

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION.

In All, I have so far paid five visits to the BaKxatla, actually living amongst them for about thirteen months. My first visit, financed by a grant from the University of Cape Town, lasted from October 1929 to February 1930. During 1930 I made them two further visits of less than a fortnight each at my own expense. On the second of these short trips I took with me a small party of senior students from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (where I was then teaching), in order to give them a first-hand acquaintance with a Native tribe and a little experience of field work. I returned again in 1931, staying from April to July, assisted by a grant from the University of Cape Town; and paid still another visit from July to November 1932, receiving for this purpose a grant from the Institute.

It was obvious within the first few days of my arrival in the Reserve that I had to do with a people who had already been considerably affected by European influences. Quite apart from the evidence afforded by such things as clothing, language, church and school buildings, I found in Mochudi a large mission establishment, a European school principal (since replaced by a Native), two trading stores, and two European blacksmiths. Any attempt to ignore the presence of these European elements and of the changes in Native Life produced by them would have resulted in my obtaining a completely erroneous impression of the modern tribal culture. I decided to concentrate upon a study of Kxatla culture as it now actually exists, a study in which the missionary, trader and administrator were to be regarded as factors in the tribal life in the same way as are the chief and the magician. Since Christianity has replaced ancestor-worship as the official religion of the tribe, I studied it just as I would have studied any other form of cult: its organization, doctrines, manifestations in tribal life, attitudes toward it of individual Natives, and so on. So, too, the trading stores had to be considered as integral parts of economic life, the schools as part of the routine educational development of the children, and the Administrator as part of the existing political system.

At the same time I naturally attempted by questioning reliable old Natives to ascertain as far as possible what usages had been customary in the past. For instance, initiation ceremonies, sex relations, marriage and death customs all now have many features different from the traditional usages of the Bantu cluster to which the BaKxatla belong. I was able in most cases to obtain a fairly serviceable outline of the former practices and beliefs, and by comparing them with what now prevails to work out the nature and direction of the changes that have taken place. In this way it was possible to trace out in fair detail the manner in which contact with Europeans had modified the original culture of people. In some respects change has been rapid and extensive, in others a selective conservatism has made itself felt; and the study of the causes underlying these differences in reacting to the new influences throws a good deal of light upon the whole process of culture contact as reflected in the relations of the BaKxatla with Europeans.

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Except for a three weeks' stay in the outlying village of Sikwane, where I lived as a guest in a Native household, I spent all my time in Mochudi, now and then paying brief visits to most of the other villages, to the homesteads at the gardens, and to the cattle-posts. In Mochudi itself I lived continuously in European households, principally with one of the traders. Local sentiment, both European and Native, made this advisable; and as the trading store concerned is not more than thirty yards away from the nearest group of Native household, I was always within easy reach of the people. I do not think that in consequence I missed anything of importance, especially as my stay at Sikwane gave me ample opportunity of observing the inner workings of Kxatla domestic life.

My work was greatly facilitated from the start by the encouragement given me by the former regent Isang, a man of outstanding ability and intelligence who appreciated the value of having the customs of his people put on record. He not only himself acted as informant, but generously placed at my disposal all his files of official correspondence, and helped to provide me with other informants. The fact that he often expressed public approval of my investigations helped a good deal to make the people more approachable and less suspicious than they might have been. The young Chief, his nephew, was less enthusiastic in his assistance, but by inviting me during my last visit to address the assembled tribe on their early history showed that he too approved of my work and realized its value. On the whole I encountered far less difficulty than I had expected. The women as a rule were more reluctant to talk than were the men, but among the latter there were many whose full confidence I was able to gain and who willingly told me all that they knew.

