kangueehi 22 October 2004). In 1989, following the Namibian peace settlement, Kgosi Kgosiemang became a member of the country's Constituent Assembly which upon Namibia's independence in 1990 was transformed into parliament. Pressure from his *morafe* led to him leaving parliament in 1993 to become a full-time *kgosi* (Poolman 17 August 2012). However, in 1998 he became a member of the ruling party SWAPO without returning to parliament, and concentrated on tribal affairs instead. He died in August 2012 and his funeral attracted Bahurutshe *dikgosi* from Botswana and his ancestral land Kudumane in South Africa as is tradition. For instance, during the funeral of Kgosi Mareko Mosielele of Bahurutshe in Manyana, 'a representative from Namibia, Kgosi Dineo Mokhatu said Batlharo and Bahurutshe came from one lineage. He said they have in the recent past strengthened their ties with the guidance of Kgosi Mosielele' (Monnakgotla 20 December 2015).

Even in South Africa, just like many other Blacks the Bahurutshe groups suffered from the brutality of apartheid including forced removals from their land. In 1957-1958 the Bahurutshe of Dinokana and Gopane villages resisted against dehumanizing pass laws which forced Black people to move around with pass documents for recording and severely restricting their freedom of movement. Bahurutshe men and women strongly and violently resisted the issuing of passes to women and local leaders who cooperated in the issuing of passes were condemned as collaborators with the apartheid officialdom. So serious were the threats that Kgosi Albert Gopane of Gopane village was forced to flee into Botswana or Bechuanaland Protectorate (Manson and Mbenga 2014). The resistance and violence spread to other Bahurutshe villages including Motswedi with *dikgosi* perceived as collaborators put on the run by enraged people. Matters worsened as the police shot protestors with thousands of fleeing into Botswana among whom was Kgosi Abram Moiloa of the Bahurutshe-ba-Moiloa. 'Many never returned to South Africa' (Manson and Mbenga 2014:112).

Perhaps the most famous Mohurutshe refugee in Botswana was Onkgopotse Abram Tiro, a student leader, who was murdered by apartheid security forces in 1974 through a parcel bomb at St Joseph's College in Kgale, near Gaborone. He was from Dinokana and a fiery anti-apartheid activist belonging to the Black Consciousness Movement, and the inferior Bantu Education for Blacks in South Africa. Consequently, Tiro became a wanted man by the vicious apartheid police leading to his escape into Botswana where they followed him and blew his body into pieces with a letter bomb (Tiro 2019). He was buried in Gaborone. Another notable personality was Paul Rantao who was born in Lehurutshe and migrated to Botswana as a child. He went to St Joseph's College, and later trained overseas as a journalist and became a civil servant. Rantao later joined the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF), becoming an elected councillor in a Gaborone ward in the 1984 general elections and serving for ten uninterrupted years as mayor, making him the city's longest serving mayor to date. He also became a member of parliament for Gaborone West constituency in 1994.

Bahurutshe-boo-Manyane and the Lucas Magope Factor in Botswana and South Africa

Leach Tlhomelang of Kanye writes that the Bahurutshe *merafe* in South Africa, who recognise the seniority of the Bahurutshe-boo-Manyane in Motswedi, and 'in times of great occasions such as the coronation of a new chief, royal weddings, and ceremonies such as burial of a chief, normally invite the Bo-Manyane Chiefs to come and take charge of these activities' (Tlhomelang 1977:iii). Significantly, in 1946 Lucas Manyane Mangope, as heir apparent of Bahurutshe-boo-Manyane was attached to Bangwaketse Tribal Administration in Kanye under Kgosi Bathoen II to be tutored on Tswana law and custom. Molokoe (2000:57) states that Mangope 'returned from his initiation with a heightened awareness as a Motswana'. He further claims that 'It must be stated that this awareness as a Motswana left an incredible impact on Mangope and instilled in him an inherent Tswana ethnic nationalism'.

Though some feel that Mangope's Tswana consciousness is exaggerated, as president of Bophuthatswana, which gained 'independence' in 1977, he tried quite hard to play the pan-Tswana card in a bid to force diplomatic relations with Botswana. However, the Botswana government stood firm against recognising any South African Bantustan let alone establishing diplomatic relations (Makgala 2021; Masire 2006). Botswana also dismissed Bophuthatswana as an offspring of apartheid which enraged Mangope. In 1986 he threatened that 'If Botswana cannot change its foreign policy on Bophuthatswana, and continues with its mud-slinging, then Bophuthatswana will have no choice but to retaliate' (Lawrence and Manson 1994:455). He tried to retaliate by sabotaging goods trains destined for Botswana from South Africa passing through Bophuthatswana and even imposing visas on Batswana entering Bophuthatswana (Makgala 2021; Masire 2006). But these were short-lived tactics with negligible impact.

