

Gitlane: Where The Moon Sickle Strikes - On the Edge of Time at Elandsdoorn*

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ABSTRACT

Ancient trade between gold producing southern Africa and gold consuming India shaped the people and the history of the BoPedi country in Mpumalanga and Northern Provinces of South Africa. The culture and religious beliefs of the BaPedi and of the Quena (Hottentots) who lived here before the Bantu-speakers arrived, reflect this history. Stone structures build during that period of Indo-African interaction reflect the religious cosmology of ancient Dravidian India and this enables us to understand them. Time was a factor that mattered in the context of the resulting Indo-African culture. They measured it precisely. A Moon Sickle on the hill south of the Gitlane River was one of their horological instruments. It measured the time of death for the community of monks and aged recluses in a nearby cave monastery.

1. THE TIDE OF TIME IN KOMATILAND

Africa is often presented as a timeless continent, and the use in various Bantu languages of obviously recently borrowed words for calendar (such as *almanaka*, *kalentare*, *kalentara* in N. Sotho; *kalintare* in S. Sotho; *ikhalenda* in Zulu and Xhosa and *likhalenda* in Swati) seemingly endorse this notion. Clumsy formulas to describe the same object, like the Zulu *inxwadi okuhlelwe kuyo zonke izinsuku zomnyaka*, further emphasise the presumed timelessness. Yet, there is a place called Elandsdoorn where men of old were aware of the tide of time that brings all men, women and animals to the very edge of time. Then, the heavenly sickle slices off the man's portion of his earthly path and all that is left for the surviving descendants are memories and memorial obligations, often summed up, in the African context, as ancestor worship.

Just such a sickle of time I recognised in an overgrown *litaku* (ancient stone ruin, see Hromník (1996)) shown to me by Adriaan de Jager on December 16, 1998 on one of the bush-clad hills on the farm Elandsdoorn, a short distance Southeast of Burgersfort in the northern part of Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. The hills in question lie in the heart of the BoPedi country between the rivers Spekboom, Ohrigstad, Steelpoort and its small tributary Mabitsana. The hills fall, in historical terms, in the northern part of the gold-bearing region which the ancients called Komatiland –the Land of the Komati people. The name Komatiland derives from

the early Indian traders named Komati, who explored this part of the country for gold in the course of the first and early second millennium AD (Hromník 1991b). They did this in co-operation with some labour recruited from Indonesia and with their own, local, Indo-Kung¹ (= Indo-Bushman) progeny, which became known as Quena,² later called Hottentots (Hromník 1981). Old and more recent gold workings occur in the proximity of Elandsdoorn. The *litaku* (ancient stone structures) described below are by-and-large a product of this early Indo-African cooperation. However, a contemporary account of the times when they were constructed does not exist, and we have to penetrate that time through a thick layer of history created by the later, Bantu-speaking peoples.

2. THE TRADERS

The area of Elandsdoorn lies on a natural access route from the coast via Pumbe on the Lebombo to the Highveld, which generated a considerable trade traffic between the tin and gold producing Highveld and Escarpment (KaHlamba– Drakensberg) in the interior and the harbour of the Indian monsoon ships in Delagoa Bay. Remnants of this caravan-route can still be seen passing through the area from Ohrigstad to Voortrekkerbad. Indian traders involved in this trade were known as *viyápari* (LTTE 1978: 642), which name spread with them to all parts of the world where they traded. In the Malay world (today's Malaysia and Indonesia) it changed into *Biapiri* and in southern Africa into Baperi and, eventually, into BaPedi (Wilkinson 1908: 25; Winstedt 1934: 44). Their leaders, who practised a republican type of elected government as we know it from the 16th century Zambezia, ate boiled rice (*bónagam*) as their staple food, which earned them a nickname Bongar (Bongares)

¹ I use the indigenous name Kung for the aboriginal hunters of southern Africa who are called 'Bushman' in older and 'San' in more recent literature. Unlike other names, given to these hunters either by the Europeans or by the Quena, Kung was used by the people whom it designated. The name Bushman is too broad and often misunderstood; San is offensive; Khoisan is artificial (made up by missionaries and academics) and totally absent from the historical record. Kung is specific and authentic, therefore most acceptable (see Hromník 1997: 8).

