## The Origin and Early Years of the History Undergraduate Major Research Essay at the University College of Botswana (Later University of Botswana)

## Fred Morton\*

When I joined the Department of History in February 1976, one of my first experiences was to attend a seminar led by Professor Thomas Tlou discussing the last-but-final drafts of fourth-year student essays on various topics of Botswana history. Apart from having read Anthony Sillery's *Botswana: A Short Political History* before my arrival, I was ignorant of Botswana's past and sat in the rest of that semester as a mute observer. Professor Tlou soon let me know that, even though I was hired to teach East African History, in the next semester I would be given research students to supervise along with himself and Professor Leonard Ngcongco. In August of that year Dr David Kiyaga-Mulindwa joined us as our West Africanist, and he had an even faster learning curve than me.

In my early days, the University College of Botswana campus was tiny with simple (non-air-conditioned) offices and classrooms, all of which are still standing today, all painted white, and marked by thin zinc roofing. The entire faculty of Humanities totalled 12 persons, and class sizes were likewise small, 10-15 on average. The newness of the place, and its mandate to chart Botswana's future at a time when the liberation struggle was reaching a boil, created a 'buzz' among students and staff alike that is hard to describe because of its stark contrast with the modern, sleepy UB. Such an atmosphere made for lively classes, close interaction among students and staff, animated discussions in the corridors, and heavily attended special lectures. Unlike UB today, where the student body and staff is overwhelmingly Batswana, the old UBS was very cosmopolitan, both among faculty and students. Zimbabweans, South Africans, Ghanaians, Ugandans, Brits, and Yankees like me supplemented the Batswana faculty. Among the student body, along with outspoken Zimbabwean and South African refugees, were many 'mature age' Batswana (26 years+), some with families, several older than myself, and with uncommon maturity and work ethics.

The research essay (required of all history majors) was Professor Tlou's idea and part of his sacred project of Africanising the University College of Botswana history curriculum. He had arrived the previous year from lecturing at Roma (Lesotho) campus of the joined University of Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), where the curriculum was heavily slanted toward Western History. As chair/ head of the first Department of History in Gaborone campus of the new University of Botswana and Swaziland, not to mention its first Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Professor Tlou enjoyed a clean slate. Apart from a course or two on modern Europe, most of the other courses were regional African History offerings along with historiography and methodology. All were intended to introduce undergraduates to a field neglected even in government schools, where many of them taught before entering the university as 'mature age entrants'. And even more barren in their knowledge was the History of Botswana. To their credit, Isaac Schapera had published many articles and books on various topics on Botswana's people, some of it historical, Anthony Sillery had produced a compendium of 'tribal' histories (*The Bechuanaland Protectorate*), and The Botswana Society (established in 1968) published *Botswana Notes and Records*, which contained short articles on various Botswana topics, some historical, written by lay and academic enthusiasts.

The gaps in the historical record, nevertheless, were immense, and much of what was published, virtually all outside of Botswana, was out of print, expensive for the fledgling University College of Botswana (UCB) library to acquire, unavailable elsewhere in the country except in scattered private collections, and overwhelmingly Eurocentric. Professor Tlou, therefore, set for all his fourth-year history majors

<sup>\*</sup> Fred Morton, Department of History, University of Botswana. Email: rodger.morton@mopipi.ub.bw

the task of carrying out original research to begin the labour of building Botswana's recorded history.

By the time Professor Tlou departed as Botswana's ambassador to the United Nations in 1978, the research dissertation requirement that he had initiated had taken on a life of its own. In the early years of UBS, each class of History majors averaged around 10 to 12 students, which meant that we lecturers were supervising 2 or 3 students' projects each year. What is striking about the topics chosen at that time was the overwhelming preference for the pre-colonial and colonial periods, with particular interest in ethnic and local history. Twice, in 1979-1980 and 1980-1981, the entire class of researchers carried out their research in a single district, in order to promote broader historical coverage and stimulate student interaction and sharing of their results. This experiment was abandoned, however, because students tended to be keen on researching their home areas, where they had not only an interest but an advantage in being known to their informants, which speeded up gathering information. Commonly, research was based on a combination of archival research and oral interviews (we were all steeped in oral traditions -Professor Tlou was a product of the University of Wisconsin in the United States, where his supervisor, Prof Jan Vansina was a pioneer in using oral traditions in Africa, and Professor Ngcongco had conducted many interviews in Gangwaketse for his doctoral dissertation, as I had on the Kenya coast for mine, and in southern Ghana as had Dr Kiyaga-Mulindwa). Only in the late 1980s did students begin to drift away from the colonial period and camp out almost exclusively in post-independence Botswana.

