

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The African e-Journals Project has digitized full text of articles of eleven social science and humanities journals. This item is from the digital archive maintained by Michigan State University Library. Find more at:

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/>

Available through a partnership with



Scroll down to read the article.

An ethnographic study of initiation schools among the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela at Mochudi (1874-1988)

Morongwa Nancy Mosothwane

In and around the Makgadikgadi Pans there are several archaeological sites that have been interpreted as places where initiation rites took place in ancient times. But how can one tell they were initiation sites? This paper attempts to answer this by looking at modern initiation ceremonies among the Bakgatla of Mochudi and the "sites" they produce. Identifying ancient initiation sites may not be as simple as it seems.

The village of Mochudi was established around 1871 under the leadership of Kgosi Kgamanyane. The decision to move to Mochudi was prompted by hostile relations between Kgosi Kgamanyane and Paul Kruger, one of the settler authorities of the Rustenburg District. Kgosi Kgamanyane had at one point failed to provide enough labour to work in the Boer farms and in "disciplining" him, Paul Kruger had him flogged in public (Schapera, 1942). In 1870 Kgosi Kgamanyane and his followers emigrated from Soulspoor and settled at Tshwene-Tshwene for over a year before setting up the village of Mochudi. Nonetheless a substantial number of his people remained at Soulspoor and continued to recognize Kgosi Kgamanyane as their chief. Today Kgosi Lincwe II, Kgamanyane's descendant in the fourth generation, is recognized as the paramount chief of the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela living at Mochudi and at Moruleng.

The purpose of this paper is to document the procedures of initiation ceremonies and to describe any physical evidence of initiation on the landscape and elsewhere. Other scholars have documented archaeological sites associated with initiation ceremonies of various Bantu communities, for instance T.N. Huffman and J. Blacking on the Venda of South Africa (Blacking, 1969; Huffman, 1996) and A. Richards on the Bemba of Zambia, (Richards, 1956). Huffman and Blacking have documented *domba* sites (*domba* is a Venda word for initiation) explaining how they may have been made, their architectural styles and other aspects such as material culture (like figurines of clay or wood), songs and dances. Likewise Richards has written extensively about the Bemba's *chisungu* initiation ceremonies (Richards, 1956; Huffman, 1996).

Initiation is a common rite of passage among many world communities. It is usually associated with initiates' introduction to adulthood (Blacking, 1969). However, initiation schools among the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela were not necessarily associated with physical maturity: very young people and mature adults were often initiated together. This kind of age distribution was partly a result of the criteria used for identifying people who were to be initiated together, and partly due to the absence of people from the village at the time of initiation (van der Vliet, 1974; Grant, 1984). For instance, the 1982 initiation of Mangana was led by a ten year old but a large number of initiates were over 20 years (Grant, 1984). In 1985 Bakgatla Kgafela led the Manoga at the age of 10 and his younger brother, Mmusi Kgafela, led the Matukwi in 1988 at the age of 9. Within the Matukwi there was Thari Pilane aged 6 years. All these *mephato* (a group of people who have been to the same *bogwera* or *bojale* schools) had youths over 18 years of age.

Most of the detailed studies of initiation have been on male initiation schools, the few that deal with female initiation are those that are concerned with female genital mutilations as it has been observed among many East African societies. This study gives an account of both male and female initiation ceremonies. The study attempts to present a detailed record

of how people looked, danced and behaved. It gives details of initiation costumes, material culture and also the material evidence left on the landscape that will eventually become part of the archaeological record. Girls' initiation schools are known as *bojale* / *byale* while boys' schools are *bogwera*. Initiation has been an important component of Kgatla customs, it was a means of ordering the society, a lot of emphasis being put on the importance of respecting elders as identified by the order of *mephato*. *Mephato* were an important source of community labour and male *mephato* were used in times of social upheaval within the community to restore order and also in time of clashes with other tribes (Schapera, 1942).

The popularity and importance of *bogwera* and *bojale* have gone through periods of decline and resurgence. It declined mainly due to lack of interest on the side of *dikgosi* who during their reigns were not inclined towards promoting initiation. Except for Kgosi Kgamanyane, Kgosi Isang and Kgosi Lincwe II, other *dikgosi* who have ruled at Mochudi did not show much enthusiasm on the issue of initiation. The popularity of initiation was further weakened by the government and churches (Grant, 1984). These two factors together with the fact that initiation was kept a secret have led to the loss of important information regarding the way in which initiation was conducted in the pre-European period. Every time the institution was revived, it was modified to meet the recommendations set by both the government and the church.

At the time of research there was a degree of secrecy and reluctance to talk about *bogwera* and *bojale* in the community. I consulted Kgosi Lincwe II and his wife, Mrs. Mmarakau "Mma Seigwaeng" Kgafela who then introduced me to some village elders whom I interviewed. I was then able to identify some people who have played important roles in *bogwera* and *bojale*. For the most part, individuals were interviewed separately but in cases where people were found in groups, they were interviewed at the same time. Literature available on the topic of *bogwera* and *bojale* was also evaluated.

Literature review

Initiation rituals of different Bantu societies have been documented by researchers from different fields of study such as history, anthropology, ethnography and archaeology. Written documents appeared mostly in the early 19th century when more Bantu groups came into direct contact with Europeans. However, no attempts have been made to merge the historical and ethnographic records of Tswana initiation schools and their implications for archaeologists. A multifaceted research of this kind has been done on the Shona and the Venda (Huffman, 1996) and it was this research that became the basis for my project.

Initiation ceremonies of most Tswana speaking communities follows the general pattern of initiating people in large numbers, male circumcision, formation of *mephato* and sometimes female genital operations which were equated to male circumcision (Willoughby, 1909; Roberts & Winter, 1915; Schapera, 1955; Monnig, 1967). The mode of teaching was songs associated with moral referents and secret meanings. Some of the songs were not fully understood by initiates until they had become initiation teachers themselves (Schapera, 1978). Initiation songs and dances were the main activity in initiation schools (Willoughby, 1909; Schapera, 1955; Richards, 1956; Monnig, 1967; Blacking, 1969; Huffman, 1996). Singing was the major mode of communication between initiation participants. Traditional musical instruments were used. The instrument that was used by women of different communities is the drum. For instance, it was used by the Bemba (Richards, 1956), the Venda (Blacking, 1969; Huffman, 1996) the Pedi (Monnig, 1967) and the Bakgatla. In all communities mentioned, the women's drum was treated with respect as it was laden with ritual significance and symbolism. It was the central object that carried powers that ensured the smooth running of the ceremonies. It was therefore played only by

a few selected individuals who were known for their wisdom in initiation rituals (Monnig, 1967). When not in use it was often kept safely at the royal residence. The most common musical instruments among men in initiation schools were animal horns (Willoughby, 1909; Roberts & Winter, 1915; Blacking, 1969; Schapera, 1978; Grant, 1984; Huffman, 1996). Animal horns appear to have been used for practical reasons only, any participant who knew how to blow an animal horn could do it during men's initiation ceremonies. At the end of the ceremonies those horns remained private property of individuals. There was no limit as to the number of animal horns that were used (Willoughby, 1909; Blacking, 1969; Schapera, 1978).

Among the Tswana, there was a tendency to put girls in seclusion in the village (Willoughby, 1909; Schapera, 1955) while boys were taken away from the village during initiation ceremonies. Boys were put under absolute separation from village life while girls were put through a period of limited social contacts only since they stayed in the village. This contrast on the use of space is an important one for archaeologists because it helps to explain the absence or presence of material culture and features associated with initiation ceremonies. A good example of an archaeological research on initiation materials and features and their relation to the use of space is by Huffman (1996) among the Venda. By mapping out a traditional Venda village, Huffman was able to identify house remains that were used for female initiation ceremonies. He also identified stone cairn fields as archaeological sites of male initiation. Hearth remains encircled by stones have been documented among the Pedi (Roberts & Winter, 1915) and among the Bakgatla (Willoughby, 1909; Schapera, 1978) but whether or not these are to be equated with what has been mentioned in Huffman's text (e.g., at Mosu and Kubu) is a research question on its own.

Tswana communities initiate youths in large numbers to form *mephato*. Reasons for initiating people in large numbers have not been investigated fully among the Bakgatla but it is possible that it was meant to emphasize tribal unity. Initiates were taught the importance of unity and co-operation with one another and with the rest of the community. Among the Nuer it is thought that if a boy is initiated alone he would be lonely and he would probably die out of loneliness (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Tswana initiation ceremonies led to the formation of *mephato* which grouped people of the same generation, although there were usually a few exceptions. Before western education, people had no means of telling their absolute ages and therefore used relative ages based on the order of *mephato* (Willoughby, 1909). In social gatherings and in tribal meetings, seniority of peoples was observed in terms of their *mephato* and that was probably why uninitiated men (*magwane*) were not allowed to participate in social decision making (Willoughby, 1909; Breutz, 1953; Schapera, 1978).

