Vessels leaving Old Calabar. All three worked independently of each other, and for selected runs of names, researchers were not informed of where in the Bight of Biafra the captives had boarded the vessel. In addition to these procedures, selected runs of names were shown to individuals from other parts of the Bight of Biafra catchment area, particularly the Cross River region.

The results of these procedures were encouraging. Cameroon is one of the most ethnically diverse non-urban regions in the world, yet there was a high degree of agreement on the part of those who looked at, or listened to, the names from these six vessels, that they were of individuals from regions in the Cameroon hinterland. Only 21 individuals had names that were associated with the hinterlands of Bight of Biafra ports to the west and east of Cameroon. Of the two consultants who were specialists on the Cameroons, one identified 717 names and the other 865. Allowing for overlapping identifications, the two provided a standardized (or post-orthographic) counterpart for 987 out of the 1,033 names in the Sierra Leone register, though 58 of the names were identified without being assigned to a region or people. In only 31 out of the 987 total identifications was there disagreement, but this occurred not so much over the name itself, but rather the peoples and region to which the name most likely belonged. For the individuals that one identified and the other did not, it was usually the case that the latter found the identification of the first consultant persuasive when opinions were shared. There was thus a large degree of consensus on both the fact that names in the register were overwhelmingly from the Cameroons hinterland, and on the region within the Cameroons in which the name was most likely to be used. While in most cases the name was an ethnic marker, our main concern was to identify its region of use rather than to affix a firm ethnic label to it.

In early 1904, as Herero refugees fled the carnage of war in German South-West Africa (GSAWA), M. G. Williams, the resident magistrate in Tsau, Ngamiland, Bechuanaland protectorate, was 'amused' to note that their...
arrival was opposed by Herero already living in the territory. In so doing, Williams made the mistake of believing that individuals who happen to speak the same language form a single continuous whole, in which people are bound by harmonious ties of solidarity engendered by language. Similarly, in the present, popular media representations portray the Herero-speakers of Botswana as a single unit; and to a lesser extent, historians and social scientists have tended also to deal with the Herero of Botswana as a single unified whole.

However, the Herero-speaking peoples of Botswana are not bound by a single unitary history. Far from it. Scattered across the length and breadth of Botswana, the Herero-speaking populations in the various districts have separate and distinct histories. The range includes the descendants of Nama serfs in Tsabong, migrant labourers in Gabane, Herero royals in Mahalapye and war refugees throughout the territory. It is only through taking account of these separate histories that one can come to an adequate understanding of the Herero-speaking peoples of Botswana.

This article concentrates on the history of Herero-speakers in Ngamiland during and immediately after the reign (1891–1906) of the Tawana Kgosi [Chief] Sekgoma Letsholathebe. Though it is well known that numerous Herero refugees fled to the Bechuanaland protectorate during the Herero-

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2 Botsman National Archives, Gaborone (BNA), RC 10/18, M. G. Williams in Tswa Ngamiland, 2/3/64, to resident commissioner (RC).

3 Granted, during the pre-independence of Namibia, it was often politically useful to present the Herero-speaking population of Botswana as a single whole. See, in this regard, Frieda Troup, In Face of Fear (London, 1950); and Kirsten Alnas, 'Oral tradition and identity: the Herero in Botswana', The Societies of Southern Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 11 (1981), 15–23; and 'Living with the past: the songs of the Herero in Botswana', Africa, 59 (1989), 67–99. However, the work of Harpending and Pennington on the demography of Herero living in Botswana is sorely marred because it fails to take into account the differing histories and consequently the modern demographic differences that exist amongst Herero-speakers in Botswana. See Henry Harpending and Rene Pennington, 'Herero demographic history' (Unpublished paper prepared for the Galton Institute’s symposium on The Genetics, Demography and Health of Minority Populations, 20–1 Sept. 1990); and 'Herero households' (Unpublished paper prepared for Johnson Fratkin session, AAA meetings, Fall 1990). Similarly the work of F. R. Vivelto, The Herero of Western Botswana (New York, 1977), treats Herero-speakers as a single whole.


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German war, it has generally been overlooked that separate and distinct groups of Herero-speakers preceded these refugees in the years prior to the war. By outlining the distinct histories of three successive waves of Herero-speaking immigrants into Ngamiland, the article underscores the point that Herero-speakers in Ngamiland were not, and should not be treated as, a single homogeneous mass. In addition, it indicates that Sekgoma Letsholathebe was able to strengthen his position through acquiring the support, by means of patronage, of successive groups of Herero-speaking immigrants who moved into Ngamiland as the Herero chief, Samuel Maharero, and the German colonial administration sought to strengthen their respective positions in Hereroland. In concluding, the article discusses the fate of Herero refugees and immigrants in Botswana in the light of recent literature dealing with the position of immigrants and refugees in host communities in Africa. In this manner the article demonstrates, and provides a context for, the manner in which refugees and immigrants can in seeking to improve their position within host communities come to be integrated into the internal politics of a host community. It also examines the negative aspects of such integration.
One of the outstanding features of Tswana societies was its ability to absorb immigrants and refugees into their own social structures. This occurred in such a manner that immigrants could become full members of the host community, yet retain their own identity. As the doyens of Tswana studies, Isaac Schapera, writing of ‘Tswana tribes’ noted: ‘every tribe has a population of mixed origins,’ and it is not unusual for these people to ‘speak their own languages and have many usages different from those of their rulers.’ The fate of the bulk of the Herero refugees who fled to Tswana societies between 1890 and 1914 serves to underscore Schapera’s words. Indeed, through the practice of mafisa, Herero refugees in Ngamiland were able to re-establish themselves as wealthy cattle owners within a generation. As one trader later noted:

I know that when the Damara [Herero] came over from south-west they were the poorest of the poor. They were in a shocking state... These people rapidly became rich, and I suppose they are the wealthiest people in the country today for cattle.

The fact that the taking in of refugees and immigrants was not unusual and was not without its benefits for Tswana societies is well illustrated by the Kwenya of Chief Sechele, who in 1852 defeated invading Boer forces with an army that consisted largely of immigrant subjects. News of the Kwenya victory spread throughout southern Africa, and in the years that followed, thousands of refugees flocked to become subjects of Sechele, thereby increasing Sechele’s power all the more. The Tswana kingdom that developed in north-eastern Botswana after 1840 had a history similar to that of the Kwenya. As with the Kwenya, the Tawana defeated and incorporated surrounding communities, encouraged external trade, acquired modern guns and actively encouraged the immigration of outsiders.


8 Mafisa, a practice which was universal across all Tswana societies. It entailed the loan of cattle to a borrower, who in exchange for herding was commonly entitled to the milk as well as some of the offspring of the herded cattle. Neil Parsons, ‘The economic history of Khami’s country in Southern Africa’, African Social Research, 18 (1974), 643-75.


13 Morton, ‘Nguniland’, 81-96; Tlou, Nguniland, 90-1.

14 For an excellent introduction on Herero-speaking refugees in Ngamiland based on extensive archival and oral material, see Kandapaena, ‘War, flight, asylum’.


16 For an excellent introduction on Herero-speaking refugees in Ngamiland based on extensive archival and oral material, see Kandapaena, ‘War, flight, asylum’.


18 For the life and times of Sekgoma Lesholathebe, see Tlou, Nguniland, 85-135; and Morton, ‘Nguniland’, 81-96.


21 For an excellent introduction on Herero-speaking refugees in Ngamiland based on extensive archival and oral material, see Kandapaena, ‘War, flight, asylum’.


23 For the life and times of Sekgoma Lesholathebe, see Tlou, Nguniland, 85-135; and Morton, ‘Nguniland’, 81-96.
nearly as far as Lake Ngami, and Herero traders and herders were to be found at a number of water sources along the trade route that led from Lake Ngami via Ghanzi to Gobabis. The area between Lake Ngami and Gobabis was heavily contested, with Banderu, Boers, Herero, Rarau and Tawana all claiming jurisdiction over the area. In the 1860s, a number of wars were fought for control of the trade to and from Lake Ngami.

In 1868, Tswana traders travelled to Okahandja to trade and to conclude agreements with Maharero, who was the most powerful Herero chief in central Namibia at that stage. These agreements came to form the basis for a treaty, concluded in 1877, guaranteeing asylum and mutual sanctuary in times of need. Both Herero traditions mention that a similar agreement was concluded between the Tswana kgosi, Sekgoma Lethlalalebe and the Banderu chief, Kahinemun. In 1884, following the conclusion of a number of treaties with various chieftains in Namibia, Imperial Germany claimed jurisdiction over Namibia. One of the treaty signatories was the Herero chief, Maharero Tjamuaha of Okahandja. This signing did not occur without protest on the part of the Hereros.

During 1860s and 1870s Saul was employed as interpreter and secretary to the Herero chief, Maharero Tjamuaha. Saul's son Samuel, who had been educated in the Cape Colony, was meant to inherit his father's position. But, as his descendants later stated:

When they returned from schooling to their onganda [homestead] in their land, it so happened that there arose a question, should the chief [Maharero] get the throne from the Germans or the English? ... The Herero were gathered at a place where they were to decide on the issue, and Samuel Shepherd came late and found out that the Hereros had decided to take the German throne. He then decided to leave for Botswana and came in that direction.

Shepherd's family initially left Hereroland for the Transvaal. Thereafter, through the intercession of the Ngwato kgosi, Khama III, they were permitted to settle in Ngamiland by the Tswana kgosi, Sekgoma Lethlalalebe. Accordingly, by the closing stages of the nineteenth century, small Herero and Banderu communities were settled in Ngamiland, and maintained close contact with the Tswana chiefcy in Tsu. The BANDERU WAR

Samuel Shepherd's fears and his refusal to live under German colonial rule were well founded. In 1866, a short brutal war was fought in eastern Namibia in which German troops, assisted by auxiliaries, waged a war against combined Banderu and Herero forces opposed to Samuel Maharero, the newly installed Herero chief of Okahandja. A direct result of the war was that large groups of Banderu and Herero sought refuge in the territories that were administered as districts of the Tswana kingdom.

