The Phuthadikobo Museum: A Record of Involvement and Achievement, 1976-2006

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Precis

This article describes the pioneering role of an unusual community development project in Mochudi in the thirty years from its establishment in 1976 to 2006. It describes its achievements as a self-help project, and the principal features of the project's Trust Deed, and notes that the vision of the founders of the project was clearly reflected when it was initially described as an Education Centre rather than a museum.

The article describes some of the activities of an orthodox local museum such as its collection and displays, as well as others, such as the silk screen-printing workshop and its archaeological research at Modipe Hill, which are not orthodox at all. It describes some of the varied elements of the museum’s relationship with the local community, its funding and financial situation, the differing achievements of its three Directors, its involvement with Kgosi Linchwe’s revival of bogwera between 1975 and 1988, its re-discovery of the ‘lost’ 19th century bojale drums, and its current educational role, not least, in relating culture and custom to sex and HIV/AIDS. It describes the museum’s publishing achievements and suggests that, unusually for a museum, its most important staff member is the one who has the responsibility for face-to-face dealings with the general public.

Introduction

All museums are educational institutions, and all therefore have a relationship with the general public whether they are privately owned, are owned by a government, a State, a regional or local government authority or are community owned. Even though there may be great variation from one museum project to another, some understanding about that relationship and about the role of each one can be gleaned from the legal documents which establish them.

The Trust Deed of the Phuthadikobo Museum

A proposal to establish a museum in Mochudi was approved by the District Development Committee and District Council in Mochudi in 1974. The following year a Trust Deed was approved by the putative Museum Board in Mochudi and registered. Significantly, it was decided that instead of describing the project as a museum it should instead be described as a community education project. There were three reasons for taking this step. The first was to make a clear statement that, as the new project was to utilise the great but abandoned building which had formerly been Kgosi Isang’s Bakgatla National School, it would continue the educational tradition inherited from the past. The school had been the only one of the country’s tribal national schools to succeed (1). It had been at the school that the Bechuanaland Protectorate African Teachers Association had been formed in 1937 through the agency of its then Principal, Mr A. M. Tsoebebe (2), and not least, it had been formally opened in 1923 by HRH Prince Arthur of Connaught, grandson of Queen Victoria (3). In short, this had been no ordinary school. It was no surprise, therefore, that amongst those supporting this particular...
policy objective were Francis Phirie, one time Tribal Education Secretary, and Amos Kgamtanyane Pilane, the leading member of the three man Council of Regency instituted by the Bakgatla during the second world war; both being former teachers at the old school. (4)

The second reason was that it was anticipated that development aid administrators would be unwilling to accept that a museum could be a development project whatever its activities and programmes and that describing it as such would have no appeal for international aid donors. When a second, adjusted Trust Deed was registered in 1982 (when it was discovered that the first had never been registered by the museum's lawyers), it was decided to take the risk and describe the project as a museum.

The third reason was entirely pragmatic. There was no known precedent in Southern Africa for the establishment of a museum focussing on a single traditional town especially as it would begin without an endowed, privately owned collection and without any certainty that there still existed either a sufficiently large number of ethnographic articles or historical materials of other kinds. (5) With so many uncertainties, it made much sense to describe the project in its broadest terms which Naomi Mitchison perfectly expressed when she wrote – 'we are making the Phuthadikobo Museum for people we shall never see, hoping it will become a part of the long process of education, making men and women aware of their past and because of that, stronger and more able to meet and use well anything which the future brings to them.' (6)

The Trust Deed makes no stipulation about origin, tribe, colour or race either in terms of its Board members or its employees; in other words, there was no requirement that only Bakgatla tribe or residents of Mochudi could be members. On the other hand, the Trust Deed did stipulate that an elected District Councillor could not be a member of the Board. The inclusion of this provision was intended to ensure that the project did not become entangled in local politics. (At a meeting with Minister O. Mfa in February 2006, the M.P. for Kgatleng East stated that, because he agreed with this concern, he had no wish to become a member of the museum Board.)

The Trust Deed followed the model normally used for NGO projects at that time with a ten person Board comprising three ex officio members, the Chief, the District Commissioner and the District Council Secretary; three permanent members, the project Director, the Director of the National Museum and a representative of the Chief and four others elected by the Board. In 1977, the Deed was amended at the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs to record that the Director of the National Museum was also representing the Ministry of Home Affairs. The government therefore has two representatives on the Board – the District Commissioner and the Director of the National Museum. It was only much later that it became clear that the Director’s dual role as a Board member and as the Ministry’s representative on the Board could sometimes be in conflict.

