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THE WITCHDOCTOR.

Medicinal practices, doctors & divination, Marapyane.

The doctors that are here, are men only. One of them by the name of Mpsyi Mkgokgo knows how to doctor and to protect a village against enemies and witchcraft and to cure diseases brought about by witchcraft. He knows very many medicines as well as those which cure children. The true knowledge of medicines, is that which is inherited from one's grandfather. Take Mpsyi Mkgokgo as an example, he was a doctor at Tlathane and Marula. All the children are not taught to become doctors, one child in the family is taught. A doctor or an ordinary person is taught the knowledge of medicines by only one person. When he has finished with the medicines of the one person and he still wants to go further in learning, he can go to a distant place to work with a doctor who is his superior. If a person learns to become a doctor, he pays seven pounds or one head of cattle according to the custom of the people of old. He is taught the names of medicines for curing, when his teacher goes to dig medicines, he goes with him, his teacher then shows him medicines and tells him their names. The man who is to become a doctor must be observant, when the doctor pounds the roots and mixes them. Sometimes the doctor sends his pupil to go and cure the disease of some one who is sick. A person learns to be a doctor until he feels contented that he knows all that is to be done as well as all the medicines. According to the belief of the Basotho, if a doctor can cure a sick person and he recovers could tell, that doctor is the real doctor. Native doctors have no association of their own. Each doctor works on his own. The doctors of this place do not wear head ornaments similar to those worn by the Changa ne. You will find them wearing a bone on the neck and a horn in which the chief ingredient is the lion's fat

also the bulb known as "serukolo". They do not wear short drawers like the witchdoctors of the olden times who wore drawers made of the skin of a quiker. A witchdoctor gets his paraphernalia and divining bones by purchasing them from other witchdoctors. A doctor with a wide experience, if he has lost one of his divining bones knows how to make one for himself. He takes the hoof of a head of cattle to make another. Many Sotho witchdoctors divine by divining bones given to them by their fathers; if ~~the~~ their fathers were witch doctors, that becomes their inheritance. If a witch doctor has no divining bones, he learns by using those of the witch doctor who is teaching him. When he knows them he has then to buy his own from other doctors or get to collect the bones of a baboon's hand, the lion's the mountain klip springer, and of the tortoise and the horns of the elephant, sea shells and he must bring them to his doctor who will make them for him, with the hoof of a head of cattle also.

The doctor learns out of his own free will, if a person wants to be a witchdoctor, nothing bothers him he can go anywhere to learn to become a witch doctor, he can go to any tribe, of ~~the~~ ^{the} black people. He can be taught if he possesses his own funds. A true doctor is sent for, he does not go about hawking his medicines. A genuine doctor is one that is called to where there is sickness. A doctor may be called to any place, even to chiefs' villages he can go. Just like Makalepe the witch doctor of Mfathla's village who died at Tsiditsane. He was once called by the chief of Seabe to doctor his village. He went there and planted medicinal pegs to protect the village. The chief pointed out a big black ox to him as ~~his~~ ^{his} reward. Makalepe was grateful. He was a witch doctor who doctored villages and armies at Mfathla Maila's village. When a witchdoctor is called, he does not ask for payment and he does not even ask the sick person what the nature of his illness is. A Sotho doctor is able to tell what a person has come for to him. The witch doctor is

/3.....never told.