² Quena is the historical name for the people of southern Africa commonly known as Hottentots, as opposed to Kung (Bushman). The Quena formed several tribes, each speaking a language or dialect of the same language family. They possessed a more advanced culture in terms of political and social organisation, local and long-distance trade, food production, housing, building in stone, livestock keeping, metal and pottery making, smoking of bhang (dagga) and other substances, artefacts made and used, etc. Their genetic makeup also differs from that of the Kung in that it displays an admixture of foreign and extra-African (mainly Indian and other Asian) elements. The artificial name Khoikhoi, favoured by the orthodox academia, is historically not evidenced and phonologically as well as grammatically unacceptable. The people in question referred to themselves as Quena (See Thom 1958: 127; Hromník 1988: 18).

and Mongar (Mongares) (LTTEd 1978: 517; Monclaro 1569: 550). They became masters of the land in many parts of the gold-producing southern Africa and their name survives until today in the Sotho *monghali* and *mong* for ‘a master’ and in the seTswana *Modò* and *Muò* with the same meaning (Casalis 1977: 66; Kriel 1976: 316; Brown 1977: 470). Elsewhere they figure under the names Pfumbi, Gova (Govha), etc., all hailing originally from the main gold-trade route on the Zambezi, down- and upstream from the ancient Sena (the Indian town Siouna of the early Arab reports, see al-Idrisi 1150: 225; Hromník 1981: 44; Von Sicard 1952: 54). These men were not only masters and rulers of their lands but also their ‘owners’, which was a new concept in olden Africa. Naturally, such leaders surrounded themselves with regiments of army, adding a new dimension to their socio-political function. Their title of office survived among the later Sotho-Pedi in the form of Mongatane (Mönning 1967: 16), meaning ‘Master of the Army’ (from Monga- + *tánai* = army in Tamil), which is assigned in the surviving traditions to the de facto masters of the land between the ‘Mseslarur’ or ‘Moschlabjoe’ (Watervalsrivier) and the ‘Maepa’ (Ohrigstadrivier) at the time of arrival of the first Bantu-speakers (Hunt 1931: 282). This happened by about the 12th to 13th century AD, when Indian trade caravans (called *kara’bane* in N. Sotho) brought into the area a new source of labour in the form of the black Bantu-speaking people (Hromník 1989: 13-29).

3. THE BANTU-SPEAKING BAPEDI

The Bantu-speaking newcomers, through their association with gold production and trade, gradually became known as Sutu (later Suto and Sotho, see Hromník 1991a). Naturally, the two groups mixed together and the mixed element retained the name *Biapiri*, now Bantuized into BaPedi. The mixed or true BaPedi absorbed and retained also some of the believes of the ancient Indian *viyápári* (traders) and this is reflected in the Pedi ancestral worship and in the word for ‘religion’ – *borapedi*. The word *borapedi* in the present-day siPedi means ‘prayerfulness’ and ‘piety’, and is derived from the Tamil word *pórru*, which in the language of the Dravidian Komati traders meant ‘to praise’, ‘to worship’. Combined with the name Pedi, the term *borapedi* means the ‘worship or devoutness of the traders’, in other words the ‘religion of traders’. Attempts to derive *borapedi* from the Pedi *go rapela* ‘to pray’ lead to a cul-de-sac and deprive the Pedi religion of its historical and theological depth (Mönning 1967: 43-44).