In the event of the closure of the project, the Trust Deed stipulates that, after all debts have been paid, the remaining assets and funds should be distributed by the Trustees to suitable organisations and projects carrying on ‘welfare or education activities for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Republic of Botswana’. Amongst museums worldwide, this particular provision may be most unusual but it does clearly demonstrate that the originators of the project saw it as being a national pioneering education project rather than a traditional, orthodox local museum.

The Board
The normal way by which a community project can recruit its Board members is by means of a membership system and an Annual General Meeting. This option for the museum was never
considered feasible, as it was not, earlier, found feasible by the Brigades. The difficulty has always been that a museum which had no entrance charge (until recently) had nothing to offer in return for membership. For Mochudi residents, there was little sense in paying good money to become a member without expectation of a return. The outcome for the last 30 years, therefore, has been a Board derived from a mix of ex officio members and members invited by the Board. Over all, that method has worked fairly well. By the end of 2006, the Board had held 98 meetings since its first preliminary meeting in December 1975; and 87 people, all community leaders in their own way and representative of a wide span of interests, have been members. Several had been either students at the old school or had taught at it. On the other hand, the museum would have wished to have attracted more women members — although Mrs Catherine Selomogwe, Mrs Unity Dow and Mrs Emeldah Mathe have all been Chairpersons, and the late Dikeledi Makgatle had previously held the Deputy Chair’s post.

**Accountability and Relationships**

The museum is financially accountable to the government by means of annual accounts provided by professional accountants and monthly reports supported by bank statements and invoices. It is also accountable to the Kgatleng District Council and to organisations from which it has obtained assistance. But it also has relationships with others to whom it is not directly accountable, for whom an annual newsletter has been erratically produced. By its function, for instance, the museum has an important role in education and tourism. Structurally, however, it relates to neither the Ministry of Education nor to the Department of Tourism nor to the new Tourism Board, even though the Phuthadikobo Museum played a central role when the Department of Tourism celebrated World Tourism Day in Mochudi in 2000. It follows, therefore, that when the level of its financial support from the government is annually determined, neither the quantity nor quality of the educational service it provides to schools and the general public is taken into account, nor indeed is its role as an important tourist attraction.

Sixteen years ago, Robert Mackenzie described with concern the relationships between the museums and government and tried to understand what might be the explanation for such problems. (7) The museum’s relations with the Kgatleng District Council were excellent until the Ministry of Local Government and Lands insisted in January 1991 that the Council must stop providing financial support on the grounds that two arms of government could not support a project financially. (8) Previously, in 1984, the Council had taken up the museum’s cause when it contested the Ministry of Home Affairs’ decision to stop financial aid to the museum over what the Council described as ‘a trivial matter’ and asked the Ministry not to lose sight of the ‘good work the museum is doing to the country’. (9) After the 1991 edict, however, the previously close personal relationships, which had existed between the museum and leading members of the Council, were slowly lost as the latter became larger, more bureaucratic and more distant. For the six years between 1990/91 and 1997/98, the Council provided no assistance to the museum but since then has continued to give an annual grant of either P4,000 or P6,000.

**Finance**

What became the core of the new Board had its first meeting in December 1975, at which it was agreed to go ahead with the museum project. This Board was so successful in mobilising
community support that for a ten-year period it was able to create and run a flourishing local museum project without receiving any recurrent assistance from the government. It did, however, receive a one-off grant of P20,000 towards the cost of renovating the old building, which could only be undertaken when, for the first time, a road of sorts had been blasted out of the rocky hillside. With water and electricity brought to the site, toilets constructed and the beginnings of a collection being acquired, the museum was up and running. But by 1984 the museum's financial situation was serious and the District Council wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs to ask, 'why your Ministry does not support the Phuthadikobo Museum?' (10). It was only in 1985/86 that the Ministry of Home Affairs made its first grant of P20,000 to the museum for recurrent assistance. By 1995/96 this grant had been increased to P106,000 and by 2005/06 to P137,000. However, by 2003/2004 all the NGO museums were experiencing severe financial difficulties and the Ministry of Home Affairs responded by providing an emergency end of year top up grant of P50,000 to each of them. It has repeated this practice in every subsequent year although the amount is steadily reduced. In 2006/2007 the Phuthadikobo Museum’s total grant from the government came, therefore, to be P170,000 which was P17,000 less than it had been in the preceding year and P1,000 less than had been given it six years earlier. (11)