never told. If you tell him then you must know that he is not genuine. Before the witch doctor leaves his home to go to where he is called, he takes his bones first of all to divine thereafter he takes his bag and goes. The witch doctor diagnoses with his bones only, he does not handle the patient with his hands. The examination takes place in the house or in the back enclosure. This is done only in the night time and in the morning. The examination cannot be held at midday. The parents must be present at the examination but not the children. Other people may be present, a true doctor does not prohibit them. Before a witch doctor took out or threw down his divining bones, the sick person's people gave a fowl or 2/6 or 1/- for opening the eyes of the divining bones. A sick person whether he has recovered or not, first of all, something to untie the bag is required, and this is 10/-, or a sheep to untie the bag. Some witch doctors demand one pound for untying their bags. If the disease is still new, the witch doctor sometimes demands a young head of cattle or two sheep. If the sickness is serious the witch doctor demands a grown up head of cattle. Even when he doctors a village or a house he demands a grown up head of cattle. All that the witch doctor does in treating a sick person, is paid for by a head of cattle, if he cleans your blood it is one head of cattle, if he has cured witchcraft, the payment is one head of cattle. If you have no beast, the doctors of to-day demand three pounds. If the doctor asks for his payment don't give him trouble. If you are well known to the doctor, he may allow you to pay part of his fee and the rest later when you get it. The doctors are not in the habit of taking people to the kgotla, but if a person refuses to pay him, is able to cause the disease to go back to him, or cause him to be an idiot. If the people wish to know about a disease, a witch doctor is called. The witch doctor comes with bones and he divines. Other witch doctors divine a disease with four hoofs, others divine with

with many bones, others divine with water and others with a stick. Some doctors take the bones of a baboon, a klip springer, hoofs of cattle, the bone of a lion, a wild pig, and elephant, sea shells, the bone of a hyena, and of a tortoise. The divining bones of the Basotho are not made in the same way. There are stones also in the divining bones. If they fall in confusion when thrown down, they indicate some sort of an affair. When they fall in a manner of deprivation, that indicate a disturbance in one family. The hoof which is called "Malope" (hoof of a klip springer) if it falls on its side, they say it indicates witchcraft and the stones also, if they have fallen down like that they say it indicates witchcraft. The one of the thumb of a lion, when standing and not lying, indicates a person's enemy, if it falls on its side, the enemy shall be conquered. The pig when standing facing in your direction, indicates a wizard. Among the hoofs, there are those called the god and goddess. When these gods go ahead of you when you are divined by a ^Witch doctor, the witchdoctor will tell you that the deni-gods that is the spirits of the ancestors are with you. These have been made with bones. When a witchdoctor scatters the divining bones on the ground, he first praises them, calling them by their names. After that he will explain to you ^{what} ~~what~~ they are saying when you have already paid a shilling or one shilling and six-pence. The Sotho doctor does not lay his hands on the sick person, the divining bones tell him. When the sick person is going to die he will see by the divining bones crowding together and he will then say that the sickness is very severe. The bones are even able to make the doctor to know the medicine with which to cure the disease. The bones are also capable of informing you the person who is killing you and what is to come. If you are bewitched by a person whose tribal totem is a duiker, the witch doctor will see that by the bone of a duiker on the ground with little stones in front of it and yourself receiving them with

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open hands. Now the witchdoctor will say that a person whose tribal totem is a duiker has administered poison in your food, he is unable to tell you the name of the wizard by bones. If you are bewitched and cannot be cured, the witch doctor must vary the treatment. Other doctors will cook you with medicines. You will just feel the heat but the skin cannot come off. If the skin does come off, the witch doctor knows that you are certainly bewitched by a person. Now the doctor will find medicine for witchcraft for him, first of all he stretches out his body and blows on him with its medicines.

A sick person according to the custom of the people of olden times.

When a doctor cures a sick person. A witch doctor comes to a sick person when he is sent for. A man was sent to fetch him. When this man arrives, first of all before the doctor leaves he takes out the divining bones of baboons, lions, goats and hoofs of cattle and shells of tortoises. He divines his journey to see if he will be successful. When he arrives at the sick person's home, the sick person's father takes him to the sick person and he tells the witch doctor that he does not know what the trouble is with the sick person. The doctor will then take out medicine bag made of skin of the black and white civet cat in which he keeps his divining bones. He shakes it and throws them down on the ground. He says "Tell us what is wrong with the child". When he divines, the child is sitting on a mat with his legs stretched out so that the divining bones should explain the sickness. If he is lying down they cannot show his sickness. The doctor will then scatter the divining bones and say "H'm !" while he is watching them, and he will say "They have fallen down in confusion". He picks them up again and tells the father of the sick person to open their eyes with something.