Many anthropologists describe initiation schools in terms of education, where initiates are taken into custody of their seniors who teach them tribal laws, fighting skills, hunting skills, initiation songs, tribal folklore, craft making and many other things. One of the main objectives of initiation ceremonies is to train initiates to have courage and endurance (Blacking, 1969). They are treated harshly, made to perform dubious tasks and are often beaten on the slightest pretext. However, the ultimate goal of initiation is not so much to make a stronger or even more knowledgeable person of the initiate, even though this may be greatly desired, but it is to transform the initiate, making him different from what he had been and separating him from his childhood existence (Lincoln, 1981).

With the coming of western civilization, a lot of traditional institutions went through some changes (Blacking, 1969). The role of initiation was being erased by the new forms of authority but this was a change not welcomed by traditionalists, as depicted by the 1920s

and 1930s relationship between the protectorate government and the “natives”. The protectorate government wanted to stamp out initiation schools because they considered them barbaric, cruel and unhygienic (BNA S217/6 & S100/2). Tswana traditionalists favoured their good old tradition, while the government called for a replacement of initiation schools by western education systems. Gradually, important Tswana leaders began to agree with the protectorate government and among them was Kgosi Lentswe I, Kgosi Bathoeng II, Kgama III and Kgosi Sebele (BNA S100/2; Schapera, 1936, 1978). On 19 December 1917, the High Commissioner passed a proclamation that was to prohibit initiation in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. No persons under the age of sixteen were to be initiated without the consent of their parents or guardians and anyone found guilty of forcing young people to undergo initiation was to be fined not more than fifty Pounds or was to be imprisoned for not more than a year. The proclamation was initially meant for some parts of the Protectorate but the Resident Commissioner had the power to expand its area of application. The proclamation had not included farms owned by whites and therefore people around Lobatsi went and performed their ceremony in a farm. In Mochudi it was also continued although circumcision had been stopped. Between 1944 and 1945, the High Commissioner sent despatches to different Resident Commissioners asking whether the 1917 proclamation was being obeyed or not. Kgama, Sebele, Lentswe and Bathoeng were praised for having been loyal to the laws of the High Commissioner.

Mephato of Bakgatla 1874-1985

Mochudi was first occupied by the emigrated group of the Bakgatla under the leadership of Kgosi Kgamanyane Pilane around 1871. He had earlier settled at Soulsport where his bad relations with the Afrikaner government eventually led him to leave the country to go and settle at the present day capital of the Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela, Mochudi, having stayed at Tshwene Tshwene first for a year (Schapera, 1942; Breutz, 1953). It is not clear as to which *mephato* was initiated first at Mochudi. Documents available indicate that the Matlakana were initiated in 1874 but before them was the Makgalo, a women's *mephato* whose date of initiation is not yet known (Breutz, 1953; Schapera, 1978). Evidence from Kgatla tribal laws tends to suggest that the Makgalo were the first *mephato* at Mochudi on the basis of the Kgatla tradition that in a newly established village the first *mephato* must be that of women. However, it is difficult to conclude that Makgalo were indeed the first in Mochudi because before finally settling at Mochudi, the Bakgatla stayed at Tshwene-Tshwene for over a year where Makgalo may have been initiated. But given the circumstances under which Tshwene-Tshwene was occupied (a temporary village while land was being negotiated with Kwena authorities), it seems more likely that they were initiated at Mochudi.

Kgamanyane died in 1874, having been a leader of the Masoswe of 1849, and was succeeded by Lentswe, a leader of Matlakana of 1874. During his reign, Lentswe named eight *mephato*, Maisakoma, Makoba, Majanko, Matshabatau, Majekere, Mantwane, Mabusapelo and Makuka. In 1892 he was converted to Christianity and having adopted this new religion he was compelled by Christian ethics to prohibit some Kgatla customs such as paying bride price, polygamy and circumcision (Schapera, 1936, 1942; BNA S217/6 & S218/10). The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) that Lentswe I had joined was particularly against circumcision in *bogwera* schools and therefore urged Lentswe I to prohibit initiation. He informed his people about his decision to stop initiation but was met with criticism and refusal. The Bakgatla made it clear to him that initiation was a communal entity, that no single individual could make a decision to stop it without the consent of the whole *merafe*. Lentswe I therefore lost his case against his people and eventually initiated

the Mabusapelo in 1895. According to Mr. Moreri Tshite the name was derived from the phrase 'go busapelo', which means to calm down. Thus, by selecting this particular name Lentswe I was saying that he had withdrawn from his intention of canceling initiation. Having initiated this *mephato*, Lentswe was put under even more pressure by the church and since he was spending much of his time at the church he agreed once again that there would be no more initiation schools. On the other hand a large group of *magwane* was preparing itself to undergo the ceremony, pressuring Lentswe to authorize their ceremony. In 1902 he did finally let the youths be initiated and he called them Makuka. Mr. Moreri Tshite has said that the name was derived from the phrase "go kuka", meaning "to lift", which implied that Lentswe I was never going to allow initiation schools with circumcision rites and indeed the Makuka remained the last *mephato* to have undergone circumcision rites for over seven decades until Lincwe II reintroduced it in 1975. Machechele and Mafatshwana were also initiated by Lentswe I but by then circumcision was completely prohibited. Lentswe I died in 1924 having retired earlier because of ill health (Schapera, 1942).

Isang took over as a regent from 1920 to 1929 when his nephew, Molefi Kgafela, was crowned. Isang was instrumental in reviving the tribal customs that Lentswe I had abolished; he encouraged people to pay bride price, he recognized the traditional purification of bereaved people (*baswagadi*, *batlholagadi* and *matlhomela*), reintroduced rainmaking rituals and advocated for better initiation schools in which boys stayed away in the bush for months learning traditional songs and tribal customs, but did not reintroduce circumcision. Initiation gained more popularity unlike during the last years of Lentswe's reign where people were called to the *kgotla* to be given a *mephato* name without having learnt initiation songs or camping in the bush (Schapera, 1942). Isang's *mephato* were Maatlametla, Madima and Machama. In 1929 Molefi, the rightful heir, was crowned chief, taking over from his uncle Isang. He initiated Mafiri and Mangope. Molefi's unacceptable behaviour and misconduct put him at loggerheads with the protectorate administration so much so that in 1937 he was forced to leave the Kgatla Reserve (Schapera, 1942, 1956; Grant, 1984). His younger brother, Mmusi, was then appointed as a regent. Mmusi initiated Malwelakgosi and Mathulwa and later on in 1963 Lincwe II was crowned. Mmusi was not very much interested in initiation and during his reign the custom lost its popularity and much of its significance. Boys were no longer staying a long time in the bush as Isang had insisted. For instance in 1963 the Mathulwa who were led by Kgosi Lincwe II spent only one night on the outskirts of Mochudi and returned early the following day to be named and dispersed. The initiation of Mathulwa was meant to formalize Kgosi Lincwe II's new position in a manner that was supposed to be traditional and yet a far cry from the traditional Kgatla culture. Traditionally, Lincwe II ought to have been initiated before being crowned but in his case he was crowned on April 6, 1963 and initiated later in June 1963. On the Monday following his initiation he was due to attend a court case in Molepolole where there were disputes over chiefs and as a result his initiation ceremony had to be as short as possible.

For ten years after the initiation of Mathulwa no new *mephato* were formed and it was assumed that initiation had been abandoned. Shortly after his installation Kgosi Lincwe II left the country to go and work in the United States of America while Mmusi acted on his behalf at Mochudi. Before he left he initiated a women's *mephato* of Maisakoma and upon his return a male *mephato* was formed. This was Masoswe and for the first time since 1902 circumcision was performed. Kgosi Lincwe II did not insist or force people to go for initiation but once enrolled there was no way of escaping circumcision. Circumcision itself was done at the Deborah Retief Hospital run by the DRC; the very same church that had

insisted on the abolition of circumcision earlier (Grant & Kgafela, 1989). In the later initiation ceremonies students from the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) were invited to help because of the hospital's staff shortage (Grant, 1984).