Originally, the Ministry’s grant was restricted to recurrent needs, it being understood that funding of capital needs would need to be obtained elsewhere. As financial support from the government for the NGO museums has been steadily decreased (especially in real terms) so the terms of its assistance have been quietly altered. At one stage, assistance was made without conditions (save accounting), then it was made available for recurrent costs and then this was changed to salaries only (at undefined levels). It would not be unrealistic to expect that its next statement will be that its annual grant is to be seen as a part contribution only to salaries. With a decreasing proportion of its budget coming from the government, the museum has tried hard to increase its locally generated income from rental payments and from sales from its shop and workshop.

The Museum Directors
Three people have held the post of Director (which has also been described, from time to time, as Curator and Secretary) - myself from 1976 to 1991, Patrick Kollars from 1991 to 1998 and Elinah Grant from 1998 to late 2007. None of the three had previously worked in a museum and none subsequently benefited from any form of museum training. I had a Masters degrees in History and the Conservation of the Built Environment, Patrick Kollars had a degree in business management and Elinah Grant had a BA in English and Environmental Science. Each of the three brought particular skills and interests to the job with the result that the nature of the museum went through three distinct periods. In the crudest of terms, these three phases equated to the collection and the recovery of the physical site; secondly the blacksmith project and the archaeological research effort at Modipe; and thirdly, people and education. These phases have been far from clear-cut and there has been considerable overlap with all three being involved in their lesser-priority areas. By its nature, the museum has been similar to a three-legged cooking pot. If one of the three legs had been ignored by any of those three leading individuals, the museum would have collapsed. Without its collection and displays, it could not have been a museum, without its craft workshop it would not have generated additional public interest or provided a valuable source of income; and without an ability to involve and excite visitors of all ages and backgrounds, it would have had no value as an educational resource.
In retrospect, it is obvious that while each phase achieved major gain, it was also accompanied by almost inevitable loss. The first phase was innovative, developmental and locally hands-on — but not strong on accounting routines. The second phase tightened up the administration but at the expense of community contact and involvement, and did attract external aid to extend the project. In the third phase, the working practice came to be that the visiting public was the project's absolute priority. In a low cost local museum the choice seems to be to prioritise either its administrative arm or its service to the public. It cannot do both.

**Serving Its Visitors**

An initial policy decision relating to the displays was that all information notices should be in both Setswana and English. It was soon understood that this was unrealistic because the number of information texts was swamping the items being displayed. It then became clear that some items needed an explanatory text in Setswana alone, some only in English and some were so obviously self-explanatory that they needed none at all. Bit by bit, over the years, the balance continued to shift with more of the explanatory texts being in English and fewer in Setswana. This change has resulted from a better understanding of the needs and preferences of the various individuals and groups who come to the museum. Local visitors tend to be upset when it is suggested that they might wish to be left to their own devices and to look at the display items they find most interesting. They regard such suggestions as dismissive and verging on the rude. They want to be involved with a guide with whom they can talk about what they see, they want explanation and they want involvement and discussion. They don’t want to read; they want to talk.

In contrast, foreign visitors prefer to be left to explore the museum displays on their own. Initially they may want to look and to read rather than talk and they are likely to become very quickly irritated by a museum attendant or guide who is following them around and hovering at their shoulders. It has been the museum’s practice with such visitors to ask if they want to have a guide with them. If they don’t, they are left to their own devices. When they have gone through the museum, they are then asked if they have questions or want more information. It is at this stage that really interesting discussions have regularly occurred.

It has been concluded from this experience that in a small museum in this country, the most important, capable staff member is he/she who has face-to-face dealings with the public, especially the local public. This person must be able to communicate and be at ease with an extraordinary mix of people of all ages, all backgrounds and temperaments. This arrangement is a reversal of the normal practice whereby the head of the project, an administrator, is virtually unknown to the normal, visiting public, and the guides who regularly interact with visitors are likely to be junior staff members with only modest educational qualifications.

