The Kinship System of the Bechuana.

Among the Southern Bantu tribes the Bechuana suffer most from the lack of reliable information about them, especially from the point of view of Social Anthropology. And yet when one comes to think about it, it is rather surprising that this should be so. For missionary work has been carried on among them for a very long time and by some of the best known missionaries that have given their lives for the opening up of the Dark Continent. One only needs to mention such famous names as Moffat and Livingstone Campbell and Bevan, Mitchell and Willoughby to realise the truth of this statement. In the course of their contact with the white man, much valuable work has, of course, been done among them. Their language has been reduced to writing, the Bible has been translated into their main dialects—Soroleng, Setswana, and Sepedi—grammars and dictionaries on these dialects have been produced by men like Crisp, Wookey and Brown; accounts have been given of their life and customs in missionary and travellers' journals; their chiefs have attracted much notoriety by their visits to England and by the placing of their people under the benevolent protection of Great Britain; but when one looks for a systematic account of their social organisation, one must confess to small disappointment. It is only in very recent times that fairly authoritative monographs on the different aspects of their life have been forthcoming. Willochby's "Race Problems in the New Africa," "The Soul of the Bantu" and "Nature-Worship and Tabbo" show much reliance on the author's experience among the Bechuana. J.T. Brown's "Among the Bantu Nomads" gives, as its title indicates, in broad outline an account of their dispersal through the different parts of South Africa; and although his account of their life and customs is marred by a rather unsympathetic account of some of those aspects of their life which do not
commend themselves to the susceptibilities of certain Christian circles—a tendency which has perhaps been exhibited to its worst extent in the recent study of "Bogadi" (bride-price) among the Bechuana by Jennings of Kuruman—it does provide us with much food for thought and with the element on which a study of the Bechuana might be based. No mention has yet been made of the work of Dr I. Schapera, of Cape Town University, a man who has been well-trained in the technique and the methods of modern field-work in Anthropology and whose articles on the Bakhatla show that we may expect from his pen an authoritative account of the social organisation of that progressive tribe. Father Norton, sometime Lecturer in Social Anthropology at Cape Town University, Mrs W. Hoernle, of Witwatersrand University, and Professor Radcliffe-Brown, now of Chicago University, have devoted some study to the Bechuana and have given us valuable interpretations of their life and thought. Thus we see that the dearth of reliable material on the Bechuana is gradually being remedied.

Perhaps of no aspect of their life is there such scanty information as about their kinship system. The mother's brother seems to be about the only individual who has attracted attention. Brown gives us a list of the kinship terms employed by them, but does not essay the more interesting and more important, if difficult, task of determining what part the different individuals whose kinship names are given play in the system of social organisation, in other words he does not give us the characteristic behaviour patterns symbolised by these terms. Thus the kinship terms are cut out of their context and consequently have a lifeless unreality about them which invariably happens with things so displaced from the context in which they have, and indeed find, import and meaning.
The Chuana kinship system may be said to be of the classificatory type in which single terms are employed to designate a much greater variety of relationships than is to be found for example in the much more descriptive kinship system of Western society. Thus the term "rra" which roughly corresponds to the Western term "father" is used to designate not only the actual father of the individual using it, but also the father's brothers, a suffix being added to distinguish between his older and younger brothers, "rramogolo", literally great-father, indicating father's older brother, and "rrangwane", literally child-father, father's younger brother. To these must be added the father's father's brother's sons and the mother's sister's husbands. More generally and indefinitely the term may be used as one of respect with reference to any individual not related either by blood or marriage to the speaker who appears to be about of the same generation as one's father.

The term "mma", mother, similarly denotes not only the actual mother of the individual but also the mother's sisters, "mmamogolo", literally great-mother, indicating mother's older sister, and "mmangwane", literally child-mother, indicating mother's younger sister, to which must be added the mother's father's brothers' daughters and the father's brothers' wives. More generally and indefinitely the term may be used as one of respect with reference to any individual not related, either by blood or by marriage, to the speaker who appears to be about of the same generation as one's mother.

The term "morwarre", literally son of my father, brother, is as a rule applied to the sons of any individual who is classed as "father" or "mother" as explained above, while "moraliarre", literally daughter of my father, is similarly applied to the daughters of any individual who is classed as father or mother.
The Chuana kinship system may be said to be of the classificatory type, in which single terms are employed to designate a much greater variety of kinship relations than is to be found for example in Western society. Thus the term "ama" which roughly corresponds to the Western him "father" is used to designate not only the actual father of the individual using it but also a father's brothers, a prefect being added to distinguish between older and younger brothers, ama-mogolo indicating father's older brother, and amangoane (literally child-father) father's younger brother. To these must be added the father's father's brothers sons and the mother's sister's husbands. More generally indefinitely the term may be used as one of respect with reference to any individual not related to the speaker who appears to be about of the same generation as one's father.

