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Agriculture and agricultural products according to the Tswana of long ago.

In winter, after harvesting, the land is doctored by the doctor of the chief. He gets young unmarried men to go and peg the land all along the boundaries of the chief's land.

Later, during the month of July, the winter month, every man goes to peg his field with his medicinal horn which he got from his own doctor, and which guards his village, and for which he paid a beast, this medicinal horn is for the protection of his children.

Now afterwards when the month of August which split the trees, the months which shake off the leaves from the trees; when the windy months go by and the summer comes in, when it is already clear that there are trees which are already about to bud, it is then that the women, the mothers, will go out with the picks to go and dig out the stalks in the month of October. As they are so digging, they are carrying with them the seeds of corn which they are sowing in order to outgrow the 'motlhatswa' worm. This is the worm which eats the first corn after reaping and threshing during the month of October. The first corn outgrows the 'motlhatswa' worm because the corn comes out after the first rain; the worm is then found to have been killed by the sun. When they plant corn they plant sweet reed as well. At that time there was sweet reed which thrived and was thick which came from Mopogo's country. We had sweet reed called 'tlarane'. The crops had different names varying according to the way our mothers planted them. Our mothers did the planting. Our fathers by the way, used to stay away a long time with the cattle. They did not often stay at home in those days of long ago.

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Here are the names of the various crops:

1. Mabele mokgatl'a kubu
2. Mathotsane
3. 'Makobo ('Makobo ke letsatsi)
4. Segaolane
5. Lethejane
6. Seka-mufokane

Sweet Reed.

1. Moswane
2. Mophalane
3. Serote
4. Mengatane
5. Tlarane
6. Mapego

Another crop is Millet. Actually this is the keffir corn of the Bakgatla.

- Others are:
1. White beans
  2. Gopolsnare (These are really ours)
  3. Tshilwane
  4. Mokgalo
  5. Senawane
  6. Befumegadi

1. Earth nuts
2. Monotsatshwene
3. Swasue (These are earth nuts).

Keffir corn and these other crops are sun-resistant, even if it did not rain very much they do not die. We have the seed of keffir marrows which are known as 'Maoane' and the melons known as Math'apodi. It is a sweet seed of a red and white colour. We have also another nice seed called 'Makgomane'.

Originally we had another small seed called 'Phare'; but here at our place we eat 'Phare' particularly when it is raw; we do not cook it we make a vegetable stew of it with 'makgomane'.

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We drink the juice of sweet reed, it is nice, we grind its ears to make beer, we mix it with millet covered in small pots so that they should sprout well as it is then that they set well and make strong beer. We make vegetables out of beans and eat them, we cook and stamp them in the stamping block, we mould them into small lumps so that we may eat porridge with them in summer. We also just boil the beans and eat them.

The weeding of the lands is done by women, and not the men; it is the women also who do the reaping, they also do the threshing with threshing sticks and clubs.

The chief sanctions the beginning of reaping by summoning regiments of men and women to go and reap the chief's garden which is cultivated by the tribe, and it is then that all the people know that the reaping of gardens is open to all just as it is done with ploughing.

It is the chief who sanctions ploughing, but according to our custom, when the women go to their gardens, the chief does not stop them and that applies to reaping as well, the chief usually says, "one does not look into a woman's head burden".

When the crops ripen, it is the millet which ripens first; it is very quick and the birds like it very much. Something also which ripens quickly is 'dithodi' (a kind of small bean) and the stembucks like them very much. The beans are not slow to ripen also, and the duiker is a great lover of them.

Our native kaffir corn is neither slow nor quick, it is very much liked by the birds known as 'megokonyane' and the beetle known as 'Mogolagang'. There were no 'mareku' (gums) which destroyed kaffir corn in the olden times. These gums were sweet and were eaten by children.

Among the crops the slow ones to ripen are the earth nuts because they are planted underground; they take a long time to be ready for eating. The kaffir marrows are quick as well

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as vegetable marrows; they are quick crops.

Knowledge of the time of Ploughing.

We here at our place, as soon as we see the 'mokgofa' tree blossoming, we know very well that the time of ploughing is near. You will hear the mothers themselves saying, "The time is gone. The seeds must be taken out". At the same time, the clouds also will be beginning to collect; you see the birds beginning to sing, flying round the trees which blossom first, the dikbasboom and the mimosa, you notice the sun not setting quickly, the night becoming shorter.

The Narrator is Ntseng Dinne of the Letsaba Regiment.

The allocation of lands according to our custom.

Each group is given a site where the people of that group should plough. The Makete group. The sub chief and his younger brothers of that group are responsible for allocating lands to the people until the site is full; they can then go again to the chief to apply for another site.

