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BAKGATLA K32/14

LS. Madisa b

T16. Kxatla history, marriage law and other customs.

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The Bakgatla are a tribe which consists of four sections.

There are the Bakgatla of Mosetlhe, the senior section, the Bakgatla of Kgafela, the Bakgatla of Mmakau-a-Modisa the younger brother of Kgafele, the Bakgatla of Motsha the younger brother of Mmakau.

All these sections come from Mosetlhe. The mother of the sections we have mentioned is one woman called Ditsamai-a-Mmusi. The chief of these sections are also four, the fifth is Sekukuni, one that cried in the stomach, of Rakau. There is Mosetlhe, Kgafele, Mmakau and Motsha.

In the beginning, they lived at Jotelong (Marula Kop) where the Bakgatla come from. In course of time there arose misunderstanding over the chieftainship. Many people followed Kgafele though the chieftainship was that of Mosetlhe. Then there arose many sections afterwards although at the beginning they were only two, the Mosetlhe, the Kgafele. Their younger brothers also began to form their own chieftainship. When Kgafele noticed this trouble, he got afraid of his elder brother Mosetlhe and then broke away with a very large section of the tribe.

The Bakgatla of Kgafela.

Although Mosetlhe was grieved by this breaking up of the chieftainship, he was particularly hurt by Kgafela who had taken away a large section of the tribe. He went to Mabyanatsiri with Kgafela begat Masellane-a-Tebele. Masellane begat Pilane-a-Matsho, and the younger brother of Pilane was Kgotlomaswe. They lived at Mabyanatsiri until those chiefs came in their order and until Pilane became chief. Kgotlomaswe began to give Pilane his elder brother trouble. Pilane left in an angry mood and went to the Matebele at Modipane and there Laka-a-Masebe said to Pilane: "I cannot accept you under me since you are a chief, the best I can do is to give you some of the tribesmen to pay tribute to you; and I will keep you for only four years, at the end of which time I will return you".

After the expiration of the four years Laka-a-Masobe returned him, having given him a lot of cattle and flocks of sheep. On the way, it was then that he sang his praises, well knowing that he would not kill his younger brother Kgotlamaswe. Here are his praise songs: "Ka Pilane .....Tau ya Mafiri" Although he had told Laka that they would not kill Kgotlamaswe, yet they killed great numbers of people who were with him, but he himself escaped with others, who were called the Bakgatla of Mmanaana on account of the red and white coloured calf which they tied up in the cattle kraal so that after their escape, it may remain bellowing to cause Pilane's followers to think that they were still there.

From there they left Mabyanatsiri and they found a chief of the Bafurutshu by the name of Swalle on the mountains which are today called "Pilansberg", that is to say, the mountains of Pilane. He drove that man away who lived in an opening between two hills, known today as "Saulspoort" that is to say Swallespoort the opening of Swalle. They lived there and in the end Kgamanyane the son of Pilane from whom the mountains derived their name, became chief. There the Europeans began to trouble them. They commenced by enticing him with bags of mealie meal and later told him to give them boys and girls to become labourers. Then on account of there being no understanding, they began to ~~annoy~~ give him trouble. Kgamanyane began to escape from Paul Kruger who was their Commandant, as he caused them trouble by inspanning them like cattle.

He ~~then~~ went away with very many of them to Bechuanaland where he came across Setshela-a-Mokwena. He went to him and asked him to give him a place of shelter. He then gave him a place of shelter at Tshwenetshwene. They ploughed there year by year and when Setshela noticed that they were getting a good harvest, he said to Kgamanyane ~~stixxixi~~: "You must pay tribute to me". As Kgamanyan did not want to pay tribute to another chief while he himself was a chief, he trekked to Mochudi where they now are. There Kgamanyane begat Lentswe the chief of the Bakgatla. During

Lentswe's rule, there were wars which took place between them and the Europeans. It was during the time when the Bakgatla Mphobathe were under the chieftainship of Ramone the younger brother of Lentswe. The Bakgatla captured many cattle during that war. These are those who still call themselves the Bakgatla of Kgafela.

