

FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT ON FIELD-WORK
among the
BAROLONG OF BRITISH BECHUANALAND

December, 1935--February, 1936

I have the honour to present hereunder my first report on the field-work I have undertaken to do under the auspices of the Institute of African Languages and Cultures.

Area. In my application for a Fellowship the question of the area of my field-work had been left open to be decided upon after consultation with the South African Inter-University Committee Studies. When, therefore, all the preliminary arrangements had been made, I left Adams College, Amanzimtoti, Natal, to which place I had returned for temporary teaching service, on November 22, 1935 for Johannesburg where I met the members of the Inter-University Committee. After due consultation with the latter body it was decided that I should devote my attention to anthropological research among the Barolong of British Bechuanaland, and Professor Schapera very kindly undertook to guide me in my work, so far as his duties permitted. We decided with Dr Schapera, that although my research was to be in the main on a special topic, namely, the Impact of Western Civilisation on the Family, my first concern should be to make a general survey of Barolong Culture as a whole and not to attempt at this stage to single out for special notice the institution of the Family. We also decided that Mafeking, the centre of the Thsidi section of the Barolong, or rather the Molopo Reserve, would be about as good a place as any in which to make a beginning. Armed with introductions from the Inter-University Committee and from Dr Schapera to Government officials and others in the Barolong area whose interest and assistance it might be wise to enlist, I arrived in the Mafeking district in December, 1935 and stayed there till February 1936. Incidentally, while in Johannesburg, I had the pleasure of meeting Miss M. Read who was on her way back from the field.

Reception. I had no difficulty in establishing contact with the people and in getting them to appreciate the object of my visit, partly because I was thoroughly familiar with their language and partly because although I had never been in the district I was well known, my name if not personally, to most of the leading men in the district. I found, however, that the thing which enabled me to gain their confidence most easily was the fact that although I am a Mongwato, my mother belongs to one of the leading kxotlas of the Thsidi section of the Barolong, and as it is a trite principle of Tswana culture that a child is more honoured among its mother's people (Ngwana moxolo kwa xaxabo mogolo), I made use of this fact, with the result that in talking to me about their customs, people felt that they were merely instructing one of their children. This acceptance had this disadvantage, however, that it placed me under an obligation to act like a member of the tribe and observe a discreetness in conducting my investigations which might perhaps not have been required in an outsider whose indiscretion would be more readily put down to plain ignorance. The Paramount Chief of the Barolong is a man of some education and I found him as well as some of the other educated petty Chiefs extremely helpful. The Chief introduced me to his Councillors in Kxotla and himself urged upon the gathering the necessity for making available for record and for the instruction of their children all the wisdom and the traditions of the tribe.

He took the trouble to introduce me to most of the leading authorities on various aspects of Barolong Culture, and in this connection I must mention also the valuable assistance of Dr S.M. Molema, the author of "The Bantu - Past and Present", himself one of the most important chieftains. He put at my disposal his intimate knowledge of the history of the Barolong, a subject on which he has been engaged in research for many years. He has almost ready for publication a book on this aspect of Barolong Culture.

The Barolong are an important Tswana tribe, living for the most part in what is known as British Bechuanaland. This area is bounded on the West by South-West Africa, the former German Colony over which the Union of South Africa has a Mandate, on the East by the Transvaal, on the North by Bechuanaland Protectorate and on the South by the Cape Province of which British Bechuanaland has been a part since 1895, although for ten years prior to this annexation the territory had been under the direct administration of the British Government as the Protectorate of British Bechuanaland. Partly because of their wars with the Matebele in the early, and with the Boers in the latter part of the last century; and partly because of their own internal dissensions over questions relating to succession to chieftainship, and partly because of their type of settlement--large central towns with cattle-posts and fields at a considerable distance away from the chief towns and so forming the nuclei of outlying villages--the Barolong are not all to be found in British Bechuanaland. The tribe is divided into four main sections, namely, (i) the Boo-Seleka who are to be found in the Free State, principally at Thaba Nchu, (ii) the Boo-Rapulana who are to be found partly in the Transvaal and partly in British Bechuanaland, (iii) the Boo-Ra-Tlou who are scattered over several non-contiguous portions of British Bechuanaland, (iv) the Boo-Ra-Tshidi who reside mainly within British Bechuanaland but have a number of their farms and cattle-posts within the boundaries of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Thus before Union the four sections of the Barolong were living under three different Colonial Governments, namely the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and the Cape as well as under direct British administration in the Barolong farms which are situated within the Bechuanaland Protectorate. At present they fall partly under Union administration and partly under Bechuanaland Protectorate administration. This raises interesting problems regarding the effect of these different administrations on the culture of the Barolong.