The number of the true BaPedi was always very low, but they formed the ‘ruling caste’ that extended the overlordship of its Royal House, Maroteng (or Maruteng), over the entire BoPedi, from Lydenburg to Pilgrims Rest, Middelburg and Pietersburg. This was the ruling core of the present-day Bantu-speaking people known as Sotho-Pedi. They modified the pre-existing though unrecorded name of the region into the well-known BoPedi (see Hunt 1931: 276-277, 282; Van

Warmelo 1974: 76), a name which was applied also to the former home of the Indo-African *viyápari*/BaPedi in the Karanga country north of the Limpopo (Knothe 1889: 336, cit. Von Sicard 1952: 47, 54). Both gold-producing and trade-generating countries were thus referred to as the Land of Traders -- BoPedi. As time went on, the Indo-African *viyápari*/BaPedi were progressively assuming more and more Bantu image, so much so that they were no longer associated with the Indians from the contemporary caravans. At this stage, the recognisably Indian traders came to be designated as MaPalakata ('Mapalakata'), meaning traders from the region of Balaghaut in India (Van Linschoten 1592: 193; Botelho 1835: 276, 399). By the time oral traditions of the BaPedi (BaRoka and others) were collected, the Mapalakata were remembered only in the praise-poems (Winter 1912: 378-379; Mönning 1963: 170). By the end of the 18th century the central point of the profoundly Bantuised and Bantu-speaking BoPedi living south of the Olifantsrivier, was Mogokgomeng, located only about 20 km west of Elandsdoorn on the Thubatse (Steelpoort) River just south of the present-day Steelpoort Station (Mönning 1967: 16).

4. MAKGEMENG ON THE GITLANE RIVER

The religious and probably also the political centre of the Indo-Quena *viyápari* (traders) as well as that of the early Indo-Quena-Bantu BaPedi in BoPedi appears to have been located on the confluence (called *sangam* 'meeting' in Tamil (Krása 1964: 162-167), *musangano* in chiShona, *umhlangano* in SiSwati, *magahlano* in siPedi (Hannan 1974: 592; Raycroft 1981: 38; Kriel 1976: 287) – all cognate of the former) of the Gitlane River with its northern tributary called the Makgemeng or Mensvreter River, where extensive stone ruins or *litaku* can be seen (Hromník 1996: 1-18). Most probably the place at the sangam was at one time (most probably later) referred to as Makgemeng or the Place of Cannibals, which in the common understanding of the late pre-colonial and early colonial times meant the At the Place of 'Strangers who were dangerous' (Chapman 1868: 76). Unfortunately, the name Makgemeng, preserved in the Dutch translation *Mensvreter*, appears to have been recorded later in a corrupt form of 'Mogokgomeng,' which led to the loss of its meaning. The Sotho-Pedi name Makgemeng has its origin in a traditional belief widely spread among the Venda, that all early Bantu-speaking BaPedi were cannibals "who eat men" (Mudau 1940: 44-45; Von Sicard 1952: 54). Its true meaning is not identical with the common notion of the term 'cannibal'. The *litaku* at Makgemeng and on the hills along the area's axial Gitlane River reflect this tradition and will help us to understand it. The historical contents of these *litaku* at Makgemeng is as yet unknown, because the complex still awaits proper investigation. One thing is known, however, that the position of Makgemeng (Mogokgomeng?) was chosen on the basis of cosmological criteria. For this

purpose it must have incorporated a solar observatory, which has not yet been identified. The probability of its existence is indicated by the surviving *litaku* on the nearby hills.

5. THE MOON SICKLE

A short distance downstream from Makgemeng along the true east-west line, a structure in the shape of a sickle, built of the local hard black dolerite stone, cuts across the path of the equinoctial sun (21st March and September) on the eastern slope of the hill named Thota naka e fedile (Time-Is-Up-Hill), which rises along the south side of the east-west flowing and the Sun following River Gitlane. Its purpose is expressively ensconced in the name of the River Gitlane: Where The Moon Sickle Strikes. The name Gitlane derives from the North Sotho word *gitla* 'to strike' and refers to the symbolic striking of the Moon Sickle on the hill. Its etymology leads to the South Sotho *hëtlë* and *h_m_* with the same meaning and, eventually, through the Swahili *Choma* to the Indian *soma* for the 'crescent' of the moon. Thus Gitlane refers to the striking by the moon crescent or moon sickle (Figure 1).