Following the death of Maharero Tjamuaha in 1890, his son, Samuel Maharero, became involved in a bitter succession dispute with a number of
rivals. Through allying himself with the incoming German colonizers, Samuel Maharero was able to intimidate his rivals into submission, one by one. By 1894, Samuel Maharero had established himself as the first paramount chief of the Herero, though not without alienating himself from major sectors of Herero society. One of his strongest rivals was Nicodemus Kavikunua, who, in terms of Herero inheritance rights, was the more legitimate heir to Maharero. Thwarted, and unable to acquire his rightful share of Maharero Tjamua’s inheritance, Nicodemus Kavikunua withdrew to the eastern districts of central Namibia and found sanctuary among the Banderu led by Chief Kahimemua.32

Following his installation as paramount chief in 1894, Samuel Maharero had agreed, in exchange for German aid, to establish the first of many German garrisons, and also – more importantly – to the first of many boundary agreements that delineated the southern boundary of Hereroland.33 Besides delineating territory to be handed over to German settler control, Samuel Maharero, by agreeing to these boundary treaties, also asserted his rights and claims to territories not previously controlled by the chiefs of Okahandja.34 Anxious to retain German support and to attain wealth and power, Maharero actively assisted in the enforcement of the treaty conditions, even though this consisted primarily of the expulsion of Herero from their lands. He sent his troops, councillors and even his own sons to join the German boundary patrols that determined and enforced the newly established southern boundaries of Hereroland.35 In addition, Samuel Maharero was at times not averse to becoming personally involved in the expulsions.36 Apart from helping to expel Herero from their lands, he also extended his powers of patronage by ordering his favourite sub-chiefs and followers to occupy territories that had now officially become his.37 From November 1895 onwards, all Herero cattle impounded for alleged boundary transgressions were publicly auctioned, and the proceeds split between the chiefs of Okahandja.38 These activities inflamed passions among all those who were not allied to him. Among the first to be affected by the boundary enforcement and cattle confiscation were the Herero and Banderu living to the east of Windhoek. The colonial authorities, assisted by their Herero auxiliaries, were far from subtle in such activities. As

32 Gewald, Herero Heroes, 41–60.
33 Bundesarchiv Potsdam, Germany (BAP), RKA 2100, Von Lindequist in Windhoek, 11 July 1894, to RKA; and later RKA 2100, Leutwein in Windhoek, 13 Dec. 1894, to RKA.
34 See boundary treaties in BAP, RKA 2100, 11 July 1894, southern boundary; 13 Dec. 1894, southern boundary adjustment; 26 Feb. 1895 and 3 July 1895, boundaries and 29 Aug. 1895, northern boundary.
35 Theodor Leutwein, Elf Jahre Governeur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika (Berlin, 1906), 92.
36 BAP, RKA 2100, Von Lindequist in Windhoek, 19 Jan. 1895, to RKA, refers to Herero councillors Assa Riarau, Julius, Paulus, Christian, Friedrich Maharero, Hugo and Wilhelm accompanying the boundary commission of 1895. See also Leutwein, Elf Jahre, 92.
37 Samuel Maharero’s personal involvement in the expulsions, see Namibian National Archives Windhoek (NNAW), ZBU 2027, Samuel Maharero in Okahandja, 31 Aug. 1894, to Leutwein.
38 Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft (Wuppertal, 1895), 71.
39 BAP, RKA 2100, Hauptmann Muller in Windhoek, 15 Nov. 1895.
wrote that the Ghanzi district fell under the authority of his kingdom as 'The district in question forms part of my territory and has always been subject to the jurisdiction of the Batavina tribe of Bechuana of whom I am the Chief'.

It was during the course of this correspondence with the British that the first refugees of the Banderu war in GSWA began moving into the Ghanzi district. Anxious to gain control over the district before the incoming refugees occupied the land, the secretary of state for the colonies in London sent the following telegram to the high commissioner in Cape Town:

Tell the trekkers to start moving. That farms will be granted by the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Tell Sekhome of trek and that it will be confined to Ghanzi. Tell him that I am willing to give him the reserve which he wants. Instruct escort to keep trek well away from frontier, both of Sekhome and of German Protectorate, and not to enter at present any lands occupied by cattle.

As regards the incoming Herero and Banderu refugees, it was later noted:

The introduction of this new element into Ngamiland ... increases the desirability of arranging for the colonisation of the Ghanzi District and of sending as soon as possible a competent commissioner with precise instructions to settle the various outstanding questions in the NW protectorate.

The arrival of the refugees was not immediately perceived as a problem by the British authorities. For, as Bechuanaland's resident commissioner, with incredible faith in the power of colonial bureaucracy, noted, 'they cannot acquire any territorial rights in the land on which they may settle in the absence of any express consent of Your Excellency [the high commissioner].' A substantial number of the incoming refugees elected to remain in the Ghanzi district as, 'they [did] not wish to live under Sekgoma as by doing so they would be servants of the Batawana.' It is probable that they were still in possession of livestock of their own, which, in the short term, would have ensured that they remained independent of Tawana loans and gifts. Moreover, they knew that they were moving on to was being withdrawn from Tawana control. In late 1897, British colonial officials reported that at least 200 'Demaras' (Herero) were squatting on land that had been earmarked for the incoming Boer settlers, and it was suggested that, 'It might be possible to settle these Demaras as cotters or bijwooners with such boers as may require them.'