Incorporation into *mephato*

There are several ways of identifying people who are to be initiated together. Membership into a *mephato* is not by an individual's choice but the system has criteria that are used to select people to be initiated together. The following are the criteria used. Eldest sons of men of the same *mephato* are initiated together so that the younger *mephato* is identified as a "child" of the older one. For instance, the Mathulwa are sons of Machama. Mr. Segwati Ramontie was the eldest in his family and his parents were of Mantwane and he became a member of Madima. Madima are identified as sons of Mantwane (see appendix for more details). Once eldest sons have been initiated their younger siblings may then follow in their order of age. No two brothers or two sisters from the same mother and father are allowed into the same *mephato*. Unless they are twins, they are only allowed if they have only one parent in common as is the case with Mr. Ray Molomo and his brother Mr. Norman Molomo who are both members of Mafiri: they are of the same father but have different mothers. Informant say that a brother and sister, of the same parents, following each in their order of birth may share the same *mephato* name. Those people who may have been absent when their turn for initiation was due were initiated with younger *mephato* but given their proper *mephato* names.

The general sequence of *mephato* is that of men followed by women but there are occasions when only women are initiated without a male counterpart. Those female *mephato* without men are; Mantshakgosi, Makgalo, Maisakoma, Matshabatau, Majekere, Mabusapelo, Maatlametla, Matshego, Malwelakgosi, Maisakoma and Mabusapelo. In cases where the village has been relocated the first *mephato* in the new village was that of women, for instance Makgalo may have been the first *mephato* at Mochudi initiated between 1869 (Mafatliha) and 1874 (Matlakana) with Mochudi having been occupied in 1874 (Schapera, 1942; Breutz, 1953). A village was equated to a household and a woman was the one responsible for the daily chores needed to maintain the family. A woman therefore played an important role in the house and it was eventually reflected in the society. Every time a new chief was installed the first *mephato* should be female and hence the saying that "*Kgosi o itibola ka basadi*" that is a chief's eldest "child" is a woman. The idea is to show appreciation to the chief's mother who has over the years taken care of her baby, a baby that had grown strong enough to take care of his father's people. *Mephato* formed for this reason include the older Maisakoma (initiated by Lentswe I), Maatlametla named by Isang, Matshego named by Molefi and the younger Maisakoma named by Lincwe II. Some female *mephato* were formed probably because of higher female population and probably because more girls were needed as wives in a polygamous society that insisted on initiation before marriage.

***Bojale / byale*: female initiation practices**

Bojale is a female initiation ceremony through which girls are incorporated into *mephato*. Once the boys had been sent out to an initiation school, girls automatically knew that they would be sent for their initiation ceremony the following winter season. Girls do not have to undergo the laborious pre-initiation sessions that the boys undertook (*bogwane*). *Bojale* like other components of Kgatla culture has been changing over the years. There has been some swift changes in the manner in which *bojale* is carried out especially from around the

colonial period when a new religion and government were replacing the traditional religious beliefs and traditional authorities.

From around the late nineteenth century up to the early twentieth century there was an initiation style that was abandoned probably after the initiation of Makuka in 1902. Only a few informants had vague recollections of what they had heard about that style of *bojale*. It is said that girls were initiated within compounds of carefully selected families, mostly those related to the royal family. Tightly packed branches were used to seclude the girls away from the rest of the community. They stayed in total seclusion throughout their initiation periods and initiation was kept a profound secret from non-initiates; even those who had undergone the ceremony did not talk about it openly. Only a few informants were able to remember this long forgotten tradition. It is not known when and why initiating girls within compounds stopped. Perhaps it was due to population increase, when it was no longer easy to accommodate the initiates and their teachers in a regular sized compound.

From around the 1920s a different style of initiation was introduced and it was mainly due to criticism of the custom by the Dutch Reformed Church that was by then fully established in the village. Many important components of *bojale* appear to have been abandoned in order to suit the expectations of the church. Girls were no longer initiated in compounds and they no longer spent the whole winter season in an initiation school. They were instead called to the village's main Kgotla where they were given a very light traditional whipping (*go loma tsetse*) and then a *mephato* name. Initiation was no longer of any great importance in the society and incorporation into *mephato* was no longer a source of pride (Grant & Kgafela, 1989). Ultimately in the mid twentieth century, initiation regained a higher level of popularity because the new chief, Isang, had put more emphasis on the importance of *mephato* as a source of community labour and organization. Instead of a one day initiation ceremony, girls now stayed up to six weeks learning initiation songs, tribal folklore, social and moral behaviour and the responsibilities of wives and mothers (Schapera, 1942). This remained the standard procedure of girls initiation ceremonies until the late 1980s, except that the duration of the ceremony has been decreasing slowly because most initiates were either students or workers.

Every late afternoon initiates from each sub ward (*kgoro*) met at their meeting places and when all had come they went to their ward's central place where all initiates and their teachers from the ward met. While waiting for other initiates to arrive the girls sang under instructions of their teachers. Initiates from the different wards would then march to the main *kgotla* where they received instructions of which routes they would take that day. They then made a procession, singing all the time and occasionally stopping for a short rest. They were sometimes instructed to jog or jump over small thorny bushes and all the time they had to keep their heads bowed. Initiates were not allowed to walk up straight and even when resting they either had to kneel down or sit in a squatting position without spreading their legs. Those postures were a sign of respect for the teachers. The initiates had to keep their arms folded on their chests because they did not wear anything on the upper body (Blacking, 1969).

There were two sessions held every night. The first session began just after sunset and continued until shortly after midnight while the second session began in the early morning hours and lasted until just before sunrise. The reason for doing so was that students and workers could choose sessions they felt comfortable with. Only those people not going to school or working were expected to turn up for the two sessions every night for they had time to sleep during the day. It was only on the last day before graduation that there was one all night long session and in the morning the initiates were laid down in their order of seniority and whipped. The whipping was known as *go loma tsetse* or "to bite a tsetse fly".

Initiates were often taken to open grounds within the village where they danced and sang. These included Seboeng, Sethobong and Phaphane show grounds. From around the 1980s initiates went out as far as Mmaesoke, a ploughing area about 5 km to the northwest of the village. Mmaesoke was chosen as an initiation ground for girls because the grounds in the village were now developed into residential areas, while in other cases bars were built next to such grounds. Mmaesoke was not very far from the village and was large enough to accommodate all participants. During the day, participants stayed at home and went around doing their day to day chores. They were not in anyway distinguished from the rest of the people for they dressed ordinarily, ate everyday food and were not put in seclusion. Unlike boys who practically moved out of the village during their initiation periods, girls remained within the village and continued to live their ordinary life during the day. Girls' activities began at night and ended before sunrise.

The traditional attire of initiates was *makgabe* and *mothikga*. This attire was used for a very long time until it was ultimately replaced by European cloth at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Makgabe* is a kind of skirt that is made from separate threads sewn together at one end and hanging loose at the other end. It was made from a bush plant called *bogokgwe* or *mosokelatsebeng* whose roots and stem were harvested from swampy areas. The plant was boiled for several hours to remove its green pigmentation and to soften it up. It was boiled until it became clear coloured and tender. Threads that came after boiling were then rolled between the thigh and hand. Pieces of roots and stem were processed into one long roll of thread which was then cut up into many pieces that measured from the waist to the knee, and the pieces were sewn together using very thin thread obtained from an animal skin. Charcoal mixed with animal fat was then smeared on *makgabe* and rubbed until it had a shiny black colour. Small knots were then tied up on each thread as a way of decoration. Since *makgabe* did not cover the buttocks, an animal skin back apron was made for this purpose. Goat or sheep skins were softened and cut to knee length with belt extensions on either side of the waist for tying up the apron. Except for these two pieces of clothing, initiates remained bare (Blacking, 1969). Women in the village and presumably initiation teachers wore leather skirts called *mothikga* made from goat or calf skins. In hot weather women remained topless but in cold weather they wore small leather blankets which were tied around the neck like capes (Blacking, 1969).

No forms of body decoration were used on Bakgatla girls during initiations. If one had any item of decoration such as necklace or bracelets she had to take them off when going for initiation sessions. One of the most common ways of decorating the body was body painting done by other Tswana communities like Bakwena and Balete (Schapera, 1955; van der Vliet, 1974). These communities used red ochre to paint either initiates or brides. The Bakgatla believed that a woman was to be born out of a girl initiate and the newly born woman had to resemble a newly born baby as much as possible and therefore initiates were stripped of all decoration items. However, Mrs Fenenke Mmutle mentioned that her mother had a set of copper bracelets that was part of her regiment's regalia. The bracelets have long been lost and therefore attempts to have them drawn or photographed failed. None of the informants nor the Phuthadikobo Museum in Mochudi had any documentation of such bracelets.

