

Totemism of the Tswana Tribes.

Tr 16

There are very many Batlhaping in our country but even though that is so, we do not have the same tribal totem and we don't even come from the same person. There are the Batlhaping of Maldi and those of Sikwe, those of Moduana, those of Molehe, those of Moremana, those of Mamathebe, those of Mamapula, those of Makwere and others whom we do not know how they came to be the Batlhaping, or which Batlhaping they are, and when they are asked, they decline to express an opinion on the matter, they stop short of telling the whole truth, they contradict themselves, just because they like the name of the Batlhaping.

The Batlhaping of Maldi have the koodoo as their tribal totem, they eat it but they do not kill it. They also have the fish as their totem and they eat it. It is said that they did not have the fish as their totem formerly, it became their totem because they ate fish at the Vaal river and for that reason they were called the Batlhaping, that being a term of contempt. The Batlhaping of Maldi are those who have mixed with those of Sikwe and those of Mamathebe. The senior ones are those of Mamathebe. Those of Mamapula have also mixed those of Mamathebe, but they are smaller. Those of Sikwe: Sikwe was a snake which lay outstretched in the middle of the road, and when those of Mamathebe and those of Mamapula were travelling from the country of Sekupu in the East, they found the snake lying stretched across the road. As it was dark, some became afraid of jumping over the snake, they went round it when the moon came out, and from that time, they were called the Sikwe-of-the moon (Sikwe-a-ngwedi.) They had an ant bear as their totem, they do not eat it neither do they kill it. When it is new moon, they rebuke it and say: "I have seen you being a new moon, bring to us plenty of crops". Moduana was the brother of Molehe and Sikwe, he liked chieftainship and position very much and they parted obstreperously. He was called Moduana and those of his family were called the people of Moduana, their totem was a koodoo, they eat it but they do not kill it, and they do not make a mat of its skin. Moremane is the younger brother of Moduana. The Moremane people have a koodoo as their totem,

they eat it but they do not kill it. It is said that formerly, they were the serfs of the Mamathebe tribe, and they were the Barolong of Sehunelo. When they increased, they called themselves the Batlhaping. The Molehe people have the koodoo as their totem, they eat it but they do not kill it. The Molehes mixed with the Mamathebes by intermarrying in the 'makgotlas'. They mixed with those of Mamapula because Mamapula had married the eldest daughter of Molehe. The Mamathemes are the Mmachoana. They are the senior people to all and their totem is the ant bear and the fish. But the fish is not their totem, it was just because they ate fish owing to the Vaal river having dried up when they came to it as they were starving. The Mamathebes do not eat the ant bear, and they don't even kill it. If one of them dared kill it, a female child died and that person was fined one head of cattle. Moremana, Molehe, Moduana and Mamapula call Mamathebe their elder brother, and he in turn calls them servants, but they intermarry and work together. The Mamapulas are juniors to the Mamathebe. Their totem is the ant bear also, as they are the children of one person. They do not eat the ant bear, neither do they kill it.

The Makveres are the Batlhaping, they are also the Barolong. The totem of some of them is the eland and the totem of the others is the koodoo. But their real totem is not known by any one. It is said that Makvere was a male child who went astray during the wars, and he got to where the Barolong lived. His name was Makvere. When they had brought him up, they married him to a Morolong girl. After his marriage, he went to a village of the Batlhaping, and lived there. As he was still young, it was not known to what tribe he belonged and his people were unknown. They have no true statement about his tribe. They do not abstain from eating or handling anything as the others do. Other Batlhapings belong to the Modiboa tribe and they are one family with the Mamathebes, their totem is the eland. It is said that they were together with the Mamathebes when they came away from the Sekupus in the East, and when they found the snake lying stretched across the road, they returned home saying that they were still going to take some medicines from the horns they had left at home so that when they did tread upon the snake, it could not kill them. Then on their way, they slept at

daytime as they were hungry. While they slept, a small male child crawled away until it got to where an eland was sleeping. As the child noticed that it couldn't hear and its anus was open, and with the sense of a child thought that the eland was dead. It thrust its hand to take out the liver. When the eland felt the child's hand, it woke out of its sleep and grabbed the child's hand and ran away with it. No one could assist the child. They then took the eland as their totem. But they kill it and even eat it. The whole tribe respects the totem of its chief and the members of his family. They also respect the totem as though it is the people's chief or their elder brother but nevertheless, they do not worship him. This tribe, is one, as they are all the Batlhaping, but they do not have the same animal as their totem. They are divided into various groups (makgotla), some are those of the Phatlha, some are of the Khiba, some are those of the 'Kgotla', some are those of the Tshega and others are children of one person. When they multiplied, they called themselves with different tribal totems. And although they are the children of one person only by origin, they intermarry, even if one calls the other the child of my paternal uncle or the child of my grandfather. For example, the Moremana's call the Mamathebas the "children of their grandfather". The Moduanas call the Moremanas "the children of paternal aunt and the children of maternal aunt. They are related to each other just as the water of many small rivers flows into a big river and become stirred up so that it cannot be known where this water comes from or that. Some respect their seniors according to the family line and the 'lekgotla' since they know that they are their chiefs. Those who are very much despised are those who belong to the Makwere and the Modiboa tribes. But they still intermingle and eat together. There are however those who are disliked, those who are called the serfs.

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