Carrying out research in the 1970s and 1980s demanded of students skills that today have been largely put aside. During the long winter break, students were expected to spend hours in the national archives and comb the stacks and the fledgling Botswana collection for relevant literature, both as a prelude to field work. Budgets for travel to the field and accommodation were meagre, requiring students to fend for themselves and accept a barebones lifestyle. Each supervisor was funded to visit his students in the field, give them a shoulder to cry on, buck them up, and offer a few pointers. Everything read or heard was written down. Light years separated the Internet and Google from these times. Large filled notebooks were standard operating procedure. Upon return to the final year at UBS/UB to write up the results, drafts for the supervisor's eyes were handwritten, but when the time came to present and defend before the Department (and invited guests, occasionally including enthusiastic members of the public), the draft had to be typed (and corrected) entirely on stencil and run off on an inky cyclostyle machine, collated, bound and circulated a week prior to the crucible event. Photocopiers were on their way, but slow to arrive.

The formal presentation and defence tended to be a gruelling test, a rite of passage on its own, when even personal dislikes could seep into the process, I regret to say. The passing rate, nevertheless, was always 100%, though a paper that made it above the stratospheric 70% was rare. Not to be discounted, however, is the accumulated benefit of these individual projects –for the Department's profile as a contributor to the nation and the growth of Botswana's historiography. Some were published in revised form, but all formed a large and growing collection in the UB that has been used by countless local and visiting researchers up to the present.

At a personal level, too, the bond between researcher and supervisor could last well beyond the student's fourth year, and the supervisor's growing knowledge of Botswana History owed a significant debt to the students who led him into a wide assortment of topics. Whereas we arrived at UBS as non-Botswana specialists, each of us was drawn into Botswana-based research and went on to publish ourselves, including John Spears III and Andy Murray, who were hired to teach European History, and the inimitable West Africanist Michael Crowder, who was hypnotised by the archival record of Tshekedi Khama. Among the first students I supervised was Renyane Dikole's research on Isang Pilane. When the 1979-1980 class all did topics on Kgatleng history, I supervised Bagele (neé Kenosi) Chilisa, Philip Monnatsie, and the late Phanuel Richard, and became infected with the *historicae Bakgatla* virus, which remained active for 30 years. Renyane Dikole and Bagele Chilisa among others would go on and become members of the academic staff at UB. A list of students and their topics is provided in the appendix below. Some of these were Archaeology majors after the discipline was introduced by Dr Dr Kiyaga-Mulindwa.

One of the first graduates of the History undergraduate major research essay in 1976 was Margaret Nasha whose essay was on an aspect of British colonial administration in Botswana. She would go on to become the Speaker of the national assembly in Botswana (2009-2014). Therefore, it was very fitting that we invited her as a guest speaker during the hugely successful international conference organised by the Department of History in collaboration with the Southern African Historical Association at UB in 2013.

## References

Sillery, A 1974. Botswana: A Short Political History. London: Methuen. Sillery, A 1952. Bechuanaland Protectorate. London: Oxford University Press.