There is not much material culture that the Bakgatla women used or produced during their initiation ceremonies. Many southern African societies are known to use a variety of figurines in their initiation ceremonies. People like the Venda (Blacking, 1969; Huffman, 1996) and Bemba (Richards, 1956) relied heavily on the use of figurines as teaching aids in female initiation schools. The Venda even used figuratively carved drums during *domba* ceremonies (Blacking, 1969). During the *chisungu* ceremonies, the Zambian Bemba people

used a variation of special figurines and distinctive architectural enclosures where girls were kept in seclusion. The Bakgatla women did not use any figurines in their *bojale* ceremonies. Their mode of teaching was songs. Bakgatla women even though lacking figurines had a drum that they used. The drum was used only by women in their initiation ceremonies. The drum was used to symbolize a womb with its bottom opening symbolizing the opening of a womb. The drum was long and narrow with only one carved handle. Its shape is not in anyway similar to that of a womb. The drum was never to be touched by men and when played in traditional events at the *kgotla* in the presence of men, its lower opening was never to be directed towards men. Not every girl or woman could play the drum: only those with special posts in initiation schools, such as the royal mother's close councilors who could make decisions and suggestions to the rest of the troop. One such person was Miss Mogaritshi Pheto whose mother had also been known for her wisdom in initiation procedures. It was believed that some people in the group had strange evil powers or were witches and if they were to play this drum disasters could befall the initiates. Even though there was a traditional cleansing or healing at the beginning of initiation ceremonies, it was always advisable to avoid taking chances with witchcraft and that was why playing the drum was reserved for only a few people in the village. At present the Phutadikobo Museum is housing the women's drum. The drum is probably the only artifact in the museum collection that the Bakgatla brought with them when they migrated from Pilansberg in 1871.

Besides the drum, initiation teachers carried with them branches of *moologa* tree (*Croton gratissimus*). They enclosed initiates in the center and moved very closely to each other and the branches became tightly packed, completely screening away the initiates in the center. No reasons have been found as to why only *moologa* branches were used instead of other tree branches and therefore the significance or symbolism of *moologa* branches remains unknown. At the end of the ceremony the branches were discarded. On the last night of the ceremony when initiates stayed all night long for *dikgalaopa*, there was ritual whipping, *go loma tsetse*, of the initiates who were ordered to lie down on their stomachs and were beaten using *morethwa* sticks (wild berry, *Grewia flava*) that had been previously prepared. Since initiates were large in numbers several sticks were used for this ritual because they would break. Like *moologa* branches the sticks used for whipping the girls were afterwards discarded.

At the beginning of each initiation ceremony initiates were traditionally medicated (*ba a phekolwa*). The idea was to guard them against evil ancestral spirits and at times of inter-tribal wars they were to be protected from possible witchcraft and curse from enemies (Blacking, 1969). A young virgin was selected from a humble family and one that was related to the royal family. She was accompanied by the royal mother and her assistants to go out and collect plants used in the ritual. The women identified the plants which only the virgin was allowed to dig out or else they would become contaminated and lose their power if dug out by a non-virgin. The plants were then treated accordingly at the back yard of the chief's house to produce the traditional medicines needed. Plants used for *go phekola* remained an absolute secret from the rest of the people so much so that even in the 1980s when there was less emphasis on keeping the procedures of *bojale* a secret from non-initiates, names of the plants used for medication continued to be a profound secret. None of the initiates interviewed knew what plants were used, only Mogaritshi Pheto and Mrs Mmarakau Kgafela admitted that they knew the plants by names. They strongly believed that I would become insane if they were to tell me the names of plants. A small fire was set at the main entrance to the *kgotla* and herbs used for medicating the initiates were thrown into this fire, the drum was suspended above the fire to let the smoke flow inside. It was

believed that by so doing the initiates' wombs were being cleansed to be able to bear children. All initiates who had small babies were to squeeze some milk on to the fire to put it out and by so doing they were protecting their children. Other initiates then walked over the fire spot bare footed and the ritual would be completed. All initiates were warned against making and using their own personal traditional medications during the initiation period or else communal medications would work badly against them. There is, in fact, a story of one woman who during her niece's initiation came with her own package of medicines and just as the initiates were entering the main kraal to be named the woman fell down and was paralyzed instantly. She is said to have died a few weeks later. *Phekolo* was done only on the first day of the ceremony and the powers of the ritual were believed to be strong enough to last an initiate's life time. Many people believed that nothing bad would happen to them once they had been medicated. They said they feared no snakes and other night creatures when they were performing the ceremony at night.

Some symbolic actions have been identified during *bojale* ceremonies. The actions are associated with child bearing which is an important aspect of societal growth. The Bakgatla believe that a mature woman was born out of a girl initiate and therefore most of the songs sung and actions performed center around child bearing. In the most commonly performed action initiates walked with their heads bowed, arms folded over breasts and sitting in a squatting position. Initiates were expected to walk with their heads bowed or else they would be beaten for failing to do so (Blacking, 1969). Since they were imitating a fetus which cannot look around and see its surrounding, the initiates had to be forbidden from looking around. They folded their arms in front to hide their breasts presumably because as young children they were expected not to have breasts. When stopping for a rest, they either knelt down or sat squatting and both positions are similar to that of a fetus and therefore the assumption is that these postures symbolized fetal postures. When initiates left home for their sessions they left fully dressed because it was normally just before sunset, with people moving around and about. As soon as darkness fell they were ordered to undress and they remained with panties only (Kollars, 1991; Motlotle, 1998). The clothes were carried by teachers, wrapped in blankets and carried like babies on the back. This manner of carrying clothes was meant to encourage initiates to get married and to have children.

Male initiation

A group of boys preparing themselves for initiation was called *magwane*. *Magwane* stayed in groups doing daily chores at the cattle posts and fields in the rainy season and in winter they idled around in the village. They often sang intimidating songs and provoked people because in Kgatla custom they could not be taken to court (Roberts & Winter, 1915; Schapera, 1978). They misbehaved mostly at night when it was not easy to be identified or else they would be ill treated when their time for initiation came. Periods of *bogwane* lasted as long as three years until the chief and his councilors felt that the boys were strong enough to undergo initiation. *Magwane* had a ritual of stick fighting where they divided themselves into two teams and fought each other using *moretlwa* sticks (Schapera, 1978). They had their own style of clothing that distinguished them from the rest of the boys. They had head gear from wildebeest (*kgokong*). A strip of skin was cut from the wildebeest's spine and was tied into a circle to fit an individual's head. When they left the village to be initiated in the bush they left the head gears behind because they were no longer small boys as the gear signified. *Magwane* also wore leather aprons known as *dikola* during stick fights. *Dikola* were normally made from calf skins but could also be decorated with stripes

of *tshipa* skins. From around the 1930s buttons were commonly used to decorate belts worn by *magwane*.

Once enrolled into an initiation school, *magwane* were now called *magwera*. *Magwera* had a different code of attire. They wore leather underwear known as *phuduhudu* or *moswapo*, and leather shawls known as *mokobolo*. These were made from any animals killed during the ceremony. When returning from the bush they carried ostrich feathers tied to sticks and these were known as *mokobolo*. Initially all initiates were given *mokobolo* but in the later years with an increased population and control of hunting by the Wildlife Department only senior boys from different wards were given *mokobolo*. If the group was led by an heir to the throne, he would wear *mokobolo* made from a lion skin because it was a fierce animal but less significant than leopard (the chief wore leopard skin). For instance in 1982 Kgafela Kgafela wore *mokobolo* made from lion's skin. In the later years people began to wear short trousers and jerseys during initiation ceremonies. *Mokobolo* were put over jerseys and rifles became increasingly common. Leather sandals were replaced by European shoes. *Bogwane* has long been abandoned and now *maditse a dikgokong* are worn by initiated men to decorate themselves.

While in the bush *magwera* spent their time hunting, singing and doing crafts. Hunting was important for meat and leather for making clothes. Besides meat, participants ate porridge regularly supplied from the village by ox-wagons travelling between camps and Mochudi. The most favorite food appears to have been *lebabe* made by frying and grinding sorghum grains. After grinding, a powder of *morelwa* was added to sweeten this sorghum powder. *Lebabe* was made by women in large sacks and was collected by initiation teachers. It did not go bad quickly, and once prepared it could be eaten with water without having to cook again. While in camps, initiates made wooden utensils like spoons, stools and leather strap chairs. Those interested in leather products engaged in softening and cutting leather from hunted animals. Initiates camped at different places in the bush and each *mephato* chose its own camping area. This was determined by the availability of water and wild animals. In some camps they stayed for a single night while in some they stayed for over a week depending on water sources available. Figure 1 shows some of the boreholes and streams in Kgatleng by which *bogwera* camps have been set in the past.