Community projects can sometimes develop in ways that were neither planned nor foreseen. It could not have been previously anticipated, for instance, that during the last few years so much of its educational service should have focused on culture and sexuality. In retrospect, this development seems to have been almost inevitable. The Bakgatla have been the only tribal community since Independence in 1966 to have re-instituted the traditional practices of initiation (bogwera and bojale) (12), and the Phuthadikobo Museum is the only one in the country which displays photos of those rites and ceremonies. Remarkably, the museum then came to have a Director (Elinah Grant) who was not only fascinated and knowledgeable about cultural practices and able to talk about the sexual significance of initiation but was also able to link past and present by discussing HIV/AIDS and to answer questions about it. A number of
visiting school groups have been eager to discuss such matters as have more adult groups. A recent local visitor remarked that he had previously no idea that it was possible to visit a museum and participate in a lively, engrossing discussion on a topic of this kind.

Serving the Schools
A key responsibility for any museum is the service it offers schools but this is something which is particularly difficult to do well. The problem, of course, is that NGO museums in this country are likely to have just one person available who must assist visiting school groups which span the spectrum from Standard Three to Standard Seven and then onwards to Junior Certificate, Cambridge, teacher training and those undertaking degree courses. Unfortunately, conventional measurement systems are concerned with quantity rather than with quality. That said, it is one strong indication of success that a growing number of schools are regular return visitors to the museum, amongst them a number of English medium primary schools from different parts of the country.

Visitor Statistics
From its earlier days, it was decided that, because of the nature of the building and its site, it was impossible to keep accurate visitor statistics and that there was, therefore, no point trying to do so. In addition there was no certainty about defining who was a visitor and who was not. Was a visitor someone who entered the museum or someone who came to it? Some visitors came to the museum to enjoy the view, some to have a picnic, some to visit the shop and some to have their photo taken either in front of its spectacular rocks or with a backdrop of the wonderful museum building itself. In 1995 it was decided that, despite these difficulties, an attempt at record keeping had to be made and that common sense suggested that all these categories had to be recorded, where possible, as visitors to the museum. The recorded number of visitors in the last five years has been between nearly 12,000 and 16,500. (13) It needs to be noted that these figures are recorded during normal working hours and that the many people who come to the museum outside those hours, during weekends or during public holidays are excluded. No attempt has been made to achieve more accurate information about these visitors such as their age, their nationality or interests. Nor has a systematic attempt been made to record their impressions of the museum other than by means of the visitor’s book, which has proved to be an invaluable tool. (14) In general, visitors, almost regardless of nationality, have been appreciative and complimentary. It is a general impression that those who come to the museum represent a reasonable balance between local and foreign visitors, especially when schools are included.

The Museum Building
The great building, which has been the Phuthadikobo Museum since 1976, was previously the Bakgatla National School. The old school, formally opened in 1923, was abandoned by the Kgatleng District Council in 1975, and made available by it for conversion to a museum late that year (15) and was formally given to the Museum Board the following year.

Without an access road, without water or electricity, and in a state of serious neglect, the historic building was first saved by the Museum Board and then slowly brought back into the life of the community. In 1980, Botswana Decorators Ltd, namely the Travaglini brothers,
(Alberto and Alvaro), completely renovated the building at a cost of P40,000. In 2003 the building was re-painted and minor repairs carried out. Today, the building remains the most prestigious in Mochudi and the most spectacularly situated in the entire country. No other building begins to approach it in terms of association, identity and community pride. It is this one building with which Mochudi people most immediately identify, and to it they come throughout the year in groups of sixty or more at a time to pose for wedding photos in front of the museum and its spectacular rocks formations. They do not go, for this purpose, to any of the large new buildings recently constructed in Mochudi or to the obvious institutions such as the kgotla or the District Council. Prior to its becoming a museum in 1976, however, there is no indication that wedding groups ever went to the old building. Could there be a more powerful indication of the emotional linkage between this museum and its local community?

In September 2005, the museum was included by the government in its gazetted list of national monuments but without financial or other commitment being made to it. As it has done for the last thirty years, the Museum Board alone is still expected to shoulder the entire responsibility for its costly upkeep and maintenance.

