

[0.1-16]

K32/27

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S.NAOA.

pp. 1-9 General knowledge and tabus, Kocatta, Marapyanane.

1/4

KNOWLEDGE OF THE BASOTHO.

[Tr 16]

According to the knowledge of the Basotho tribes, the mountains and rivers and all that exists are the work of creation. Nothing was thought of concerning their creation, and all that they could say was just, "This is the mountain of the chiefs or this mountain has the spirits of the ancestors.". This statement is confirmed by one of the the old women whose name is (asekgubi of Khafela who lives at De Hoop (Dilokong).

The eclipse of the moon signified the death of a great chief, they said that the moon was dead.

Thunder in a cloudless sky and without lightning also meant the death of a chief. When it thundered, people shut their ears with fingers and they knew that a chief had died. This narrative is confirmed by Seapei Bokaba an old man from Bopedi-land who lives at Dilokong (De Hoop).

According to the custom of the ancients, when it was new moon, the boys were made to bend and were lashed at the cattle kraal with the "noretlwa" (kruisbessie).

It is as Ramabele Nawa states, one of the old men of Mfatlha who was thrashed when it was new moon. He lived at Le otlwane, his tribal totem was a duiker and was a subject of chief Mfatlha Milla. He says, an alarm is given that the moon has cursed the women and all the boys should go to the kgotla to get a lashing. They did not know why they were beaten, it was the law of the origin of the Basotho. A man used to be chosen to beat the boys.

.GM.

The days of the month were counted by experienced men. They counted them by making engravings with their knives on a long stick. The counting was done whilst the moon could still be seen, the counting was discontinued when it appeared in the night time. They would begin counting again when it was new moon. Most of the Basotho did not know how to count the days of the month. There were two or three men who did this job.

When it was time for ploughing, these men notified the tribe that it was ploughing time e.g., the months of July and August. The tribe of Mafatla during the time of Maalebodi and up to the time of Motshela ploughed during August and as Maaphatsana Motshila states, whose totem was the crocodile and a member of the Mafatla tribe, the Bakededi ploughed during July.

The names of the stars are these:

Kopa dilalelo (The evening star), Naka (Pleiades) Selemela (The constellation of the Pleiades), Agwa-maisu (Orion) Naledi ya masa (morning star) Ditlhatlwa (Southern Cross), Dikolobe (The pigs), Tlala la kgora (Hunger and plenty), Molala Tladi (milkyway).

- (a) "Kopa dilalelo" is seen after sunset. It signifies the night.
- (b) "Naka" signifies the approach of winter and warns people to prepare their blankets.
- (c) Selemela signified the cold of the winter.
- (d) The Morning star signified the approach of dawn.
- (e) The Southern Cross it is said are male and female stars, there is no specific knowledge about them, they say that they advance with the year.
- (f) "Dikolobe", they say that they formed a single file,

They watch the year but there is no clear knowledge about them.

(g) Famine and Plenty: Famine is a large one and Plenty is a small one. During a year of great famine, people say it is a year of terrible famine, but when the small one is seen, abundance does seem clear and they say there shall be plenty of food.

(4) The milky way they say turns the sun towards the East. This statement is taken from Seapei Bokaba whose totem is a porcupine and a man from Bopedi-land.

With regard to the thunder of the rain it is said that it is a bird with green wings and a beak similar to that of an eagle. Lighting it is said, is the eyes of the bird. When a cloud thunders they say it is when this bird flaps its wings. This statement is made by Phaka who showed me its scar on his forehead. The very man Koos Phaka whose totem is a bearded finch, a Mokone. He says that this bird had fallen down while it was playing with another one in the clouds. It had fallen on to the mountains of Mokone. They were still little boys when they found it. They fought with it, it sprang and hit them and struck Phaka on the forehead. He still has the scar even now. They fought until they overcame it and killed it. They made fire and put it on the fire. When the fire burned water oozed out of its body and put out the fire. They kindled the fire again after it was put out by the water that oozed out of its dead body. When they were still kindling it, the clouds moved this way and that way and it rained. They ran home to report the matter. Witchdoctors ran to the spot to get medicinal charms.

WOM.

The boys knew that when a rainbow was in front of the clouds, it kept the rain away. When the people saw a star on the west, they knew that the rain had come and even when it was on the East, it meant rain.

According to the custom of long ago, a man who was called a Moroka, caused the rain to fall. Roots of trees were used to cause the rain to fall. A cattle kraal was made behind the chief's house. The guard of this kraal was a Moroka, the rain-maker according to the belief of the Basotho of long ago.

When rain was needed, girls were called and given pots into which the juice of roots was poured by a Moroka. They were ordered to go along the boundaries sprinkling medicines for rain on the ground saying, "Rain, rain, don't you want to come when called by the chief". At Mfatlha Maila's, they sang a song which runs thus; Mmadioka where is the rain, hail, hail Mmadioka rain". It was when they were living at Mmamathule and Mafatse, and when they returned from the boundaries, they never looked back.

The Moroka kept on stirring the pot of rain, pointing to the four cardinal points and then rain was caused in a very short time.

At Mfatlha Maila's, when they were at Kwadibeng the rain-maker was Ramanne Moeng. Mpotso Kwadi was one who was doctoring the lands against the birds.

One again who confirms that a Moroka was a rain-maker is Lea Mahoboe an old woman of Mmapela's who lives at Dilokong. She is one of those who were sent to cause the rain to fall by sprinkling medicines in the country.

NGM.