## Appendix

	11	
Table 1: The list of History and Archaeolog	gy Student Research Essays fr	om 1976 to 1990

History/ Arch.	Year	Author	Title
History	1976	Bobeng, M	The Bangwato-Babirwa Conflict in the early nineteenth and late twentieth centuries
		Kooagile, T.A	Relations between the Bakwena and the Bangwato c.1830-1890
		Kote, D.D	Recruitment of mine labour in Botswana, 1899-1945
		Letsididi, B.M.S	Some aspects of the career of Tshekedi Khama
		Mangole J.T	The Barolong Farms
		Mongatane, T.L	Balete and the scramble
		Mosarwe, K.M	The history of Baseleka of eastern Botswana
		Mosothoane, P	The Batlokwa of Gaborone's search for a homeland
		Mtutuki, M.J	The Mwali cult in northern Botswana: some oral traditions c. 1893-1976
		Mzwinila, M.M	The Bakhurutshe of Tonota
		Nasha, M	Aspects of British administration in Bechuanaland Protectorate
	6 6 7 8 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9	Nthobatsang, K	The colonial administration: a critique by Simon Ratshosa
		Phillips, H.Y	The BagaSeleka barolong's search for a homeland
Woto, A.P.S	Woto, A.P.S	The Tati District and the Scramble	
History	1977	Mabena, O.C	The decline of the power of the Tswana chiefs, 1885-1934
		Maikano, B.M	Micro study of economic imperialism in north-eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate
	•	Manungo, K.R.D	The role of the Native Advisory Council in the administration of the Bechuanaland Pro- tectorate, 1919-1960. Published in Essays of Twentieth Century Botswana History
		Mhapha, G	The career of Chief Sebele I
		Mongwa, M.D.K	The political struggle between Baka-Nswazwi under John Madawo and the Bangwato under Tshekedi Khama, 1926-1932
		Mulale, D.M	The life and career of Dr. Kgalemang Tumediso Motsete
		Ramsden, F.L	The Basubia
		Sechele, G.K	Colonialism in north-eastern Bechuanaland: Bakhurutshe case, 1840-1950
		Sesinyi, A	History and politics in the Caprivi Strip

		·····	
		Tambula, S.B	The Sebele-Kgari dispute
		Tlhomelang, L	Bahurutshe boo-Manyana
History	1978	Dikole, S.R	Kgosi Isang Pilane's modernizing programme
		Dikole, W	Sekgoma Letsholathebe's rule and the British administration
		Hulela, M.M	The role of the European Advisory Council in the administration of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1920-1960
		Kwelagano, C.M.T	The history of Francistown to the 1960s
		Mannathoko, C.E	Kalanga politics in the context of nationalism in Botswana: a historical perspective
		Mgadla, P.T.R	The history of the town and area of Lobatse from pre-colonial time to 1965
		Molefi, R.K.K	The regency of Chieftainess Ntebogang of the Ngwaketse, 1924-1926
• • • •		Rampa J.B	Euro-African reaction to incorporation: the Bechuanaland case, c. 1908-1940
		Sebolai, M.K	A history of the socio-political changes in the conditions of the Masarwa (Bushmen) in the Bamangwato Reserve, c. 1700-1940
		Setlhare, F.T	The interaction between the Khurutshe, Ndebele, Kalanga and Ngwato during the nine- tee nth century, and its subsequent effect on the Khurutshe of Tonota
		Tselaesele, B.M	Bakgatla ba-ga-Mmanaana
History	1979	Lubinda, I.S	Ethiopianism in Botswana
		Makaya, Ma- Lord. T	The Anglo-Boer War and its effect on the Bechuanaland Protectorate
		Masendu, K	Religion and politics in Mapoka, with reference to surrounding areas, 1900-1975
		Monyatsi, P.P	The history of the Ndebele of Siviya Village, eastern Botswana to 1969
		Sekgoma, G.A	History of Trade Unionism in Botswana, 1940s-1978: a Marxist-Leninist interpretation
•		Tshambani, M.M.W	The Vapostori of Francistown: the study of an African Independent church from 1951 to present
History	1980	Chinganze, F	The political economy of Kgatleng, 1971-1920
		Kenosi, B.M	From self-sufficiency to dependency: the econom, ic history of Kgatleng, 1871-1930
•		Madisa, M.M	Regiments as a tributary mode of production: the case of Kgatleng
•		Mafu, D.	The origins and growth of Oodi Village: a socio-political and economic analysis
		Manyeula, A	The place and changing roles of the kgotla and chieftaincy in the history of Bakgatla
		Mchaeli, C.M	An analysis of headmanship: the Ntshole of Morwa, 1896-1966
		Molotsi, P.P	The historical roots of agrarian underdevelopment in the Kgatleng, 1930-1970
		Monnatsie, P.P.I	The growth and spread of religious sects in Kgatleng: the case of the Zion Chritian Church (ZCC), 1933-1977
		Moswela, M.F	Politics in Kgatleng: parochialism versus nationalism
		Moyo, M	The development of capitalist trade and the impact of traders in Kgatleng
		Mpatane, M.K	Isang Pilane and educational innovation in Kgatleng, 1920-1941
		Nkosana, B.M	Bakgatla/Bakalanga relations: politics of the integration of a minority
		Ramogwera, J.P.K	The role and survival of traditional medical practices in Kgatleng
		Richard, P	Basarwa surbodination among the Bakgatla: the case of the Kgakole. Published in Es- says on Twentieth Century Botswana History
History	1981	Chakalisa, P.P	The development and impact of western education in Kweneng, 1946-1966
		Lecha, M.D	The history of Francistown to the 1960s