The fact of being under double administrative control is calculated to affect the following aspects of the life of the Tshidi section of the Barolong among whom I spent the major portion of my first trip to the field:-

a) The relation of the chief to the different administrative bodies. Thus the Union policy of Native Administration may be said to be one of direct rule or at least has been so until quite recently. The chiefs were very largely supplanted by the local magistrates or Native Commissioners in both their judicial and administrative functions. It is true that in British Bechuanaland under Proclamation 2 of 1885 Native law was recognised and the chiefs were given civil jurisdiction in civil cases between members of their own tribes and were allowed to retain criminal jurisdiction except as regards certain serious crimes such as murder, rape, culpable homicide, pretended witchcraft and theft from other tribes which latter fell ~~under~~ within the jurisdiction of the European magistrate. Chiefs were also debarred from inflicting any punishment involving death

mutilation or grievous bodily harm. Appeals from the decisions of Native Chiefs in British Bechuanaland in both civil and criminal cases lie, in civil cases first, to the court of the local Native Commissioner and then to the Native Appeal Court, and in criminal cases to the court of the Magistrate and thence to the nearest local divisions of the Supreme Court of the Union. Until the passing of the Native Administration Act of 1927 none of these courts was under any obligation to apply Native Law to decide cases brought on appeal, while even under the Act of 1927 the discretion given to Native Commissioners on this point seems a rather wide one, and the recognition of Native Law is subject to the rather ambiguous proviso that it must be repugnant to public policy of natural justice.

Furthermore under this Act the powers of the Barolong Chiefs in common with those of other British Bechuanaland Chiefs have been curtailed to the extent of depriving them of the power of determining decrees of nullity, divorce or separation arising out of marriage by Christian or Civil rites. When it is borne in mind that a large proportion of the cases that come before the Native Chief for trial are connected with marriage and that an increasing number of tribesmen, under the influence of missionary or other agencies are contracting civil or Christian marriage, it will be realised what a serious limitation this is upon the powers of the chief. Whether this limitation is justifiable or not, it deprives the chief of authority over a large number of the members of his tribe in a matter which impinges upon many aspects of tribal organisation. Finally under this Act the Governor General recognises and appoints chiefs or headmen and may depose any chief or headman so recognised or appointed and the minister of Native Affairs may appoint any person to act temporarily as a chief or headman in the place of or in addition to the ordinary incumbent of the post.

On the other hand the policy of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Administration under whose control the Barolong are is in theory at least one of indirect rule. The chiefs retain a large measure of civil and criminal jurisdiction over their followers, subject, it is true, to review by the resident magistrates in special cases. Native Law and custom are supposed to be of legal force and effect. Native Chiefs are selected by the tribes concerned in accordance to their own laws of hereditary succession and the chief, recommended by the tribe, if he he proves after inquiry to be a fit and proper person and he is recognised by the High Commissioner and confirmed in his office by the Secretary of State. Apparently it has been felt for some time that the powers of the chiefs in the Protectorate are rather extensive or that the right of the Administration to intervene in tribal matters is too ill-defined for two proclamations have recently been passed by the Administration with the intention, among other things, "that if and when the necessity should arise there should be no doubt or dispute as to the right of the Government to take such action as may be requisite for the promotion of the welfare and progress of the people or for the prevention of any maladministration, oppression or injustice" (Explanatory memorandum by his Excellency the High Commissioner on the Bechuanaland Protectorate Native Administration and Native Tribunals Proclamations). It is worthy of note that two chiefs namely Chief Tshekedi of the Bamangwato and Chief Bathoeng Of the Bangwaketsi are seeking through an action which is now pending against the High Commissioner to have these these proclamations declared ultra vires on the ground that they constitute an unjustifiable encroachment upon the rights and powers of the chiefs.

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The Barolong Chief is not taking similar steps against the High Commissioner, but my impression is that his sympathy is with the plaintiffs in this action.