#### Cowitship and Marriage in the olden times

##### Part I

In the olden times many customs were practised which are prohibited today by religion. That is to say, the laws of the churches forbid these many customs. There was a custom in a family of parents taking care where their children marry, or where they are married. A child was not allowed to fulfil his wish to go and marry outside the family that was not of his people, if it were a girl, she was not allowed to get married to one whom her parents did not agree upon themselves. In this manner, the parents maintained the custom of deciding whom their children must marry or to whom they must be married.

If there was a young man in the home, the parents were very vigilant in finding a girl who might be attractive in the young man's family. If she could not be found, they waited for one who was yet to be born. Sometimes they told a woman of their family who was still in a pregnant state, that if she gave birth to a girl, that girl would be married by their child.

What they said was strictly observed.

That was what happened, this boy, whether he liked or not, by order of his parents, had to await the accomplishment of the decision they had come to. And if while the boy's parents were waiting, things went the way they had wished, and a girl happened to be born, she would be allowed to grow until she became of age. During all that time the parents of the boy and those of the girl will have come to an agreement. Eventually, the time would come for the girl to be asked for. The affair would now become a public one. People will be picked out from the boy's family. The choice was not made at random. The people picked out

would be those whose duty it was to undertake what they would be to. They would then be sent to ask the wife to come to her new home, the same woman whose marriage was arranged before she was born.

In this family one of his paternal uncles and his elder brother if already married, will be picked out. He is to be accompanied by his wife. The paternal uncle is also to take his wife along with him. On their arrival, after greetings and sitting down, the matter is introduced by the boy's paternal aunt to the girl's mother by saying, "So and so's mother, we are here in quest of a calabash of water." Now, the girl's mother gets up and if she likes, calls the girl's father and tells him the matters for which the parents of the boy have come.

5 In that case, they also can call their relatives to come and listen together with them, more especially the maternal uncles of the girl, who if they are far away, could be represented by her paternal uncles. Now, after having heard the news, they will reply as they think fit. If they like they will say "The woman is yours we have decided upon her". Now the people who have been sent by the boy's parents return home. After a little while, this giving away of the woman having been done, a feast is made at the home of the girl, and the food at this feast is beer, porridge and meat of either a goat or a sheep. Now the boy's party, the same people who asked for the woman and others who might join them are invited to come and eat the food. In Setswana when reference is made to this food, it is said the boy's party is going to eat mmoto at the girl's home or at the home of the people-in-law. They will leave to go to feast at their people-in-law's place on the appointed day; they will have a very nice time in the company of the boy himself if he is nearby. Those who drink beer will have a lot to drink and those who do not drink also will have mats laid out in the hut for them as well as ox skin or goat skin mats and those who drink have also their skin mats and mats laid out for them in another hut. At the commencement things go quietly but in the end when the food has had its effect on them, they begin to sing songs and to get away from the mats singing.

At this time, the girl and the boy have been given time to converse with each other in their hut. The people of the olden times used to build quite a number of huts. Then about dusk the son-in-law and his party returned home.

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A little later again, after their return from their people-in-law, they have also got to prepare a feast so that the girl's people should also come to see the home. But they do not come with the girl. They leave her at home. They enjoy themselves in the same way as they did when they were at the girl's home. Ni mats have been spread out for them, mats which are better than those that were produced at the home of the girl because in their case they are trying to give a favourable impression. When the food is finished they also return home in the afternoon. The food of this particular feast is called by some "mmoto" and by others mabona-lapa (inspection of the home). From that time, the girl is under all circumstances given over to the boy's parents. It is the boy now who will begin to betroth her.

The custom of betrothing was kept in many different ways seeing that people are not like teeth which have the same length. They are not of equal standing. They differed according to their status. Those who called themselves the cream of the people, gave their child an iron ring. This ring is made of brass. It was made by men by means of a mould. It is melted in a large pot and it is then poured into the mould while it is liquid. When it has thickened, it is then taken out. It comes out now being a fine round iron. It was worn round the neck and you would find it shining brilliantly.

It has also to be taken by the people who went to ask marriage from their home-in-law. When it was bought for the first time with money, when its makers were diminishing among the Batswana, its price was one pound. A young man whose young girl did not wear it was of no dignity.