Initiation sites

There is variation in the potential archaeological record that successive male *mephato* produce. This is mainly dependent on the manner in which different chiefs viewed *bogwera* and the manner in which they ultimately changed or altered *bogwera* proceedings. A lot of changes occurred in the early twentieth century with influence from western civilization (Schapera, 1936). Each chief was influenced one way or the other and it was this influence that determined the direction of *bogwera* and *bojale* proceedings. Evidence of initiation procedures left behind may be in the form of initiation sites and their associated features and material culture.

A number of initiation sites have been identified in and around Mochudi. Tsope is a valley located about six kilometers west of the main *kgotla*. It is an area associated with *bogwera* camps. It is a small valley area bounded by a series of small hills that provide a natural screen away from the village (Fig. 2). The site consists of a small stream that provided water for people in *bogwera* camps. It was an ideal place for setting up a *bogwera* camp because it was not very far from the village, which made it an easy task for village women to take food to the camp. It was naturally secluded from the village and it also had its own water source. Tsope was established as an initiation site around 1874 and as far as oral traditions are concerned only five *mephato* were initiated at this site: Matlakana

(1874), Makoba (1880), Majanko (1884), Mantwane (1892) and Makuka (1902). Initiation "signatures" at Tsope are mainly hearths encircled by stone slabs (Fig. 2). Slabs of stones were obtained locally and planted vertically on the ground to make stone fire places. The first slab planted was smeared with traditional medicine made from foreskin residues of previous circumcisions (*tshitlho*) (Schapera, 1978). At the time of investigation a lot of these hearths had been totally destroyed as the site was developed into a residential area in the 1980s. Unfortunately no attempts had been made previously to map Tsope and as a result it is not easy to reconstruct the layout of the original site. At present only fifteen hearths, of which four are hardly intact, remain in an area of about 160,000 sq m. Their diameters are mostly around 1 m. A layout of a *bogwera* camp is similar to that of the main village in terms of how other wards are located away from the *kgosing* ward (Willoughby, 1909; Grant, 1984) but attempts to locate where some wards may have been were fruitless because there was no means of identifying the *kgosing* hearths and also because it is not known exactly how much of the site has been destroyed.

Molapo wa baruti or Kgogometsong is another circumcision site located on a stream bed about one kilometer west of the village hospital. It was first used for *bogwera* purposes in 1975 by Masoswe who were initiated by Kgosi Lincwe II. It has since been used by Madingwana (1976), Malomakgomo (1980), Mangana (1982), Manoga (1985) and Matukwi (1988). Kgogometsong was chosen for *bogwera* camps because it is on a stream bed bordered by a small escarpment that shields it from the rest of the village and most importantly because it is very close to the hospital which had taken over the responsibility of performing circumcision operations. Water was not so much an important factor as it could be fetched from nearby taps. Unlike at Tsope, hearths at Kgogometsong are not encircled by stone slabs but they just lie in the open. Ash deposits of this site have over time hardened and formed compact deposits. The highest deposit is of the *kgosing* ward which measures about 1.2 m in diameter and 40 cm in height. All hearths are present, even though some may be very shallow deposits. During the 1982 initiation of Mangana, a plan of the camp was drawn complete with branch enclosures that are otherwise burnt down at the end of the ceremony. The map gives all details of the camp layout (Grant, 1984:11) and no further study of the site layout would add much to the already existing information from the map.

Motlhwareng is an open space situated about two kilometers Northeast of the main *kgotla*. It is where all *bogwera* participants gather on the last day before departing for the bush. It is an assembly area where final examination of initiates takes place. Those found to be seriously ill may be sent back home or to the hospital until they recover. Transport arrangements for students and workers are made for them to join the rest of the participants on weekends. Motlhwareng appears to be the only initiation site in and outside Mochudi that has been used continuously from the time when Mochudi was established. It therefore has been used for over one hundred years but with only two initiation features, a *motlhware* tree and an older log of the same tree. The ritual significance of this tree is still unknown. In the 1980s a new *motlhware* tree was planted next to the log of the older one that had died earlier on and the two are next to each other.

S'thobong is an area around Lentswe's residence. There is an open ground where girls often spend some time singing and receiving lectures during *bojale* ceremonies. There is no material culture nor any features associated with *bojale* at S'thobong and it appears to have been used because of its openness. There are no dates of when it was first used for *bojale* ceremonies but it has been used in recent times. Seboeng is another site associated with *bojale* ceremonies. It was initially on the outskirts of the village on the southeastern side but now the village has expanded beyond this place. *Dikgalaopa* (the last night of *bojale*)

used to be held at Seboeng next to Kgosi Isang's field. It was last used as an initiation site by Mantshakgosi in 1979 and since then *dikgalaopa* have been held at the show ground. Mmaesoke is a place on the outskirts of Mochudi on the western side which was proposed by Mrs. Kgafela to be used for *bojale* since the 1980s. All *bojale* sites mentioned lack initiation features and are therefore not identifiable archaeologically. Bogwera sites have features that may identify them archaeologically.

Rituals and the use of space

There is a clear contrast of the use of space inside or outside either a house, a compound, a domestic space and even a village. For instance the cultural practice of Kgatla funerals was that during funerals women were expected to sit inside compounds while men sat on the outside of the compound of the deceased. Any decisions or announcements that were to be made were done separately inside and outside the compound or yard. Men built their own fire outside the compound in their assembly area while the women's assembly area was without fire. The only time women came into contact with fire was when they were preparing tea or food. In pre-Christian times there was a clear contrast in terms of places for burying people of different sexes. In the absence of graveyards, children were put inside pots and buried in the house, women were also buried inside houses while men were often buried inside cattle byres or fields. The Bakgatla believed that a woman would continue guarding and working in the house in her afterlife and likewise a man was to continue taking care of his animals or crops. Thus, dead people were buried in areas or spaces that they had occupied while alive. In life women were restricted to the house while men roamed around freely in the bush looking after cattle.

During their initiation ceremonies, the Bakgatla girls were initiated around the village. Girls performed their initiation activities at night when people were asleep to avoid being seen, but contrary to that boys were literally taken away from the village into the bush and returned only when all activities had been performed. Some informants have argued that boys needed to be away from the village to ensure that they be completely barred from sexual contacts before the circumcision scars were healed. However, there are those *mephato* whose initiation procedures did not include circumcision but who nonetheless spent some time in the bush during their initiation ceremonies and therefore the reason mentioned above seems inadequate.

Lincoln (1981) believes that the resolution of contrast or opposites always involves a move from separation to unity and from limitation to totality. Before initiation people are identified as individuals but after going through the ceremony they are identified by their *mephato* which groups a large number of individuals into large units. By becoming a part of the process of contrast (in terms of the use of space) an immature boy or girl becomes an adult as the nature of his or her very being is radically transformed (Blacking, 1969; Lincoln, 1981). Lincoln (1981) argues that the contrast between what initiation accomplishes for men and for women is graphically presented in spatial terms of their respective rituals. For men initiation is an installation to office (e.g., *mephato* were used as armed forces and they also provided free community labour) and a change from one level of authority and responsibility to a higher one (e.g., only initiated men were allowed to participate in decision making on tribal issues at the *kgotla*) and as such it must involve a spatial transition or change in residence. For a woman there is no installation into office and therefore her initiation needs no special change. A woman remains where she had always been in terms of authority and office and this is why she is initiated within her normal living space rather than doing it elsewhere. The importance of initiating a Mokgatla girl appears to have been noticed by women mostly, while initiating a Mokgatla boy was a

thing emphasized by men and women equally. Male initiation was clearly the whole tribe's pride but female initiation was more a women's pride. When men arrived at the *kgotla* from the bush they were met by happy crowds of men and women wearing attires and masks of all kinds to decorate themselves. Even women did wear elaborate attires on such occasions. But, when girls arrived at the *kgotla* very few men wore their elaborate attires to meet the girls. Male initiation was much more elaborate, complex and resource consuming than female initiation. Change in the authority level of initiated men affected both men and women while authority of initiated women was felt more by other women and less by men.