My enquiries were made through the mediums of English, Afrikaans and (after some time) SeKwatla, of which I had acquired a fair working knowledge by the time I paid my last visit. Many of the men spoke English fluently, and I had no hesitation at all in working in this medium, as it enabled me to establish direct contact with them at once. All my work with Chief Isang, for instance, was done in this way. Afrikaans I employed only with some of the older men, who knew it from the days when they had worked on Boer farms in the Transvaal. Where I could not communicate directly with informants through a European medium, I had at first to employ an interpreter. After working for a short time with two Native teachers, who were useful as interpreters but handicapped by the fact that they were themselves foreigners, I was able to secure the help of the Mission printer, Sofonia Poonyane, a young man who was a good interpreter and an invaluable informant. He soon came to realize what I was after, and began to make independent inquiries on my behalf, often with surprisingly with good results. Even after I was able to talk SeKxatla myself I often continued to use him as interpreter, in order to train him more fully as an investigator. But during my last visit much of my work, especially with magicians, was done in the vernacular without the aid of any interpreter.

The fact that many of the BaKxatla can read and write enabled me to make extensive use of the text method. I would assign a certain topic to an

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informant, who would then go to his own people, ask the old people questions about it, and write me a long text on the subject. We would then go through this text together, discuss any points that arose out of it and then he would go back to get further information where his knowledge was defective. I found that in this way I would first get a reasoned Native account of a whole topic, in which the elements most important to them would be emphasized, and then by further discussion and questioning I could fill in details which seemed significant to me. At one time I had four youngmen regularly working for me in this way; They all lived in different parts of Mochudi, and by getting them to inquire simultaneously into the same topics I could get much fuller information than I could have maganged by myself in the time. In addition to the actual information thus obtained, I was able by this means to amass a collection of several hundred really good texts on Kxatla life and customs. I may add that during my absences from the tribe between one visit and another, Sofonia at my request kept a rough diary of what was happening and so provided me with much valuable information that I might otherwise have missed.

I have emphasized the text method because it played such a large part in my scheme of work. But in addition I from the employed the methods of personal observation and direct questioning. As a rule I would devote half the day, either the whole morning or the whole afternoon, according to circumstances, to walking about the village, entering the homesteads of my friends and acquaintances, sitting at the kxotla, talking to the people and noting what was happening generally. I attended tribal gatherings and lawsuits, church services, such ceremonies as I could, took part in feasts and beer-drinks, stayed out at the cattle-posts and gardens, watched the men and women at work, and the children at play and at school; and in this way acquired first-hand knowledge of most aspects of tribal life.

By using informants, I soon found that I had to discriminate, as few of them could speak with accuracy on all aspects of tribal life. I met with only one man who deliberately attempted to deceive me; the rest were willing enough, but not necessarily competent, and at times the rely xa ke itse, 'I don't know', almost became disheartening. The younger men with whom I became most friendly I used for matters specially within their province, such as sexual life, initiation ceremonies, cattle-herding, village gossip, events at home, and so on; the older men for history, law and politics. I made the acquaintance of several magicians, one of whom, the tribal rain-maker, became a great friend of mine, and not only willing told me all about his work but also invited me to attend any ceremonies that he performed. I tried in general to get as many points of view about a topic as I could; the rain-making ceremonies, for instance, were described to me by the rainmaker himself, by the chief, by men and women, by boys and by girls, and in this way I obtained a good picture of the extent to which knowledge about them is common or secret. With the women I was on the whole less successful than with men, owing mainly to the natural reticence they display in talking about the intimate details of female life to men; but during my stay at Sikwane the mother and wife of my Native host proved very helpful, while in Mochudi the

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concubines and friends of my young informants often came with them to act as informants. Many topics about which they would not speak freely to me they would discuss with their lovers, who were prompted by me and who would then come along to tell me what they had learned. Some of these young men also got into the habit of discussing their sexual and domestic problems with me, thus giving me an insight into the things that really mattered to them or were puzzling them.