**RINDERPEST AND REFUGEES**

An unexpected benefit of the rinderpest epizootic, which raged throughout southern Africa in 1896 and 1897, was that the tsetse-fly infestation of the Okavango swamps retreated. As the ungulate wildlife, on which the fly preyed, died out, so the tsetse-fly was eradicated in the Delta. As a consequence, extensive tracts of land that had hitherto been closed to human settlement, became available. At the same time as the rinderpest, drought and desiccation struck the areas to the west of the Okavango Delta and Lake Ngami in particular. In 1896, Lake Ngami dried up for the first time in living memory and Nkalachie, Sekgoma's capital on the shores of Lake Ngami, saw its wells dry up. As a consequence, Sekgoma withdrew his capital to Tsau on the edge of the Okavango delta, and resettled his herds on Chief's Island in the middle of the delta, which was now free of tsetse-fly infestation. Virgin lands, normally reserved solely for hunting, were taken over by the Tawana, who could now 'farm near river water and valleys without fear of sleeping sickness ... [and whose] cattle could have access to river water all year round.'

Having withdrawn into the well-watered regions of the Okavango delta, it was in the desiccated areas to the west of the delta that Sekgoma now resettled the Banderu refugees under the reciprocal asylum arrangements that had been made between them and Sekgoma Lesholathebe. In effect, though the Tawana had withdrawn, the lands remained firmly under the control of the Tawana. Loans of royal mafisa cattle were extended to the incoming refugees and a number of Banderu, under Kandu Matundu, Kunho Nenguva and Kakopere Hange, were settled in the areas to the west of Makukung. Most of the remaining refugees were settled in the Sehitwa-Thololamoro area along the northern shores of Lake Ngami.

In the aftermath of the Banderu war, German and Herero commandos allied to Samuel Maharero mercilessly attacked those alleged to have been involved in the war in GSWA. The followers of Tjejo Kandji, one of the richest of the eastern Herero and the father of Kahaka Seu, one of the Herero leaders who had fled to Sekgoma Lesholathebe, were among those raided. In addition, in the aftermath of the rinderpest, raiding for cattle escalated as chiefs allied to Samuel Maharero attempted to re-establish their depleted cattle herds and authority. At times this raiding extended over the boundary and into the Bechuanaland protectorate. By the time the
Herero–German war broke out in 1904, Samuel Maharero and his allies could count on very little sympathy from those who had preceded him in their flight to Ngamiland.

THE HERERO–GERMAN WAR

In January 1904, the Herero–German war broke out. The war resulted in the death of the majority of the Herero and the expulsion of thousands of survivors from German South-West Africa. After hostilities had begun, German authorities informed the British high commissioner in Pretoria of the war, and expressed their fear that the Herero would seek refuge in the Bechuanaland protectorate. In response, the British authorities prepared for the influx of Herero refugees, established a temporary police station just across the boundary at Olikantskloof and dispatched eight Basotho troopers of the Bechuanaland protectorate police to Ngamiland.

Shortly after the war had broken out, Herero began streaming into Ngamiland. Broadly speaking, the incoming refugees could be divided into two categories: those with cattle and those without. The first refugees to cross the border were generally still in possession of their cattle, and were thus, as long as they could find sufficient grazing and water, self-sufficient. The majority of these refugees crossed the border between Rietfontein in GSWA and Olikantskloof in the Bechuanaland protectorate. Once across the boundary they were disarmed by Bechuanaland protectorate troopers and resettled on government land in the Ghanzi district. Not that this meant that they were safe. In May 1904, German forces launched attacks on the refugees across the border, and Herero were shot and killed in the Bechuanaland protectorate.

Sekgoma Letsholathebe showed every desire to help in the resettlement of refugees in the Ghanzi district, an area which, though officially no longer under his jurisdiction, he still claimed as his own. Added to this, these people would form a buffer against the Ghanzi Boers and the Germans, pay tax and provide a support base for his position vis-à-vis Mathiba (the man who in terms of Tawana custom ought to have become Kgosi). Refugees without cattle were less fortunate and generally entered the Bechuanaland protectorate at a later stage in the war. As the war had raged in Namibia, the Herero, in attempting to take their cattle with them, had withdrawn north-eastwards until they had reached the Waterberg. Here, they had been surrounded on all but one side by German forces. On their eastern flank the Herero faced the waterless wastes of the Omamebe (coarse eastern flank the Herero faced the waterless wastes of the Omaheke sand) veld. With the battle of Hamakari, and the skirmishes that followed, the Herero were driven into the Omamebe. This, as the official German war history put it, 'completed the work of destruction'.

