

Some representatives of these tribes are found in the eastern districts, but the bulk of them inhabit the Spelonken, Shivasa, and Maenertsburg. The name Shangaan is an abbreviation of Amshangana, meaning "the Destroyers", which was originally applied to the predatory hordes of Mamkusa. Magwamba, a name by which they are often known, was given to the Shangaans by the Savenda and Basuto peoples on account of their habit of swearing by "Gwamba," who according to them was the first man created. They used also to be called "Knob-noses" from the custom of lacerating their faces, especially the nose, in such a manner as to produce a number of raised scars or knobs, but this practice is now dying out.

These people are the descendants of some of the Abagaza tribe which commenced to migrate northwards from Zululand about the year 1820. At this time the Zululand people had not yet been forced into the compact and formidable nation which they shortly afterwards became under the rule of Chaka, but some of the present Shangaan chiefs trace their descent from the Zulu royal house. The emigrant Abagaza had reached the Sabi River in Portuguese Territory, when in 1845 they were attacked by the people under Manukusa, a Zulu chief who had also emigrated northwards, and many of them driven into the Transvaal, taking with them some of the Ba-Thonga tribe who seemed to have joined them en route. Though these have become merged in the Shangaans, the latter are sometimes called Bathonga themselves at the present time. Those that remained in Portuguese territory were subjugated and severely oppressed by the Zulus.

The Spelonken branch of the Shangaans owes its existence to a Portuguese adventurer, named Joao Albasini, who, having come into the country a few years previously by way of Lydenburg, settled at Pisang Kop, near Louis Trichardt, in 1861, and having great influence with the natives, was appointed to the native Commissionership of the district by the Boer Government. He soon built up a regular chieftainship for himself, and having persuaded a number of the down-trodden Bathonga in Portuguese territory to come across the border and live under his protection, was before long the absolute ruler of a large and powerful tribe. The influx of Bathonga continued for the next ten years during which time Albasini led his people against the Savenda, and engaged in various small wars with other tribes, which were at the time frequent occurrences. Albasini was dismissed from the Boer Government service in 1868, but was recognised by the British administration after the annexation of 1877 and apparently continued to be chief of the tribe till his death in 1885. Though he was an unscrupulous man, who had in many ways sunk to the level of the native, there is no doubt that it was largely owing to his influence and ability that the Northern Transvaal was preserved to the white man. Members of his family are still resident in Pietersburg.

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Under the late Government the native Commissioner of the Spelonken was always considered chief of the Shangaans ex-officio, in consequence of which they had no regular chiefs in this district to this day, but are ruled by a number of Indunas, of whom there are 103 at present in the District.

There are now over 21,000 Shangaans in the Spelonken and Shivan districts under these Indunas. The latter, however, owe a sort of allegiance to Kings, who is nominally chief over them all. Kings is a very old man, but seems still to exercise a real influence over the people. His head kraal is some eighty miles from Louis Trichardt in a north-easterly direction, about thirty miles south of the Limpopo River, and is reached by the "Eastern Hunting Road."

Mavamba, another considerable Shangaan chief, resides on the same road, about twenty miles short of Kings's kraal. He is a good type of his race, intelligent and very well disposed towards Europeans in general and the British in particular. In 1898 he assisted the Boers against Mpefu with 800 men, who did excellent service.

Sikundu, who resides between Kings and Mavamba, is perhaps the most influential Shangaan next to Kings.

The above mentioned chiefs are of some note, and respected by the Shangaans, but the tribal system is not followed by these people, each small clan recognising only its own Induna or headman as its chief.

In the Haerertsburg district there are two tribes of Shangaans; the Nkuna or B-Nkuna and the Baloyi, the first of which is by far the stronger and more important.

The Shangaans generally are known among natives as "Eshundhela" which signifies "pioneers." Having always been well disposed towards Europeans, they were encouraged by the late Government to settle on the banks of the Great Letaba, in order that they might act as a buffer between the Basuto tribes living to the north and south of that river respectively.

The Shangaans are a stalwart race, and approach more nearly to the Zulus in physique than any of the other northern tribes. They alone wear an imitation of the Zulu head-ring, which with the Zulus denotes the proved warrior. The Shangaan ring is, however, removable and larger than that of the Zulus, which, being partly composed of the growing hair of the wearer, cannot be taken off.

In this and in other ways the Shangaans try to pose as Zulus, probably because they recognise them as a superior race. They nevertheless hated the Zulus as their oppressors in former times.

Though they have engaged in various inter-tribal wars in the past, and have on occasion assisted the Boers against other tribes, the Transvaal Shangaans have never fought against Europeans, and it is very unlikely that they will ever wish to try conclusions with them in the future. They are a peace-loving people and, though not lacking in courage, more given to trading than warlike pursuits.

/They

They are industrious cultivators, ready to adopt progressive ideas, very intelligent and on the whole likely to benefit quickly from civilization.

The so-called "Knob-nose Location," which was allotted to the Shangans by the Boers, is unhealthy and deficient in water; many of the people, therefore, prefer to squat on outside farms even if they have to pay rent for their occupation.