When a man has been allotted land, he asks his wife to make beer so that the people should come and help him dig the trees where his land should be, and when the trees have been dug, the owner of the land will go and see a doctor, and he says to him, "I have a piece of land where I wish to cultivate my crops". He will go to examine the land, to see if it is all right; it is the doctor who will consult his divining bones, at home. He will slaughter something and to find the pegs he should give him. The owner of the land takes the doctored pegs which the doctor has in his medicine horn and he goes away having been given directions for use.

He plants the pegs at the corners of the land as directed by his doctor. The land belongs to the woman who had invited the people to come and dig up the trees for her, and for whom the land had been asked, that is for her family; and that is why you hear it said in Tswana, "Malope give me a new ground for

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ploughing, the reaped garden is with the Spirits."

A garden is the inheritance of the children of the woman in whose name the garden was applied for. It will remain the inheritance of his children and according to our custom, the garden and pots are the inheritance of the female children. The inheritance of the male children is cattle. Again, a garden is never sold; if a person removes to another village, the gardens are left with the female children at home; and if there are no children, they are left in the hands of the chief; he will help those who continue to remove into his village; those who come and say, "Take the burden of my head chief, it is heavy for me."

Those are the people who are often helped by those unploughed gardens, before they find their place for ploughing.

In most cases we plough the fields on black ground. We have great faith in it. We do not rely on sandy ground because it wears out; sandy ground too is loved by 'moolwana' (weeds) and 'moolwana' destroys kaffir corn. As for guarding, we, according to the custom of our olden times, the gardens were sprinkled with medicines so that the bird should not eat kaffir corn or flocks of birds, if sprinkling with medicine had been done, they did not eat standing in the garden; they settled down even if they sucked sweet reed; the kaffir corn must first ripen properly and it is then that they can eat standing.

If you go to the gardens to sprinkle medicines, on your return, you do not speak to anyone, you walk without speaking and without looking in the direction from which you come, looking only in the direction you are going; you will uproot one sweet reed without cutting it with a knife. It is that,

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which will be the sign that you should not be spoken to; you have come from doctoring kaffir corn so that it should not be eaten by the birds or worms.

No hedge of loose bushes is build round the gardens, it is done by word of mouth only; it is the back yards which have a hedge made round them, with cut thorn bushes; and while the kaffir corn is still in the veld, in the gardens, at home the people are busy making boxes and corn-bins in which the kaffir corn is to be kept when it is brought home.

At the 'kgotla' where the men pass their time, skins of koodoo and hartebeest are brayed, they make bags of kaffir corn a large karosses of hartebeest with which they reap in the gardens. Corn-bins of cow dung are made by the women, in which the husks which still contain corn left when threshing and which will be eaten in winter.

In the winter time, you often heard your fathers and mothers say "No, we shall sit and warm ourselves at the winter fire." They said even if there was nothing. After the kaffir corn had been threshed, it was winnowed. The women put manure or the heads of kaffir corn after grain is removed in the fire to make ashes which they will put in the corn to avoid its being eaten by weevil or by the butterfly which makes the kaffir corn worm.

If they do not put in ashes, it means that when the heat of the sun is intense, they will have to take them and spread them out in the sun, and if the weevil is not destroyed by the sun, the women will make a fire and take small clay pots, and roast the kaffir corn to burn the weevil and the butterfly with fire. Before doing this, they first put their seed aside.

They have sorted out the seed and kept it aside, it is kept in properly closed leather bottles in the corn-bins and under the receptacles you find wrapped up parcels of seed, the seed of the melon tribe is also thrown in there.

'Mothhoofatshe' is the seed of the Matebele. Since our fathers were proud of their custom, they respected it indeed, and always said, "All things are done according to the law of their tribe." That is to say, no man or woman could cut grass before the chief had sanctioned that it was time to do so. Grass was carried on the head without complaint by the women when the chief required it for thatching. When the chief required thatching grass, he issued a proclamation to all the women and according to our custom all went without protest.

In those times of long ago, the men gathered together at the chief's meeting place to scrape the skins of cattle with which they made karosses and skin mats. The men left the chief's meeting place with shavings scraped from the hides. These shavings were cooked and eaten. It was great pride to scrape the hides of cattle; there, you would hear a man who had a sharp adze which he trusted when applied to the hide boasting and you would hear the sound of the adze: 'goi, goi, goi,' when it moves downwards and upwards. You would hear its owner praising it, saying, "Listen, listen, listen, Seaka-petlo-monna, Mo go nna monna seleps". He would praise it with his head raised so that the women at their 'malapa' should sing to him a song of triumph. He would say "Men 'tlatlwe'". There would be great joy mixed with anger among the boys.