Others possessed garments of wild animal skins. The young man must prove to his father that he is a man by going out to hunt with his dogs, his assegai and stick. It is known that there he

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will meet with a leopard, a jackal and other beautiful looking wild animals, such as the leopard, wild cat and . As knows that their skins are good for making skins, he must then try to show his prowess in deed by killing a lot of them in order to come and make a coloured blanket for his girl. Sometimes he will manage to kill some of them and with them he will be able to get the blanket known as "matlisiwa".

After this then the people-in-law know that the son-in-law is a man of mighty deeds and they begin to treat their child differently from the others.

### Part 2.

Although on many occasions the people of the young man's father go to the home of the people-in-law, the girl is not one who will like to find herself frequenting them or wishing to speak to them or laughing with them even the young man himself. On many occasions when she sees them, she goes out of the back entrance to the home of So and So. By so doing, they consider her a polite person. The custom of the olden days was that there were people who married more than one wife. If a man was liked by some members of his family, he could still be given a young girl to marry and he could do all the necessary things for her just like any unmarried young man.

After this gift of the blanket (matlisiwa), comes the time for the young man to marry. The same people who had gone to ask for the woman go to the home-in-law to inform the parents of the girl that the young man wishes to marry. Sometimes they come there to find that she is a person who is still termed "ngwale" (a girl who has reached the stage of entering into the initiation rites), that is to say, one who has not started to go to the ceremony for girls at the age of puberty. In that case they will be notified that she is ~~is~~ still a "ngwale", so that the young man's party should not be surprised in the future if her age group wants her for the ceremony. After this the question of "bogadi" is introduced that is, they state what they want for their child. They may demand a lot but the young man must state what he has.

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They then go home to relate the question of "bogadi". After discussing the matter, they inform the parents-in-law when the "bogadi", will be brought. If it is to come the next day, fires are kept burning the whole night at the home of the girl. The girl is also there, placed on a wooden seat, well dressed in the blanket which was brought as a gift ("Matlisiswa"), she is being praised by her parents and her aunts and grandmother in the following words:

Se ria-rialo di tswa marojana,

Di tswa khunwana di mabele a thata.

At sunrise, the "bogadi" cattle from the young man's home arrive, being driven by well-developed young men. As they enter the gate of the kraal the women throw dust on them until they are forced back, they wave pieces of sackings and the cattle ran as fast as they can. The boy who drives them runs until he spits a clod of blood. Later the men at the kgotla say "Let them come in". Now they are being inspected while they are standing at the Kgotla. Those who drove them have already been invited to the "lapa". The girl's grandmothers and the wives of his elder brother have got hold of her and given her the sticks of those who drove the cattle and the blanket of her father-in-law who is all the time with them to teach her that she is today one of their family.

9 Before or after the bogadi there is food which is prepared known as "disetlwa-ka-metsho-a-dipona-meno". At this feast, the people of the young man's parents are invited to come and see the girl's teeth, and the people of the girl's parents to come and see the young man's teeth. That is to say they may now talk to each other and laugh with each other freely. Those who have not had a good opportunity of seeing the girl, see her and those who have not had a good opportunity of seeing the young man, see him. They see their teeth also when they speak.

On the wedding day, there is not much work. Food is cooked at the home of the young man as well as at the girl's home. Now the family of the young man go to the girl's home to eat the food prepared for the visit (dijo tsa morallo).

There they spend only one day feasting, and on the following day they go to the young man's home to eat the food prepared for this particular visit (morrallo). There they may even spend three days. When they go out of the "lapa" of the girl's parents to go to that of the young man, the girl gets up and stands on her feet in her parents' home, in readiness to leave with her witnesses or her guards. When she is about to go out, she stops and refuses to proceed. There then they will begin to give her presents, e.g. wristlets, arm or leg wire rings and beautiful blankets as she goes out of the front yard. But if she stops and refuses to walk, lot of presents are given.

Now when they have finished all the food of the "marallo" feast other food is cooked and this is called "lefiso", at the young man's parents-in-law and also at the young man's home. The "lefiso" is eaten at the young man's home first. After that they go to eat it at the home of the girl.

During the meals of the "lefiso", porridge and meat of the luncheon is put in the bowl of clay and given to their owners. When they have finished the parents of the young man or those who have come to take the wife to her new home will in the evening speak to the parents of the girl asking that the girl should go home. Then she leaves with her witnesses to go to the young man's home. The next morning when the witnesses get up, they return home. She is now called "ngwetsi" (daughter-in-law). She has been given the law of womanhood and everything is ended.