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The father of the sick child then takes out a shilling or two or he may point out a fowl. The witch doctor scatters the divining bones again and he says, "H'm! Tell us the sickness, the child is sick". They drop down, he praises them, calling them by their names and he says, "They are down, but the cause is not far to seek, it is in the family. This child is bewitched by his maternal uncle". The child has trodden on blood, it entered through the foot. There is the blood horn, it is indicated by this divining bone. The witch doctor goes on to say, "Get real doctors for this child". The child's father then informs his wife. The wife says, "Well and good, inform the doctor he should try to cure the disease". The husband informs the doctor. "He proceed to cure the child". The witch doctor will demand a sheep for opening his bag of medicines. He demands "malla nku" (?) The witch doctor then scatters the divining bones a third time to ask them sleep and to ask the name of the medicine from them. The divining bones which indicate witchcraft being the bone of a klip springer. When these divining bones are standing up on being thrown down, they indicate that there are some people who are enemies (danger). The doctor will now take out a medicine "maitolla" he cooks this and when it is boiling, he takes his whisk (witch doctor's whisk), he puts it in the medicine mixed with boiling water, he sprinkles the sick person whose clothes have been taken off. The sick person just feels that it is hot but his skin does not come off. When he has finished, the witch doctor says "take this medicine (serokolo bulb) mixed with the large "maime" (medicine) and the fat of a sheep and keep on fermenting the sick person's foot with it, and here is medicine for the blood, it is "mathuba difala" (breaker of granaries) mixed with "makhona tsotlhe" (medicine), keep on cooking it before cooking food because the food pots may render it ineffective and fail to cure the sickness. The doctor tells the sick person to

cook it in a pot lid twice a day, without telling him what quantity he should drink. The doctor will then tell the nurses of the sick person to place a cross bar at the door so that ordinary people should not enter because the feet of others are heavy (that is, others are wizards, they come there for the purpose of causing the sick person not to get up, having smeared the soles of their feet with "mogato" (medicine) to hold the sick person down. The sick person is fed on soft thin porridge of kaffir corn meal only. When he has recovered, his father goes out to hunt a hare for him for meat or a fowl if he has one. Now that the child has recovered, his father calls in the witch doctor and he points out to him a horned ox as his reward. He says to him, "God has given us back the bones (the sick person has recovered). His sickness was not a natural one, "bolwetsi ba mhasoana" (Gods sickness). The sick person was made to lie down near the fire. The ancient people say that fire is medicine, it soothes the sick person. The nurses went out to gather fir wood to keep the light burning for the sick person because they knew nothing about a lamp. When they wanted anything in the house, they lit it with grass only. The nurses woke the sick person up and caused him to lean against the wall in order that he should keep on rubbing his back bone. Before he went to bed the sick person's back bone and feet were rubbed with hands, if he was very dick. By doing so, they said that they were stimulating circulation of the blood so that the muscles could also function. If the patient was feverish at night a young man would run the next morning to call the witch doctor. The witch doctor gave him medicine for fever (masongwane) to make him perspire until he recovers. When he had recovered, the witch doctor said "The spirits of our ancestors have spared him for us".