The Road

When the District Council made the old building available for conversion into a museum, it had no access road. The curious historical fact was that whilst the tribe had been able to construct the building without a road in the early 1920s, it was unable, without one, to renovate it fifty years later. It was, therefore, abandoned. The museum’s first challenge therefore was to get a road constructed. Until this was done, there was no chance of renovating the old building. Profit deriving from a raffle generated initial momentum, and then with a significant amount of community support and the energetic help of IVS volunteer Bernard Roebuck a road of sorts was eventually pushed through the rocks and down a precipitous slope.

The Collection and Displays

The museum uses four of the eight old school classrooms, or 148.80 square metres, for its displays and makes periodic use of its hall to mount exhibitions. What is on display in these rooms is the larger part of a collection built up over 30 years of the 125-year history of the Mochudi community, many of the artefacts being donated by local people. Taken together this represents a collection which is unmatched in this country - no other community, city or town possessing anything comparable. The collection is built around the research and photographs of the late Professor Isaac Schapera, who first arrived in Mochudi for the installation of Kgosi Molefi Pilane in 1929 and made his last visit to it in 1980. Schapera donated his photographic collection to the museum in the late 1970s but the negatives were later returned to him because of the Board’s uneasiness about safeguarding them in a proper condition. (16) The consultant to the government, Mr Dawson Munjeri, noted that the Schapera photographs and papers at the museum represent a unique record which is of national and international significance. (17)

Artefacts of major importance which have been found and collected include the 19th century bojale (female initiation) drums, Kgosi Isang’s rain making pots and his 1936 Case tractor, Kgatla baskets, a complete collection of blacksmith’s tools, metal tax receipts, ethno­graphic artefacts of various kinds, archival documents, bellows - including one dated 1862, three tapestries from Odi Weavers depicting aspects of the past, brass neck rings originating
from the late 19th century, and numerous photos taken, not least, by Duggan Cronin in the early part of the last century. Apart from the two bojale drums, the museum’s most remarkable find may have been the printed programme for the opening in August 1923 of the old Bakgatla National School, by Prince Arthur of Connaught, because the likelihood of such a document surviving for so many years outside an archive was very slender. In addition, the museum collection includes early bibles, in particular the bibles inscribed and presented to Kgosi Lentswe 1 by the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries, on his conversion to Christianity in 1892, and to Kgafela (Lentswe’s heir) and Seingwaeng on their marriage in 1905. Strangely, despite the crucially influential role of the major Tswana Dikgosi in the evolvement of what became the independent Tswana state, Botswana, few of their personal possessions have survived and are included in the collections of any of the country’s museums. It follows that those two bibles, held by the museum, are of especial importance to the entire country.

**Craft and the Shop**

Phuthadikobo is the only museum in the country to include a permanent craft project. It was established in 1980 by Petra Rohr Rouendaal. One of the original intentions was to utilise artefacts and materials in the museum’s collection for designs on tablecloths, bedspreads and t-shirts and by doing so to re-cycle back to the community elements of its own history and culture. Some of these designs were made by participants in museum-organised classes and workshops, one of the better known being the cattle drawn by local children. Other designs have been the work of the workshop manager, Hardwork Kachere, which have included traditional housing and mural decoration, ethnographic items, crops and foodstuffs, gourds, Tswana cattle, guinea fowl and women engaged in traditional work. These designs have been utilised on curtains, wall hangings, bedspreads, tablemats, t-shirts and shoulder bags. The workshop also provides a key role in the service the museum provides the community. In past years it regularly accepted trainees sent to it by the District Office. When that programme came to an end, the workshop accepted trainees sent to it by the Vocational and Technical Training Institutions up and down the country. The workshop continues to be regularly visited by school groups (not least by art classes) and other visitors.

The project has had its up and downs, gone through phases of change, experienced its share of problems and latterly ceased to be viable. A re-structuring process is now under way which is intended to reduce costs and improve productivity and quality. The project has owed much, over the years, to Petra Rohr Rouendaal, the late Obakeng Bogopa, Marian Hartland-Rowe and latterly to Hardwork Kachere. Its designs throughout this period have been distinctive, attractive and popular. (18) Perhaps the project’s high point was the publication in 1985 of Marian Hartland-Rowe’s article, ‘Textile Prints of the Phuthadikobo Museum’, in the prestigious American quarterly magazine *African Arts*. (19) This appears to have been only the second time that an article on this country has appeared in this particular magazine. (20) The article was later re-published by the Air Botswana flight magazine, Marung.