Almost all the areas of the Bahurutshe including Batlharo in South Africa formed part of Bophuthatswana. Some villages including those of non-Tswana speakers did not want to become part of Bophuthatswana but Mangope used brute security force and violence to force them into Bophuthatswana. The Bahurutshe villages of Braklaagte and Leeuwfontein fought against incorporation to the bitter end. Therefore, 'One of the most sustained incidents of political resistance, matching the 1957 Hurutshe revolt, took place in the bushveld twin villages of Braklaagte and Leeuwfontein', write Manson and Mbenga (2014:127).

When the hated apartheid system ended in 1994 the territory that had constituted Bophuthatswana was re-incorporated into South Africa and much of it became part of the North West Province. South Africa became a democratic state friendly to Botswana, and the two countries established diplomatic ties with resident high commissioners. Mangope could even come to Botswana freely on private visits or come officially as a *Kgosi* of Bahurutshe-boo-Manyane to attend cultural ceremonies such as the enthronement of Kgosi Mosadi Seboko of Balete in Ramotswa in 2003. He had been invited by his close relative Kgosi Mareko Mosielele of Bahurutshe in Manyana to accompany him and help in his draping Kgosi Mosadi Seboko, the first substantive woman Kgosi in post-colonial Botswana, with a leopard skin. This symbolic ritual is extremely important in tribal power relations among the Tswana.

In May 2016 a national culture day spectacle was held in Manyana under the theme 'Proud and United Nation Through Culture'. 2016 marked Botswana's fiftieth anniversary of independence and a lot of activities happened on the build-up to 30 September (Independence Day) and the slogan 'Proud and United Nation' was everywhere. The choice of Manyana was deeply significant historically in the context of 'Pan-Tswanaism'. Although this was a national event, the Bahurutshe status was being glorified and linked directly to the perceived genesis of the nation resulting from the Batswana-

Boer skirmish at the nearby Dimawe Hill in 1852-1853. As we noted above historians have etched the Battle of Dimawe into the history of Botswana as the cradle of modern-day Botswana. By 2016 Lucas Mangope had retired as *Kgosi* in Motswedi and his son, Kwena Mangope, had succeeded him and would play a key role in the 2016 national culture day in Manyana. The Member of Parliament for the area, Moshupa-Manyana constituency, was the then vice president of Botswana, Mokgweetsi Masisi. The event was hosted by Kgosi Kebinatshwene Mosielele of Manyana who had succeeded his father Mareko Mosielele in 2017. Kgosi Mosielele made the significance of Dimawe quite clear as reported by a *Botswana Daily News* journalist:

> The Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Thapelo Olopeng is expected to conduct the official opening on Saturday where the cream of Bahurutshe culture and other tribes that make up Botswana will be showcased. Kgosi Kwena Mangope of Motswedi in South Africa will be the guest speaker while Area MP, Vice President and Patron of Manyana annual cultural festival, Mokgweetsi Masisi is expected to grace the pomp and fanfare filled spectacle. Kgosi Kebinatshwene said the two day event will also characterise traditional cuisine and games… 'My wish is to in future [sic] have this festival at Dimawe which bears cultural significance to our existence as a Nation. It was in Dimawe where numerous Batswana Merafe battled and won a war against the Boers in 1852 under the command of Kgosi Sechele of the Bakwena', he said (Mojalemotho 18 May 2016).

However, the following year 2017 in August during Kgosi Kebinatshwene's controversial draping with a leopard skin in Manyana to symbolise his Paramount Chief ('*Kgosi-kgolo*') status, as would be expected, some of the crucial guests were the Mangopes from Motswedi. The controversy arose from the argument that whereas the symbolic seniority of Bahurutshe Kgosi among the Tswana was not in doubt, the fact was that he was in the jurisdiction of Kgosi Malope of Bangwaketse who was thus the only authority entitled to be draped in a leopard skin in line with the traditional 'little elephant' principle.