#### Death and Burial.

There are many customs today, which are practised in connection with attending the dead. According to the custom of the present day, there is Christianity and civilisation which are good and which our grandfathers did not know.

In the olden times when a person died attendance to the person was mostly the duty of men. When the women heard that one of the number was dead, they got afraid of creating a noise of weeping, owing to their respect of the law of the menfolk, and for



fear of frightening their children. The men would send others to awaken those who ought to know about the death of that particular person and about burying him, because burial took place in the night time even, if death would have been known in the daytime. In the dead of night, the men begin to dig a grave ( a  
 11 round hole) on the stoep of the house or in the back yard or in the cattle kraal. Silently they take the corpse and tie up the feet with a cord, bent down together with the folded arms and they place him in a sitting position in the grave. If it is a child they get a pot for it in which it could fit in and they place it also in a sitting position. From that time they wake the women up if it is on the stoep or in the house, they will smoothen the floor and smear it with dung in the night before anybody gets up.

In the morning when the people get up the children also ask "Where is Jo and Jo?" The answer is "He was taken away by a hyena during the night". Now a beast is slaughtered at the dead man's kraal or anywhere at the home of his people. This is the "mogoga" beast (one slaughtered for a dead man). The wife of the deceased makes porridge for the members of the deceased's family so that they may come and despair of him or know that he has gone for good. The porridge is not one that is made sour, it is fresh porridge. Meat is not salted. If possible, beer is made to make the people to forget the grief. Now the position is quite different. There is today, a cemetery. In the olden times, anywhere and everywhere, where possible was a grave.

#### The building of a new village.

Before the whole job, people must be careful of what they are doing because that job more than anything else, was in the hands of the owners of the village. Men go out in the early morning to inspect a locality where the village should be built. On their return the owner of the village gets a witch doctor which should go to lay out the village before anything is touched. The  
 12 following day, the witch doctor and the owner of the village namely the chief, men, wives and all their children leave the village in which they leave to go and be established together with their

village. It will be a great task, those concerned following each other holding adzes, it is the doctor's orders. The children of each "laps" stand in the order of their birth, omitting those who are dead. A man holds an axe and chops while the doctor is treating him with medicines. The woman takes an adze and chops a stubble, the doctor treats her with medicines. The first born child takes hold of an adze and afterwards hands it to his younger brother whilst they are being ~~saw~~ doctored right up to the end. If the first born child is absent, being away on a visit or at work, his bowl is doctored.

The following morning the men and women take axes and adzes to clean up where each of them will have his house.

If they removed their place of abode to go to a distant place, all this work was done by them coming from their camping places. But if they move to a near place, they accomplish this work coming from their village. This having been done, the village is established. They can now build their huts as they like but before entering it, they begin by building kraals for their herds and flocks.

### Birth.

There are not many who observe the birth custom as it should be a good number however still follow the ancient custom although it appears that they have diverted from it owing to the fact that people, not being teeth, are not equal.

13 Some have self control, that is they have not ~~max~~ many of the relatives who are alive. But those who have relatives would do as the people of the olden times did if they had that knowledge and love.

In the olden times if a woman gave birth to a child, in the day time or in the night, some time would be allowed to lapse or the people would wait for sunrise and then the relatives present would send a messenger to inform other relatives. Then all of them would come individually to offer their greetings and to hear about the child whether it is a male or female. If it is a boy they say: "Let him grow and mature, and marry (bring a

daughter-in-law into the home"). If it is a girl they say, "Let her grow and reach a marriageable age so that the lobola cattle should come into the kraal".

From that time every one knows what to do for the child. One will bring kaffir corn in a basket, the other will pledge himself to bring milk every morning; some of the relatives who have no gifts stamp kaffir corn for the lying-in-woman and draw water for her from the river. The work of the old women is to go and collect fire wood. In all this work, there is one among the women who is perhaps the wife of her elder brother or the wife of her paternal uncle who has been chosen to attend to her during her confinement. Her duty is to cook for her and to see that she is ~~all~~ clean. There was not much to cook, it was only hot thin porridge contained in a wooden vessel or a clay bowl. But the vessel of lying-in-woman must be used by her only. In front of the house in which she is, a small pole is placed. It is a long thin pole lying across the front of the house. It is to prohibiting young women and young men from entering this house; recently married daughter-in-law are also prohibited. This does not mean that others besides these are allowed. There are those who do enter individually.