The museum opened a shop soon after it had started its silk screen-printing workshop in 1980. For some time now, this has been attractively housed in one of the old classrooms. The shop provides a showcase for the museum’s own products as well as for craft items made elsewhere in the country. It is, without question, an essential part of the museum’s service to the public and a popular stop for many people.
Conferences
Admittedly some time ago, the museum organised or hosted conferences on the Problem of the Neglected Child and the School Leavers (1979) and on the Future of Mochudi (1979). It also hosted the conference of the Botswana National Cultural Council on Cultural Activity (1981) and the first museums conference in 1986, which discussed the report of Mrs J. Oram and Mrs D. Nteta, ‘Towards a National Policy for Museum Development’, and made recommendations for the future (follow up conferences were held at Selibe Phikwe (1994) and Palapye (1996)). In 1980, Macmillan Botswana decided that the museum was the most appropriate place to launch its History of Botswana (by Campbell and Tlou). It has appeared less and less likely that prestige events of this kind will again be held outside Gaborone.

Exhibitions and Events
In its earlier years, the museum organised two evenings of traditional music. Although these events were spectacular and successful, it was decided that the museum’s physical isolation, especially in the evening, made it an inappropriate venue for such events. In general, the museum has lacked the resources required to put together such events although it has twice organised commemorative gatherings of World War 2 veterans. Over the years the museum has both hosted and organised a number of exhibitions. These have included a wire car exhibition and competition (1980), a biographical exhibition on Kgosi Linchwe, one on bogwera (1982) and a photographic exhibition entitled ‘Just People’ (1984). In more recent years, in 2002, 2003, 2004, the museum has initiated and organised successful Junior Community Secondary School annual art exhibitions at the museum but this idea has now been taken up by the school themselves and held elsewhere. The museum’s most recent exhibition entitled 'Forget Me Not' (taken from a hand written note on the back of one of Duggan Cronin’s photographic prints of a lady in Mochudi), in September and October 2006, was a three part show comprising the museum’s designed and printed fabrics, its collection of funeral programmes during the last twenty years, and photos of some of the country’s historic buildings.

Research
It seems to be poorly understood that there cannot be a museum which does no research, if only because each item on display must be identified and the museum staff must know something about all of them, how, when and with what material they were made, and their function or purpose. It follows that the more community items a museum possesses the more research it must do. By its nature this kind of research is invisible – people make assumptions that somehow this knowledge must have automatically existed. Similarly the relationship between knowledge and research is poorly understood. Those in museums who deal with the public must be well enough informed so that they can answer nearly all the questions (about almost anything) thrown at them – the provision of accurate information being a core function of museums. This knowledge can only be gained as a result of research – by reading as much as possible on the place or subject area, and by immersion in the community and by talking with people, especially older people.
Publications and Information
In 1978 the museum re-published Isaac Schapera’s Bogwera and two years later, his *History of the Bakgatla* (1980). At around the same time it published *Guide to Mochudi* (undated). In 1995 it published *Decorated Homes in Botswana* which is still the most ambitious book to be published by any museum in the country. It is also one of the most ambitious to be published in the country. In 2001, the museum published *People of Mochudi* and in 2002, *Mochudi Around the Time of Independence*. It also contributed articles of all kinds (which includes conference papers) on Mochudi written by museum staff which have been published in this country. Copies are available to researchers visiting the museum. These articles cover subject matter such as crafts, funerals, bogwera, place names and biography. The article, ‘The Relevance of the Past In the Present in Mochudi, Botswana’ published in World Archaeological Bulletin No. 3 in 1989 and co-authored by Kgosi Linchwe, represents a most unusual form of cooperation between a Museum and a local Chief. Since 1971, the museum has kept a file of newspaper cuttings about Mochudi and the district. This is always available to researchers.

Assistance to Researchers
The museum regularly assists researchers at all levels – from PhD graduates to UB students to CJS school students. During the middle months of 2006, the museum was working closely with Professor John Comaroff on the background information and captions relating to Isaac Schapera’s photographs for the impending publication of these photos by the University of Chicago.

The Museum Assists Central and Local Government?
For a number of years, the museum provided a facility for the Department of Non-Formal Education. It also provided a meeting place for both the Kgatleng District Council and the Land Board. These institutions stopped meeting at the museum as soon as sufficient funds became available to them to build their own facilities. During those years, the museum functioned as an unusual kind of community centre with High Court murder trials being twice held in its hall.