By September 1904, some Herero refugees from the Waterberg, bereft of their material goods and stock, began reaching the Tawana cattleposts in the western part of the protectorate. Completely destitute and frequently starving, the Herero were at the mercy of whomever they chanced upon. They exchanged their weapons for food, or were simply robbed. Refugees also sought to take up and hunt game, or took to eating veld foods, some of which were unfamiliar and poisonous. Tormented by thirst, Herero drank any water that they chanced upon and sometimes died of poisoning. Diseases easily afflicted weakened refugees, and smallpox raged among them. In some instances, Bushmen, whose hospitality the Herero appear to have abused, led German patrols in their attacks on the refugees.

As the refugees streamed into his territory, the Tawana Kgosi Sekgoma Letsololathebe sought to make use of the pastoral skills for which some of the Herero were renowned. As the resident magistrate in Tsau noted, 'Sekgoma has agreed to locate them in this reserve, these people are being sent to the various Tawana cattle posts where they will be able to obtain food, they will now be looked upon as forming part of this tribe.' Apart from being employed in Ngamiland proper, Herero refugees came to be employed on the newly established Boer farms in the Ghanzi block, or as herders for Bakgalagadi in the areas south of Ghanzi, around Hukunsi and Lehatutu.

The British colonial administration for its part felt that it would be better if the refugees were to be put to work in the labour-hungry mines of South Africa. Shortly after the arrival of the first Herero refugees in Ngamiland proper, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) appealed to the British authorities to lift their ban on the export of labour from this area of South-West Africa under German Rule, see Gewald, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Cape Town, 1979). For an overview of the war and its consequences, see Gewald, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Cape Town, 1979); J. M. Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Berkeley, 1981); Horst Drechsler, *Let Ul Die Fighting* (London, 1982); and Gerhardus Pool, *Die Herero-Opstand 1904-1907* (Cape Town, 1979).


BNA, RC 10/18, Williams in Tsau, 6 Sept. 1904, to RC. Refers to Herero refugees arriving at ‘Tsangwa’, Xangwa, Qangwa, a small settlement along the Kama River. Herero pastoral settlements surround it and the area is referred to as Magopa. In 1960 anthropological research on the Dobe Kung was conducted at Magopa, Xangwa and Dobe. On Tawana ownership of these posts, see BNA, RC 11/1, Merry in Tsau, 25 Apr. 1905, to RC. 'Until the boundary [BP/GSWA] is defined it is quite impossible to say on which side of the line Nsyinayi and Gudowa are situated, natives on both sides look upon their places as being in Sekgoma’s country, and until recent years the Batawana had cattle posts at both places...'.

For disease and thirst, see BNA, RC 11/1, report by Saron in Tsau, 3 Apr. 1905, to RC; and Merry in Tsau, 25 Apr. 1905, to RC. For searching of veld foods and hunting, see BNA, RC 10/18, report by M. G. Williams in Tsau, 28 Sept. 1904, to RC. On the trading of weapons, see BNA, RC 12/12, Hodson in Kaken, 16 May 1905, to RC.

BNA, RC 11/1, Merry in Tsau, 25 Apr. 1905, to RC.

BNA, RC 11/1, Merry in Tsau, 5 July 1905, to RC.


BNA, RC 12/12, Hodson in ‘Gukunsi’, 5 June 1905, to RC.

BNA, RC 11/1, M. G. Williams in Tsau, 31 Oct. 1904, to RC.

BNA, RC 11/1, HC in Johannesburg, 25 Jan. 1905, to RC.
stock and property of any kind brought from Damaraland into the Protectorate and registered as the property of any person shall be regarded as for the present the property of the person in whose name it is registered. 88

Shortly after his arrival in Ngamiland, Samuel Maharero ceased to live at the quarters of Sekgoma Letsholathebe as a guest of the kgosi. Instead he moved to the police camp in Tsau, where he was dependent on handouts from the British authorities. As long as he stayed in Ngamiland he was evidently unable to maintain his position as paramount chief of the Herero. 89

He had become, in the words of a British official, ‘an ordinary refugee ... [with] no rights whatever to any chieftainship even over his own people in the protectorate’. 90 In response to German claims that Samuel Maharero’s presence in Ngamiland posed a threat to German interests in GSWA, the resident commissioner noted:

Any idea ... that he and his people are contemplating a renewal of hostilities is preposterous. The man is a poor, weak creature, without much brain, utterly without resource of any kind, and thankful to be where he can exist without dread of reprisal for anything that may have happened during the war. 91

The Tawana kgosi, Sekgoma Letsholathebe, shared the British position vis-à-vis Samuel Maharero.

In April 1905, less than six months after Samuel Maharero had arrived in his territory, Sekgoma Letsholathebe firmly rejected Maharero’s authority by coming down openly in support of the Banderu refugees and their applications for asylum. Maharero’s earlier attacks and old scores with the Banderu had finally come back to haunt him. Thus in April, Sekgoma and his councillors were signatory to the following letter:

To our R.C.

Sir we are glad to write to you about one of the Damara’s refugee that has come to our country, with great humility we ask you to let him stay here with us, as he likes to stay. He is your man with his people though he stays here with us, we ask you to let him stop here with us. He says he wants to stop here. We do not talk of Samuel, but Nicodemus, he is afraid of chief Samuel. He says he ran away from Damaraland as far as here because he was afraid of the chief Samuel. Therefore he is afraid to stay with Samuel he asked to stay with us in our Reserve we hope you will listen to our sayings.