		Leepile, M.A	The impact of migrant labour on the economy of Kweneng, 1940-1980
		Malambane, M	The role of the L.M.S in Kweneng: an aspect of missionary imperialism
		Mautle, T.G	Bakgalagadi-Bakwena relationship: a case of slavery, c. 1840-1930. Published in Bo- tswana Notes and Records, 18 (1986), 19-31
		Mokopakgo- si, B	The socio-economic and political impact of the Second World War on the Bakwena, 1939-1950. Published in Richard Rathbone & David Killingray (1986), eds. Africa in the Second World War London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 160-180
		Molebatsi, C.O	Agricultural transformation and the rise of Kulak farmers in Kweneng, 1939-1966
		Molotsi, K.A.M	The impact of colonialism on the institutions of chieftainship: the Kweneng case, 1885- 1961
		Selepeng, O.S	Totemism and clans in the history of Kweneng
		Senabye,	?
		Tafa, E.M	The rise of conservative bourgeois nationalism: politics in Kweneng, 1945-1974
History	1982	Bitsang, M.C	Chiefs, the transfer [to the Union of South Africa] and administrative colonial control: Bechua naland Protectorate, 1930-1940
		Katsand, G	The evolution of the Bechuanaland Protectorate African civil service in a colonial con- text, c. 1895-1992
		Keineetse, D.M	European presence as a factor in the transformation of Botswana's political and social formations
		Kobokobo, K.E	Labour migration and its economic impact on the north-east district: the case of Bakalan- ga 1870-1939
		Mafela, L	Colonial initiatives and African response to the establishment of the dairy industry in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1939-1966. Published in Essays of Twentieth Century Botswana History
		Maikano, G.K	The evolution of district administration in Botswana, 1900-1980
		Mbongwe, J.P.B	The colonial and post-independence urban development in Gaborone, 1887-1981
		Moamogwe, B.V	Rural conservatism versus nationalism in pre-independent Botswana: the Bechuanaland People's Party, 1960-1966
		Moerane, L.N	The role of the Legco in the formation of political parties in the Bechuanaland Protector- ate, 1960-1965
		Molobe, E.N	The role of the Department of Agriculture in the promotion of arable farming in Botswa- na, 1935-1981
		Nthobatsang, S.M.O	Chiefs, aristocrats and cattle: the political economy of Gammangwato, 1926-1960
		Sabone, M.K.L	The Asian factor in the trade and rural production of colonial and modern Botswana, c. 1885-1980
		Slave, T	The history of colonial land policies: the Molopo case, 1895-1966
		Tsumake, P.S	Agrarian underdevelopment in the South-East District of Botswana since the nineteenth century
History	1983	Hamandawa- na, H	Trade and politics among the Kalanga in the nineteenth century
		Kebeilwe, K.P	Acculturation in north-eastern Botswana: the Kaa of Sebina among Mengwe's Kalanga, 1800-1966
		Madikwe, M.M	Western education among the Kalanga of northern Ngwato District, -1966