The recognition of the Bahurutshe seniority among the Tswana was also demonstrated during Lucas Mangope's funeral in early 2018. Following Mangope's death in January 2018 Vice President Masisi travelled to Motswedi to pay Botswana's last respects to the deceased Mangope. Masisi was accompanied by Kgosi Mosadi Seboko, Kgosi Mosielele, Kagiso Mmusi (the son of late and former vice president, Peter Mmusi, who hailed from Mmankgodi), and Mpho Balopi, secretary general of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party). Masisi, himself a Mokgatla-waga-Mmanaana, comes from the nearby Moshupa. It seems Kagiso Mmusi was included to represent the Bahurutshe of Mmankgodi. Interestingly, soon after Mangope's ouster as president of Bophuthatswana in 1994, popular belief in Gaborone was that he had fled into Botswana and was hiding at the former vice president's house which the Mmusis rubbished. Mpho Balopi was also a Mokhurutshe, and over and above his attendance of Mangope's burial as a BDP functionary, it was his Bokhurutshe that he also wanted to put in prominence (email communication with Prof. Andy Chebanne 2 March 2021). Whereas Masisi may have included them in his entourage for other reasons their ethnic link to the late Mangope was obvious. At the funeral Kgosi Mosielele addressed the mourners on behalf of the government of Botswana and his Bahurutshe in Manyana (*Mahikeng Mail* 2 February 2018). The front page of one of the leading newspapers in the North West Province, *Mahikeng Mail*, sported a prominent photograph of Kgosi Mosielele addressing the mourners and standing in front of Mangope's coffin draped in a chiefly leopard skin complete with a stuffed head.

Annual Pan-Hurutshe Gatherings

The post-liberation period also saw some interesting cross-border pan-Tswana cultural developments in the new millennium. Among these was an association known as *Ipatlise o Ikitse* ('Trace yourself to know yourself') initiated by Bahurutshe youth (Lekaukau 2010), notably Mothibi Mothibi, Baakile Kesebonye, Isaac Sekopecwe and Maemo Mampo. While at a funeral of their cousin in Ramatlabama in Botswana they realised that they frequently met while attending social gatherings such as weddings and funerals in Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia, but were concerned that they did not know how they were related. This sparked a desire to know their history, to find out their relatives spread across the three neighbouring countries and understand how they were related. They, therefore, agreed to form an association through which they could meet regularly 'to know each other as Bahurutshe in different countries and network for the exchange of information in a number of cultural issues like the development of family trees' (Mosielele 9 September 2014). Other Bahurutshe were mobilised and the first meeting was held in Moshupa in Botswana in 2007 and another one in 2008 in the village of Tlakgameng to the west of Vryburg town in the South African North West Province. Some elders from Botswana and South Africa invited to these preparatory meetings, embraced the idea and encouraged the youth to spread the message further so that ultimately a conference could be held drawing participants from the three countries.

Moses Lekaukau, who proudly declared that he was a Mohurutshe-wa-ga-Motlhware (Motlharo), was the driving force as the administrator anchor and the regional coordinator of the movement. He was a former long-serving permanent secretary in the government of Botswana and a successful businessman from Hukuntsi (Kgalagadi District). The association worked to bring together Bahurutshe and their Batlharo offshoot from Botswana, South Africa and Namibia for annual conferences held in the three countries on rotational basis. Other Tswana groups were also invited or represented at these conferences where the main task was for different clans to trace their genealogies and engage in cultural exchanges. These started being held in Gobabis in Namibia in 2011, Tsabong in Botswana in 2012, Batlharos in South Africa in 2013, and back to Gobabis in Namibia in 2015. Unlike most cultural festivals in Botswana, which are held in the same place year in and year out, the *Ipatlise o Ikitse* conferences or activities were held in different Bahurutshe villages or centres in the three countries.

It was hinted that one of the key objectives of *Ipatlise o ikitse* was eventual exhumation of the remains of Kgosi Makgolokwe Toto of one of the Batlharo groups buried at Robben Island for a dignified reburial at his village in South Africa. However, it is quite surprising that more than a century after he died and about three decades after apartheid ended this had not been done. Even as late as 2018 talk of exhumation of Kgosi Toto's remains from Robben Island was still ongoing (Ledwaba 16 February 2018). This is even more striking when considering the case of the slain student leader Onkgopotse Tiro, who was murdered by apartheid security forces in 1974 through a parcel bomb in Kgale. He was buried in Gaborone in 1974 but in March 1998, just four years after the end of apartheid, his remains were exhumed in a befitting ceremony in Gaborone for reburial in his native Dinokana across the border