According to the statement of Mphahla Mma-phatsana, one of the very old people who is still alive and lives at ~~Zuurvlei~~ ^{Zuurvlei}, one whose tribal totem is a crocodile, she says that if a girl became pregnant before she attained womanhood, it would not rain again when a woman or a girl allowed her blood during menstruation to drop on the ground, that kept away the rain. If a girl was found having done so, she was taken to the place where her blood during her periods had dropped in order to point out all the spots. Today the Basotho have no more faith in those things of the olden times.

The mountains nearby here are :-

1. Marula'skop, (Moharitse wa bo ngwanyana o lla, ko Phutse le rengwa ka selepe) (2) Sambok's kopje (3) Kop-ellen, (4) Rantswetswetswe, near where a circumcision hut was built. "Moharitse wa bo ngwana", is where the whole tribe of Mmakau originated, where the grave of Mmakau in person is, at the morula tree. He is the founder of the Mmakau tribe.

There are no rivers here, people drink water drawn from the taps only, the children of this place do not know a river.

Marula'skop is where Mmakau the father of Samboko of Mmakau had his abode. It was a very large village. After the death of Mmakau Motsepe, the tribe of Mmakau was attacked by the Matebele of Moselekatse. The Matebele destroyed Mmakau's village. The Bakgatla trekked to Mmankopane at Mmapela's. The chief of the Bakgatla was then Samboko.

The Mathamaga vlei is where the young men of Mmakau once took the cattle from their enemies by force. They had been taken away by the young men of Mosetlha. The young men of Mosetlha had come from the north.

to take the cattle of the Mmakau tribe by force from the cattleposts.

At the grave of Mmakau at Marula, when the Bakgatla were in need of rain, they went there to ask for it at the time they were at Tlhathane of Ramadi. This statement is made by Mashala Matshila whose totem is an ox and who is of the Mmakau tribe who lives at Dilokong (De Hoop) today.

The hare and the guinea-fowl were not eaten, if a person ate them, he constantly changed his place of abode.

The acacia tree (mosetlha) was not used as fuel. If you used it as firewood and warmed yourself at its fire the cattle of your family will calve male calves only. If a cow was sterile, its ears were cut off so that it may calve.

The medlar tree and the kruisbessie were not used as fuel because they protected the village.

Kaffir corn they say, came into existence through a woman. This woman's child fell ill. She did not know what medicine to give it. She went outside and cut some grass and rubbed it of on to a mat which is placed under a grinding stone. After grinding that, she cooked it and gave the child. The child got cured. The people said it is kaffir corn it is giving birth. According to Sotho belief, that is how kaffir corn came into existence. Nobody knows the name of this originator.

If rain fell with hail, people did not go to the lands. They said if a person went to the lands, the hail would come back again. On that day a woman would not even transport earth. Even now that law still exists among the Bakgatla of Mmakau at Matshila's.

WGM.

According to the belief of the ancient people, it is said that all the black people come from Lowe. That is where all the black races originated, from. That is what Hanabeng Mohlabe states as well as the old men of Mfatlha, one who is old man Solomon Nawa who died at Mtlhakeng (Kliprivier). Maphatsana of Matshila also says so, she is still alive, she says they heard this from their great grandparents, some of them being Sengalo and Bohosi. They say that it is a flat stone, at the centre of it there is a deep pool of water. They say that there is a person in this deep pool whose name is Matsieng. They say that the spoor of his movement is still there, when he took the people out of the pool. The spoor of the people and animals coming out of it are visible on the flat rock. Matsieng's spoor is visible when he took the people out and when he went back into the pool of Lowe. They say that this deep pool is in the middle of a flat rock and it is fearful. The old ^{old} people say that even now, he is still alive in that hole of water. That is the story of the origin of man according to our great great grand parents. They say that some of the animals remained in the pool. That deep pool is in the neighbourhood of Motshudi.

It is said that a baboon was an old woman who was starving. She went to a rock and made fire there. When it had become cinders, she sat on it and slid saying, rii-rii-rii, I can feign a baboon; rii rii, I can feign a baboon, she grew a tail and hair and 'ditlatswa(,?) and lived on the mountain and even today she lives on the mountain. This story was told by Madi Nawa one of the old women of Mfatlha's tribe whose totem is a quiker who died at Lebotlwane and his statement was confirmed by Mmamotimedi and M.G.M.

Makakaba, old women of the tribe of Nawa of Mfatlha. They say that it was in the morning when the person feigned a baboon. They also testified that all black people came from Lowe.

According to the custom of the ancients, all fires were extinguished in the whole village when the woman entered it who was to beget the chief at Mfatlha's, and even among the Tswana tribes the same thing was done. Fire was kindled at the chief's kraal and the whole tribe went to fetch it there. Sotho law prohibits a fire to be kindled at the entrance because it is where the medicines of the village are buried. If it is kindled there it may undo the foundation of their village. The 'moretlwa' (kruisbessie), 'morola' (species of wild plum tree) and 'mmilo' (medlar tree) are not firewood and may not be put on the hearth. The 'moretlwa' and the 'mmilo' are used with the medicinal charms of the villages, they can destroy the villages if fire is made with them for people to warm themselves.

According to Sotho custom, if a witchdoctor doctors a person with medicinal charms against witchcraft, he should not carry out his doctoring at the fire. A person can just take a firebrand to go and kindle fire but that must not be at night. At night he may destroy the village and again according to the custom of our ancient people, a firebrand is not lifted in the night time. If you lift it up, you have undone the enclosure of your family.

According to the custom of the ancient times, the boys did not stay at home in the enclosure with the women, they lived with the men at the place of meeting. The boys rest on their knees when sitting.

.GM.

The women come to the men's place of meeting only to fetch fire.

According to the Agatla custom of the Maakau people, they say that when smoke is blown by the wind towards you, it means that your uncle (maternal) loves you. According to the people of Mfatlha of Mails, it means that your paternal uncles hate you.

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