The Moon Sickle on the eastern slope of the Thota naka e fedile (Time-Is-Up-Hill) is well preserved, mainly because its Indo-Quena builders gave it a solid, 170 cm wide foundations and tapered its dolerite walls inwards, so that at the height of 100 cm their width is mere 70 cm. The appropriately long handle (3 m) of the Moon Sickle has a nicely built and slightly widened butt pointing NW. Running SE, the handle meets the blade of the sickle at right angle. The arch of the blade retains a constant height of approximately 100 cm down to its easternmost point and then begins a gradual descent towards its sharp point. The sharp point, which aims westward, is made of a large but thin flagstone placed on the ground level. In the middle of its arch, the sickle has a 40 cm wide door, the jambs of which are slightly misaligned, producing an impression of a split doorway. The split door, which in the Hindu theology represents the way of our arrival on this earth through the crevice of the vagina and the way of our departure through the crevice of the grave or the crevice of the ashes absorbing river (IAOI 1982: 4), here allowed those whose time had been cut by the sickle of death to fall out and be ready for a cremation pyre on the bank of the Gitlane River. The entire sickle is orientated in such a way that the line through its door, which halves the distance between the sharp tip and the lower end of the sickle's handle, runs precisely TE - TW and aims at the top of the Thota naka e fedile (hill) in the west. The purpose of these arrangements and orientation is to allow the time measuring equinoctial Sun pass through while the sickle of the crescent Moon cuts its unending cycles of time into smaller portions. The victims of this time cutting were, of course, the very builders

of this horology. It was their time of life that was thus measured and cut when its God-given length had been accomplished (Figure 2).

Several features of the Moon Sickle support this interpretation of its purpose. The TE - TW door-line begins in an open V-shape notch in the eastern horizon mountains and the sun rising in it determined the spring and autumn equinoxes. To achieve this halving of the year, the Moon Sickle had to be built on this line and nowhere else. Its position was therefore cosmologically justified. No other position would have given its builders the desired calendric information. This line of reasoning is confirmed when we follow the path of the equinoctial sun to the summit of the Thota naka e fedile. The path leads to the hill-top, but misses its highest point by 44 m, passing by the southern edge of the summit. And precisely where the path goes over the horizon line, as seen from the door of the Moon Sickle, there we find a large pot buried up to its rim in an anthill (Figure 3). There can be no doubt that this pot, and perhaps many other pots before it, once contained offerings to the god of the equinoctial Sun or to the Sun God in general. Such God was called *Suriyan* by the Dravidian *viyá pári*/BaPedi (Hromník 1993), while their Quena kinsmen called him *Suri* ('*Surrie*' or '*Sore*'). At the same time, the heavenly cutter, the Crescent Moon, was called *Chandiran*, *Chandra* or *Chan* by the Dravidian gold traders, while the Quena called him *Chan* (Grevenbroek 1695: 207; Hromník 1990; Wreede 1691: 217; Kolbe 1719: 229, 232).

Once the heavenly measurers of time were appeased, offering could be made to the spirits of the deceased forefathers. Such offering, called *dakshina*, must be done in accordance with the Hindu cosmology in the southern quarter (Walker 1968: 320; Daniélou 1991: 281); and indeed, a receptacle (another large pot) for such offerings was found 3.6 m south of the Sun/Suri and Moon/Chan offering pot. Offerings of this type usually call for food articles and mineral or other tints, some of which have to be ground into paste or powder before they can be used in the sacrifice. They are prepared on flat grinding stones which we see in the antehalls of the modern Indian temples. At least one such grinding stone has been found here, on the Thota naka e fedile, within a short distance from the offering pots. This discovery confirms the correctness of my interpretations and justifies the naming of the hill as Thota Naka e Fedile – the Time-Is-Up-Hill. Here the offerings and sacrifices were made when the time of any member of the community of Makgemeng was up; when he or she was stricken by the deadly sickle of the Crescent Moon. The lower slopes of this hill are littered with dilapidated stonework of considerable antiquity, pointing at its religious use for a very long time. Not having had the time to pay closer attention to these *litaku*, I am unable to comment on their purpose. Future research will elucidate them.