Chief Sekgoma Letsholathebe; Dithapo Meno; Lekgopho Mogalakwe; Katimpa Mogalakwe; Ketsuhile; Kooluteb; Gabosegwe; Keatatse; Moikwathai; Nkuwana; Shwanka. 92

The letter clearly indicated the fear that Nicodemus Kavavure (alias Hjatovu or Nikodemus Kahi memua) had of Samuel Maharero. Nicodemus was the son of the younger brother of Kahi memua, the Banderu chief who had been executed in Okahandja with Samuel Maharero’s consent in 1896. 93 Sekgoma, in compliance with the earlier reciprocal asylum agreements, had accepted Nicodemus in 1896, and had settled him at one of his cattleposts in the western desert near Magopa. 94 It was precisely this cattlepost that was raided by the forces of Samuel Maharero in 1904 as they struggled towards Ngamiland. 95 Not surprisingly, Nicodemus feared Samuel Maharero, and his own letter to the British authorities brings this across very clearly:

I Nicodemus Kahi memua want to stay at Sekgoma’s Reserve. As Sekgoma is your man I am also your man. I did not run away from Damaraland because I was afraid of the war. I was afraid of Samuel, therefore I came to Sekgoma. 96

With uncharacteristic understatement, the resident magistrate in Tsau, Lt Merry, noted that there appeared to be ‘great enmity’ between the Banderu and the Herero: ‘The Banderu are particularly bitter against Samuel Maharero, whom they look upon as being responsible for the death of their late chief Kahi memua’. 97

In a meeting held in 1906, the resident commissioner, Ralph Williams, noted the following:

It is necessary to explain that although we call these people Damara’s they are two separate peoples, viz: Hereros and Banderus, though I gather they have no marked boundary line.

He [Samuel Maharero] appears to have lived in towns, to have drunk heavily, and to have neglected and perhaps oppressed the people in some degree. Nicodemus expressly told me in Samuel’s presence that he and the Banderu were oppressed by Samuel, and Samuel’s reply was: ‘Are you sure that it was not the German Government and not I who did this?’... Anyway whether Samuel was a catspaw of the Germans or not, it is now quite certain that the Banderu in this protectorate desire not to recognise him and to have nothing to do with him. 98

Referring to Kahaka Seu and his followers, one of the Herero leaders who had fled from Samuel Maharero during the war of 1896, Williams noted that they had become ‘more or less part of the Batawana’. Be that as it may, it was clear that the Herero and Banderu, who had entered the territory before 1904, wanted absolutely nothing to do with Samuel Maharero. In fact, these earlier arrivals urged the government to treat them separately from Samuel Maharero: ‘They pray that they may not be regarded as refugees and that they may be regarded as entirely distinct from Samuel’. 99

88 BNA, RC 11/1, RC in Mafeking, 8 Sept. 1905, to acting magistrate Ngamiland.

89 BNA, RC 11/1, RC in Tsau, 7 Aug. 1905, to HC.

90 BNA, RC 11/1, Merry in Tsau, 31 Jan. 1905, to acting RC Mafeking.

91 BNA, RC 11/2, RC, Ralph Williams in Tsau, 24 June 1906, to HC.

92 BNA, RC 11/1, Batawana council in Tsau, 27 Apr. 1905, to resident magistrate (RM).
Opposed by a number of people whom he claimed as his subjects, opposed by his erstwhile host, Sekgoma Letsholathebe, and given to understand by the British that he would not be entitled to any preferential treatment, Samuel Maharero sought to capitalize on his waning prestige as a chief by attempting to revive his role as a labour recruiter for the mines of South Africa. In this way he hoped to begin reacquiring material wealth, as well as a modicum of status in the eyes of the British authorities.

Samuel Maharero had old connections with the Rand and believed that the Herero–German war had been caused by his willingness to supply the British with labourers for the South African mines. It was an aspect of shared responsibility that he sought to emphasize in all his dealings with the British authorities after the war.  In effect, his ability to gather together labour was his trump card. Sources indicate that the British authorities as well as the mining companies truly believed that Samuel Maharero would be able to supply substantial amounts of labour for the mines. Accordingly, as Samuel himself reported in later years:

After I had fought the Germans in my own country, I sought refuge under the [British] Government, and the Latter received me and prevented my enemies from pursuing me. And when the Government had received me, a white man named Jund [Hewitt] came to me at Tsau, Lake N'gami, and said to me: I have been sent by the Government to you, the Government has given you ground on which you and your people will build'. But, Chief, this was an untruth, he was only getting me into trouble, he was referring to ground owned by Companies. And after I had left with him he took me to the Transvaal and told me that it was a country of contracts and that I must send my people to work on contract at the Mines. Thereupon I began to send men to work on contract, and they died in large numbers.