Male initiation pattern is that in which initiates are carried away from the village into the bush (separation), where they are subjected to various ordeals and given instructions (liminal rites), after which they return to the village where they are received as adults (re-incorporation) (Lincoln, 1981). The female pattern is such that initiates never leave the boundaries of the village during their liminal periods. For girls it is not a time of separation but only a time of limited social contacts. Their spatial locus is not changed, only the nature of their activities change. Instead of the three stages of separation, liminal rites and re-incorporation, *bojale* stages are those of enclosure (within the village), magnification (of the initiates social role) and emergence (girls emerge as women) (Blacking, 1969). Although Lincoln's study was based on women's initiation rituals of the communities of the Tiv, Tiygar, Navajo and Tukuna, his findings and conclusions are clearly applicable to the Bakgatla's case and it may probably be applicable to other Bantu societies.

Another contrast worth looking at is the importance of fire as a central feature in *bogwera* camps and its absence in *bojale* places. The first fire built in *bogwera* camps is that of the *kgosing* ward (*sebesong*) and other wards may take an already burning wood from the *kgosing* hearth to light their own fires. The *kgosing* fire has to be constantly alight and in fact there may be one or two initiates whose role is to ensure that the *kgosing* fire never dies. When other people go out hunting they (fire custodians) may remain behind and are instructed by old men never to let the fire die (Roberts & Winter, 1915; Monnig, 1967; Schapera, 1978). The *kgosing* fire, which was also a central fire for the whole *bogwera* camp was ritually significant. Initiates going for hunting carried with them a burning wood (Roberts & Winter, 1915). In *bojale* schools there was absolutely no fire. This was probably because girls stayed at home throughout their initiation seasons but on the last night before graduation (*dikgalaopa*) they stayed the whole night singing in an open ground. Fires were built but only for older women who had undergone the ceremony previously. Fire was not so important nor significant in *bojale* schools as it was in *bogwera* schools. This contrast of absence and presence of fire may probably be explained in terms of Tswana ritual beliefs even though none of the informants was able to give an answer for this contrast. The Batswana believe that women, and especially girls in puberty, are ritually 'hot' and 'unclean'. Only older women who have gone past the child bearing age are thought to be cool. The reason for not using fire in *bojale* may be to avoid initiates coming into contact with ritual fire since they are already ritually hot. They need to be cooled down and hence they perform initiation activities at night in winter when temperatures are at their lowest.

Identification of *bogwera* sites

In the examination of Kgatla initiation sites it has been observed that *bojale* sites are not physically marked by permanent features and therefore they are not likely to be recognizable archaeologically. On the other hand *bogwera* sites have been shown to be marked by more permanent physical features such as hearths. *Bogwera* sites can be identified by a concentration of hearths isolated in the bush. There is a difference between

hearths on circumcision camps and of ordinary bush camps. Camps made in the bush were occupied for a short time, often for less than a week and the ash deposits are therefore very thin. Unlike in circumcision camps, hearths in bush camps are not often well preserved because they are not too thick and also because they are left in the open where transformation processes would work on them rapidly. Circumcision site hearths may be encircled by stone slabs as is the case at Tsope and they may also be thick enough to form compact deposits that are more durable, as at Kgogometsong. Bush camp and circumcision hearths are similar in that they are found alongside streams or next to small dams. In recent years boreholes have been used more frequently because they are much more reliable than natural water bodies. The hearths are also much bigger because there would have been many more people sitting around the same fire than at home. In this respect *bogwera* hearths are different from domestic hearths. *Bogwera* fires were not necessarily meant for cooking, they were also meant for congregations and hence they were much larger and more compact. Fires in camps were also used for lighting at night and this meant that they had to be big to produce enough light. *Bogwera* camp sites are often not associated with permanent occupation materials like house remains. They are often found away from villages and they were not built using durable materials. Tree branches were used to build enclosures and when camps were relocated those branches were burnt down leaving no traces behind. Thus, apart from hearths there are no other forms of architecture indicative of occupation on *bogwera* sites.

There are also very low artifact densities on *bogwera* sites. Initiates traveled lightly and did not carry out many tasks at the camp that would produce artifact discard patterns. On these sites there are very low pottery densities. Pottery found is mainly in the form of pot sherds that would have been accidentally broken during the ceremony. There would not be many complete vessels because they were the personal property of individuals who had taken them from home and therefore had to bring them back at the end of the ceremony. There would probably be very few complete vessels that would have been left behind. Participants in *bogwera* schools may engage in wood craft but it is highly unlikely to find wood debris from craft making. Leather working was also common in *bogwera* schools but like wood it would not be possible to find traces of it in the archaeological record. Leather easily decays and is fed upon by insects making it difficult to preserve. No major metal work is done during initiation ceremonies because metal working itself requires much more time, labour and equipment. Only minor works may be done, for instance making and sharpening knives which would not be traceable in the archaeological record.

The faunal record of *bogwera* sites would consist of both domestic and wild fauna but there would be more wild fauna than domestic ones. Hunting was one of the major activities in *bogwera* ceremonies and the animals killed were taken to camps for consumption. Hunting was not only meant for eating but also for obtaining animal skins to be used for making clothes, shoes, blankets and other items. Wild animal bones on these sites therefore would not only be of animals that were eaten but of animals that were exploited for their skins such as genets, lions, leopards, jackals and foxes. There would be a wide variety of animals consumed on the sites ranging from small animals like hares, squirrels, guinea fowls to big animals like antelope and cattle. If preservation conditions were ideal there would be a good indication of floral remains on *bogwera* sites. These would include plants exploited for food such as wild berries (*morethwa* and *mogwane*) and also trees used for making wooden implements. Wild plants exploited for food are a good indicator for seasonality because initiation ceremonies are held during specific seasons, in particular winter. Plant seeds would be mainly preserved as charred remains if they do get into contact with fire. Tree species obtained for making crafts would also indicate

seasonality in that they would have to be in a particular stage of thickness and dryness. Trees exploited for firewood would obviously be preserved in the form of charcoal fragments and they would be the most well represented in the archaeological record.

It is a common practice among many Tswana societies to demarcate some areas within and around their villages for ritual and religious activities. Such areas are often laden with myths and beliefs that create fear among people, who thus treat them with respect. Among the Bakgatla such places would include initiation sites, obvious archaeological sites such as Modipe hill and Matsieng, and some parts of the Notwane river. People would only go to these places to perform ritual activities. It was believed that when encountering such places one had to do an act that would please the gods in the sacred area (Schapera, 1960). It was a common practice to carry small stones which were piled up at some points as a token of appreciation and fear for the gods. It is said that at Tsope and some other places when people encountered the sacred areas they took with them stones which they put on previous collections to honour the gods. A lot of piles will be created if the sites were frequently visited and this may result in stone cairns similar to the ones at Kubu and Kaitshe (Huffman, 1996). At the time of investigation the ones at Tsope had been totally destroyed. It is said that there were three of them made mainly by people herding livestock in the area.

On the basis of the descriptions of initiation sites and on the basis of what people do in sacred areas it appears unlikely that the cairns at Kubu and Kaitshe are necessarily indicative of initiation. I would argue that they are indicative of places demarcated for religious purposes. The density of the cairns probably imply that they were frequently being used. A comparable group of stone cairns is found in the Sua Pan area. Mike Main has recorded a number of stone cairn fields along the Mosu escarpment (Reid & Segobye, 2000) and the basic characteristic of these features is that they do not have any materials in association. Further study in the Sua Pan area is needed to establish the possible use of the cairns. Within this area there are also Zimbabwe tradition sites at Kaitshe, Toronju, the Khama site and Tapanana that Huffman suggests are settlement sites associated with the cairns, therefore implying that the cairns are initiation features of the Zimbabwe tradition people. But at the moment there is not enough evidence to link the cairns with these settlements because there are no cultural materials on the cairns. Current research in the area (Reid & Segobye, 2000) suggests that the area was occupied between AD 900 and 1500, the most recent being occupation by the Bakalaka, Bangwato and Basarwa at Moojane *ca.* 1800. Stone cairns have been found at Moojane but their association to the site is still unknown. This recent research does not give positive identification of the cairns as initiation features. There is basically not enough evidence to make us conclude that the cairns are initiation features. However, it is not sufficient to disregard Huffman's conclusions on the basis of only one society's initiation evidence. In order to cross check and verify the implications of stone cairn fields of the Sua Pan area we would need to do more survey and excavations.