Land Tenure. On the Union side the Tshidi Barolong live within what is known as the Molopo Reserve. The system of land tenure is tribal in that they are settled on the land as a tribe under a chief who parcels out the land among his petty chiefs who in turn allot to members of the tribe portions sufficient for their needs. The basic idea of the land tenure is occupation by the tribe as a whole and individual land tenure in the European sense does not exist and land is not a negotiable or commercial asset. The Governor-General is empowered, whenever he deems it expedient in the general public interest, to order the removal of any tribe or any portion thereof from any place to any other place, but as long as he does not take this step the tenure of the tribe within the Reserve is fairly secure.

With regard to the Barolong Farms situated within the Protectorate the position seems to be different. This territory for land tenure purposes is apparently not a reserve but consists of a number of farms given out on individual titles by the chief to a number of individuals who have permitted other tribesmen to settle on these farms. The Pim Report gives the number of individual title holders as 41, and explains that this expedient individual titles was adopted for the purpose of preventing the alienation of tribal land in the days when European settlement was contemplated in the whole eastern boundary strip of the Protectorate. The extent of the Barolong Farms is 450 square miles, the estimated population 3600 and the estimated number of cattle 10000. The extent ^{and the} nature of the land rights of persons other than title-holders I have not been able to determine.

(c) Taxation. Under the head of taxation we may expect to find differences between the Union and the Protectorate and the obligations of those who fall within both boundaries for taxation purposes must be heavy. Within the Union males between the ages of 18 and 65, unless exempted, are liable to a Poll Tax of £1 and Local Tax of 10/- and may be called upon to contribute to any levy which the tribe has with the approval of the Governor-General, imposed upon itself. In the Protectorate the Poll Tax is £1.3s. and levies may be imposed here by the chief with the sanction of the tribe.

(d) Cattle Regulations. The fact that many of the Barolong have their Cattle-posts within the Protectorate puts them to considerable inconvenience when Foot and Mouth restrictions are imposed by the Union Government on cattle from the Protectorate. During such periods they are unable to derive proper benefit out of their stock generally and in particular the milk supply is affected. It is customary when necessity arises e.g. during a confinement in the family, for a few cows to be brought to the central town for milking purposes and when Foot and Mouth disease breaks out in the Protectorate this is not permitted and those who attempt to get their cattle across the boundary by illicit means run the risk of arrest and of the destruction of the animals concerned. In the short time I had at my disposal I was not in a position to estimate fully the effect of this double system of administration on the life of the Barolong but no doubt further study will bring to light a number of interesting repercussions of this anomalous position.

Culture Contacts. Another point of interest about the RaTshidi Barolong is the number of agencies of acculturation at work among them. Several Missions including the Wesleyan Methodist, the London Missionary Society, the Church of England, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Roman Catholic, have been operating among them for varying lengths of time and have wrought in their lives the changes usually associated with Missions. It was difficult to find evidence of their own religious conceptions and practices even some of the oldest people scarcely remembering a time when they had not come under the direct or indirect influence of the missionary. In all their settlements fair sized schools are to be found in which the rudiments of Western education are given, ten of their larger schools having altogether over 2500 pupils taught by 46 teachers, an average of over 50 pupils per teacher. Many of these schools are overcrowded and a tribal levy of 5/- per tax-payer has been imposed with the proceeds of which it is hoped to build a large central school in the chief Stad. A good deal of recruiting is done in the district both for the Gold-Mines and for the European farms. I gathered from the Recruiting Agent for the mines that over 80 % of the men recruited in the district are on the Deffered Pay system so that the bulk of the money which they earn is spent within the district. A considerable number of men and women find their way to labour centres otherwise than through recruiting agencies. Through them not only money and other material objects of Western civilisation find their way into the Reserve, but there is a steady infiltration of new ideas and attitudes which do not readily fit in with the general scheme of things in the tribe. Another source of acculturation which must be mentioned is contact with other tribes. A fair number of members of other tribes such as Xosa and Fingo have settled in different in different parts of the Reserve and they have not been without their influence among the Barolong. I found that several of the witchdoctors practising in the district were members of foreign tribes, presumably on the principle that the strength of his medicines depends upon the distance the doctor had to travel in order to get them. The Barolong also declare that these foreign elements have introduced new conceptions among them about institutions such as boxadi or lobola e.g. the demand of full boxadi before celebration of marriage, the demand for return of boxadi on divorce, things which were either unknown among them or were regarded as improper and very seldom took place. Incidentally these foreign elements supply the servant class. From them are, not infrequently, drawn the Balala (servants) who rank the lowest in the social stratification of the Barolong among whom the idea of rank is very strong.

