

Historians support dikgosi statues

The three Dikgosi are Khama III of the Bangwato, Sebele I of Bakwena and Bathoeng I of Bangwaketse.

According to the historians, the efforts by the three dikgosi saved the country from a brutal regime whose administration in neighbouring Zimbabwe turned the lives of the locals into misery.

This is a major milestone in the history of the republic as it recognizes the efforts of its leaders whose heroism saved the country from brutal regimes, head of history department at the University of Botswana Professor Pat Mgadla said of the monuments which will be unveiled in October.

Another possibility according to the scholar, apart from incorporating the land into the then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was for the company to hand over the country to the racist Union of South Africa.

The union was founded on the philosophy of white supremacy. Contrary to popular belief, the academic explained that the 1895 overseas trip by the tribal leaders was not to ask for British colonization or protection.

The protection, he said was long imposed on the land by Charles Warren, a British soldier cum administrator who was based in Vryburg, South Africa, in 1894, few years after Kgosi Khama III's appeal for protection was rejected.

The protection was unwelcome in the Kweneng and Ngwaketse Reserves. The two had confidence in their military might as they had on previous occasions defeated the Boers.

The three Dikgosi therefore went to UK in 1895 specifically to protest against the impending move to hand over the protectorate to the British South African Company whose brutal administration they knew and saw next door, the academic said.

According to another academic from the institution, Dr Alfred Tsheboeng the British government was willing to hand over the protectorate to any willing administrator as it was of no economic value to the mother country.

The three Dikgosi realised this and decided to travel to UK to seek for public support.

Before they held meetings with the Queen administration, they held public meetings in the country highlighting the impending repression should their country be handed over to the company, Dr Tsheboeng said.

The tribal leaders and missionaries who accompanied them campaigned in the British cities as they feared the brutality of the BSACo regime and their fears were confirmed in the same period when the company head, Cecil Rhodes attempted to overthrow the Paul Kruger government in Transvaal.

The idea of transferring the protectorate to the company was then rejected as the British supported the native Dikgosi, Tsheboeng said.

According to the two academics, opposition to the company taking over Bechuanaland as started by the three Dikgosi dominated the public discourse until 1966 when the protectorate was granted independence.

The support on the project by the two renowned academics, come against a backdrop of complaints by some pressure groups who feel that the P 10.5 million project was a waste of money.

The monuments, standing six metres from the ground, are at the Gaborone Central Business District, not very far from the place where the headquarters for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is to be put up. BOPA

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