In 1944 a Setswana verse competition was organised to mark the launch of Botswana's first Setswana tabloid newspaper, Naledi ya Batswana ("Star of the Batswana"), and of the 39 entries received, 28 took the world war, in which Botswana was then participating, as their theme. 1995 marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, and the publication of these poems is intended as a reminder of the efforts made by the Batswana in the world-wide struggle against Nazi Germany and her Allies.

Praise Poetry

The Setswana art of composing, memorising, and publicly declaiming praise poetry is well known. Though the art of composing such poetry, especially the praises of oneself, appears to be fading away along with other aspects of Setswana culture, men still live who memorise and recite praise poetry. Still more men exist who have composed personal praises, alluding to events and formative experiences during their lives, though such poems are seldom heard publicly, if heard at all.

As a student researching the history of Botswana during the Second World War, the opportunity to hear Batswana veterans recite their own praises relating to their war service, has been a welcome one. Three examples of such praises are given below, though the main purpose of this article is to record some of the 28 poems relating to the war effort of the Batswana that have laid at rest in the Botswana National Archives since 1944. One can safely say that such a collection of poetry, written in Setswana, is rare, possibly unique. It certainly warrants publication.

Naledi ya Batswana

The occasion for the collection of these poems from all parts of Botswana was the competition organised by the Director of Education to mark the launch of the first Setswana tabloid newspaper specifically published for the Batswana of the then Protectorate. For decades missionary bodies had sporadically printed papers in Setswana, as had African intellectuals like Sol Plaatje, and before the war the Education Department in Mafeking had issued a quarterly newsletter called Labone Iwa Batswana. Nevertheless, Naledi was a landmark in the history of the press in Botswana.

The arrival of Botswana's first "proper" newspaper was itself hastened by the war effort of the Batswana. The British Administration and the dikgosi (chiefs) were very anxious to keep the thousands of men serving in Europe and the Middle East in touch with home. With this in mind, a Bechuanaland supplement to the South African Army newspaper, Indlovu-Tlo received publication in Setswana and sent to the Batswana in the war theatres. Batswana reporters in the major villages sent regular bulletins to the Director of Education containing local news:- births and deaths, weather and crop reports, news of kgotla litigation, public events, and the

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movements of the dikgosi and District Commissioners. From the start of the war, to facilitate the dissemination of war news on the home front, the Administration had issued a fortnightly newsletter. For many years the Director of Education had pressed for a Setswana newspaper aimed at the Africans of the Protectorate to be established, believing that such a publication would be invaluable as an instrument for educating the population.

In September 1943, Mr Paver of the South African publishing house the Bantu Press, wrote to the High Commissioner suggesting that the material sent to the troops would be of equal interest to the people at home, and so began the moves that were to see the newspaper Naledi ya Batswana emerge 13 months later. The 4 page paper, issued first on 26th August 1944, combined the functions of keeping the men at the front informed of home news, through its reports from the main tribal capitals, informing the home population of war news, and providing articles of educational value. Reflecting the Administration’s belief that the future of Bechuanaland lay in developing its livestock resources and improving on methods of crop husbandry, articles by the Chief Agricultural Officer, Russell England, and the Chief Veterinary Officer, were regularly featured. Titles like "The African and his Cow", and "The Soil and the Key" were common, though there appeared educational information from all of the departments of Government in Mafeking, and articles of general interest.

At the time of the first issue of Naledi, the war in Europe and the Far East was still raging, and the troops from Botswana, serving in the Middle East and Italy, had been on unbroken active service with the African Pioneer Corps for two and a half to three years, depending on the draft in which they were enlisted. On the home front, the war had made an impact in the form of recruiting drives, kgotla and letsholo meetings, prayer meetings, tax increases, new tribal levies, greatly increased cash circulation, the cultivation of warlands, continual fund raising drives, letter-writing, price rises and food shortages, and the knitting of woollen comforts to send to the men. For many Batswana, especially those with friends and relatives in the Army, the war was an every day reality, not a distant murmur.

Given the depth of Botswana’s participation in the war effort, it is not surprising to find that of 39 entries for the Naledi competition, 28 took the war as their theme. Other more traditional aspects of Setswana life were also covered in verse and song, and there was even submitted a Bechuanaland National Anthem, complete with a musical score.