Conclusion

This study has been able to describe criteria that archaeologists may be able to use to read the archaeological record of ritual sites. The way in which an initiation ceremony among any society is carried out determines the material culture, features and other non-physical items (*e.g.*, songs) that are used. While in seclusion Bakgatla men may camp at various places in the district and the length of time of camping depends on the availability of water and wild animals. Camping sites may be occupied for as little as one night only while some may be occupied for over two weeks. Camps were often built using readily available materials, especially tree branches. When moving out of a camp branches were burnt down

and as a result it was difficult to map any camps outside Mochudi because the scanty occupation deposits were quickly eroded by wind and water. However, circumcision camps were occupied longer, resulting in thick deposits of ash that are the only remnants of male initiation schools. These ash deposits will be localized. Female initiation schools do not have any physical evidence of site usage since initiates stayed at home and only went for initiation sessions at night. Girls were not put in seclusion but were restricted to few social contacts during their initiation ceremonies. There is not much communal material culture associated with initiation ceremonies of both boys and girls. Attire worn was personal property and their preservation depended on how much their owners cared. Much traditional attire is made from organic materials (*i.e.*, plant roots and animal skin) and therefore their archaeological durability is not guaranteed. An observation made is that there appears to be a relationship between the use of space and gender in rites of passage that the Bakgatla practice. Areas of male domination are usually on the outside while women conquered the inside domestic space. Generally most of the analysis and examination of ideas and issues that came out of this research tend to dwell more on men because male initiation is more likely to leave an archaeological trace while women use hardly any archaeologically durable materials. There is therefore a social selection for men as potential archaeological record producers. The case study of Bakgatla demonstrates that ritual sites need to be analyzed from different points of view, for instance the society's use of space and what that use of space implies in terms of gender relations and also from the point of view of social organization where an initiation site's layout is explained by the way in which a society is organized. Another key factor to look at is a society's ritual beliefs and how that society relates itself to, and interacts with ritual sites and ritual objects.

Appendix

Regiments initiated at Mochudi

	REGIMENT	LEADER	PARENT REGIMENT	TEACHER
?	Makgalo	Senewe Kgmanyane		?
1874	Matlakana	Lentswe Kgmanyane	Masoswe	?
?	Maisakoma	Mapidiwe Kgmanyane		?
1880	Makoba	Ramone Kgmanyane	Mangana	
1884	Majanko	Modise Kgmanyane	Matukwi	
?	Matshabatau	Mojaki Kgmanyane		
?	Majekere	Nkate Kgmanyane		
1892	Mantwane	Mochele Kgmanyane	Mafatilha	
1895	Mabusapelo	Nthakeng Kgmanyane		
1902	Makuka	Kgafela Lentswe	Matlakana	Matshabatau
1911	Machechele	Isang Lentswe	Makoba	Mantwane
1915	Mafatshwana	Ofentse Lentswe	Majanko	Makuka
1920	Maatlametla	Maramane Pilane		
1922	Madima	Radikolo Lentswe	Mantwane	Machechele
1928	Machama	Molefi Lentswe	Makuka	Mafatshwana
1929	Matshego	Motlatsi Pilane		
1939	Magata	Mmusi Lentswe	Machechele	Madima
1947	Mafiri	Ramono Pilane	Mafatshwana	Machama
1955	Mangope	Mokohe Lentswe	Madima	Magata
1962	Malwelakgosi	Tshire Lentswe		
1963	Mathulwa	Lincwe II Kgafela	Machama	Mafiri
1973	Maisakoma	Khukhwanana Pilane	Machama	

1975	Masoswe	Ramonnye Kgafela	Magata	Mangope
1976	Madingwana	Phulane Pilane	Mafiri	Mathulwa
1978	Mabusapelo	Seipati Pilane		
1979	Mantshakgosi	Mmalebotse Lentswe		
1980	Malomakgomo	Kube Pone	Mangope	Masoswe
1981	Majekere	Seingwaeng Kgafela		
1982	Mangana	Kgafela Kgafela	Mathulwa	Madingwana
1985	Manoga	Bakgatla Kgafela	Masoswe	Malomakgomo
1988	Matukwi	Mmusi Kgafela	Madingwana	Mangana

Notes

Ms. Morongwa Mosothwane is currently a postgraduate student at the University of Pretoria. Her research essay was completed in 1999 under the supervision of Alinah Segobye. The original includes a number of photographs which have been omitted for space. The text was lightly edited.

References

Oral Sources

Female informants

NAME	SURNAME	AGE	REGIMENT	WARD
Marca	Gouwe	89	Lechama	Manamakgotla
Mmarakau	Kgafela	54	Leisakoma	Kgosing
Mogaritshi	Pheto	67	Lengope	Kgosing
Mmatsatsi	Mfetane	97	Lechama	Mabodisa
Kgatheng	Sello	96	Lechama	Manamakgotla
Matlhodi	Pheto	71	Lengope	Kgosing
Motsatsi	Pilane	73	Lefiri	Kgosing
Mmathari	Bokole	88	Lefiri	Morema
Sampo	Gouwe	35	Lelomakgomo	Manamakgotla
Marothodi	Lepiri	74	Lefiri	Morema
Motlatsi	Diswai	90	Lechama	Mabodisa
Shanto	Podile	99	Ledima	Mabodisa
Nkidi	Mosothwane	59	Lethulwa	Manamakgotla
Sakatsane	Molefe	61	Lebusapelo	Morema
Mmamokgethi	Kitsi	100	Ledima	Morema
Sebitse	Lesane	78	Legata	Morema
Lemme	Maiko	81	Letshego	Tshukudu
Mmantho	Molefe	80	Lekhama	Tshukudu
Mmadikeme	Lebekwe	70	Lefiri	Morema
Mokhuthe	Moje	68	Legata	Manamakgotla
Mmasengwe	Sebakwe	60	Lethulwa	Manamakgotla
Lesedi	Mokgatle	75	Lengope	Manamakgotla
Matlakala	Ntshole	72	Lengope	Manamakgotla
Bogadi	Modisana	95	Lechama	Manamakgotla
Motsei	Sebako	73	Legata	Manamakgotla
Mnamonala	Tladi	78	Lefiri	Manamakgotla
Rabeka	Tshetlhane	72	Letshego	Manamakgotla
Motlatsi	Pheto	78	Legata	Manamakgotla
Seipora	Selemogwe	78	Legata	Kgosing
Fenenke	Mmutle	63	Lethulwa	Tshukudu
Maruapula	Pilane	40	Lebusapelo	Kgosing
Tietseng	Kgamanyane	77	Lengope	Kgosing
Sabona	Mmale	88	Legata	Kgosing

Male informants

NAME	SURNAME	AGE	REGIMENT	WARD
Kgosi Lincwe II	Kgafela	60	Lethulwa	Kgosing
Sandy	Grant		Lethulwa	
Modise	Tladi	80	Lefiri	
Ntlhe	Moje	65	Legata	Manamakgotla
Ramono	Mongale	82	Lefiri	Manamakgotla
Pone	Kube	61	Ledingwana	Kgosing
Mpuwe	Makakaba	84	Legata	Kgosing
Tsae	Mosothwane	84	Legata	Mabodisa
Moreri	Tshite	82	Legata	Manamakgotla
Ramfi	Seoke	64	Lesoswe	Mabodisa
Lentswe	Kgamanyane	85	Lefiri	Morema
Ramontie	Segwati	95	Lediwa	Kgosing
Thipe	Segwati	41	Lengana	Kgosing
Lobi	Kgotele	98	Lediwa	Kgosing
David	Mokgadi	45	Lengana	Tshukudu
Modise	Ntshole	61	Lethulwa	Manamakgotla
Thari	Bokole		Lethulwa	Morema
Show	Mfolwe	65	Lengope	Manamakgotla
Ditshwene	Masike	77	Lefiri	Morema
Bakgatla	Kgafela	22	Lenoga	Kgosing
Mmusi	Kgafela	20	Letukwi	Kgosing
Kgafela	Kgafela	28	Lengana	Kgosing

Botswana National Archives

- BNA S217/6, Bogwera and Bojale. Application of proclamation to Bechuanaland Protectorate 1931
 BNA S218/10, Notes on interviews with Chief Bathoeng II 1931/05/21
 BNA S100/2, Medical Officer 1930/05/31

Published Sources

- Blacking, J. (1969) 'Songs, dances, mimes and symbolism of Venda girls' initiation schools' (parts 1-4) *African Studies*, 28: 3-36; 69-118; 149-200; 215-266
 Breutz, P.L. (1953) *The tribes of Rustenburg and Pilansberg Districts* Pretoria: Government Printer
 Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1940) *The Nuer* Oxford: Clarendon Press
 Grant, S. (1984) 'The revival of *bogwera* in Kgatleng - Tswana culture or rampant tribalism? A description of the 1982 *bogwera*' *Botswana Notes and Records*, 16: 7-17
 Grant S. & L. Kgafela, (1989) 'The relevance of the past in the present in Mochudi, Botswana - initiation and museum' *World Archaeological Bulletin*, 3:5-11
 Huffman, T. N. (1996) *Snakes and Crocodiles* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press
 Kollars, P. (1991) 'Bojale 1990', 73-76 in *Tshomarelo ngwao - The Museums of Botswana celebrate twenty-five years of independence* Gaborone: Government Printer
 Lincoln, B. (1981) *Emerging from the Chrysalis: studies in rituals of women's initiation* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press
 Monnig, H. O. (1967) *The Pedi* Pretoria: Van Schaik
 Motlotle, N. P. (1998) 'Bojale - girls initiation school' *The Zebra's Voice*, 25 (2): 19-21
 Reid, A. & A.K. Segobye (2000) 'Politics, society and trade on the eastern margins of the Kalahari' *South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series*, 8:58-68
 Richards, A. I. (1956) *Chisungu* London: Faber
 Roberts, N. & C.A.T. Winter (1915) 'The *kgoma* or initiation rites of the Bapedi of Sekukuniland' *South African Journal of Science*, 12: 561-578.