These attendants will carry on their duties until the child's navel is healed, that is to say, until it is able to go outside, when the mother is strong enough to work. Others who have nobody to attend to the , as soon as the child is born, the next morning the slaughter a sheep or a goat for confinement. Even the period of remaining in the house depends on lying in without assistants and the birth of the people. But even those who have no assistance at confinement do not remain for more than three months. When the child has gone out of the house, they leave it to look after itself.

#### The Herding and milking of cattle.

The custom of herding cattle is almost one. It began to differ among the Batswana when fencing by European methods started, where cattle were kept alone in camps. In the olden days, there were cattle posts. The cattle posts are a long distance away from home. Boys live at the cattle posts. A hut is built for them to

live in. They are not cared for very much by kaffir corn and mealie being sent to them; no, they are left alone with the cattle with instructions to take proper care of them. It was a known fact that they would live on their milk. They can live ~~there~~ there for many years without returning home. It is only their fathers who at certain intervals pay them a visit and go to the cattle posts to inspect the cattle.

15 In summer the herd boys know that there is a long time for grazing. If they sleep in the kraal, they let them out for grazing at a reasonable time. If they sleep out in the veld, they must drive them to the kraal to allow the calves to suck. On many occasions they sleep in the veld if it is known that they are not cattle which go long distances or go away for good.

In winter when they sleep in the kraal they let them out of the kraal early in the morning because they know that the time for grazing is short. Now, on those two occasions when they sleep in the kraal, they graze from the morning, and come home in the afternoon when they return from drinking water. The herd boy always takes care not to mix his cattle with those of other herdboys, even if they are driven off to graze, he knows their separate grazing lands, so that the bull of his home should not leave the cattle to be out of control and so that no other bull should introduce a different breed among his cattle. These are the instructions given to him by the men. In building a cattle kraal care was taken to divide it into three sections. There is a section called the kraal proper; where the cattle sleep. There is a small kraal, where the large unweaned calves and little fat calves are kept after being separated from their mothers. There is an open space; it is where the milk cows are milked in the morning and afternoon. The herdboy should take care that the milk of the large unweaned calf's mother is not mixed with that of the mother little calves. That of the mothers of large unweaned calves is good milk which is rich, and it is the milk that is fermented to make sour milk. The practice of the herdboys is to milk the mothers of the little calves first and those of the

16 large unweaned calves afterwards. There are other cows whose milk is not mixed with that of the little calves and that of the large unweaned calves; that is the beestings (kgatsele). As soon as this milk comes from the cattle kraal, it is cooked and when it begins to be hot a boy stirs it continually until it boils. It is then taken off the fire and it is continually stirred again until it cools down. When it has cooled down you will find that it has become thick, the colour having changed into yellow. The boys then eat it with their hands. The cow will give beestings for a few days but afterwards it becomes milk. Boys can always drink the milk of the little calves' mothers. It is good because it is more of a laxative than that of the mothers of large unweaned calves, which is thickened in a skin sack, the skin of an ox or calf which is brayed by the men. They must take care that the whey is properly let out of the skin sack. If the boys take proper care of the milk it becomes a valuable diet.

Since some of the calves are bigger ones which do not live by milk alone, they must be let out of the kraal after the cattle have gone and they must be brought back before the cattle return home. Among the calves, the boys pick out half-grown oxen and make a hole in the nose through which they insert a cord. They ride them and visit their friends.

#### The doctoring and care of cattle.

17 There are quite a number of medicines used for curing cattle. In the olden times a certain medicine was known which was to be found in the veld. It was called "Sebete". It is a bush that does not grow high, it spreads out like a melon and its leaves are broad. The calves were given this medicine to drink when they were sick and the cattle also. The boys took care also that the cattle do not eat burnt grass because they would get anthrax. If a beast was found to have died from anthrax, it was buried in a hole together with the contents of its stomach or it was burned. There were always some people who ate the meat of cattle suffering from this disease. If a person ate this meat, he was not allowed

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to enter the cattle kraal without having washed himself. If the blood of a beast suffering from anthrax dropped on you, if you are not lucky the disease will get into you.