		Marata, O	African traders in the North-Eastern District up to 1981: the rise and development of an African middle class
		Mogotsi, M.O	Failure to reclaim lost land: the Khurutshe and British Tati company imperialism, 1890- 1939
		Mupindu, J.E	Creation of the Tati company and land alienation: a case of the North-East District of Botswana, 1888-1939
		Ndai-Paulos, I	Agricultural production and exchange: the case of Central District Bukalanga area, c. 1890-1940. Published in Pula, Botswana Journal of African Studies, 3, 2(1983)
History	1984	Dube, P.O	Settlement pattern as a dynamic process: the Sebina/Mathangwane area of north[ern] Central District of Botswana, 1895-1959
		Edzani, U	European cattle trade among Bakalanga: its nature and impact, 1890-1960
		Gadibolae, M.N	Serfdom (bolata) in the Nata area, 1926-1960. Published in Botswana Notes and Re- cords, 17(1985), 25-32
		Kebiditswe, K	Surbodination and conflict in Ngamiland: the Bayei protest of 1948
		Letsatsi, R.B	The impact of labour migration on Botswana: a case study of Balete of Ramotswa, Bang- waketse of Kanye and Bakgatla of Mochudi, 1900-1970
		Manase, G.U	The politics of separation: the case of Ovaherero of Ngamiland. Published in Essays on Twentieth Century Botswana History
		Mbuya, T.M	Legitimacy and succession in Tswana states: the case of Bakwena, 1930-1943. Published in Essays on Twentieth Century Botswana History
		Mosime, C	The impact of the Native Administration and Native Tribunals Proclamations of 1934 on the Ngwaketse state
		Ngwenya, B.C	The development of transport infrastructure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate 1885- 1966. Published in Botswana Notes and Records, 16 (?)
		Pharo, S	A history of the Ntombo Kalanga people (Baperi) up to 1966
		Phorano, G	The changing role of chieftainship, 1930-1950: the case of Bangwaketse
		Rametse, M.S	Aspects of subordination and bureaucratization of chieftainship: the case of Balete of Ramotswa
History	1985	Boikhutso, K	The life and times of Leatile Raditladi, 1910-1971
		Bulawa, H	The political, economic and social impact of the railway on Botswana, 1895-1970
		Gabasiane, O	Tshekedi Khama in exile 1949-1959: a study in the continuing influence of the former Regent Bangwato politics in particular and [on] the political life of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in general
		Gauthusi, S.L	Pre-colonial history of Bakalanga of Mengwe, c. 1800-c. 1885
		Keddy, B	The Mokgopoetsane coloureds and their response to cultural assimilation
		Koveya, C.A.S	The origin and development of Tatitown district of Francistown to the 1970s
		Molelu, G.B	The history of the Babirwa from pre-colonial times to early Ngwato rule, 1820-1926
		Mooko, T	The role of royal women in Bangwato politics under the regency of Tshekedi Khama, 1926-1949. Published in Essays in Twentieth Century Botswana History
		Morapedi, P	The political history of Baka-Nshakashokwe from pre-colonial times to 1956
		Mothudi, T.H	The history of the founding of Selebi Phikwe mining town
		Ngidi, G.S	The history of the Botswana Mine Workers Union (BMWU)
		Ramothibe, B	The history of the Joint Advisory Council in the administration of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1950-1966
History	1986	Gumbo, G.B	The demarcation of reserve boundaries in the Bechuanaland Protectorate
		Jorosi, N.B	The economic history of Tonota and periphery, c. 1913-1966