Blacksmith
In 1981 the museum purchased Koos David’s blacksmith’s yard, the last one to have survived in Mochudi. Its intention was to re-constitute this old yard as the country’s first heritage project. Two highly skilled blacksmith volunteers were recruited through Skillshare Botswana, Henry Pomfret and then Bernard Heer, new products were made and a great deal was achieved. When Heer left, however, it proved impossible to sustain the project or indeed to exercise proper control and in 2001 it was closed down.

Archaeology and the Environment
In the early 1990s, the museum discovered that the most important archaeological site in the Kgatleng District, Modipe Hill, was being damaged by a recently approved and licensed stone crushing plant. With the assistance of Skill Share Africa, the museum was able to recruit an experienced archaeologist, Nick Pearson who, between 1992-1995, surveyed much this very large hill and with the assistance and involvement of the National Museum in Gaborone, carried
out extensive fieldwork on different parts of it. Radio carbon dating indicated that the different settlements on the hill ranged in date from the late 15th century to the mid 18th century. It was noted by the Pan African Archeological Association at its Harare Conference in 1995 that the work done at Modipe Hill provided a rare example in Africa of a local museum undertaking archaeological research on a site of major national importance. (21)

The Museum Gives to the Community and Takes From it
The museum provides Mochudi with a prestige institution, which is flatteringly described in all the guide books of this country. It helps to define and symbolise Mochudi’s identity and its historical experiences and achievements. The community sends its schools and other groups to the museum as well as its visitors of all kinds. It donates personal materials for safekeeping and for the benefit of the community. It routinely buys gifts for departing employees and staff members from its shop. It buys its unique materials, featuring elements of local life, for its institutions, for the District Council offices, for the hospital and for the schools. The museum brings visitors to Mochudi who would not otherwise come to it. They eat there, they drink there and they buy in its shops – the museum thus directly contributes to the local economy. In addition, it currently fills an important but still unrecognised role as a local information centre even providing people with the telephone numbers of institutions in Mochudi which they are unable to find in the directory. When its help has been requested, the museum has routinely helped bereaved families with materials for funeral programmes such as biographical information and photographs.

Assistance to Other Museums and Institutions
The museum had some involvement with the establishment of the Khama III and Sechele Museums and gave considerable help to the Mphebatho Cultural Museum in Moruleng/Saulspoort, South Africa when it was being set up.

The Logo
Few logos attract public attention. For a museum to possess one, which has prompted such continuing public interest, must be rare indeed. This particular logo, using the vervet monkey, the totem of the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela, was designed by Mr Vic Hanna, Managing Director of Media Communications, Gaborone in 1995 and donated to the museum. It was first used in the book, Decorated Homes in Botswana. The logo when spotted on the museum’s vehicle has prompted an extraordinary degree of public interest, with thumbs up signals and hooted horns and even a police ‘chase’ to learn more about it. With such a reaction, it is surprising that the design has won no award.

Youth
Since 1998 the museum has made special efforts to assist and engage itself with out-of-school youth, firstly in encouraging a marimba group, then a drama group, then the Sedibelo Business Club (funded by Junior Achievement Botswana), and then for the last eight years the Phuthadikobo Scouts Troop with Elinah Grant acting as ‘Manager’. Resulting from this
involvement, Elinah was elected, in May 2005, the Secretary of the Kgatleng District Scout Committee.

Bogwera and Bojale
Kgosi Linchwe's reintroduction of bogwera in 1975 was by far the most significant attempt at cultural revival to have occurred anywhere in the country since Independence in 1966. It would have been unfortunate if the museum had remained uninvolved and unable to record what occurred. In the event, the museum was involved in all but the first of the six bogwera exercises which were organised between 1975 and 1988. An article in *Botswana Notes and Records* describes the bogwera of 1982, a photographic exhibition of the bogwera exercises was organised at the museum in 1984, a more permanent photographic record is on display in the museum, and it is hoped the museum will soon be able to publish a new book on the subject. The situation in respect of the revival of bojale is inevitably very different. Had the museum then been headed by a woman, it would probably possess more information about those exercises than it does now. Mohumagadi Kathy Kgafela has recently helped to fill that gap by giving to the museum a set of photos of the bojale exercise.

