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Domestic Life and rules for
behaviour

S. Naooa 1/4

According to ancient custom, a woman is mistress of the house, and a man is master of the stock. A woman controls utensils and all the household effects. She can lend a pot to another woman without consulting her husband, yes she can lend others her dishes and bowls just as she pleases. A man is master in the cattle, goat and sheep kraal. That is to say he can lend anyone his cow, oxen without consulting his wife. The woman has also a say in the cattle kraal for she ^{also} has cattle which belong to her, although she cannot lend an ox to someone.

Amongst the ^{man's} cattle in the kraal there are some which have been branded for the children. The father brands cattle for his son or daughter. When their father has done so, he informs his wife; He says, "I have branded the calf of that cow for my son or my daughter". Even amongst the sheep, the children are given theirs so that when their father or mother dies, each child should know which cattle belong to him or her and thus avoid disputes. If their mother ~~has~~ dies first, the girl is allowed to select the dresses she wants from those of her mother, the boy is given nothing; he too when his father dies, is entitled to select what he wants from the clothes of his father. In the olden times, a man did not gather fuel for his wife, it was the duty of every woman of the Mpatlha tribe to gather fuel for herself. It was the law of the ^{'kgotta'} men of the Mpatlha tribe that when a woman returned from gathering fuel, she should pass the 'kgotta' and deposit on piece of wood there. If a woman passed the 'kgotta' without

depositing a piece of wood there, the men refused to allow her to take fire from their hearth in order to alight her fire at her home. Every woman in the morning came to the 'kgotla' to take fire to go and kindle her own. They said that a woman was a broom because every morning she took a broom to sweep the house and the ^{whole} 'lapa', she did the same thing also in the afternoon.

The men of the Mfatlha tribe in the olden days used to get up early in the morning and go to the 'kgotla', that was their bounden duty. Even if a man had his own work to do, like weaving a grain basket or making a skin blanket, he did that at the 'kgotla'. His duty at home was to build the house, to make a door and to look after the kraals of their cattle, sheep and goats. The woman looked after the walls and smeared them with dung mixed with earth and smoothed them with a ^{smoothing} flat stone, as well as smoothing the 'lapa'. When the wife's sister visits her, her first duty is to discuss the ^{visitor} matter with her husband. She will say, "You see the child has come home, now what is it going to eat". The husband will perhaps brush his moustache and say, "We don't know, how is that kid? I think we could make some gravy for the child". The wife will then say to her husband, "I don't know father, you know best". The man will then call the boys to catch it and slaughter it. Now she may want to give her sister second hand dresses. If a mother visits a child at her home, she does not go empty handed. She goes with a broom or a small clay pot or earth nuts or beans or the seed of pumpkins. By taking something for a child in this way, she wants to make her happy and say, "Mother has come, she has

brought me things which I did not have.

Now when ^{your} mother happens to come wearing only a kaross, on the day of her departure her child or daughter-in-law will give her a blanket. When a father-in-law visits children, he should take something with him, a table spoon or a thong to be brayed or a garden pick handle or tobacco. By so doing, the son-in-law will be able to give his father-in-law clothes without hesitation. If their father needs money for his tax, he asks it from his child, the wife and her husband will then discuss his request between themselves and come to an agreement as to what they could do. If they have nothing in their possession they borrow from their friends. When the principal wife has an inferior wife to her ~~side~~ nearby, she calls her if she wants to smear the floor of the lapa, to come and help her.

If she is perhaps in the family way, she sends for her mother to come and help her with the work in the lands and even at home. If a married woman is pregnant for the first time, she is sent to her parents' home for confinement.

That is a well known law among the Mfathha people. Every woman whose time for confinement is near, is not allowed to see frightening animals or to do heavy work. They say that when a woman is pregnant and she sees anything which frightens, she may give birth to a child that resembles it. A certain woman of the Mfathha tribe once saw a cripple whose name was Pontsho and who lived in the village of Matlammeng. When she saw this cripple she laughed loud because he had no legs. When she gave birth to a child, the child resembled Pontsho the cripple. It is said that when a

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woman is pregnant and she is frightened by something or she laughs a dumb or crippled person, when her child is born, it is born a cripple or a dumb person. According to the law of the ancient times, when a pregnant woman ^{has} given birth, her husband refrains ^{from having} sexual intercourse with her for a period of one year; if he does ^{not}, they say that it is taboo. Nowadays they don't do that, after only three to six months, you will find a man ^{already} sleeping under one blanket with his wife.

When a man has quarrelled with his wife and he beats her with a stick, she takes shelter in another house or she deserts ^{and goes} to the home of her parents whether it is nearby or far away. The husband will follow her to her home and on arrival he will say, "I had an argument with my wife for this and that reason and now she has deserted me". The woman will then be called and they will be judged by their maternal uncles. If it is their first quarrel, according to the Ndebele custom, he is not fined, but if he beats his wife again, then he is fined. If a man has ploughed a field, weeding it is his wife's duty. They help one another when they reap or when they uproot trees to prepare a field. The woman is mostly responsible for the food.

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