The term motse, similarly denotes not only the actual mother of the individual, but also the mother's sisters, isamamogola (literally great-mother) indicating mother's older sister and umangoane (literally child-mother) indicating mother's younger sister, to which group must be added the mother's father's brothers daughters and the father's brother's wives. More generally and indefinitely the term may be used as one of respect with reference to any individual not related, either by blood or by marriage, to the speaker who appears to be about of the same generation as one's mother.
The term **morwane** (literally son of to my father) brother is as a rule applied to any sons of any individual who is classed as father (see above), while **moraliane** (literally daughter of my daughter father) is similarly applied to the daughters of any individual who is classed as father or mother. Apart from these general rules are found others which distinguish between brothers and sistis according to age, **mogolole** indicating older brother or older sister, **snake** indicating younger brother or sister. There is a term for reciprocal use between brothers and sistis, namely **kgantsadi** without distinction according to age.

The term **rakgadi** (literally female father) is applied to any woman. These terms are also used more indefinitely as terms of respect with reference to any individual not necessarily related to the speaker by blood or marriage who appears to be of the same generation as one’s older or younger brother or sister.

To any woman whom one calls **kgantsadi**, the term **rakgadi** (literally female father) is applied, while the husband of such a woman is also called **rakgadi**. **Mogotse rakgadi** (literally husband of my rakgadi) may be used to obviate confusion.

To any man who is the husband of a woman called **mma** the term **maleme** (literally male mother) is applied, while the wife of such a man may be called by the same term, **mogotse maleme** (literally wife of maleme) being used to obviate confusion. Another method which is commonly employed to distinguish between husband and wife where the same term is of address is referred to applied to them is to attach the personal name of the individual concerned to the kinship term. Thus maleme **otsele** would clearly indicate mother’s brother, because **otsele** is a man’s name, while maleme **mohlalepula** would indicate mother’s brother’s wife because **mohlalepula** is a woman’s name.
Another method used is to attach to the term used for
a name of the individual concerned, derived from his fatherhood
or motherhood of a particular child. It is common to find that
married individuals have two names — a personal name such as
those already used and another which is derived from the combination
of the names of one of his children, usually the eldest, with the word
mra or mma. Thus a man may have the personal name
Ditse, but also be known as tsa-Kabelo, because the name
of his eldest child is Kabelo; a woman knows while his wife
in addition to her personal name will also be called tsa-Kabelo.
In applying a term common to husband and wife to each
other of them, it would be usual to add their marriage name
as, tsa-Kabelo or tsa-Kabelo as the case might be. Thus
we have malene tsa-Kabelo, which clearly indicates a man
and malene tsa-Kabelo which obviously refers to a woman.
The same may be said with regard to the common use of the
term tšakgadi.
The terms tšamogolo, and mmamogolo are used to indicate
grandfather and grandmother respectively. It may be observed
that these terms are the same as those applied to
mother’s eldest sister, and father’s eldest brother. How can we
be distinguished between these relatives? The use of possession
forms in connection with these terms is a way out. Thus
your grandfather is always described as tsa-mogolo, while
your father’s oldest brother is always described as tšamogolo, so that
the possession forms with in the case of grandfather is put between
mra and mogolo, while in the case of father’s oldest brother, it is
put between at the end of the word tšamogolo. The same
applies to the terms mmamogolo which is used for both
grandmother and mother’s eldest sister.
Grandparents called their grandchildren—mottogolo (pl. bonmotogolo). Brown suggests that the terms are interchangeable, retlogolo and mottogolo, but from my experience I have never heard them so used by a machenam and I submit that they are invariably differentiated as shown above.
The corresponding differences in the case of his grandfather and his father's elder brother are *mogolo* and *ramogolwane*, while for the first person, the terms are *mogolo* (to my grandfather) and *ramogolwane* (my father's elder brother).

The eldest child of every woman is *njwana wa matšibolo* or briefly just *matšibolo*. The corresponding Zulu term is *mazibuko*. The last born is called *gohele* (literally "let it be finished"). There are no special terms applied to other children in the family, and the existence of special terms for the first-born and the last-born children indicates, as we shall endeavour to show later, that they have a special importance in the family.