The calves have a disease of diarrhoea caused by sucking plenty of milk from their mothers. Another way in which young calves contracted this disease was by sucking from their mothers. The herdboys took care to allow grown up calves and not the young ones to suck. Finally, they took care that the cattle did not have bush ticks on their teats; they also took care that the milk did not fall on the fire because that caused the ~~hard~~ teats to crack.

At the cattle posts, there will be bullocks which must be castrated. The practice was to castrate them in the winter because they knew that wounds healed quickly in winter. They knew very well that in summer the wounded parts would swell and they would all die. In that way, they took great care of the times of the year. It is during these days that we see these things done with European medicines and castrating is done with European instruments.

### Public Meeting.

There are three kinds of meetings: Firstly, we know the chief's public meeting with the tribe, that is to say a gathering for which a messenger goes out to the villages in the neighbourhood to inform the people about it, to go to the chief's place to hear what he is calling them for. It is a public meeting.

Secondly, there is a meeting if you call a person by name, who is nearby or far away. Even if you do not call the person by name, if you just ~~shout~~ shout at him.

Thirdly, there is a meeting which I wish us to study. I believe that most of you have seen a gathering of men at the kgotla where the chief is sitting on his throne at the centre.

In the olden days, when this meeting was held, it was generally known that the men would go out on a hunting expedition or that there would be a prayer for rain. That meeting was known as the chief's meeting, when the men would go to a hunt or to pray for rain.

People of the olden days had some reasoning too. Sometimes they saw a green and red colour in the vicinity of the sun, a green and red colour. They wondered as to what it was. Someone said: Perhaps the spirits of our ancestors are calling us. Someone again said: Perhaps we have offended them and they now want to kill us." Another one would say: Perhaps they want to speak to us, it is ourselves who do not know what they mean by this sign. Such thoughts were in the people and on one occasion in the night time they saw the moon surrounded by such a colour. There they believed definitely that the bones in the graves want to speak to them by the spirit. While they were still in that difficulty, it rained heavily and rivers and river valleys were filled. Now they began to believe that the sun and moon had held a meeting to pray for rain. As it was their first time to notice such a thing, they did not believe implicitly until they saw the second and third sign. From that time, they had great faith in the moon and sun and later they regarded them as their gods. During rainy seasons, when the rain has disappeared for a time, they watch carefully to see a sign of rain and eventually they see it, and they realise that it will rain again by the intense heat of the sun. In other countries these signs are still very well known.

It is for this reason that the people of the olden days had so much faith in the moon and the sun as being their gods.

#### Age groups.

There is a great difference between the various tribes of the Batswana. Each tribe has its custom of doing things. There is a custom of installing a chief among the Bakwena and perhaps their customs and those of the Bakgatla are the same, but they cannot be the same as those of the Zulus and the Mandebels. Again the formation of age groups is carried out differently by other tribes.

This means, according to the Batswana custom, that there are people who are called "Magwane" (uncircumcised), that is the boys and girls who are not yet fit to be called men and women. Now this word "Magwane" refers to them during their period of freedom,

because during that time, they are not very much bound by the laws  
 bind the men and women. At that time they may just do as they  
 like but what they do is nevertheless not the same. The boys are  
 more cruel than the girls. In that business of theirs even if they  
 could kill another, they would say "An uncircumcised person is  
 never brought to law" he is a dog, that is a fact well known  
 even before God. This talk came however out of custom, and not  
 out of the knowledge that God is great. We believe that they  
 could be pardoned because it is written that: "Lord forgive them  
 for they know not what they do". Now they are still in the status  
 of the uncircumcised. They may carry on their duties at home.  
 When they are at the cattle posts or out herding cattle they cut  
 thin sticks, and besides the thin sticks there are sticks called  
 "difetlho" or "dithebe" shields if they are for men in warfare.  
 The "difetlo" (stick for guarding with) are used for warding off  
 blows from the thin sticks when they hit each other, just as a  
 shield protects one from assegais. Sometimes word will come from  
 the leader of the uncircumcised lads, that the gang will go to a  
 contest of hitting each other with sticks on a certain appointed day.  
 During the time they are given for preparation, you will see all the  
 uncircumcised lads carrying skins of stembucks and braying them  
 to make fine loin cloths with trimmings; and small skins for  
 making shields. They also cut a small skin of the wildebeest,  
 which has long hair, this to be tied round the head as a decoration.