It is important to note that the composers of these poems were hardly typical of the majority of Batswana, being educated men, often able to write in both English and Setswana. They would have had access to the printed news of the war, and as members of what might be termed the intelligentsia, employed within the Protectorate as school teachers and tribal administration officers, they would have been close to the heart of tribal and national life, and able to glean information from chiefs, councillors, traders and District Commissioners. The poems show a knowledge and an understanding of the war’s causes and personalities that many Batswana certainly did not share. A few "household names" took part in the competition, like Archibald Mogwe, then a student at Kanye Senior School, Peter Sebina, and Leetile Raditladi, then employed at the District Commissioner’s office in Gaberones. Seven poems were submitted by school children from St. Joseph’s, Kgale Hill.

Bangwato

1) In this excerpt from the personal praise poem of Radiphofu Sekgoma of Serowe, the
composer likens his exterior to the steel of the trucks used to transport coal underground in the Witwatersrand mines (kgokgophana or kokopana), and his interior to fiery coals inside the truck.

The steel truck that contains hot coal
The full-grown progeny of Mother-Moloi
A rare steel that resists hammering by strong men;
One hand he uses but the left hand.

Your piercing horn causes extreme agony,
It causes agony when it pierces man's ribs;
It causes agony when it pierces Mussolini's soldiers.

2) Entitled "Praise for Tswana Verse Competition", this poem was submitted by Peter Sebina of Serowe in both Setswana and English. The first 2 verses indicate the incredulity with which news of war was greeted, and possibly the ridicule that was commonly reserved for Basarwa. The poem goes on to tell of the calling and sending of regiments by Tshekedi Khama, and the work of the women on the home front. Later the author refers to the fear that the name Montgomery engendered in Germany, and refers to his success in pulling the fortunes of the Eighth Army out of the doldrums in the Desert War. Many Bangwato served under Montgomery during the latter stages of the Desert War and in the invasion of Europe through Sicily and into Italy. The poem concludes with the author dramatically claiming that the grief of Berlin, the German capital, keeps Serowe awake at night, though the references in the last 2 lines are too oblique to decipher.

When we of late to gather wood had gone,
To gather wood for the use of our liege,
A young Bushboy to us was sent to report
That a riot had arisen across the seas,
To which many nations were brought together,
The nations gathering with bloodshot eyes,
And others had come flying across the skies.

With laughter we listened to Radipala talking,
Not believing while he the story continued:
When he the pottage swallowed we thus replied:
"Too much hast thou to say, bird of the early dawn
Thy song at early morn violates the truth:
But where is thy ox, the recompense for falsehood-
The trophy of thy lying, begging with thy tongue?"

A shout was heard at the break of calm day,
Ragonkgan, Mosekela-batho, was then calling:
"Separate the combatants that with heavy paws smite,  
The bull dogs at each others backs are scratching."
The shout was carried to distant lands,  
The men in kgotla have heard that shout,  
It reached the boys who were out to herd.

The able-bodied Masokola were then sent to rally,  
The Maletamotsa followed in the wake of their deed,  
The Makgasa kindled the embers of their dying fires.  
That shout was heard by the motherly women,  
Who then gathered for the purpose of knitting,  
The Bamangwato women who venerate the duiker.  
Resolutely answered the call of Mma-Serogola.

A white woman we heard the Setswana language speak,  
Speaking with the women in the yard of the Chief,  
Knitting the jerseys that provided warmth to the body,  
But when has Miss Young started the school?
Her father in the past with Ramolloane had ruled,  
The Leemelwa commanded by Seeletso and Ramoroton,  
We knew him when we learned to write.

Could you but see them at the Chief's kgotla,  
The Bamangwato men who are happy their share to pay,  
Contributing to war, keeping clean their hands,  
For they hear of Montgomery, the ox at the back,  
That he pulled a heavy wagon that had landed in grief,  
In Germany, Montgomery is not mentioned at night,  
For fear he would, next morn, attack the place.