Usage. When we say that a person understands the divining bones, it is when on throwing them down, he is able to tell you why you have come to consult him. The witch doctor studies the manner in which the divining bones lie down and he is able to tell you what

your complaint is. When they make divining bones, they collect all the bones that are needed. They make eyes on the hoofs, they carve them properly, they get the bulb known as "serokolo" and put it together with them. They also get a black fowl, it is the "sedimo" (an invisible thing that may be heard), they put them together in this job. If they want to teach you to be a witch doctor, they examine you by throwing divining ^b bones, they put the divining bones in water overnight. They take them out the next morning and they make you drink the water from which they have been taken out. When you have drunk their water, then you will be able to learn them well. They will give you four divining bones and tell you their names. They will throw them down and say, "Do you see them?" You will say yes. Then they say "They have fallen down "motlhakole" in a depriving manner", when they fall in a depriving manner, it is when they are like this. First of all the witch doctor teaches a person the various ways in which they lie down when they are scattered and then he explains everything afterwards. The native witch doctors of this place are able to draw blood by cupping. They use a razor blade and a horn. Other witch doctors are able to cup by means of a tortoise shell. The native witch doctors know how to use the horn even old Basotho women know how to cup the vein or to relieve the head. "Thaxadina" and "Meraro" are some of the divining bones which indicate witchcraft.

Knowledge of medicines : Mosetlha, moletsa-kgwadi, moretsinini, makgona-tsotlha, moretlwa, mile, mokgalo, kgopho ya naga, setlhabi, moforokgu, lenatla, mogabala, lenaka la kgono, morola, senaolele, sebeta, moduba, thotse, noc idi, masine, masio-mabe, serokolo and others. Explanation : (1) a man scrapes the barks of the "mosetlha" (acacia tree), he pounds it and puts it in cold water. It is said that this is medicine for diarrhoea in children. (2) A man scrapes the barks of "moletsa-kgwadi" and puts it in cold water. He ~~puts~~ leaves the medicine until it is very strong,

he then takes out the barks and gives the child the medicine.

It is for dysentery. (3) A man digs the root of the "more-tainini"

and boils it for the child when it purges blood. (4) A man

digs the root of the "makgona-tsothe" (a medicinal herb and a powerful purgative) and cooks it. It is said that it is for the blood. (5) The "moretiwa" (kruisbessie) and "allo" (medlar tree) are mixed together in the charms of the village.

(6) Mokgalo (wait-a-bit tree). The root of it is dug and water is poured into it and then cooked. They say it is medicine for the blood, it removes impure blood.

(7) "Kgopha ya naga" (a small bush with edible fruit), it exudes milk. It is for sneezing. It is medicine for burns.

(8) "Bethabi" (?) They are two, the small one and the big one. Their roots are dug and cooked. A sharpened twig is pointed to the surface of the water. Water is poured into it put on the fore, the pointed twig placed in the direction of the piercing pain.

(9) "Mofokub" (?) The root of it cures piles.

(10) "Lematla" (?) also cures piles. The roots of it when cooked and mixed with the roots of the "morola" bush cures the hip joints.

(11) "Mogabala" (edible creeping plant) grows on the mountain.

When a person is insane and suffers from heart disease, he is given the green barks of this plant to eat. It is said, it is

for the heart. (12) The horn of an old ox, when a child has navel trouble. A man burns its point, he takes a knife and then he removes the burnt powder from it, he grinds this and puts it in water, he gives the child to drink daily. It is said, this is medicine for the navel.

(13) "Morola" (the belladonna plant). If you dry the root of it, and you have headache, you burn this root and draw in the smoke through the nostrils. Again when you have toothache, take the root or fruits and roast in fire. When it is hot, put it on the tooth. If the hot liquid of the root or fruit can go into the tooth, it is going to be cured. It is said that this is medicine for toothache.

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When the root of the belladonna plant is mixed with the "lematla", it cures the women's hip joints.

(14) The root of "senaolele" when pounded and put in cold water, it is said that it is able to destroy the sores in the eyes.

(15) "Sebete" (?) Its root is pounded and put in water. The cattle are given to drink when they suffer from liver.

(16) "Moduba" (a tree which grows in the hills) is used for curing hip joints.

(17) "Thotse" (seed of the melon tribe) is used in medicine to turn something into a snake.

(18) "Motshidi" (?) They say that its barks, if you eat them, cure bleeding from the mouth nose or throat.