One offering stone (*balikal*) has been found on the tip of the Moon Sickle, while several grinding stones for preparation of offerings, some portable and some fixed, were discovered within a few metres NW of it. The finds are interesting as they reveal yet another important aspect of the Indian cosmology, here obviously shared

by their Quena kinsmen. The NW quarter is ruled over by the Wind God, Vayu, and the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati. These two deities represent the purificatory powers of the one and only God Creator of the Dravidians, God Āiva. Prayers to Āiva are directed northwards, and for this purpose a short portion of the southern arch of the Moon Sickle was built in such a way, that it could be used as an altar. Here the sides of the wall were built vertical rather than tapering in, creating thus a wider platform for the altar. The altar was strengthened by three orthostats on the inner side of the sickle, while other, less prominent, upright stones, were planted on the outer side. In time, this vertical wall gave way, and as a result the altar is the only portion of the Moon Sickle which is not in a perfect shape. The altar faces North and its central point has a counterpart in a deliberately built projection in the middle of the northern arch of the Sickle. That way went the prayers to the three-faced God Āiva: the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. At the same time, the central orthostat of the altar is positioned so that a TNW line from it passes by the sharp tip of the Moon Sickle and through the area where offerings used to be prepared. Obviously, the Moon Sickle was not only an instrument of death, but also an instrument of purification. Purification is the quality most needed by a dying person. The purificatory and sacrificial quality of the Moon Sickle is completed by the SE-facing Seat on the wall of the Sickle in its SE quarter. The SE quarter is the domain of the fiery aspect of Āiva, represented by the Fire God Agni. To this deity was addressing his prayers the man sitting on the SE Seat.

All these arrangements and rituals had one main objective: To facilitate the passage of the members of a community from their existence on this earth to the world beyond. A TNE line from the main orthostat in the Altar through the Split Door indicated the way out – to the cremation ghat on the bank of the Gitlane River and, for the few who reached the ultimate truth, to *Turakkam* (*Āivaloka*) or Abode of God Āiva in the North (LTED 1978: 373; Stutley 1977: 294). About 90 m from the Split door, the line touches the first of several symbolic rows of stones planted upright on the edge of a steep slope to the Gitlane Ravine. From this spot, a line that corresponds with the local azimuth of the winter solstice sunrise, leads to an anthill in which there is buried another big pot and a smaller pot in it. The extended line once again passes the horizon mountains through a V-shaped notch, where the dying Sun of the 21st June rises. Here the annual demise of the Sun is symbolically linked with the demise of the dead, whose last journey led through this North-east temple to the cremation pyre on the banks of the Gitlane River.

6. THE MONASTERY AND ITS HOLY MEN – THE CANNIBALS

The men who built this sickle time machine in the first millennium AD were the Quena (Hottentots) in whose veins circulated the blood of the Indian gold prospectors mixed with their indigenous, Kung (Bushman) ancestors. Had the

Quena remained in control of this country up to the time of arrival of the European hunters, traders, explorers and Voortrekkers, their toponym would also have survived and our interpretation of the *litaku* on the hills would have been that much better and that much easier. However, the course of history was different. By about the 12th century, before any written record was created, the trade of the Indian *viyápari* (traders) brought a new type of the Bantu-speaking immigrants into the area of BoPedi. The black (Negroid) newcomers joined and mixed with the original Indian and Quena inhabitants of BoPedi and eventually created a new, Bantu-speaking BaPedi. These new immigrants we know as the Sotho-Pedi, who were of fundamentally African origin, but many of them were born of African mothers and Indian fathers (traders, prospectors, miners). They attached themselves to the Gitlane tradition, translating the old Indo-Quena names into their own Indo-African language, SiPedi, the Traders' language. In the new language, not all of the old religious and social concepts were understood. Thus, from the former worshippers of the men-devouring Moon Sickle became the Makgema or Cannibals, and their name became a subject of various tales of horror. In a similar fashion, the men of high accomplishments, with reputation of building in "huge stones", became a subject of the Venda traditions under the name VhaSenzi (Van Warmelo 1940: 10), which is of Arabic origin and means 'savages' (Zawawi 1979: 121, Hromník 1979). Such "men-eating wild men" were supposed to inhabit the Mensvreter Kloof.