But what is it that we hear from across the sea,  
Which so disturbs and forbids us to slumber?  
The cry that from Berlin the wind has wafted,  
That soul-sickening cry thus to us is directed-  
Yet no such order from us was given: "Bite him, Snake;  
Snake, bite him, for greatly he has provoked us."  
The worthy snake of our fathers, author of good,  
Author of evil works, author of the good.

Bakwena

3) Entitled "Bakwena efforts towards World War Two" and composed by Selebatso Masimega, then a clerk in the Bakwena Tribal Administration, and a reporter of Bakwena news for the papers sent to the troops, this poem tells of the request made by King George for help from the British Protectorates in Southern Africa. Great use was
made in the kgotla meetings convened by chiefs like Kgari Sechele to announce the coming of war to the Batswana, of the request of the King, and of the obligation owed to the monarch due to the protection given to the Batswana by Mmamosadinyana, the "little woman", the name given to Queen Victoria. The poem tells of the ways in which people at home were to participate in the war, namely by the raising of funds to be handed over to the British Government. The author refers specifically to the War Levy and to the Spitfire Fund, through which the Batswana raised 10400 pounds, enough to by 2 Spitfire fighter planes, named "Kalahari" and "Bechuana". A small plaque, given to Bechuanaland by the Royal Air Force as a token (a very small token) of thanks, is housed at the National Museum.

Once in the past outbreak of war rumour was heard
The rumour of war which spread all over the world,
It spread and roared to reach awareness of the King.
It spread to reach the attention of Great King George III;
"Hee! Hee!" he said, "Come to help ye British Protectorates."

Prompt acceptance was the response of the Bakwena of Mmamagana
Mobilisation and recruitment immediately took place.
A call from Kgosi Kgari Sechele-a-Motswasele covered all Bakwena
Thus each sitting man double marched to the call,
Every man danced war-cry and rushed to meet the Chief's call.

Sale of livestock took place in a short space of time-
In that way 5 pound notes piled to a high degree,
Since war is not fought with only high-power ammunition,
But with other efforts including financial means.

Then fat trek oxen were sought out,
Domestic animals, the livestock of the people of Motswasele,
Through that process piles of cash were brought to account,
Since money and ammunition are the same weapons of war, and
Combined with labour they form part of formidable armour.

Piles and piles of cash were immediately raised
And heaps and heaps of money was delivered to Government,
The money that was meant to buy weapons of war,
The weapons - Spitfires of the people of Sechele -
To this day exist they do, namely "Kgalagadi" and "Botswana".

Bakgatla

4) A poem composed by M.Komane, the Treasurer of the Bakgatla Tribal Administration, and entitled "Makakatlela". It is a well-crafted and very deep poem, and though an
effort has been made to explain the hidden and historical references, not all have been identified.

The first and second verses liken Kgosi Molefi Pilane to a cow that produces milk for his people (the calf), and for the King. The reference to the cow’s absence, when it did not produce any milk for the tribe to suckle, is to Molefi’s suspension from the chieftainship and exile from the Reserve by the Administration. By going to war and maintaining a good record, Molefi returned cleansed in the eyes of the British, and was subsequently restored to the Bakgatla throne. The British had found it very difficult to stimulate recruitment among the Bakgatla without the aid of the rightful chief, and had also encountered resistance in its efforts to organize the women on the home front, due to the refusal of Pilane’s mother to co-operate.26

It came back lowing very loudly,  
The cow that offers milk to high ranking royals, 
The cow that offers milk to the King, 
The cow that stopped producing milk just recently  
And has thus stored milk within its udder.  
It came back to find its calf still alive.

On its return it stopped calf sucking; it chased the calf away.  
"I have not come to produce any more milk", it said,  
"I come decided and prepared to go to war,  
Because I heard stories about the war, 
So I say to you Lentswe: Your tribe is in the horns of a dilemma.25"

Repeat recent action, Sedibelo26  
Mobilise and send out your black ant regiments, Kgabyana-a-Kganyane27,  
In order to ward off the criminal oppressor,  
The tyrant who attacked Poland and France,28  
The tyrant who still persists in world oppression.