#### The sowing of kaffir corn.

The men did not know how to sow kaffir corn. The women did the sowing. The seed was not scattered. It was thrown with the hand into the hole which was made with the adze or with the 'sekoko' but the 'dikoko' were used mostly when there had been rain because the adzes would have a lot of mud sticking on to them.

Amongst all the crops we are speaking about; the earth nuts and the beans are foods that cause indigestion; even the vegetables made of beans, cause indigestion very much. Among the vegetable

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foods and boiled mealies, those which did not cause indigestion were the indian beans 'ditlhodi'. They caused no trouble in the stomach after one had eaten them. That is the food we use most. Porridge is made from millet but kaffir corn is used most. Millet is not used in making stiff porridge. Kaffir corn has no trouble and that is why you hear your mothers and fathers saying, kaffir corn is the main supporter of the people.

Our real food is thick, sour, porridge, of crushed kaffir corn fermented with boiling water; that is our staple food. We also eat unfermented kaffir corn porridge, porridge made of crushed kaffir corn meal which is cooked without fermenting, but our food is thick sour fermented porridge, our food for all times, eaten by old and young. Infants eat the fine pasty meal of fermented porridge, it is cooked, and the women after confinement eat the thin porridge of this 'ting': that is our real food.

From the time of our origin, this thick sour fermented porridge was agreeable when eaten with meat, also with vegetables, with locust and with the meat of any kind of buck. It is agreeable also when it is mixed with fresh or sour milk which is contained in milk sacks or clay pots or water pitchers. Thick sour porridge can also be mixed with water and eaten, with fat also we eat it when it is warmed. Thick sour porridge does not give stomachache; it may cause acid eructations if it is too sour.

Porridge which is not fermented is our food but we do not get accustomed to it. It is eaten by men at the cattle posts, where they have no fermenting earthen pots. What they depend upon there is meat and milk. They boil the porridge with milk, sweet milk, the porridge for men. Stiff porridge agrees with sour and fresh milk, it also agrees with meat but not with gravy. If you eat it with gravy, you will have an evil smelling breath.



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Stiff porridge is also cooked with the marrows of the pig melon, it is also very nice with vegetables. Stiff porridge is really nice; it is the right food for us if eaten with pig melon marrows. Pig melon marrows are eaten from autumn to spring and early summer. Pig melons are turned into dried fruit, they are cut into strips, and peeled and spread out to dry, then the kaffir marrows are cooked with them, and their seeds are ground and boiled into porridge and sometimes they are roasted before being eaten. Pig melons are cooked before they are eaten, they are peeled, the peels are also good food either wet or dry, they are nice. You can roast or cook them, it is the same.

Food that is not eaten continuously is boiled beans, when the trees sprout they also sprout, then they cause stomachache. They are like earth nuts. Millet is nice. It is made into thick sour fermented porridge only, it is not made stiff porridge. It does not make beer like kaffir corn, but it makes nice white porridge indeed.

If there was famine, our food was the berries (moretlwa). They went to pluck the berries and when they got home, they spread it out to dry, and pounded it and ate it as powder; the locust was also gathered and cooked and it was ground and also eaten as powder.

We must remember, there were 'dibapalo' (?), 'manaula' (edible roots), they drink them as beer, 'kgometlwa' (?) was made into 'letšomo' (?). Even during early summer the 'mupudu' (wild apple) was eaten; the meat of wild animals was also eaten, biltongs and 'kungwa' (meat cut into pieces).

Things that grew on the ground which were also eaten were 'tehuge' (species of roots) and monakaledi (species of edible bulbs) and 'marusa' (large edible bulbs). The 'marusa' are very watery, they are carrot-like edible roots dug from the ground; the roots are eaten. They were eaten during famine. The men have a good knowledge of them.

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The thing the women know very well is vegetables. It was the custom of the people of long ago to eat food with roots. The milk was kept on the trees in the shade, for fear of red ants on the ground.

Milk was taken with medicines, at the cattle posts the men were even afraid of the milk of some of the cattle, it caused acute stomachache.

Milk is the food of the boys at the cattle posts; they drink 'letugs', when a boy gets out from under cow with a pail full of milk, the man says to him "Boy, give the calf the 'phols' to suck," that is to say he must drink all the milk in the pail. This boy has, by the way, not yet had any food. He tied the legs of another cow and caused the boy to finish the milk first before he went to tie the legs of the one he was going to milk.