On that day a bone flute will be sounded by order of the  
 leader of the uncircumcised lads which brings them together in  
 order that they should set out on their journey. None of them  
 takes an assegai; because it is for men. None of them takes a  
 shield, it is also for men.

The assegai of an uncircumcised lad is a thin stick; his  
 shield is a rod and his gun is a stick. They go out in the  
 veld in the open. As it is their custom to hold this contest in  
 summer, when the fruit of the brown berry is ripe and milk plenti-  
 ful at the cattle posts, they know very well that they cannot starve.  
 They therefore leave food behind. As they go along, there will be  
 some who are called "ditshimega" (cocks of the gang), that is



171 those who overpower others. These will cut down a good number of thin sticks which they fill their bags with; they give these to those whom they overpower. Although they may have to carry such heavy loads, there is a time when they have to run.

They will travel for months for this purpose, constantly getting a supply of milk from the cattle posts, drinking it and throwing it away. If they find a bigger lad, they will shout as they approach him and say: "Close the entrance" If he is not a coward, he will pick up his sticks to show that he is also a circumcised lad who is a sub champion. But if he is a coward, he will remain quiet and they will milk his cattle by force. Even if they have done so, no one will report to the chief that they have committed an offence. During all this time they live by killing wild animals in the same way as the men when they are out hunting. They make those whom they overpower to carry them. At a certain time, their principal will cause them to return home. By agreement, they will do so, but now when they return home, they will try to carry home for the chief, the skins of animals which they killed on their way, by so doing, they show their manhood so that the senior chief should become aware of their manhood.

As they advance towards home, they start a song and begin to sing. The people will come out in great numbers from the village to see them stamping the ground with their feet, while they are being walloped with a stick. After a short while one of the principals of the uncircumcised lads will be given instructions to shout and say "Podi-motlhalo" (When they hear him saying so, they separate into two sections. One section called the chief's and the other called in a different name. If they are Bakgatla they say "Dintlha" section or 'Mabodisa section. Now these two sections will be arranged by their leaders according to their knowledge of how they know how to use the stick in hitting each other. They then begin. They will wallop each other for a long time and in the end the one section is defeated. In the course of this hitting of each other, the women are trilling. Each one praises his child to strengthen his marrow. The sound of sticks being the same as that of salt when thrown in the fire. It is the job of uncircumcised lads.

When they dismiss there they take those skins to the chief, being led by the sections which conquered, the skins of leopards being carried by their cocks, the others carrying those of other animals. While they are doing this, they are being followed by the women of the village, they are listening to the music of the uncircumcised lads, whilst one is jumping about in front with the skin of a leopard or a cheetah. On arrival at the chief's place they must also start their music for a short while to greet the chief before they dismiss. Afterwards, they go to their homes. This action alone, without anything being said to the chief means that they ask to be sent to a circumcision school, to be formed into an age group.

The reason is that that, married or unmarried, there is no respect shown them, they are still called boys, no matter how big they are, they are not allowed to go with the men to the kgotla to listen to the discussions concerning the village. This state of affairs hurts them very much. They want to be regarded as men, they must know the matters which the men discuss at the kgotla, they must marry and thus have a rest. At that time now, a few days shall go by. After those days there will be music at any time desired by the uncircumcised lads. The girls of the uncircumcised lads, are taken out of their homes by force, to go and clap hands and to sing whilst the lads dance, by the way, they lead the others in the singing.

They will live in this manner, teasing each other as though it is the others who refuse that they should be sent to the circumcision school.

There is however a time when they do get a rest though a decision may not yet be made for them to be sent to the said circumcision school, that is the way they live.

Later of course they will be given their age group. They may be called "Matshama" or "Madima" "Mafatshwana" "Matshetshela" "Makuka", "Mantwane" "Majanko" and so on right up to "Makoba" and others.

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