In reality, the men of the Mensvreter Kloof had no cannibalistic inclinations. They were men who followed the ancient Indian tradition of dividing man's life cycle into three or four stages: 1. when one is cared for i.e. the stage before adulthood -- neophyte; 2. when one cares for one's children -- householder; and 3. when man's care is to re-establish contact with the Creator – hermit or pilgrim (Zimmer 1956: 18; Müller 1910: 350). The men of BoPedi in the Quena period (1st millennium and up to about the 13th century), who reached the third stage of their life, gathered upstream in a Cave Monastery (*Bodulanoši*) in the deep Mensvreter Kloof (Kriel 1976: 113; LTTED 1978: 373, 424). There they spent the remaining years of their life sitting (*dula*) alone (*noši*) in meditation and prayers. The siPedi words used to describe their essential activity – sitting alone – are of Dravidian origin, indicating the source of the monastic institution. Unfortunately, the ancient name for the monastery has in recent times been replaced by the English 'monasteri'.

Mensvreter Kloof empties its flood waters into the perennial Gitlane River about 2.1 km west of the Thota Naka e Fedile (Time-Is-Up-Hill). Going upstream, the kloof takes a northerly direction; after about 1.8 km it turns east and soon enters into a deep and narrow gorge not more than 2 m wide at the narrowest point. At this point it is barricaded by big boulders making a waterfall, which poses a formidable obstacle to the walker going up the gorge. A water worn stone deliberately wedged in at a crucial point makes the scaling of this barricade possible. A trickle of water runs down solid rock river bed from the bottom of the dry waterfall. In the

following ca. 200 m the kloof runs almost exactly TW -> TE and is about 60 m deep.

About 40 m upstream from the waterfall and about 7 m above the riverbed there is a large shelter in the sandstone cliff on the northern side. The shelter was surveyed in October 1997. It is about 20 m long and 5 m wide at the deepest point. Its floor of solid rock with little accumulation of loose sand and gravel is sloping at an angle that makes it rather un-welcoming for would be sleepers. The front of the shelter is closed by a long, slightly crooked wall, ca. 1 m. wide at the base and about 1.1 - 1.3 m high, tapering in towards the top. The stones of which it is built are covered with a light coloured patina, which gives it a very fresh look, camouflaging its apparently very old age. At least three upright stones and three cut off tree trunks planted in the top of the wall, and perhaps replaced more recently, decorate it. Their purpose seem to be symbolic, though in the short time available I was unable to make any sense out of them. Several large slabs of stone are built into the wall from inside in an upright position. This points at a very old age of the wall. Access to the shelter is via the small openings at both ends of the shelter wall. Climbing the cliff below the eastern opening is easier. From this point also a small path leads up to the top of the cliff. Purpose unknown.

Several loose or fixed rubbing stones can be seen on the floor. Scattered over the floor are numerous thin (Quena) pot shards, mostly grey to black in colour, as well as several thick red shards (Sotho-Pedi?). Other artefacts may have been collected by previous European visitors, whose names appear scribbled on the back side of the shelter's rock.