		Kooagile, G	Chief versus Chief's representative, Phetu Mphoeng and Sekgoma Kgama: an episode in the life of a district governor
		Moeng, B.E.M	The root cause of poverty among the Bakgalagadi in Kweneng West: exploitation and underdevelopment by the Bakwena, 1931-1966
		Pitso, G.M	The Indian community under the British administration, 1885-1966
		Sedimo, O.L	Bechuanaland Border Police, 1885-1895
Archae- ol.		Segobye, A.K	Pottery types and other forms of archaeological evidence in the reconstruction of Kgat- leng History. Published as 'Southern Kgatleng Prehistory: an archaeological reconnais- sance survey' in Botswana Notes and Records, 19 (1987), 45-56
History	1987	Gaborone, M.R	The Metlobo migrations: a question of religious intolerance among the Bangwake- tse,1956-1966
		Kollagano, I	Impact of white farmer settlers on Botswana society: a case of Lobatse block, 1904-1965
		Kuswani, N.E.T	The socio-economic and political effects of the Second World War on Bukalanga, 1939- 1950
		Molemoeng, V.G	The evolution of a national newspaper: the case of Naledi Ya Botswana, 1944-1964
		Ojang, R.R	The impact of Christianity among the Balete of Ramotswa, 1935-1965
		Othusitse, T.O	The evolution of agricultural training in Botswana: a historical survey, 1934-1982
		Sekgwama, J.Z	Babirwa-Bangwato relations, 1920-1966: politics of subordination
		Tube, P	Maize production and marketing in Barolong Farms: the case of Ditlharapeng, 1947- 1974
History	1988	Boy, V.M	The economic history of the Okavango Delta: the role of the state 1945 to present
		Charumbira, B.B	Socio-economic development in the Bechuanaland protectorate (Botswana), 1945-1966
		Gabasiane, P.S	Tshekedi Khama in exile 1949-1959: a study in the continuing influence of the former Regent on influence of Tshekedi Khama, 1958-1966
		Kebonang, B.B	The socio-economic and political history of the Herero of Mahalapye, Central District, 1922-1984
		Lekoba, K	Sorghum production and marketing in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: the case of Kgat- leng and Ngwaketse reserves, 1939-1966
		Maruatona, T.L	A historical analysis of the conditions of farm labourers in freehold farms: [the] case of Tuli Block, 1930-1975
History	1989	Dimpe, M	Batswapong-babirwa relatrions: the politics of subordination and exploitation, 1895- 1949
		Leepile, G.S	The trend of bogosi in Botswana: the case of Bangwato, 1949-1979
		Maine, M	The role and development of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police force, 1966-1989
		Marumo, M.S.D	The socio-economic and political impact of the Second World War on the Bangwato, 1939-1945
		Molodi, M	An assessment and interpretation of the controversy between the British colonial govern- ment paramount chief Molefi Kgafela Pilane of Bakgatla-ba-ga-Kgafela, 1921-1958
		Mooketsi, R	A reconstruction of the riverside villages of south-east Kgatleng
		Morapedi, W.G	The Boer trekker settlement in Ghanzi and its impact on indigenous people, 1895-1980
		Nyamupachi- tu, J.T.M	Bechuanaland Protectorate-Southern Rhodesia international border: its effects on the partitioned Ikalanga-speaking society

		surrounding areas
	Tsheboeng, P.A	Southern Rhodesia attempts to incorporate Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1889-1930
1990	Malete, L.J	The career of Kgosi Bathoen II (Seepapitso Gaseitsewe) of the Bangwaketse, 1908-1969
	Mbonini, B.K	A history of Ba-ka-Masunga from c. 1890-1966
	Phuthego, G	Serowe: a settlement history, 1902-1089
	Ramodisa, K	A history of the cooperative movement with special reference to marketing cooperative societies: a case study of Kgatleng, 1964-1966
	Sechele, O	The history of the origin and settlement of the Ba-ka-Moroka on north-eastern Botswana
	Sethibe, S.T	Bechuanaland Protectorate African Teachers Association (later BTU): impact on the educational structure of the country, 1937-1977
	Thapelo, T	The life and career of Chief Bakwali Habangana of Mapoka village, 1930-1987
	Walebowa, G.G	The history of trade in the Boteti area, 1885-1975
		1990 Malete, L.J Mbonini, B.K Phuthego, G Ramodisa, K Sechele, O Sethibe, S.T Thapelo, T Walebowa,