(19) "Maine" (a medicine) The roots of it are bitten by men with their teeth, they smear their faces with it and it is said that it causes people to like you and to regard you as an important person.

Preparation of medicines. Most of the Sotho medicines are those which are dug in the ground. If a doctor has dug his medicine, you will find him having spread it out in the yard of the house to dry, if it is going to be ground. Sotho medicines are ground on a grinding stone solely reserved for that purpose. Some of them, after they have been ground, are mixed with others as well as the fats of carnivorous animals; they say they are for protecting a person as well as the village. Some of the doctors give you a charm that has been mixed and they give you instructions that when you get home, you must smear the "moretlwa" twig and pitch it on the roof of your house above the door. Then he will tell you that lightning which is the work of a sorcerer will never strike your house. The Basotho bury another charm at the door so that anyone who comes in with witchcraft should stop there pinned down. When you are sick, they give you some of the medicines in powder to take, others are put in the fire to cause perspiration. Witchcraft. It is a word that is well known even to children. They know that a wizard can cause your death. It is a Sotho

belief. According to ancient custom among the Basotho people, a wizard was put to death because wizards were discovered by the chief when he walked about the village during the night. Chiefs of the ancient times did not sleep at night. Chief Tselapedi of Motlhasedi once saw wizards during the night in his village. The next morning he called a kgotla, and those wizards were put to death with sticks at Kgapanadi. One of these wizards was the chief's partenal uncle. He was also put to death because the chief had seen him riding an animal of a white and black, leading other wizards and going out through the entrance.

According to Sotho custom, if you have not been doctored by a real witch doctor, you cannot hear a wizard walking about in the night time. A person who is a wizard is bound to get stuck and fail to move in your yard. According to ancient custom it was your duty to report to the chief and the wizard was put to death because the wizard went about naked, having only sprinkled ashes over his body. Today when a wizard gets caught, you may just talk to him and ask him precisely what he wants. He will give you money so that you may not reveal him. If you divulge the secret about him to other people, you will certainly die. He is sure to plan your death. For that reason, if a person sees a wizard in possession of a wizard's horn, he is afraid of reporting him to the chief. If you are always seen in the company of a person who is known to be a wizard the people will say that you are learning to be a wizard. According to ancient custom, if a wizard was put to death, his cattle were taken by the chief of the village. Basotho doctors are able to point out a wizard by means of the divining bones. They are able to tell where the wizard has concealed his medicines for bewitching the people and if he is not disputing this doctor the people know then that he is a wizard. The witch doctor also points out the wizard. The witch doctor also points out the medicines of the wizard which are tied round his hip. People are afraid of the food of one who

is known to be a wizard, when they see him they just think of witchcraft only. If a person comes to live in a village and becomes familiar with a wizard, the people will know that he is also a wizard. According to Sotho custom if a person who is bewitched dies, he tells the people that so and so has bewitched me. When a wizard dies too, he tells the people who the persons and children are he has killed. According to Sotho belief, when a person does not recover when he is doctored, people say it is not only a disease that he has, there is also something done to him by the Basotho. According to Sotho custom, diseases are sent to people by witchcraft, just as a witchdoctor would say, "you have trod on blood or somebody wouched you on the shoulder or they have caused you to eat hair. The witchdoctor may ask you if you have been bitten by something and if you reply that you were once bitten by a snake, the witch doctor will then say very well, that snake was in fact not a snake it was witchcraft sent through snake. The witch doctor may perhaps ask "Did anything ever frighten you" ? You say an animal in the night frightened me. The witch doctor will then say well, some disease as a result, got into your heart. In order to make a mixture for you against witchcraft. In order to make a mixture for you against witchcraft. If a person says that he will send you or your children witchcraft or cause superstitious fear in you", you must get medicine for the children, the one known as "more-wa-megaditwane", dig its roots, put in cold water and wash off this fear.

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