Another fruitful method of approach was the taking of genealogies, village and household plans, and other statistics. The genealogical method I employed to a fairly considerable extent; it supplied data not only on the relationship system of the people, but also on the size of the families, fertility rates of women, polygyny, marital residence, intermarriage of relations, and so on. I made a household census of Sikwane during my first visit, and although I neglected to obtain information which subsequent knowledge of the tribe showed to have been important, such details as I did get are useful. I drew plans of about twenty households, and obtained full information about their inhabitants, disposition of huts, and so on. During my most recent visit I also made another type of census of a large kxoro in Mochudi. I copied the names of ~~xx~~ all the taxpayers in this kxoro from the official register. Then, with the aid of Sofonia, himself a member of this kxoro, I enquired into the families of these men, the type of ceremony with which they had been married (there are now four different types of marriage ceremony), whether they had paid boxadi yet, and if so, how many head of cattle, whether they had ever worked for Europeans (and if so, where, what sort of work, and how long they had been away from home), what special occupation they followed when at home (magicians, masons, carpents, makers of woden utensils, etc.), whether they possessed wagons, ploughs and cattle, etc. In this way I made a social and industrial census of a group of about 120 men. This type of inquiry can be considerably extended, and I hope, should the opportunity recur, to develop it still further. I also made two of my informants, a young man and a young woman, note down daily the food they ate, and so obtained sample dietaries^W over a period of about two months in each case. Other statistics relating to labour and the sale of cattle I obtained from the chief's office; the trader^m with whom I stayed supplied me with lists of the goods sold by him and with specimen accounts of several Native customers; the missionary gave me relevant figures about church membership, baptisms, marriages, etc; while the inspector of Education supplied me with copies of his reports on the schools. I also adopted the plan of giving small prizes to school-children for compositions in the vernacular on games, folk tales, household tasks, and other aspects of child life; obtained family records of over 250 school-children; and made an inquiry into their ambitions which threw interesting light on the desires developed by education.

The statistical method, as sketched out above, I regard as a very fruitful approach in a tribe such as the BaKxatla. A concrete investigation of even a single unit in the tribe, such as a clan, to embrace the family of each man (number of wives and children, form of marriage, amount paid as

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boxadi), experience of employment by Europeans, specialisation in occupation number of gardens and total yield of each crop, wealth in cattle, ploughs, and other forms of material possession, throws more light upon the actual nature of conditions than any general statements would. I myself have not employed this approach as fully as I now realize I might have done, but on going through such material as I did obtain in this way I am convinced of its real value, especially as an index of the extent to which Europeans influence has left its mark upon social and economic life.

Another important feature suggested by my own experience is the possibilities lying in the employment of educated Natives to write accounts of their own culture. By using such Natives as interpreters and informants, I could train them to appreciate the methods of anthropological investigation and to conduct independent inquiries for me. On occasion, I would, by way of experiment, leave the choice of subject entirely to them, and seldom would they come back something of value. In the long run this meant that it was not only I who was doing ethnographical research, but also these Natives, for often they would tell me that they had learned something from the old people about which they had known nothing at all. I feel that to some extent I have inspired these young men to take a keener interest in the old customs and beliefs which hitherto they had ignored or even despised.

The information I have been able to obtain during my visits to the tribe is embodied in a vast mass of notes in English, a large collection of Kxatla texts, and a number of genealogies and other statistical matter.

I. SCHAPERLA.

Age Differentiation

1. Age & seniority of considerable importance in social life
2. Elderly members demanded & obtained respect
3. (a) Special terms of address for older brothers & sisters
 - (b) no argumentation with them
 - (c) older always to have last word
 - (d) Don't look in face when addressing
 - (e) Order of seniority to be observed in marriage
 - (f) Respect for elders in village & tribal life apart from family

Causes of decay

- a. Age limited experience & knowledge
- b. Content of knowledge differs today
- c. They have aversion of references direct to elders
- d. Less keen seniority is questioned
- e. Rigidity of elders