Meat is a very important diet to us. Long ago, we ate the meat of wild animals such as the hyena, wild cat, silver jackal, civet cat, spring hare, weasel, porcupine, squirrel, hare, koodoo, rock rabbit and other large animals such as the leopard and tiger cat. There was no scarcity of meat in the olden times; we really ate meat. The meat was cooked in lumps and sometimes it was well-boiled, other meat was hung up to dry to make biltong for eating stiff porridge with.

We ate a dead beast too. The carcass of a beast which died of anthrax was not eaten. They often burned or buried it. Meat was eaten if a beast was slaughtered. People slaughtered quite a lot in the olden times. You may ask what they used to slaughter with. They stabbed the cattle with a spear. A man just stood alongside it and stabbed it under the foreleg. He stabbed it and stepped back as it fell. Meat was distributed according to the limbs of the beast. The foreleg went to the male child, the hind quarter to the younger female child. The head went to the maternal uncle. The back bone with meat on it

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went to granny. The intestines went to mammy. The liver went to the owner of the beast. The skin went to the one who was given the head. The spleen went to the herd boys; the stomach to the men. The son-in-law gets lower parts of the ribs. The old man gets the lower bowel of the animal, the kidneys and the small stomach. The chief eats the breast. That is how the beast is allocated.

#### The Bee. The Bee's Habit.

The bees are placed before the men to be eaten, when the boys have taken them out of their nest. If the boys do not do this then they will have broken the law of the bees. They must take them to the men. When the boys have taken out the bees, they go home with them. That is the law of the bees.

#### Ants.

Many kinds of ants are eaten, the larvae of ants, the flying ants which come after the first rain; the canker worm which has been gathered from the ground is eaten, and the young locust and the 'matswana'; the names of the locust.

Now the 'magakgala' is eaten, it is a worm the 'phane', it is a worm; they are eaten when the wild plums are sprouting. There are other locusts, the 'letlhorontlhophe', the 'sefurulele' the 'melelemedi' and the 'kgope'; these are just eaten, not because there is famine.

Food that is eaten at home. It is the woman who cooks and dishes out porridge. The man has his own bowl out of which he eats alone, no child ever eats in it. The woman has her own small bowl also and each child has its own. When the bowls are not enough, the children eat in one bowl. The women were washing their hands and smearing fat, they did not like dirt. You could find their bowls washed with sand and white clay. You will find their spoons and bowls at cooking time, after they have washed them and hung them on the walls of the yards of their

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mothers indeed, you would be attracted; the girls having washed their feet causing them to shine. You will see them wearing their skin skirts which are smeared with fat.

In the evening at bed time, you see a Tswana pot smeared with cow dung. The girls were cleaning themselves.

Beer: The method of brewing beer. Kaffir corn is put in water so as to become wet; when it is wet, it is taken out of the water; it is covered in pots, they then sprout and the sprouted corn is ground. Other kaffir corn which is not sprouted is ground. A pot of water is then put on the fire and boiled as is done with sour fermented porridge, then the sprouted corn is added and kept covered so that no air escapes. The next day when it is fermented, the fermented porridge is cooked and it gets fermented again. It becomes porridge. It is then strained with a sieve. Before straining, sprouted corn mealie meal is added and allowed to brew. It is then strained. Shortly after straining, that beer is called 'serobo' which means beer that has not yet fermented thoroughly. It is served in small clay pots. The pot of the male head of the family is filled and another one for the son-in-law. It is the wife who serves; they then drink the beer in the house.

The custom in beer drinking is that you do not give it to anybody even in a small drinking vessel before you drink a little first; that is to say, you are taking out your medicine. This is always done with beer, it is a recognised custom.

The chief's beer is served in a pot and he drinks with whomsoever he chooses, a man or a woman, just as he likes.

#### Dagga.

Our fore fathers did not grow dagga in the olden times; there were however some who grew it. It is not our custom to smoke dagga. It is a thing of the Bushmen. You would find few people growing it. Seeds are planted and watered. When it has grown the large leaves are plucked off and the small ones are

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left alone. It is not smoked when divining bones are thrown. It is smoked on the ground its horn is on the ground. Dagge is very strong indeed; it is the Bushmen's drug. It came with another tobacco called 'Magonotwane'. It is a strong tobacco, but now it is nowhere to be seen.

Tobacco. Tobacco came with the Europeans. There was always the 'magonotwane' of the Bushmen; now we see Europeans growing tobacco. We get it from them; they smoke it in a pipe and they also put it in the mouth. Now we went further and snuffed into the nose and we also put it in the mouth. You plant the seeds and water it. That is all about tobacco.

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