Do you not hear the cry of your mother you gum-eaters?29  
Is the sword of Geri not the same as ours at home?30  
Have you ever let any wild dogs flee freely  
Flee freely to go and hide in burrows,  
Without the intention of tracking them the following day?

Take up your nob-kerrie black insect of Bakgatla,  
Turn out young men of the regiment of Maaparakobo,  
Turn out and follow Chief Molefi in sacrifice,  
Turn out and follow him through deserts without fear,  
Follow him with the confidence that he is your protector.31

We recently heard from the Director of Education32
That Sedibelo is well and has been called upon to get ready,
To get ready while armies take positions,
They are still drinking at the city of Pharoah on the Nile River
Taking position are the people of Kgatleng,
Taking position to attack the invading enemy.

With faces showing extreme alarm,
The beasts of the rock with the hole underneath,
The dilution of Sedibelo,
The people who hate fire light,
Face the hibernating wild dogs,
The wild dogs of the attacking tyrant,
They who are harassed by the black regiments,-
Advance and ward off Makgalagatsena.

The killer of a lion is worthy of reward of shield and arms and ammunition,
The brave who was offered to rule Kgalagadi, son of Seingwaeng, son of Lekanyane,
Let it be on his arrival, that he be awarded shield and arms,
Let him be clothed with the skin of the leopard, high born attire,
Let him be crowned with the skin of the beast of the forest.

Balete

There were no poems in the Naledi collection from the Balete, but here are reproduced two poems recently heard in the village of Gabane. Balete migrated from the then Bamalete Reserve and settled at Gabane under the Bakwena. The first is that of veteran soldier Mositsane "Rex" Mosidi, born in 1912, and a member of the Diphatsa Regiment. He speaks of his own fierceness and the terror that he instils in opponents, by likening himself to a leopard. The reference in the final verse to "the beast of Kings" and "the precious dress of Kings" is to the leopard as a royal animal, for a leopard skin was used at the installation of a new chief.

I am the fierce leopard
I hate to be seen
The time I am seen
I'm noticed by my beautiful skin.

There is no one who can face me
Because I am the fierce leopard
Even a strong man can't look at me
When I charge, I just take one leap.

When somebody sees me
He's facing the fierce leopard
Which will blind him with its beautiful skin
Then tear him apart with its sharp claws.

Because I hate to be seen.
It’s the beast of Kings:
The leopard, the precious dress of Kings.

6) The second praise poem from Gabane is that of Monthe Mokgosi, born in 1913. The composer likens himself and the other young men who left for the war to young calves with bent horns, taken from their mothers and their families. Those chosen to go to war, the calves with bent horns, consider themselves to be special.

Get up and praise yourself for tomorrow you’ll be at the front,
Striking out the names of other people.
I’m a slender young man of Mokgosi-the-bull
When they take calves from their mothers in the veld,
Those with bent horns think they’re of the same kraal.
Walking with a swagger, I’m a grown-up of Mmaswediamphela,
We just look at the people, but we are not going to stay with them,
The calves that have horns that are bent.
There’s the cow, there’s the buffalo with terrible horns,
Horns that are twisted, -
They will be afraid of them when they begin to stab.

Bangwaketse

7) This poem was written by Alfred Mabe of Kanye, and the title is an adaption of a Setswana proverb, rendered here as “Britain was not ready for war so Germany hit first”37. The author addresses the war effort of the Bangwaketse at home and at the war front.

It was in a time of peace and serenity,
When leisure and comfort were reigning,
Suddenly there broke in a Satanic foe,
A Satanic foe by the name of Hitler of Germany,
Raising his sword higher and higher,
Saying, “I’m blind to destroy anything before me”,
Saying, “I’m hungry and I need feeding”,
Saying, “I spare no nation this time,
I have already attacked Poland,
Like lightening I crush any resistance”.
So terror ran through nations around the world,
Terror brought about by this single merciless German.
That was when His Majesty the King of England
Called up to his Bechuanaland Lions,
Saying, "What do you say about this intrusion?"
To this question did Bangwaketse respond.
Bangwaketse: Protectors and receivers of refugees,
And their Chief whose wrath never ends,
Bangwaketse Chief, a pioneer of Bechuanaland,
He shouted and said, "Hi---bi---i---i!
Rally! Turn up! ye people who live on livestock.
So they heard at once, the people of Maila-a-babela,
Forth came Mookami and Mooketsa, sons of Nkwe-a-Ratshosa,
Then they met Rommel's Germans in the Egyptian Sahara desert.