- Schapera, I. (1936) The contributions of Western civilization to modern Kxatla culture, BNA BNB 388
- Schapera, I. (1942) *A Short History of the Bakgatla Bagakgafela of Bechuanaland Protectorate* Cape Town: University of Cape Town
- Schapera, I. (1955) *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* London: Cass
- Schapera, I. (1956) *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies* London: Watts
- Schapera, I. (1960) 'Christianity and the Tswana', 489-503 in S. Ottenberg & P. Ottenberg (eds.) *Cultures and Societies of Africa* New York: Random House
- Schapera, I. (1978) *Bogwera: Kgatla Initiations* Mochudi: Phuthadikobo Museum
- van der Vliet, V. (1974) 'Growing up in traditional society', 211-234 in W.D. Hammond - Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Willoughby, W.C. (1909) Notes on the initiation ceremonies of the Becwana, BNA BNB 370

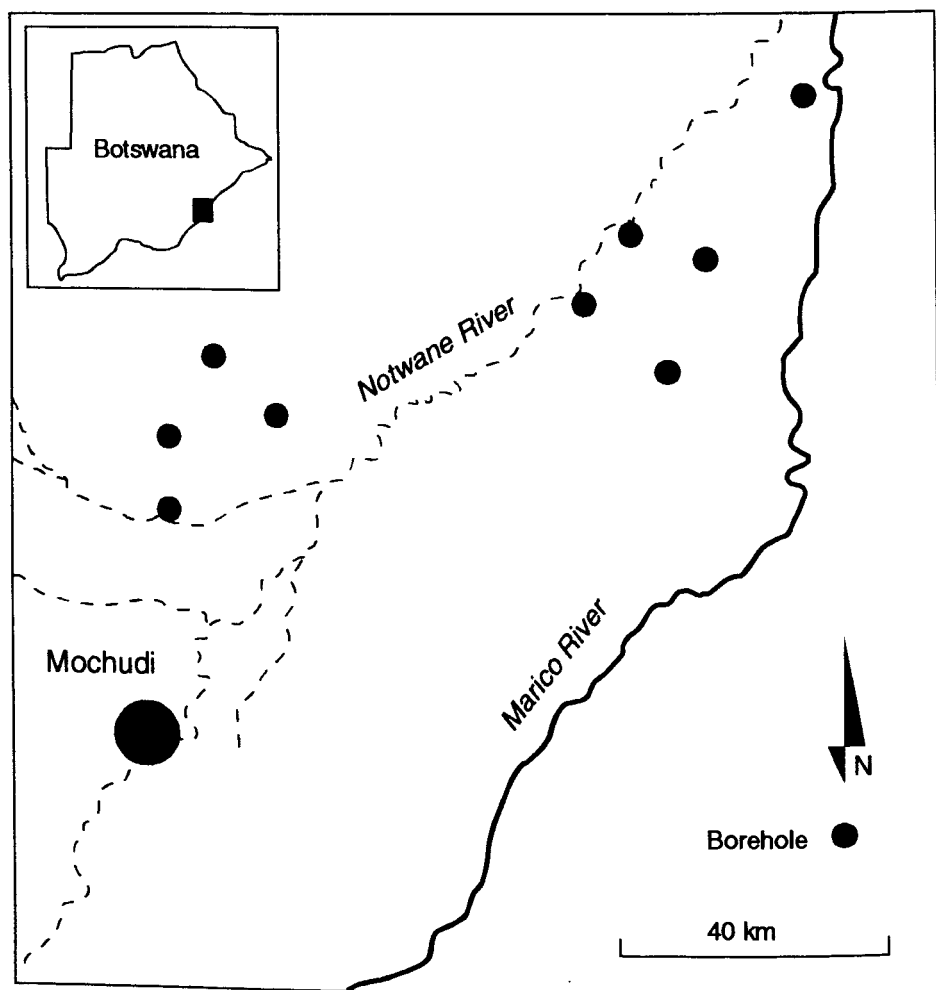


Fig. 1. Mochudi and nearby boreholes used as initiation sites.

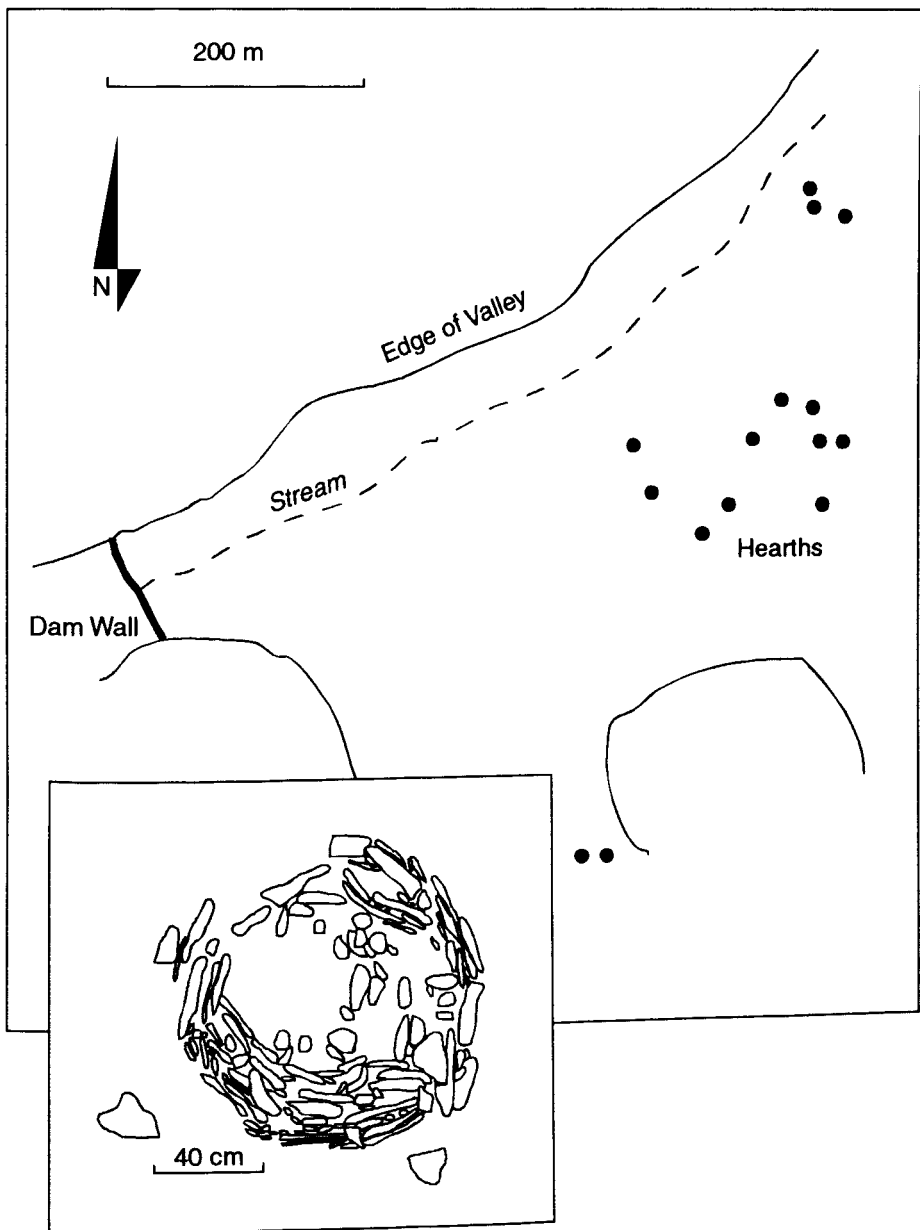


Fig. 2. The initiation site at Tsope with an enlarged view of a hearth.