Finally, their central stad being fairly close to the town of Mafeking, which although a small town is an important railway centre, the Barolong are obviously affected in various ways by contact with the white people who reside in or pass through Mafeking. They meet them in their shops, observe their trains and cars, are employed by them in domestic and other forms of service. The results of this culture contact may be seen in the type of clothing which many of the people wear, the kind of houses they build, the articles of furniture they use, the forms of recreation in which they indulge, the implements they use in farming, the keeping of records in their central chief's Court, the Christian phraseology which they use in discussing religious matters, etc. By no means of the majority of them can it be said that all these foreign elements enter into their lives, but probably none have failed to be influenced by some aspect of Western civilisation.

Persistence of Tribal Culture.

Yet it is remarkable to what extent

The Tshidi Barolong still adhere to the essentials of their tribal culture. Their loyalty to the Chief is strong and the Chieftainship still exercises a profound influence upon their lives. As both the magistrate and the Native Commissioner confessed in interviews I had with them, comparatively little use is made of the right of appeal against the Chief's judicial decisions, although even a short acquaintance with the Chief's court would show that this is not because the Chief's decisions are invariably correct. Respect for his office and the traditions of the tribe continue to play their part in their relations with the chief. Members of the tribe turn out to plough the chief's lands ~~and for~~ and for other duties which he may assign to the various age grades into which men and women are divided. It is suggested by some that people nowadays do not discharge these duties with the same alacrity as formerly, but taking into consideration the numerous demands on their time arising out of modern conditions, my observations lead me to think that they accept their responsibilities cheerfully enough. The system of ranking of the tribe - from the chief and members of his kinship group who constitute the highest social class to the "Balala" (servants) who form the lowest - is observed in their relationships ~~ex~~ with one another - in forms of address, in public gatherings, in their code of etiquette, in the rules of marriage. The system of land tenure has naturally undergone alteration to the extent ~~necessitated~~ necessitated by the exigencies of subjection to a new political power - that of the white man. But tribal land belongs in theory and very largely in practice to the chief who parcels it out in large blocks under petty chiefs, drawn mainly among his relatives, by hereditary right, who in turn have under them a number of headmen who have charge over smaller portions of land. Each family (Kxotla) is entitled to land ~~and for~~ for various purposes - residential, cattle-pasture, fields - and while the rights of land-holders are not negotiable in the commercial sense, they pass to their heirs by right of succession, subject, of course, to continued allegiance to the chief and acceptance of the ordinary responsibilities of members of the tribe.

From all accounts the kinship organisation also has not suffered serious alteration. The marriage process follows the traditional steps - mokwele (an institution involving reciprocal gifts between two kinship groups between whom a marriage is contemplated) and boxadi (bride-price) continue to pass in marriages. The newly ^{married} woman stays with her own parents in the sexotlo hut for varying periods of time, and sometimes does not go to her new home until she has had one or two children. I came across cases of quite well educated couples who were conforming to this temporary matrilocal residence known as xo ralala. The powerful influence of the mother's brother also points to the close interweaving of matrilineal and patrilineal elements in the kinship organisation of the Barolong. Preferential mating is practised, the order of preference being said to be (1) cross-cousin (2) parallel cousin, (3) other kinship groups. Although I have not yet made any statistical estimate of the prevalence of cross and parallel cousin marriage, I expect to find the proportion of such marriage very high. Culture contact does not seem to affect this aspect to a great extent. Confinements among the Barolong are still very protracted affairs, the seclusion of the "Motsetsi" (confined mother) and child in the sexotla often lasting three or four months, during which time various taboos have to be observed by the mother, her husband, other members of the kxotla and even visitors. Infant corpses are still buried either within or close to the walls of the sexotlo huts for fear of their being dug up by "baloi" (wizards and witches) and used among other things to destroy the procreative powers of the mother. The burial of the head

of the *kxotla* takes place in the cattle-kraal and some families have extended this "honour" to other adult male members of the *kxotla*. The division of labour between the sexes follows largely-traditional lines-women doing the cooking, drawing water, fetching wood, building the walls of the huts and keeping them in condition both inside and outside, making pots, weaving mats and baskets (crafts which are however maintaining a precarious existence in their competition with Western substitutes), while the men rear cattle, roof the huts, prepare skins for blankets, etc., attend *kxotla* and plough the fields, an innovation for them necessitated by the introduction of the European plough.