Hierarchy of Age

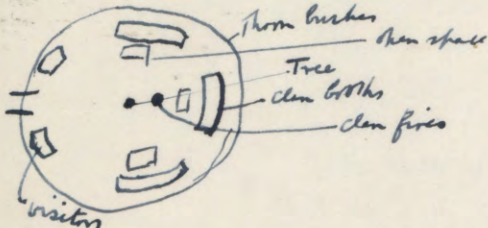
- (a) Prior to weaning
- (b) Post weaning
- (c) Pre-puberty
- (d) Puberty initiation
- (e) Post initiation pre-marriage
- (f) Marriage
- (g) Marriage & children
- (h) Marriage & grand-children

Loosa

- ngona
- mosimais - moretana
- ngogwa - moroba
- lekolwane - ingale
- lekau - kgasbe
- monna - moradi
- proena - mokunngadi
- monnamogole - buadimogole

Initiation

1. Camp in secluded spot, away from village, near water, consecrated by chief magician



Instructions

- Songs which contain tribal lore
- be humble toward elders in community
- respect the aged
- obey rules of hunting
- defend cattle from wild beasts
- obedience & loyal behavior
- sex education - behavior toward women

Talents

1. avoid using women
2. not to mention those who die in camp
3. secrecy concerning every thing in camp

- a. Camp looked after by "shepherds" - members of last segment who have kept free from women; also members prepared to do other manual tasks. All must remain free for whole period except occasional visitors
- b. Length of stay about three months
- c. Hardening of boys
 - (1) Whipping for indolence, want of alertness, being sleepy at night
 - (2) Special workouts for head-stay boys
 - (3) Little food given - increase & hunger & thirst
 - (4) Eating & drinking food without murmurs
 - (5) No blankets at night, only a little grass covering
 - (6) Singing & dancing
 - (7) Bathing in cold water
 - (8) Working for exercise

Return to village

1. Place of assembly - meeting & the whole
2. all initiated men women present
3. Testimony, dancing, singing, drinking, moral lesson
4. to round village with bullock hides, given presents of weapons, stocks & gifts worth them

Guthrie's Puberty Test

1. Performed in town
2. Several private courtyards built set apart for purpose.
3. Candidates assemble after boys initiation
4. Taken to field for marginal operation by mistress of supplies
5. Return to town carefully screened by initiated women
6. Enter huts & put on ceremonial garments, made of corn-stalks
each foot wears a pair of, smears body with cotton daisy.
7. Ceremonial festivals each day of the month.
 - a) use of clay images of animal or of parts of the body
by then a phallic animal.
 - b) Mass carried in procession to place of assembly, all concealed from general public.
 - c) Later women masquerade as gods

Instruction

work of home stand
affairs of sex
duties to male relatives & husbands
sug. & demands
drinking regimen.

Return

1. Bath
2. Anoint with anointer - red ochre
3. Put on fine clothes
4. Clay horns on head of each.
5. Must stand in place for 24 hours with all night.

History of Girls
Notes

Elonization: 7 Feb 1847



Womers-

1. Daughters less popular than sons
daughter-bearing wife less popular
2. Places in village reserved closed to women
3. " " " " other " only
eg. regatta, section of house, but with confined woman
4. Special occupations for women only
cooking, drawing water, stamping corn,
weeding, making pots
5. Special occupations open to both men & women eg. magic - boboi, bongalla
Other
6. Religious disabilities for women,
(a) no leading part in sacrifices
(b) no consultation on tribal policy
(c) no political office except as regards-
7. Legal status of women —
a perpetual minor
8. Considerable freedom in household
- (1) reputation if mother of sons
(2) part in local festivities such as singing,

men.

1. Sons more popular than daughters
2. Places in village closed open to men only
eg. Khotla, Kwaal
3. Place in village closed to men
4. Special occupations for men only,
looking after cattle, attending court, preparing
skins
5. See before
6. (a) herding post in sacrifices etc of Kwaalhead
(b) consultation on tribal policy
(c) can hold political office
7. Legal status (a) proprietary
(b) contractual rights
(c) can become a mayor