The term *ntsala* is used reciprocally between cousins. At the only persons who are regarded as cousins are those usually known as cross-cousins. The children of a man and those of his sister are cross-cousins and are *ntsala* properly so called to one another. The children of two brothers or those of two sisters are regarded as cousins; they are brothers and sisters. The mother's brother (male) calls his sisters' children *sitšologolo* (plural *ditšologolo*), while a go
It is observed that children of the same father and mother never refer to each other as children of the same mother, but always as children of the same father. Even where they are of different mothers but the same father, they speak of one another as son or daughter of my father respectively. It is only where they have the same father, mother, and different fathers that they may refer to each other as son or daughter or vice versa. This is of course due to the fact that the Beduina are strongly patriarchal—child belong to the father. They owe their existence to him much more than to the mother in common Bedouin parlance. The woman’s child-bearing power are put at the disposal of the father, who is the principal father factor in the begetting of children. Thus in the event of there being no children in the family, the blame is seldom ever laid at the door of the father who is assumed to have full procreative power while the woman may bear sons or may by means of witchcraft convert the seed implanted in her by the man from developing into children.
1. The reciprocal use of term mogwe - enters into almost all affinal relationship terms.
   (a) between sisters, (b) between brothers-in-law, (c) between own parents.

2. Ngweisi stands by itself - Nkgo a mame.

3. Matesla - one who has given birth forme.

4. Poposiall term for wife’s sister - potential wife if younger.

5. Husband’s brother - potential husband if younger.

6. Man’s home in law - vogue, wife’s home in law - mote.

7. Wife’s sister only person with whom you can be at ease at home especially younger, where traditional rules for age is inoperative.

8. Husband’s brother only person with whom wife can be at ease, especially younger who is not likely to take father’s status - recoverable husband.

9. Husband’s sisters restrained - because cattle given for them provide lobola for brothers wife or cattle given for them will go to brother.

10. Husband’s brother easier - because they inherit cattle, lobola-polling younger, in case of wives marriage her lobola will help to find wife for younger brother.

11. Brother must live on good terms with sister’s son because their mother’s lobola either get them or will get him a wife.

12. Children marry in order of seniority - all brothers helping to find lobola for one another.

13. Sisters divided among brothers - the lobola for each sister helping to provide a wife for a brother.

14. Mother’s brother daughter a preferred mate for cattle return to place where they come - hence girl very prominent in marriage of father’s sister’s son - may lead a mock fight against girls of bride’s home.

15. Place of mock fights today taken by Chair Contemplations Dance.

16. Bride is supposed to weep bitterly at wedding to show her parents how sorry she is to leave such good a home for a rather different home. Bride’s chief job in modern weddings is to take care of washing bride.

17. Long harangues at wedding to wife - oblige to husband.
1. Fundamental terms — Bia, Mma — others compound them.
3. First child — matutula — Kgosana
4. Youngest child — Botelo — the spoiled child of the family
5. Another spoiled child is one brought up at mother's home
6. Children seldom get names from maternal side
   - Usually only one that is one brought up at home
   - in-law
7. Children get respect due to those whose names they bear.
Father — Kpra
Mother — Mama
Sister (m.s.) — Kgantsadi
Brother (of own father) — morewane
Brother (of own mother) — morewane
Sister (of own father) — Kgantsadi
Sister (of own mother) — Kgantsadi
Elder brother (m.s.) — morewane or ngkone
Younger brother (m.s.) — morewane
Younger sister (m.s.) — morewane
Younger brother (w.s.) — morewane
Younger sister (w.s.) — morewane
Father's brother — n/a
Father's elder brother — n/a
Father's younger brother — n/a
Father's brother's wife — n/a
Father's brother's child — n/a
Father's sister — n/a
Father's sister's husband — n/a
Father's sister's child — n/a
Mother's brother — n/a
Mother's brother's wife — n/a
Mother's brother's child — n/a
Mother's elder sister — n/a
Mother's younger sister — n/a
Mother's sister — n/a
Mother's sister's husband — n/a
Mother's sister's child — n/a
Mother's elder sister's child — n/a
Mother's younger sister — n/a
Son — mora
Daughter — moradi
Brother (w.s.) — Kgantsadi
Brother's child (m.s.) — nyawanake
Brother's child (w.s.) — n/a
Mother's brother's child (m.s.) — nyawanake
Mother's brother's child (w.s.) — n/a
Mother's sister's child (m.s.) — nyawanake
Mother's sister's child (w.s.) — n/a
Mother's younger sister's child — n/a
Mother's younger sister's child — n/a
social relationships, although they may be thrown into sharper relief by the larger forms of social grouping to be mentioned later. The family among the Bechuana is thus the basis of the economic, religious, military, educational, recreational and social life of the people.

4. The smallest kinship grouping among the Bechuana is the family circle consisting of a man, his wife and his children. Within this group there are several important relationships to be noted, namely, (i) the relationship between husband and wife, (ii) the relationship between parents and children which may be further divided into the relationship between father and children on the one hand and that between mother and children on the other, (iii) the relationship between children and here we must distinguish between the relationship between brothers and that between sisters and that between brothers and sisters.