The present distribution of the Shangans in the Soutpansberg Division is shown in the following table:

Chief Mohlaba. Number of adult males in tribe about 1,500. The Ba-Nkuna, like the Shangaans of the Spelonken and Shivasa migrated northwards from Zululand about 1830 and first settled at Bileni, near the junction of the Limpopo and Olifants Rivers in Portuguese territory under a chief named Ripje. Manukusa with a Zulu Impi followed and defeated Ripje, but allowed him to remain where he was a tributary. Ripje was succeeded by Shiluvan or Silubana, father of the present chief. Manukusa wished to remove Silubana's people further north into Portuguese territory, but they fled via Komatipoort to near Leydsdorp in the Transvaal and settled under the protection of Maale's Basuto tribe in 1855. About 1858 they moved to the headwaters of the Selati and remained there till 1868, when they were attacked by the Basuto tribes of Mafefe Mkhubua, Sekororo and Maale. Silubana thereupon retired into Mojaji's territory and remained there till 1873. Albasini (known by the natives as "Juwawa") now wished him to join his people and attacked him when he refused, driving him back to Maale's country where he remained three years. While here, the tribe divided into two parties with one of which Silubana moved to the left bank of the Letsitele River, where he died in 1882. In 1886 the two parties reunited under Silubana's son Mohlaba,

This chief is now about thirty-five years old. He is educated, progressive and trustworthy, and is universally liked and respected by his white neighbours. He joined the chief Maake in repelling an attack made on them by Sekororo in 1901.

His people are mostly found in the "Harmony Proprietary Company's" farms, which lie between the Selati and Thabina Rivers and extend as far as the Great Letaba.

Molepo - Molepos
Makhuba - Haenertsberg
scattered
Matabata - Pietersburg and
Haenertsberg

In this are included the followings of the chief's Molepo, Matabata, and Makhuba, besides the adherents of several petty chiefs. These were originally all one tribe, and about 150 years ago lived near woodbush on the site of the present Lekhali's Location. Early in the nineteenth century the tribe split into the three sections above mentioned, who then moved to their present locations.

In 1894, at the time of the Boers' campaign against Malabokh, Makhuba led a general revolt of the Basuto tribes in the Haenertsburg district. He paid dearly for his temerity, however, as General Joubert, the Boer Commandant-General, let loose a Swazi impi upon the tribes, and Makhuba himself was slain with many men, women and children of the tribe. His daughter now rules the tribe; she is about twenty-one years of age (1905) and in her youth worked as a servant in a Boer family. The tribe numbers about 1,500 in all, and lives scattered over various farms in the Haenertsburg district.

Molepo's section is the most important, numbering over 6,000 people, and Mkwane and Mojapelo, who are sub-chiefs under him, together muster nearly 3,000 more. The present chief's real name is Moshia, and he and the above live in Molepo's Location in Pietersburg district.

Matabata has 1,000 people in Haenertsburg and about 600 in Pietersburg district, and the petty chiefs Chuene and Maja, whose joint following amounts to about 1,000, are also in the latter district, affiliated to the Mutalerwa tribe.

MAHUPA

A part of the original Bakoni, first heard of as coming from the Bokhaha to their present location, "Duiwel's Kloof." They have a warlike reputation, and in 1858 fought and defeated the Shangaans. After this they also repulsed an attack made on them by Mojaji, to whom they, alone of the neighbouring tribes, refused to be tributary. Mahupa, the present chief, is the same who rebelled against the Boers in 1894; when defeated by them fled to Mashonaland, and only returned in 1902. The tribe is now living on various farms, the property of settlers, and its men, women and children total 2,600. A number of people of this tribe also live in Sekukuniland. (See Eastern Division.)

This tribe numbers over 19,000 souls in Malitzi's Location some fifteen miles north west of the town of Pietersburg, besides a number in the Spelonken. It is a conglomeration of a number of small clans - the Manamela, Komapies, Malekos, etc., ruled over by chiefs belonging to a family called Nathhaloga. The Nathhaloga originally came to the Zoutpansberg from the direction of Basutoland and subdued the other tribes whom they found in possession of the tract of country which they now inhabit, early in the 19th century. It is not certain whence the latter came, but as the crocodile (kwene) is their national totem, it is possible that they are an off-shoot of the Bakwena (see Western Division). This, however, is not clearly proved or generally accepted as a fact, and they may have been there since the original Bantu invasion from the north. In any case, both in language and customs they differ from the Bechuana tribes far more than from the Basuto of Basutoland, and it therefore seems right to class them as true Basuto.

Moselikatse attacked the tribe in the course of his northern raids, but does not seem to have been successful, as, unlike most of the other tribes, the Bamolechi were not dispersed in consequence of his visitation, and appear to have occupied the same locality peacefully ever since.

The present ruler of the tribe is Seripa, whose family name is Moloto. He is acting for his nephew, named Sirin, a minor about fifteen years of age. Seripa is about forty-five years old, an intelligent, quiet and civilised man, and well-disposed towards the Government. His tribe is reckoned one of the most powerful in the northern Transvaal, but no trouble is apprehended with it, as the people are well-behaved and contented, and they evinced strong British sympathies during the war 1899-1902.

Matala is the hereditary name of the chiefs by descent of this tribe. The last rightful bearer of the name died in about 1900, but his eldest son (also named Matala, now twenty years of age) is of weak intellect and not considered fit to be chief, so the power is now exercised by Selaki, brother of the late chief on behalf of a younger son of the latter who is still a minor, fifteen years old. Selaki, is much addicted to drink, but seems to manage the tribe satisfactorily. He is about forty-five, of a quiet disposition, and very friendly towards Europeans. His people number about 9,000 in the Pietersburg and nearly 5,000 in the Blauwberg district.

These took no part in the late war. They are believed to be well-disposed towards the present Government, but should they ever be disposed to give trouble "Matala's Location" would lend itself to defence, being surrounded by high hills and well watered inside.

The petty chiefs Mtiba, Klein Mtiba, and Kukuna Lehali in the Pietersburg district also belong to this section of the Bakoni. They could muster about 600 fighting men between them.

SEKHOPO

SEKHOPO

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On Thabina River and
in Pietersburg District.

These people take their name from one of the early chiefs of the Mojaji tribe, of which they are an offshoot. Their history has been uneventful. The present chief, named Mamakubi Sekhopo, rules over some 1,700 people. He is about thirty-five years of age and resides near Buffels.

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