**Mathiba's Coup**

Unfortunately for the Banderu and Herero refugees, the patronage and support which they had received from Sekgoma Letsholathebe was cut short when he was deposed in a coup supported by the British authorities in 1906. In late 1905, Sekgoma Letsholathebe travelled down to Mafeking to review the grounds on which Nicodemus and his followers had been permitted to stay in Ngamiland. Initially, Sekgoma could still count on substantial support in Ngamiland. There, his followers, known to the British as the Sekgomaites, were secure in their numbers vis-à-vis the new Kgosi Mathiba. However, the longer that Sekgoma was forced to stay away from Ngamiland, the more his power base became eroded. As a consequence, the position of his allies, including the Banderu and Herero, became ever more tenuous.

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100 BNA, RC 11/1, translated letter from Samuel Maharero at Nanyi, 28 Sept. 1904, to Williams; RC 4/18, memorandum by Ngamiland magistrate on the native inhabitants of the German South-West Africa Protectorate with special reference to the conditions affecting Ngamiland, 20 Jan. 1905; and RC 11/4, RC, Ralph Williams in Tsau, 24 June 1906, to HC.


102 NNAW, SWAA 2085, copy of letter from Samuel Maharero, 25 Feb. 1902, to RC.

103 For a detailed discussion of the coup, see Morton, 'Ngamiland', 89–96; Tlou, *Ngamiland*, 130–5.
It would be safe to say that Stigand idolized the Herero. In a later letter he stated, 'the Damara is head and shoulders above all others, and the Batavans about the most indifferent'. For Stigand, the Herero were the ideal native:

When the rains fall and there is water in pans away on the sandbelt, the Damara go off with their herds ... like the Masai of B.E. Africa ... The Masais, however, are still savages, whereas the average Damara is (thanks probably to the German Missionary Schools of G.S.W.A.) very civilized.114

But, unfortunately for the Banderu, these favourable statements were confined solely to the Herero. In Stigand's own words, 'the Banderus are the inferior natives of Damaraland and stand in the same relation to Hereros as the Makoba [Yei] do to the Batavans'.115 Clearly, for Stigand, the Banderus were not what he considered to be the best sort of native. It is probable that Stigand's rejection of the Banderu of Ngamiland was related to their continued allegiance to Sekgoma Letsholathebe. A further possible cause and symptom of Stigand's admiration for Herero bodies was his having taken two Herero women as concubines.116

From Subjects to Aliens

In terms of royal genealogy and aristocratic support, Sekgoma Letsholathebe had been a usurper. His power was derived from a base not normally used, which included the Herero-speaking refugees and immigrants in his kingdom. Under Sekgoma's rule these immigrants had been accorded the right to speak at kgotla, where they helped to determine political developments and enjoyed the same rights as Tswana.117 When Sekgoma was deposed and incarcerated in the military fort in Gaborone, a substantial number of his supporters lost their power. Tswana subjects who were now deemed to be 'strangers' were no longer allowed to take part in kgotla proceedings.118

Cut off from political power, archival and oral sources suggest that the immigrant supporters of Sekgoma turned to other more esoteric forms of power. In colonial parlance, the supporters of Sekgoma were referred to generally as the 'Sekgomaïtes'.119 In 1913, the Tswana capital and the resident magistrate's camp were moved from Tsau to Maun at the request of the supporters of Mathiba on the grounds that 'the Sekgomaïtes have poisoned and bewitched the ground here'.120 Eighty-five years later, Tsau is

114 BNA, S 292/3, Stigand in Tsau, 18 July 1913, to RC.
115 BNA, S 43/4, Stigand in Tsau, 27 Apr. 1911, to acting RC Mafeking.
116 Rhodes House, Oxford, MS Brit Empire S 22 G8, Anti-slavery Papers. British South Africa Bechuanaland, S 22 G10 Native Case in Bechuanaland, Butler to Sec, Anti-slavery and Aborigines Prot. Soc. 4 May 1916. With thanks to Barry Morton for access to his notes.
117 The kgotla is the court or council place at the centre of Tswana society in which public affairs are discussed and decided upon by the generally male members of society.
118 'Tou, Ngamiland', 130-5; Morton, 'Ngamiland', 93-4.
119 Morton mentions that the Setswana term Mafodi, with the approximate meaning, 'those who fight for a lost cause', was used to refer to the 'Sekgomaïtes' in Setswana. Morton, 'Ngamiland', 99.
120 BNA, S 35/6, RM in Tsau, 29 Jan. 1913, to RC.
a small desolate settlement. In front of its trading store lie the remains of what was once an enormous camel thorn tree. Informants state that prior to 1913 this tree provided shelter and shade for the kgotla, and that following the deposition of Sekgoma Letsholathebe, the tree died. Oral histories support the witchcraft claims voiced by Stigand, and claim that Banderu, in response to the deposition of their patron Sekgoma, had cursed the tree that provided the kgotla with shade. With its death, oral historians argue, Mathiba and his followers saw the power of the Banderu and began to agitate against their remaining in Ngamiland.