The shelter is rather inhospitable, waterless and offers only a very short term defensive advantage. It does not seem to have been built for this purpose. As a home for ordinary dwellers it offers very few comforts. The overall impression of this walled in shelter is that it was occupied by Spartan men, most probably monks. Apparently it served as a retreat for *Badulanoši* – by which name of Dravidian origin the local Pedi used to designate the monks or men living in seclusion. Most probably it was a *Bodulanoši* – a Monastic retreat. The holy men of this monastery followed their own objective, which was their personal salvation. At the same time they most probably fulfilled the role of priests for the people in the ordinary settlement at Makgemeng and elsewhere in the vicinity. Thus they functioned as *suris*, the priests or the masters of religious ceremonies, of whom each Quena village used to have at least one or two, as we are informed by Kolbe between 1705 and 1713. They led the Quena led in their prayers, offerings, and all ceremonies of worship (Kolbe 1731: 88; Hromník 1990: 26-34). The institution of these holy men came to BoPedi with the Dravidian gold seekers, from whose language the word *súri*, meaning 'wise or learned man', was borrowed by the mixed Indo-Kung Quena (Hottentots). Later, the Bantu-speaking BaPedi called them *Badulanoši*. They were not cannibals, but the Sickle of the Moon was smiting (*kgenetha*) them down and eating them up one by one. The memories of the men smitten by the sickle of time

lived in the minds of their surviving relatives, who once in a while had to appease the souls of the smitten men by bringing pots filled with the lunar juice – *soma* and other offerings to the top of the Time-is-up-Hill. The pot for the smitten men was placed south, the pot for the heavenly Time-keeper was placed north, right on the path of the equinoctial Sun. The River Gitlane carried away the ashes of those who had been smitten by the unforgiving sickle of the tide of time. The logistics and ceremonies connected with the death ritual on and around the Gitlane River reflected the religious cosmology of the mixed Indo-Quena and, later, the mixed Indo-Bantu society of BoPedi.

7. THE GITLANE COMPLEX

Many more religiously or cosmologically related sites of the Gitlane complex can be seen on the surrounding hills and in the valleys. Each of them must have added a special dimension to the ordinary and religious life of the trading (*viyápari*) and the supporting farming communities of BoPedi. Some of them have already been noticed, while others are still waiting to be discovered and explored. Their contents will one day enable us to obtain a glimpse of the life of the ancient BaPedi, which is quite beyond the usual ethnographic and historical image of these interesting people. They, in a way, represent a microcosm of ancient Africa, which was a home to the indigenous black (Negroid) population in its interaction with the gold, tin, ivory and other commodities seeking men from Asia, especially from India. In this way, ancient Africa resembled in many ways the Indo-European world in Europe and Asia, and the only name that can describe that state of affairs in Africa is Indo-Africa (Hromník 1981).

8. LOOKING AFTER THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The complex of temples and a monastery in the Gitlane River basin is an unrepeated asset of African and Indo-African history. It must be treated with respect and care. It should be opened to the visitors like a book describing the distant past of BoPedi and of Africa in general, but its content should be jealously guarded and preserved. No stones, pots or any other objects should be picked and removed by visitors. A temptation to excavate its temples should be resisted. The finds from such excavations would reveal far less information about the Gitlane temple complex than would be the loss suffered from the resulting disturbance. Discovering that the builders and users of the Gitlane temple complex ate wild game or domestic animals and crop foods of the land in varying proportions – the usual findings of such excavations –, reveals nothing new; nothing that we do not know already. The real source of historical and cultural information at Gitlane is the

spatial correlation of the individual parts of the spread-out temple and habitudinal complex. These correlation's must be studied, guarded and preserved. Special care should be taken not to disturb the known cosmological linkages by building paths and other installations for the visiting tourists. These should be developed in close consultation with the researcher. The religious and mythological theme of the Gitlane complex of temples and shrines is today not familiar even to the local BaPedi people, and the South African archaeological community is totally unfamiliar with the subject. Hence the owners should be careful not to be misled into harmful action by would-be experts, be they indigenous or academic. The Gitlane treasure is far too valuable to be mistreated the way Thulamela in the Kruger National Park has been deformed. Thulamela has lost its soul by ignorant excavation and reconstruction. The same should not be allowed to happen at Gitlane, where the Moon Sickle strikes. We must allow it to strike until the time will be up on the slopes of Thota Naka e Fedile.

Figure. 1. Moon Sickle of Death on the Gitlane River in the BoPedi Country.
 Drawn by Dr Cyril A. Hromník and Sonja Jíchová, 17 December 1998.

