

The Kololo under Sebetwane

Origins and migration of the Kololo people

- The Kololo were Sotho speaking people from the Transorangia area composed of two Fokeng groups which migrated under Sebetwane during the period of Mfecane (a.k.a Defecane).
- The Patsa Fokeng under Sebetwane left as a result of attacks from the Tlokwa of Mma Ntasi.
- Sebetwane fled across the Vaal river to move as far away as possible from the threats and disturbances of the Mfecane
- They arrived in Tlapini capital Dithakong in 1823 facing resistance from the Tlapini and Griqua who had guns and fought on horseback.
- Sebetwane continued through Botswana reaching Molopo River where he defeated the northern Rolong around Kunwana.
- The Kololo proceeded further into Hurutshe and defeated them but they were in turn defeated by the Ndebele.
- In Botswana they managed to defeat Kgabo- Kwena and Tshwane-Tlokoa but they were forced to leave Kwena by the Ngwakwetsi. Sebetwane attacked the Ngwato who sought refuge in the Kutswe Mountains.
- The Kololo marched through the Kalahari Desert travelling mostly at night in small groups. They rested at Lake Ngami where they carried out raiding expeditions to replenish the cattle they had lost in the desert heat.
- From Lake Ngami they travelled across the Okavango River reaching Chobe where they established their capital at Dinyati.
- They defeated and ruled the Sibya fisherman and some Tswana.
- The Kololo left the Chobe Valley as it proved to be unhealthy as they journeyed towards the Zambezi where they raided the Tonga for cattle.
- They established a settlement on the Toka Plateau south of Kafue an area excellent for cattle.
- Settlement in Zambia after having subdued most of the chiefdoms on the Toka Plateau they crossed the flood plain of the Kafue River.
- They were assisted to cross into Illa by local fishermen who resisted the intruders by force.
- The Kololo reached the Sala area near Lusaka capturing the Sala religious leader, Priestess Chief Longo.
- Sebetwane was warned against trekking further because of the danger of the Portuguese and their Chikunda allies and Swahili traders.
- He was advised to turn west to a land of red cattle called Luyi country or Bulozhi On their way the Kololo defeated the Ndebele in the Tlokoa Plateau in Kolomo.
- The hill at which the fighting took place was named Thaba yabasadi (the women's mountain) in honor of the brave Kololo women who took part in the battle.
- The Kololo finally arrived in Bulozhi which was under the rule of the Litunga and Mubhukwanu.
- Sebetwane took advantage of a weak state divided by succession disputes.

- The kingdom had been divided into south and north and there was also division into Lozi proper and the conquered subject peoples.
- Settlement in Buluzi Sebetwane found support of the local people as well as the Ndambe who did not like the Litunga. Sebetwane defeated the Litunga and forced him into exile.
- He took the heir to the throne and all the young men of the royal family and educated them as members of the Kololo aristocracy.
- The Kololo control of Buluzi was hampered by invasions from the Msene-Ngoni under Nxaba in 1843 that were driven away at great cost.
- The Ndebele also invaded in 1845 and 1850 but were cleverly defeated as they were lured to an island where they were later flooded.
- The final defeat of the Msene-Ngoni and the Ndebele brought unity in Sebetwane's new kingdom.
- Trusted local chiefs were left in charge of their areas while some of them were given positions in local government councils.
- Sebetwane mixed freely with his subjects, both the Kololo and the Lozi. Sebetwane took wives from among the conquered groups to ensure unity and trust.
- He encouraged the use of the Kololo language in his kingdom.
- Raids were carried out into the surrounding Tonga, Livingstone, Illa, Mazabukwa and north western Zimbabwe.
- Even in areas where Kololo rule was permanent Sebetwane did not force the conquered people into the age regiment system.
- He allowed the Lozi to continue with their political and administrative institutions but did his best to persuade them to adopt his methods.
- He placed one or two Kololo families in every village as Lords of the Land. Villages were grouped into provinces under Kololo provincial governors.
- Subject peoples were encouraged to cultivate the land but paid tribute in grain, nuts, spears, hoes, ivory, skins and canoes.
- He took some of the tribute and distributed it among his people. In 1850 the capital was moved Naliele at the southern end of the upper Zambezi flood plain to Dinyati for strategic and economic reasons.
- At Dinyati Sebetwane was able to defend his kingdom against any threat from the south. Dinyati was also good for cattle as it was situated where the wagon road from Ngamiland and the Cape ended.
- Dinyati was also free from mosquitoes. The end of Kololo rule Upon his death, Sebetwane was succeeded by his daughter who in turn abdicated her throne in favour of her brother Sekeletu.
- Sekeletu, however lacked his father's courage, intelligence and ability as a leader. He did not trust his official advisers especially the Lozi.
- He became suspicious of his councillors and got them killed.
- After he became a leper Sekeletu accused most people especially the Lozi of bewitching him.
- During Sekeletu's rule the Kololo became arrogant and treated the Lozi as inferior or even slaves.

- The Lozi did all the farm work while the Kololo did the harvesting.
- The Kololo became involved in the slave trade with the Portuguese in 1853. The Kololo from the South were decimated by malaria as they had less resistance to the disease.
- Sekeletu's death was followed by succession disputes and civil war which destroyed the state. Tired of the Kololo rule the Lozi organised themselves and rose up in arms against their rulers.
- They were supported by the Tonga and the Kololo were defeated.
- Old men were killed and young men and women were incorporated into the Lozi kingdom.
- The desire by the Lozi to be independent proved to be the major drive behind the collapse of the Kololo state.