In 1916, Banderu under Nicodemus Kavarure petitioned the Bechuanaland protectorate government for permission to trek away from Ngamiland. The petitioners requested that they be permitted to move to and settle at 'Nyae Nyae in the South West African Protectorate', as 'Chief Mathibe, under whom they have been for several years is inclined to exact too much from the Damara in his reserve. Making them weed lands, build houses, bury dead Batavana, make roads and hunt buffaloes etc.' In commenting on the Banderu complaints, Kgosi Mathiba did not dispute that there were major difficulties between himself and the followers of Nicodemus Kavarure. However, in contrast to his predecessor, Sekgoma, who had accorded the immigrants full rights within the Batavana kingdom, Mathiba sought to emphasize anew the alien status of the immigrants. Thus, Mathiba stated, 'The customs of the Batavana are totally different to the Banderu and the Damara, and the former refuse to adapt themselves to the new conditions and defy the Batavana laws.'

In the eyes of all concerned the situation had become untenable and, in the interests of peace, permission was granted to Nicodemus Kavarure and his followers to trek to Kavimba, on the southern banks of the Chobe River, where the remaining followers of Sekgoma Letsholathebe had settled.

IMMIGRANTS AND ALLEGIANCES

In a perceptive paper, Inge Brinkman has recently noted that 'the relationship between war, exile and ethnicity has only recently garnered some attention.' Brinkman could also have included 'the political allegiance of refugees in host communities' as another element of this relationship. Apart from contemporary UNHCR and NGO reports on refugees seeking to assimilate within host communities, their political allegiances are open to refugees: becoming assimilated or maintaining a distinct identity.

Malkki has clearly detailed how history and identity were being continually refashioned in Mishamo refugee camp to strengthen and maintain the Hutu identity of camp residents. By contrast, in Kigoma, Hutu refugees sought to lose their Hutu identity and to disappear into the heterogeneous mix of the town. Thus, Malkki argues, in the case of Burundian refugees, the past was of little significance to those living in towns, whereas to those living in camps it was of the utmost importance as a mythical charter by which daily life could be lived. Generally speaking, there would appear to be two choices open to refugees: becoming assimilated or maintaining a distinct identity from the host community as refugees. In dealing with strategies adopted by Angolan refugees, Brinkman notes that, in contrast to the Burundian refugees studied by Malkki, Nyemba immigrants in Kaisosi and Keheuru seek to 'stress the multiplicity of ethnic as well as national identity'. That is, the refugees studied by Brinkman continually seek to keep open as many options as possible.

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In the short term, in contrast to the Nyemba immigrants discussed by Brinkman, the willingness of the Herero immigrants in Ngamiland to express their allegiance and loyalty to Sekgoma Letsholathebe was not without its benefits. However, in the long term, following the ascendancy of Mathiba, these initial expressions of loyalty and allegiance, which had led to rights on a par with the Tawana, led to the marginalization of Herero immigrants in Ngamiland.

CONCLUSION

There has been a broad tendency to treat the Herero-speaking people living in Botswana and Ngamiland in particular as a single delineated whole. Yet, such a view fails to take into account the historical and political developments following the deposition of Sekgoma Letsholathebe, the tree died. Oral histories support the witchcraft claims voiced by Stigand, and claim that Banderu, in response to the deposition of their patron Sekgoma, had cursed the tree that provided the kgotla with shade. With its death, oral historians argue, Mathiba and his followers saw the power of the Banderu and began to agitate against their remaining in Ngamiland.

In 1916, Banderu under Nicodemus Kavarure petitioned the Bechuanaland protectorate government for permission to trek away from Ngamiland. The petitioners requested that they be permitted to move to and settle at 'Nyae Nyae in the South West African Protectorate', as 'Chief Mathibe, under whom they have been for several years is inclined to exact too much from the Damara in his reserve. Making them weed lands, build houses, bury dead Batavana, make roads and hunt buffaloes etc.' In commenting on the Banderu complaints, Kgosi Mathiba did not dispute that...
that have taken place in Ngamiland. Herero-speaking migrants arrived in Ngamiland at different times and for different reasons. Herero speakers in Ngamiland were also strongly divided among themselves. Residual resentments from events in Namibia continued to inform Herero relations within Ngamiland. More often than not the Herero immigrants already resident in Ngamiland were in conflict with new Herero migrants who sought to settle in the territory. During the reign of Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe, Herero-speaking immigrants, in seeking to strengthen their position in the host community, became actively involved in the internal politics of the Tawana kingdom. Different Herero migrants allied themselves to a variety of power brokers, be they the incipient British colonial administration, Tawana royals allied to Mathiba or Tawana commoners allied to Sekgoma. As long as Sekgoma was in power and dependent upon his unusual support base of commoners and immigrants, the power and prestige of a number of Herero immigrants was assured. As soon as Sekgoma was deposed, in a coup which reinstated the centrality of Tawana royalty in politics, the power and prestige of the majority of Herero immigrants diminished. While in the years following Sekgoma’s demise, Herero would become among the richest of Ngamiland’s inhabitants, their political influence in Tawana politics ceased to exist.

This is in total contrast to the Herero allied to Samuel Maharero, who were settled by Khama in Mahalapye and are currently still well represented politically in contemporary Botswana. Deborah Durham, ‘Images of culture: being Herero in a liberal democracy (Botswana)’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1993).