At the battle field did man and son face each other,
Shooting bravely did Matshaba-le-kgomo stand,
And they pushed the German army back, hitting them as they ran,
Pushing them across the Red Sea,
And then occupied the site with triumph,
And they raised their swords and shouted, "He---jana---a---heal!"
Remembering that at home the son of Seepapitso and Mogatsa Kgari,
And his tribe the Bangwaketse, were restless.

At home did Chief Bathoen raise funds,
There was no time to rest, or to forget,
As the people wholeheartedly worked for the war,
Raising the funds for war purposes,
Funds raised through the sale of cattle.
Women also made garment contributions,
Warm garments to clothe the soldiers,
Warm garments to protect their men from the cold,
Knitting jerseys, scarves, gloves and stockings.

Without question Mongwaketse intended to win the war,
Travelling from place to place at home and overseas,
They are determined, the sons of Malope and Masilo,
They say, "We can't return to Gangwaketse before we have finished the Nazis."
When Bangwaketse think of war, they always speak of it,
And they say, "Is there any dispute with you the men of Germany?"
Try hard Bangwaketse, for this year is decisive,
Even though we are not many, we are never beaten,
You should go ask Mzilikazi where he perished,
He was afraid of us and they fell into the great Zambezi River.
8) This poem was composed by Boishwerelo Yane, a Motawana teacher who had spent much of his life in Kanye. At the time of writing this, he was teaching at Mapoka African School, Ramaquabana. At the end of the poem he added a dictionary, some of which is reproduced here. The poem is entitled "The contribution the Batawana made to the war after they had sat down to discuss it". In the poem Hitler is likened to an angry khaki-coloured dog. In the fourth verse the author compares the army training of the young men to the traditional training at initiation schools, and in the last verse the Batawana women are asked not to cry, but to build a monument to their men by ululating.

When things were just about to begin,
At a time when the bells call worshippers to go and pray,
There was heard a whistle-call, that travelled
All the way from Mr Churchill, the head of the Government.44

In response came out Mongwaketse, Mokwena, Mokgatla and Mongwato,
And the chiefs of smaller tribes in the Protectorate.
Their answer was, "Do not wait to be asked!"
Hitler of Germany stood up in anger, the dog raised his tail.

He has put his paws on the little ones, like Poland,
Raise your voices and say, "You dog! You have comrades,
But so too does Mr Churchill,
He has comrades who will come to oppose you."

Hold fast High Commissioner, he who through the mirror watches over the Protectorate45,
Look! The shepherds are collecting boys for initiation quickly,
The initiation school commanders first wait for the boys to stand in a straight line,
Then what happens? They go to the left, and they go to the right.

The Resident Commissioner pointed a stick at the son of Mathiba46,
The place Ngamiland is very far, you sleep overnight using lorries,
Drive the one nearest you, strive for segoloduane, (see dictionary)
Remove the roughage and take a rifle in hand47.

Paper receipts show shillings paid for Spitfires,
Let’s broadcast that the boys from the West are doing their bit,
Listen to Mr Churchill, who says, "Many hands make light work",

Motawana woman, your breasts appear to be small,
But the milk is not tasteless from those breasts,
Women, wipe the tears from your eyes, build a monument with your tongues, 
Death is for the brave, and they are praised with songs of triumph.

Some interesting extracts from the dictionary appended to the poem:
Moana Seritibadi - High Commissioner
Badisa tsa Tshireletso - chiefs
Mpya tshetlha - Hitler, the khaki dog
Kgajane - instructors at the initiation ceremonies
Motloletlehi - Resident Commissioner
Nhabe - Ngamiland
Segoloduane - sound from the throat practiced by boys in olden days, which gave 
the boy who did it well the right either to lick the vessel of porridge or to sit 
close to the fire.
Sekgatha kgatla sekgwa molele - Spitfire fighter-plane guns

General

9) A poem that does not refer to any particular morafe, written by Leetile Raditladi, in 1944 
employed at the District Commissioner’s office at Gaberones. The poem is entitled "Our 
soldiers".