All these points still require closer investigation and deeper study in order to reveal how the Barolong are adapting themselves to the new conditions under which they have to live, in what directions their culture is being modified in the search for a new social equilibrium.

May I attempt to state now in summary form the aspects of the life of the *Thsidi* Barolong among whom I spent the larger portion of my time thus far looked into by means of direct observation, questioning, visits to cattle-posts and private homes, attendance at *kxotla*, etc.:-

Language. It was inevitable that I should engage in the collection of vernacular texts on subjects such as riddles, proverbs, poetry consisting mainly of the praises of chiefs and warriors of the past, in addition to having my notes on customs and institutions taken down, as far as possible, in the vernacular. My impression was that there was still a wealth of material of this kind available, and in view of this, I endeavoured to encourage some of the younger members of the tribe to undertake such collections, in some cases with promising results. If such texts are to be of real value, especially to Tswana school children who are badly in need of them, they must, of course, be properly annotated, an aspect of the matter which I could not go into sufficiently with the time at my disposal.

Recreation. I made notes on the forms of recreation of the Barolong, past and present; because many of the games and the songs connected with them have fallen into disuse, accounts given of them were rather sketchy and one did not have the advantage of checking the information given by observation. New forms of recreation such as tennis-for which there are at least four courts in the central *stadt*-football, basket-ball, etc. have largely supplanted the old games. A noteworthy aspect of this matter is the lack of games for girls among these new forms of recreation and that may account partly for the popularity among girls of Western dancing. Dances arranged for in a ~~Kxxx~~ Public Hall in the central *stadt* invariably attract more young women than young men. Wayfaring provides an outlet for school girls and Pathfinding for boys, but for the non-school-going children forms of recreation are conspicuous by their absence.

Economic and Social Organisation. In this connection I endeavoured to get as much information as possible on the production, preparation, consumption and distribution of food, on forms of employment and wage-earning open to tribesmen both locally and abroad, on the shops run by a few in the central *Stadt*, their stock and how it was disposed of, what indications that gave of changes in diet and material culture. Notes were made on the life-history of the individual-confinement, birth, weaning, initiation ceremonies for boys and girls (which incidentally have not been held for several years among the *RaThsidi*, although the *RaTlou* continue to have them), the age-grade system which in spite of the non-holding of initiation schools is still used as a basis of social grouping, the marriage process and the kinship system which by the way shows how strong "mother-right" can be among a supposedly patrilineal people, death and burial.

Judicial and Political Organisation. By frequent attendance at kxotla and a study of the reports of cases kept in the Chief's office one endeavoured not only to get some knowledge of tribal law and custom, but also to study the trend of litigation—the frequency of certain types of cases, the nature of punishments given, the amounts of fines, and the procedure of the court which impresses one as much more formal than is generally supposed by writers on Native Law and Custom. It may be argued that this formalism has come with western civilisation, e.g. the keeping of records, but the general conduct of the case, the order of the speakers, etc. seemed to have deeper roots than that. The territorial and political organisation, the ranking of petty chiefs and headmen, their rights and duties, the division of the Stadt into wards, the internal organisation of the latter are all matters which received such attention as one was able to give in the time.

Plan for next Trip.

It will be readily realised that none of the matters referred to above have yet received their due consideration, hence my looking forward to my next trip when I hope to be able to fill in some of the many gaps in my material. I expect to pay a short visit to the field during the winter vacation partly to keep up contacts and partly to arrange for my visit later in the year.

I have arranged with Principal Kerr to be released from duty at Fort Hare from November 1936 to March 1937, and if necessary this period may be extended. I intend to spend this period among the Barolong who are more remote from culture contact conditions in the Barolong Farms in Bechuanaland Protectorate and also in the Molopo Reserve in one or two smaller stadts such as Phitsane and Thsidilamolomo. That should make it possible for one to get a firmer outline of the old culture to compare and contrast with conditions among the more "sophisticated" RaThsidi. In particular I want to get, if it still possible even there, more information about religion and magic, law and custom, economic and political organisation