The Bojale Drums
These two drums were re-discovered in 1970. (22) It was reported, by Mr A.K. Pilane at the time, that the drums had been brought with them to Mochudi by the Bakgatla when they migrated from the then Transvaal. They therefore pre-date 1871. One drum is kept by the National Museum. The other drum, which is held by the Phuthadikobo Museum, is kept in trust for the tribe on the understanding that it would be made available to it whenever bojale was held and the drum needed. Honouring that agreement, the museum has made the drum available to Mohumagadi Kathy Seingwaeng for the duration of the six bojale rites organised since it was found. It is recognised that this understanding between a museum and its community is likely to be found in few countries in the world.

Entrance Charges and the Donations Box
Because of its increasingly precarious financial situation, the museum recently decided that it should institute a modest entrance fee of P2 for adults and P1 for school students, although it continues to rely heavily on the generosity of visitors in making additional contributions in the donation box.

Conclusion
Because all the museums in Botswana post-date Independence in 1966, they tend to reflect the personal interests of the key individuals who first founded and then led them. This is particularly true of the Botswana National Museum and of the Phuthadikobo Museum. In the case of the latter, it is obvious from much recent comment, not least from the Minister himself, that there is a wish that, under different leadership, the museum should be first revamped, and remodelled according to other interest areas and then transformed into a completely different kind of project. Inevitably change will bring to an end what could be called Mochudi’s Schapera era, which began with his research into the last traditional initiation rites of 1902 and probably
came to an end when he died in 2003. This era covered a hundred years of Mochudi’s history and community life and virtually the entire 20th century. It began with Kgosi Lentswe 1 and stretched through Kgosi Isang to Kgosi Molefi and Kgosi Linchwe. It included sixty years of life under the British Administration and forty years as part of an Independent state. In a new millennium it may well be that at its museum, Mochudi will look for an entirely new kind of vision and the start of a very different era of its recorded history.

Notes
4. Clearly the Kgatleng District Council viewed the project in the same way because its letter (19th April 1977) informing the Trust that Council had given it, free of charge, the old school building expressed the hope that there will be more fruit from it in future to ‘further the development of the district’.
5. The country’s museums were established in the following sequence – the National Museum 1967 (taken over by the government in 1976), Phuthadikobo 1976, Serowe 1985, Molepolole (1991), Supa Ngwao, Francistown (1992 – when it acquired its first building), Maun (1995), Kanye (2000), Kuru (1992). Livuna Mpapho, Maropong is currently in the process of coming into being. Although it had been earlier established, the Thapong Art Centre in Gaborone qualified for government funding as a museum in 2005 under the terms the National Museums Policy of 2004.
7. ‘The general uncertainty and disagreement about the role of museums in national development.... evident in Botswana in 1966, continues to prevail. Despite discussion stimulated by the National Museum’s Open Week (in 1980) and three subsequent consultancy reports, a coordinated policy for museum development is yet to emerge. For all the rhetoric now associated with them, museums in Botswana remain relatively marginal institutions. Why is this so?’
8. ‘We wish to inform you that...the Ministry of Local Government and Lands decided to withdraw your proposed annual grant of P2, 000 with immediate effect. This letter therefore serves to let you know with regret this unpleasant and sudden change.’ Acting Deputy Council Secretary to the Secretary, Phuthadikobo Museum. 16th January 1991.
9. Council Secretary to the Secretary, Phuthadikobo Trust. 19th April 1977.
10. Council Secretary to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs. 22nd August 1984.
11. The museum has always been under funded by the government and as a result has been under a continual, almost permanent threat of closure – see Museum May Close Due To A Problem of Funds. *Botswana Daily News*, 24.2.1981, and Community Museums in Cash Crisis; Save Our Museums. Ramsay, J. *Mmegi* 19-26 February 1998. *Mmegi Monitor* 30.1.2006 – ‘Some of them are on the verge of closing while others are reported to have laid off staff.’ For a comment on this situation see *Mmegi* 19-26 February 1998, Rampholo Molefe in the *Mmegi Monitor* of 4.7.2006 – ‘Government is deliberately killing museums, the very storehouses of cultural tradition, artefacts and creative arts. By so doing, the government is killing the history of Batswana and creative enterprise.’

15. Acting Council Secretary to S. Grant. 22nd December 1975.
16. For comment on Schapera's photos at the museum see Naomi Mitchison's 'A Museum in Africa' in Museums Journal, Vol. 77, No 1, June 1977