My people, what have you done to be praised? 
It is now that you can be praised 
To be praised because you are overseas, 
Our womenfolk are living on stored grain, no ploughing has been done since you left, 
And they say, "Those who plough for us, when are they coming?" 
Our people hear of the war from those who have gone, 
Those who have gone to war, they listened to the cry of the chief, 
The young soldiers are well encouraged, 
They have gone in wholeheartedly, 
When they go their eyes are looking to Benghazi!

The soldiers of Italy come crouching and with no saliva in their mouths, 
All our soldiers are working like vultures, 
Like birds stripping crops from a field, 
Like strong oxen putting weight on to their backs, 
And they caused great difficulties for the Italians, 
Who found it difficult to come into contact with Batswana, 
Because our soldiers are very strong. 
The Italians had to give up the land they had held, 
And had to accept unconditional surrender.

The Germans are still crying, 
And their women do not wipe their tears,
Hitler, they say, is blind,
He doesn’t care that the Italians have forsaken him,
He started war without sitting down to discuss things,
Now Mussolini has had to give up his throne,
After being tied with many knots.
Mr Hitler you have dug your own grave,
Tomorrow you will wake tired after heavy bombardments.

Our soldiers have not died without reason,
The calf has teeth that we don’t see,
The teeth of a calf we fear to see,
We saw these teeth when the calves were taken from their mothers.
There were claws that looked like those of a lion going to hunt,
And now the enemy has met with teeth that will bite him,
And claws that were not cut off.
All our soldier were told, nothing was hidden from them.

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Notes

1 Non-Setswana speaking students of Botswana’s past will be familiar with the difficulties encountered when rendering Setswana into English. These problems are particularly acute when translating praise poems, replete as they are with symbolism and allegory, and obscure historical references. The literal translation requires further interpretation in order to reveal the meaning of the references. Younger Batswana are usually at a loss to make sense of most such poems, unable to get beyond the literal translation, and often not even able to get that far due to unfamiliarity with certain words and phrases of "old" Setswana. These translations were done by men with an excellent knowledge of the history of the Batswana, and a personal knowledge of many of the characters encountered in the texts. While it is the case that no two renditions of the same poem will ever be alike, it is hoped that the poems printed here have been rendered in a way that makes sense of the composers intentions, translated by men possessing knowledge of the art of praise poetry, of the Setswana language, and of the tribal histories and genealogies of the Batswana. It is cause for alarm that in ten or twenty years time it will probably be impossible to interpret the meaning of such poems with any degree of accuracy, for the people who possess this prerequisite combination of knowledge will have all died.


3 See Alverson, H (1978) "Mind in the heart of darkness: Value and self-identity among the Tswana of Southern Africa" (Yale University Press), under the Index reference
"poetry".

4 See for example Jones, J (1972) "Mahoko a Becwana: The second Tswana newspaper" Botswana Notes and Records 4: 111-120. (Botswana Society, Gaborone), and the paragraph under the heading "newspapers" in Morton, F, Murray, A and Ramsay, J (1989) "Historical dictionary of Botswana" (London)

5 "Labone Iwa Batswana", Light of the Batswana

6 "Indlovu" and "tlou" are the Seswati and the Setswana words for "elephant", respectively.

7 Botswana National Archives. See file S129/1/1 for the correspondence relating to the setting up of the newspaper. Correspondence among officials in Bechuanaland, the chiefs, correspondence with the prospective publishers, and the High Commissioners correspondence with the Secretary of State in London. See file S129/2/1 for the original copies of the poems. See box BNB 11,434 for two early copies of Naledi, including the first issue.

8 Radiphofu is the son of Khama's half-brother Moloi. He is third in rank, after Tshekedi, Rasebolai and Serogola, in the Maletamotse regiment. "Maletamotse" means "home guards", and the regiment was built in 1926. See Shapera book cited under Note 2 above, p.227.