In September 2014 the Bakhurutshe village of Tonota celebrated its centenary and the *Ipatlise o ikitse* played a key role in the festivities with Lekaukau as one of the main speakers. It was said to have been the first ever event of this nature to bring together different Bahurutshe and Batlharo groups with their *Dikgosi* from Botswana, South Africa and Namibia. It was reported that 'Tonota made history last weekend when she celebrated her 100th year of existence not only with pomp but also with one of the greatest re-unions the southern region of the African continent has

ever witnessed' (Tumedi 15 September 2014). The guest of honour and keynote speaker was Kgosi Kebinatshwene Mosielele of Manyana. The Batlharo-baga-Lotlhare in Coe (Northern Cape Province in South Africa) were represented by Kgosi Pule Bareki. The following excerpt by the *Botswana Daily News* while lengthy is nonetheless informative:

> Tonota village recently celebrated 100 years of existence amidst splendor and sharing of historical thoughts by the few who could still remember the long history of Bakhurutshe since 1914. The chain of events kicked off from the equally 100-year-old Tonota Primary School on September 05, with traditional songs, cultural performances, and games, followed by an evening of historical thoughts at the village's oldest Molebatsi kgotla. The events culminated on September 07 with a big feast and speeches from various guests from as far as Namibia, South Africa and Lesotho, among other countries….
>
> Kgosi Mosielele said it was perhaps the first time that they had met together emotionally to celebrate after a split which was occasioned by a [an ancient] fight between the two sons of Queen Mohurutshe being Motebele and Motebejana. The conflict resulted in them splitting and going their separate ways; therefore, he commended the theme for the celebrations 'Popagano ke Phenyo' which translates to 'Unity is Victory' in English. He said it captured the emotional meeting of brothers and sisters who had not known for centuries that they were actually one. Furthermore, he elaborated that, as Bakhurutshe, they had had a significant success in building a comprehensive genealogy from their ancestor Phofhu to present generations. However, they needed to do more and engage more brains, particularly from the youth to write a comprehensive history of Bahurutshe because the information is scattered all over in a number of publications. He stressed that their success had also elicited interests from other tribal groupings to join them in order to emulate what they had started.
>
> For his part, Mr Patrick Balopi [former speaker of the national assembly], who is regarded as one of the village elders, echoed the late [President] Sir Seretse Khama's words that 'a nation without a… [past] is a nation without a soul'. He stressed that it was imperative for Bakhurutshe to celebrate and showcase their rich cultural heritage and history so that it does not wane. He emphasized that understanding one's cultural heritage goes a long way in nation building (Lebowa 14 September 2014).

Moses Lekaukau died in 2015 and at his funeral in Gaborone in December 2015 'Kgosi Victor Suping of Supingstaad in South Africa paid tribute to Mr Lekaukau for having united the Bahurutshe of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, noting that his quest to establish and compile genealogies of Bahurutshe families and clans in these countries should be accomplished' (Shapi 7 December 2015). Furthermore, 'Kgosi Suping said through the late Lekaukau many were able to realise that they have an extended family tree with long roots thus he formed what is today known as 'Ipatlise o ikitse'. In Namibia, where the Tswana are a tiny minority, the Batlharo and other Tswana groups came together to unite and they attended *Ipatlise o iketse* events as one group. Unfortunately, the passing of the influential Moses Lekaukau also saw the waning or fading of the cross-border enthusiasm for the Pan-Hurutshe initiative. Two years after his death, only one conference was organised in Batlharos (South Africa) in 2017 and it was poorly attended. Efforts to resuscitate the movement have not borne fruit. Internal differences among members in each of the countries also made it difficult for the movement to carry on with its original objectives. Among other duties that the late Lekaukau used to perform remarkably well was to reconcile and settle differences among individuals

and various groupings within the movement who differed sharply on issues relating to seniority of clans, kinships, and *bogosi* (chieftainship). This required lengthy telephone conversations with the concerned individuals at great financial cost. However, some family gatherings continue to meet and few of these drawing family members from the three countries.

Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated the historical development of different Bahurutshe *merafe* and how they spread from South Africa to Namibia and Botswana owing to intrusion by the Boer land-grabbers and the British colonialists into their territory. Subsequent hardship caused by the apartheid system, which led to further displacement of Bahurutshe with some fleeing South Africa for Botswana, is discussed.

Most importantly, the paper demonstrates efforts by Bahurutshe, as did other *merafe*, to engage in a Renaissance process for cross-border unity, preservation of their culture and tourism promotion. Unfortunately, for the Bahurutshe this seemed to be a short-lived endeavor whose revival needs to be encouraged.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Dr Bruce Bennett and Professor Andy Chebanne for the helful comments they made in the development of this paper.

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