

**Sandy Grant with Elinah Grant, Botswana: An Historical Anthology**

Cambridgeshire, Melrose Books, 2012, 95 pages, Softcover, ISBN: 978-1-907732-84-3.

and

**Sandy Grant, Botswana and its National Heritage**

Cambridgeshire, Melrose Books, 2012, 116 pages, Softcover, ISBN: 978-1-907732-83-6.

Sandy Grant says in his introduction to *Botswana: An Historical Anthology* that he has compiled a collection of writings containing historical information that is not readily available or to be found in school textbooks or guides to Botswana. The collection begins with Livingstone at Kolobeng in 1852. It quickly moves to 'The Protectorate Period, 1885-1966' and condenses in to 40 pages of quotations from over four dozen sources that reflect part of the story of what people were communicating about in the 81 years of the Protectorate.

Various texts of communications by Kgosi Sebele, Kgosi Khama III, and some with Sebele and Kgosi Bathoen I, are included over the last 15 years of the nineteenth century. In 1895, when challenged by Dr Jameson why he went to England without speaking to him, Khama replied, 'your ambition is but to kill'. This significant selection by the author has a note:

Within days after this meeting, Jameson led his disastrous raid into South Africa. His force was quickly rounded up and forced to surrender. Cecil Rhodes, who had backed the incursion, was obliged to resign as Prime Minister of the Cape Government. Almost overnight his influence in London dropped dramatically and the plans of the British government to hand over the Batswana tribes in the Protectorate to his British South Africa Company were promptly dropped (p.26).

Khama III had no difficulties telling people 'go back to your own country' if you can't respect our laws, and to speak out against the evils of alcohol (p.14 and p.15).

For example Dr Silas Modiri Molema in 1923 (no exact date is provided) prays 'that Isang Pilane's new Bakgatla National School will "shed light and live upon our benighted country"' (p.32). Molema's prayer is moving and reveals a broad perspective. In *The Personalities* at the end of the book the reader will find that (medical doctor) SM Molema (1891-1965) represented the Protectorate on the African Advisory Council, Joint Advisory Council and the Legislative Council—he also helped form the All Africa Convention (in Bloemfontein in 1935) after he lost the right to vote. He was born in Mafikeng, but his people, the Barolong, 'straddled the international border'. He died one year before independence in 1966. If one googles Dr Silas Modiri Molema on the web, there are pages of entries about him. Grant's slim book in hand can help to serve as an entry to the web, suggesting who to search for to learn more. For example, look and you will find: <http://www.nai.uu.se/ecas-4/panels/101-120/panel-110/Jane-Starfield-Full-paper.pdf>. You will also find on the web that Dr Molema's book *Montshiwa 1815-1896 Barolong Chief & Patriot* is available from Alibris, but not his *The Bantu Past and Present* (1920). Then you will learn that two brothers both Silas, also called Seetsele, and Sefetogi both studied medicine in Scotland, but graduated twenty years apart in 1918 and 1938.

In the third part of *Botswana: An Historical Anthology* 'The Independent State, 1966 to 2009' Grant compacts into 36 pages a number of carefully selected documents that span 43 years. This is a difficult one, as books or documents that parallel this collection would demand hundreds of pages. For example see the work of Professor Gail Gerhart of Columbia University, New York City, who with Thomas G Karis and others has since 1984 co-authored six volumes of a documentary history of African politics in South Africa. The challenge remains for such work to be accomplished for Botswana.

In the third part, selected voices are (in alphabetical order) Unity Dow, Bessie Head, Seretse Khama, Nelson Mandela, Quett Masire, Peter Mmusi, Festus Mogae, Julian Nganunu and about a dozen others. Many will find this slim pickings, but then the actual selections are important. Dow's High Court Decision on the CKGR is presented. Head's description of Serowe is reproduced from Village of the Rain-Wind. There are a variety of entries from Seretse Khama. A communication in 1980 from Mandela to Masire is included that was written after Seretse Khama had died; it underlines South Africa's appreciation of Botswana, as a 'source of tremendous inspiration'. One of Masire's selections is on the transition from colonial administration to self-government. In 2007 Festus Mogae commented on his ten years as President of Botswana.

It is obvious from Botswana and its National Heritage that Sandy Grant has had fun with this volume. It contains 24 short chapters of varying lengths. The first part contains material of historical significance on specific events, issues or places including: the Old Capitol Cinema (that is no more); the Kazangula Ferry (that should be replaced); mineral rights; the imperial reserve in Mafikeng which once served as the capital of Bechuanaland; a bit on how Gaborone was created from Gaborones; and one on Seretse Khama and his favourite hat—a Homburg, that had its origin in a small town in western Germany.

The second part of Botswana and its National Heritage is longer, with 15 selections. Again there is some delightful material here. They focus mainly on historical and heritage sites, like Modipe Hill, Ntsweng outside Molepolole, the three historical Bangwato centres and Old Palapye. He has a go at cultural institutions, like the kgotla, and practices like bojalwa (its various tastes and politics), clothing, craft, transport and graves and graveyards. He describes what traditional 'towns' were like, and then takes a look at Kanye, Lobatse, Mochudi, Ramotswa and Tlokweng.

Botswana and its National Heritage is the kind of book that will appeal more to students in schools. The author stresses again, in this volume, 'this is not a history book'. It is a selection of short pieces of interest on the national heritage of Botswana. The black and white photographs will make it an attractive book even in primary schools (many of them are by the author).

This is the volume that Sandy Grant obviously loves. He has put himself into every one of the 24 chapters. His vision of Botswana is based on nearly five decades of commitment to the country—he is a citizen. He is known for his Etcetera column that has been going for 22 years and the book of collected Etcetera One columns between 1991 and 1997. He has also sustained a column in Mmegi separate from the one in The Monitor called 'Our Heritage'. On the 20 February 2013 it featured a portrait of Seretse Khama from the 1940s that hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. In this column Sandy Great calls for the creation of a National Heritage Centre in Gaborone created out of the old prison, the original BDF headquarters the old fort in The Village.

To get these two books published Grant had to turn to a 'Professional Partnership Publishers' or what formally was called a Vanity Press. This is another example of his commitment to Botswana. Let us hope it is justified by these two books being taken on by, and used in, schools. They should be in all school and tertiary institution libraries. The No 1 Ladies' Book Club used both books for a session and would recommend them to other book clubs.

*Reviewed by Sheridan Griswold*  
(First appeared in *Mmegi* 1 March 2013)