9 Benitto Mussolini, the fascist dictator who took Italy to war on the side of Germany.

10 "Radipala" was a nickname for Basarwa referring to the burn scars often to be found on their knees caused by sitting too close to the fire at night.

11 "Ragonkgan" was a nickname for Tshekedi Khama, from the verb to smell. (go nkgan) On the occasion of his first kgotla speech in 1925, he had asked "What smells?", referring to the smell of beer being brewed in Serowe, in contravention of the wishes of Khama III.

12 "Mosekela-batho": the meaning of the name Tshekedi, "advocate".

13 Bangwato age regiments.

14 "Duiker", or phuti, the totem of the Bangwato.

15 "Mma-Serogola", Tshekedi's sister, Bonyerile.

16 Mrs Page Wood, who knitted with the Bangwato women.

17 Miss Young, one of the early missionary teachers among the Bangwato, who moved with the tribe from Palapye to Serowe.

18 "Ramolloane", a nickname of Khama III, meaning author or father of little fires, referring to his military tactic of sending a secret force to go behind an enemy and set fire to their village. The reference to "her father in the past" is to Captain Nettelton, a former Resident Magistrate at Serowe, who got on very well with Khama III and used to say that he was a member of the Maemelwa regiment.

19 Sons of Sekgoma and half-brothers of Khama III, commanders of the Maemelwa regiment.

20 General, later Field Marshall, Bernard Montgomery, famous for leading the Eighth Army to victory at El Alamein in 1942.

21 The snakes are the bomber airplanes that give Berlin its growl.

22 "Mmamagana", a reference to Sechele I, likening him to a good strict mother.

23 "Motswasele", founder of the Bakwena.

of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910-1966" (Longman Botswana) about the war and the Bakgatla, pp.89-91.

25 Literally "in the middle of the horns of the buffalo".

26 Perhaps "recent action" is a reference to the calling up of Bakgatla regiments for service in the First World War. "Sedibelo", is a reference to the chief, though is later used as a collective reference to the Bakgatla soldiers overseas.

27 "Masonry a matsho", literally "army ants". "Kgabyana-a-Kgamanyane": = "small ape of Kgamanyane", another reference to the chief.

28 Hitler's lightning attack upon Poland in 1939 was technically responsible for Britain's declaration of war upon Germany, and in 1940 France succumbed to German arms a mere 6 weeks after the invasion began.

29 The mother referred to is probably Queen Victoria, and "gum eaters" ("dijamarekhu") is another reference to the Bakgatla totem, the monkey or small ape.

30 "Geri", or "jerry", was British slang for "Germans".

31 The reference is to a father and his orphans.

32 H J E Dumbrell, the Director of Education in Mafeking, wrote the war news summaries that were sent to the villages.

33 The city of Cairo.

34 "Makgalagatsena" is a pejorative term used to belittle the enemy, meaning "little slaves".

35 Molefi's mother.

36 Perhaps the author is subtly asking for the reinstatement of Molefi as chief upon his return from the war.

37 "E a re Mmabontsi a sa lele Mmamotla a bo a ise a kolope."

38 The chief's brother and cousin, the highest-ranking Bangwaketse royals to go to war.

39 General Erwin Rommel, Commander of the Afrika Corps, fighting the British Eighth Army in the desert at the time of Batswana soldiers entering the war.

40 The Bangwaketse people.

41 An honorific name for the chief.

42 During the war Bathoen and Tshekedi visited the troops in the Middle East.

43 As with all foreign tribes, the names of the enemies were prefixed by "Ma", the Italians becoming "Ma-Italiane", the Nazi Germans either "Ma'jeremane" or "Manasi".

44 Winston Spencer Churchill, British Prime Minister during the war.

45 "Lefatshe la tshireletso" was the Setswana name for the Protectorate.

46 The Batawana chief, Moremi III.

47 Two complicated lines, though the author is probably exhorting people to encourage their sons to go to war, and telling the sons to strive to do things well (like the noise practiced with their throats as boys), and to become polished soldiers.

48 Benghazi was an area in the Middle East where many Batswana served.

49 In 1944 when this poem was written, many of the Batswana soldiers were in Italy as part of the armies that had defeated Italy and forced it to accept unconditional surrender.