~~1/22~~. s.298(23) translated copy K32/22

Towana burial custom. B. Mogorosi.

298(23) pp.1-4 [a1] Death, Burial etc. K32/22 1/4

1.

When a person became ill, a doctor was consulted. If he were bewitched, he would state, and if his illness was a natural one, he would also say so. That is the reason why the Batswana consulted a doctor even if a person was dead to throw divining bones to explain the cause of his death. There is death from natural causes after illness, and people said that he was taken away by his departed spirits. There is death from witchcraft also. Death from witchcraft results when a person has eaten drugged food to cause ~~him~~ harm or when medicine is used to send a disease to a person or when medicine is placed on his path. Another death was caused by one bieng injured by something.

Witchcraft: The Batswana have medicines for doctoring which they dig in the ground. Wizards know even those which kill a person. A doctor cures a person who is bewitched, sometimes he fails. ~~to cure him~~ But with the knowledge of divining they are able to find out if a person is bewitched. A person died either ~~in~~ the house or outside. A person died outside ~~when~~ there were no people about who could see ~~him~~ ~~when he was~~ dying. When people noticed that a person was dead, his relatives were called to have a look at him together with ~~his~~ those who nursed him. When a person was seen to be dying, the children and very young people were sent away so that they should not get a shock when they see a person dying. When a person died, his eyes were closed, he was made to sit on his haunches and his arms were folded. After death, he was covered with his ~~blankets or~~ karosses and laid down in that position at the spot where he died. The corpse was washed by elderly women. People were then

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told that So and So has passed away, and people gathered together here to be on guard. There were some who actually kept a watch close to the corpse. When the corpse was taken away for burial, it was wrapped in an ox skin and made to sit in the grave on its haunches facing sunset so that when the deceased rose again he should have no difficulty in standing up. The corpse was never examined but a decision was arrived at by casting bones after the burial. A person was buried the day following that of his death, he was buried on the second day. When a person had died, the chief and all the people as well as his relatives were informed. People brought food and small stock, it was said that those were for his burial. A man was buried in the cattle kraal. A woman was buried in the house or in the back yard. The grave was dug during the night out of sight of the children and the young, the corpse was also buried during the night so that the children should not see where their father or mother was buried. They were told that he had gone away on a journey and would return after some years. In the cattle kraal, the grave was filled to the level of the manure so that nothing could be seen of it.

Earth was thrown into the grave and the top was smeared with dung mixed with earth.

Only adults went to the burial. The relatives of the deceased were the people who conducted the ceremony in charge and friends joined in the work. The corpse was carried by men. No prayers were said like nowadays. A person was just buried amid sorrow and weeping. The older people comforted the relatives of the deceased so that they should not weep

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increasingly, as that would frighten the children. They used to say: rest in peace. Appeal for rains on our behalf to the spirits where you are going. Food where death occurred was never salted. Sheep, goats and cattle were slaughtered for the people to eat. The bereaved people shaved their hair. Other people were buried in the veld as it is done nowadays. They were also wrapped in the skin of an ox for burial. Their feet and arms were tied up and they faced west. A person who was buried in the veld was buried at daytime. The grave was filled with earth and stones were placed on the top of it. People got a witchdoctor for the grave to doctor it against wizards so that they may not come to take out the corpse. The Batswana did not put anything at the graves of their people, because they maintained that the dead person would not see those things. One could not be able to take out the bones of the deceased person or to bury one of their people in the same grave. They only placed them next to each other. The people were buried in one place. ~~Northern~~ Furthermore, people of different families were not mixed. The children were afraid of going to the graveyard because they thought that the people would kill them. The chief was buried at a different place, and not where other people were buried. The people were not buried at the same place. If a person died from drowning, he was buried in the river. If he was bitten to death by a crocodile, he was buried with the garments he was wearing. If he was bitten by a lion, he was buried at the spot where it had bitten him. Murderers were thrown alive into precipices. Those who

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died in the battlefield were devoured by vultures. The house of a deceased person or one in which a person died was smeared with wet cattle dung and earth on its floor, his belongings were spread out and shaken off by relatives such as his father's sisters, grandmothers and the maternal uncle's wife. They threw earth and ashes on his garments and beat them with sticks to make them clean. The house is smeared with wet dung unmixed with earth and after that, they smeared the house and the front yard. The people who had carried the corpse were said to be unclean because of handling it and the earth of the grave. That is the reason why they had to wash their hands on their arrival at home. The wife or husband and children wore mourning clothes so that it could be known that they are in grief through their bereavement. Their sign was the shaving of their hair, not making festivals or dancing and singing. For an older person the mourning period is one year, for a young person it is six months. If a man is dead, the maternal uncle gets a witchdoctor for the children and their mother to cleanse them with the contents of a sheep's stomach mixed with 'mosiama' (plant used for ceremonial purification) and other medicines for cleansing. They wash their bodies with them. Now when the period of mourning is over, they leave their hair to grow, they dance and sing and drink beer. The Batswana say: A man may not marry before period of four years has expired after the death of his first wife. The same applies to his wife. If he or she marries quickly, they say that he or she is the one who killed her or him in order to marry or get married again.

end s 298

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