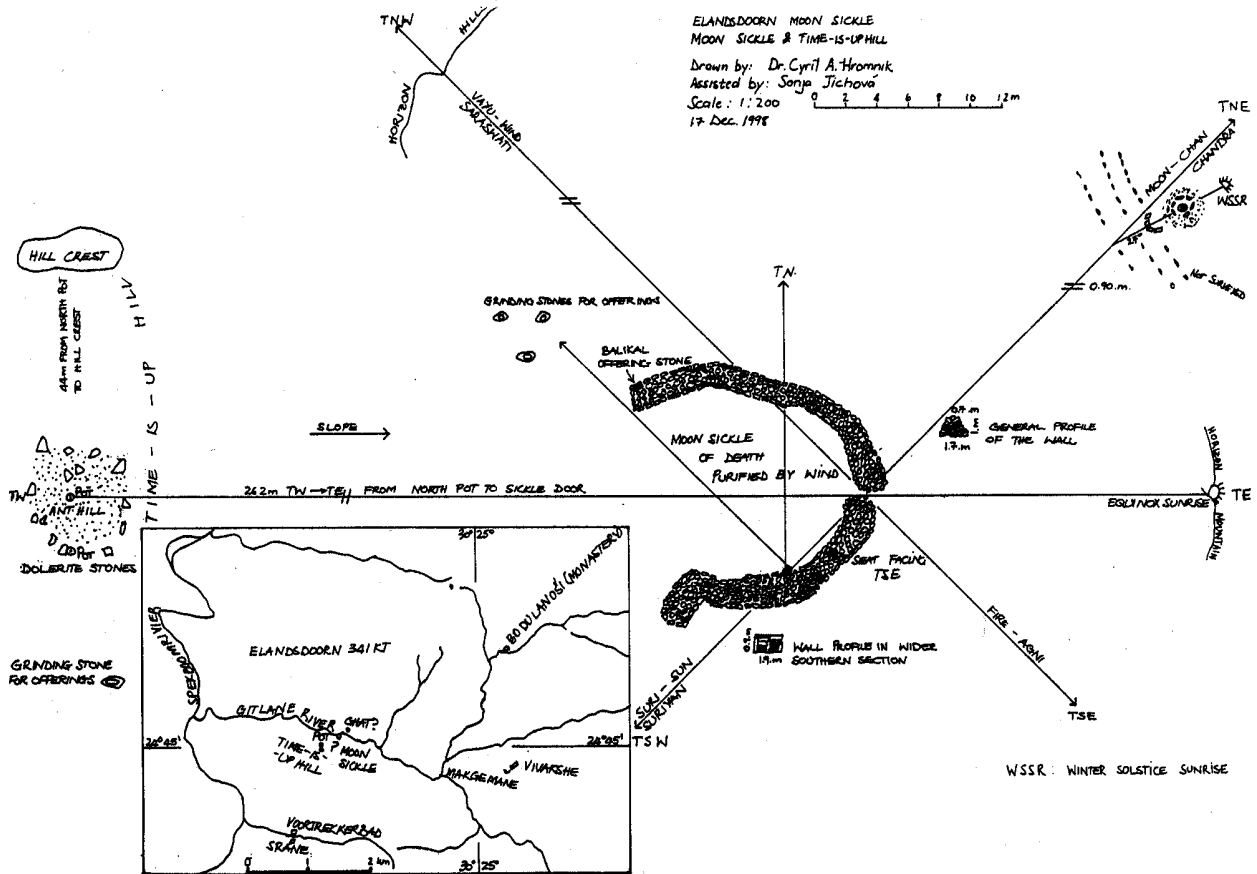


Figure 2. Hard black stone was used to build the well tapered walls of the Moon Sickle of Death. TSW --> TNE. Photograph by Dr C.A. Hromník, 17 December 1998.

[Note: Figure 2 not available in the web version.]

Figure 3. Large offering pot on the horizon line 262 m west of the Moon Sickle. Photograph by Dr C.A. Hromník, 17 December 1998.

[Note: Figure 3 not available in the web version.]

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