

THE BAROLONG SETTLEMENT.

The ordinary place of abode of a Barolong family consists of a number of huts which, taken together, constitute the lolwapa. In the lolwapa live a man, his wife and children. As the sons become old enough to get married, and do so, they build their malwapa in close proximity to that of their father. In time these malwapa increase and, taken together, constitute a settlement of closely related families tracing their common descent through males. The malwapa of close relatives tracing their descent through males taken together form what is known as the kgotla at the head of which is the senior male relative of the kinship group living within that settlement. The head of the kgotla is variously known as mong a kgotla, i.e. the master or owner of the kgotla, or mogolo wa kgotla, i.e. the great one of the kgotla. The headship of the kgotla as a whole depends not so much upon age as upon seniority in rank in the history of the combined family units of which it is composed. Thus at any one time the head of the kgotla may be a fairly young man who is the heir of the senior branch of the kgotla. Thus A, the founder of a kgotla, has four sons B, C, D, E. The descendants of B, the eldest son of A, will always remain the senior members of the kgotla, whatever their age, as compared with the descendants of C, D and E. B may die unmarried and therefore childless, or he may get married and die without issue. A younger brother E may be called upon by his father or by the senior male advisers of the family, if his father be deceased, to marry a wife for B, his deceased brother or marry his widow and so raise up seed for B. The children of the seantlo union thus formed are the children of B. C and D may be married already and have grown up children. But immediately a son is born to B through the seantlo union of E with B's widow or another woman married in the name of B, this son takes precedence over the sons of C and D, and although C, the man next in order of seniority after the deceased B may have assumed the latter's status as head of the kgotla, this position in due course will devolve upon the son of the seantlo union set up in B's name, thus excluding the descendants of C, the regent during the minority of the "son" of B.

Girls are, however, excluded from the headship of the kgotla. Again and again in discussion with informants on the question of succession, one hears the statement that So and So died without issue when as a matter of fact closer investigation will show that he had several daughters. This is because, for the purposes of determining seniority and the continuance of the line of descent of the kgotla, female children are not reckoned. By their marriage they will eventually pass out of their own kgotla into another, and although wherever they may be a very vital and direct interest will be taken in them and in their children by their brothers, the girls and their descendants can never form part of ~~their~~ the heirs of their father's kgotla. Thus daughters, whatever their age, always rank after sons in their family.

LOLWAPA. The term lolwapa is applied either to the whole settlement of a man, his wife and unmarried children or to the courtyard which is erected in front of the main hut in which the family lives. When one enters a Barolong house, one first comes into the lolwapa which is surrounded with a mud wall about four feet high; within this wall is an open space which has been levelled and smeared with cow-dung mixed with earth (boloko). In one corner of this level space may be a fire-place which consists of a circular depression slightly below the level of the rest of the lolwapa. It is customary nowadays to border this fire-place with the iron hoop of a beer barrel. The cooking of the family may be done at this fire-place or at another in another part of the family dwelling to be described presently. On the far side away from the entrance to the lolwapa is the hut in which the family lives. The hut is round in shape with a wall about six or seven feet high. The wall is for the most part made of mud mixed with cow-dung. It is the job of women to erect this wall. The roof of the house is one of thatch, the framework consisting of a number of beams put together in such a way as to form a cone. The framework of the roof rests on the wall in such a way as to

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project to a certain extent over the wall, making a kind of narrow verandah known as mokatako. Not infrequently the roof is held up by means of a pole set in the middle of the hut, to the top of which the beams making up the framework of the roof are tied by means of leather thongs or otherwise. At intervals of about a foot to eighteen inches down the side of this conical framework are ropes made of bark which are fastened to the poles making up the framework. The grass with which the house is thatched is laid on this framework and bound with the ropes which encircle the roof. Instead of the central pole supporting the framework of the roof we sometimes find beams resting on the wall running horizontally across the walls of the hut. To these the beams of the roof are tied with strong ropes.

The floor of the house is smeared by the women and the walls whitewashed with colour-washer of different colours found in the ground. Some women paint certain designs on the walls of their houses and the patterns of these decorations show that the Barolong women are by no means devoid of aesthetic taste. To-day most huts have small apertures in the walls which do duty for windows while more "advanced" people have regular windows in their huts. The interior of the hut is often divided into two sections by means of a screen, one section being the sleeping quarter, and the other the living quarter. At night the living quarter is also used as a bedroom, mats made of grass (ditlatla) or made of skins (diphate) being laid down on the floor to make a bed, while the blankets may either be made of sheep or goat-skins or may consist of karosses made out of the skins of wild animals. The preparation of skins for the various purposes indicated above is the duty of men, some of them acquiring wide reputation for their skill in this kind of work.

SEGOTLO. The lolwapa and the hut we have so far described constitute the living room of the Barolong household. This is the part of the settlement to which strangers are admitted when they visit the family. But at the back of this hut is an enclosure similar in construction to the lolwapa known as the segotlo, and within it stands a hut known as the segotlo hut. This is the private part of the household or settlement to which

strangers . . /

strangers are not generally admitted. Only members of the family, members of the wider kinship group to which the family belongs, and their close friends within the community are admitted within the enclosure. It is a mark of special friendship to be allowed the privilege of passing into the segotlo. Even if a stranger upon arrival at a home should find nobody in the lolwapa, it is not good manners for him to pass into the segotlo, even if he should be aware that there must be people in the segotlo. His duty is to make his presence known in some other way, e.g. by shouting until he is heard or ~~to~~ ^{by} wait ^{ing} until some member of the family should appear, who will undertake to announce his arrival or lead him into the segotlo or otherwise attend to his wants. Private undertakings such as consultations with a witchdoctor are carried out in the segotlo hut. In particular the segotlo is the section of the household in which women live and carry out their activities. When women are confined, childbirth takes place and the confined mother is kept within the segotlo hut. When the daughters of the family become of marriageable age huts may be erected for them within the segotlo enclosure. Here such a girl may be visited by the man to whom she is betrothed during the go ralala period. The mother is in charge of the segotlo of her family and here has her daughters under her direct supervision. According to one informant, in the olden days the lolwapa hut used to have a small aperture known as "sethola-mogwe", (i.e. the place through which one watches the son-in-law) through which the mother could keep an eye on all persons passing into the segotlo even if she were at the time inside the lolwapa hut. I was not able to confirm this, but if such a custom did exist, it merely serves to emphasise the private character of all that went on in the segotlo. Among the Barolong boys were not allowed to have huts built for them in the segotlo, nor indeed outside it, until there were married. They might, of course, have huts erected for their use at the cattle-posts, if any. Otherwise they live in the lolwapa until they marry when they set up their own households which will also ultimately consist of (1) a lolwapa, (2) a lolwapa hut, (3) a segotlo, (4) a segotlo hut.

Prior to his marriage, a man may live in the segotlo hut of his future parents-in-law, when arrangements have been duly made for this purpose as will be pointed out in the section dealing with the go ralala custom.

Thus the segotlo represents:

- (1) the private apartments of the settlement as a whole;
- (2) the women's section of the home in which confinements and domestic activities such as cooking take place;
- (3) the living quarters of daughters of marriageable age;
- (4) the part of the household in which the go ralala custom (courtship) is carried out, i.e. the living quarters of the sons-in-law of the family when on a visit to the family or to their future wives.

The adult males of the family spend much of their time at the kgotla of the settlement and sleep in the lolwapa hut. The polygamist has a separate settlement for each wife, consisting of the various parts mentioned above. Thus the settlement of a polygamist or that of a man with a number of daughters of marriageable age would consist of a main lolwapa and one or more segotlo huts joined to it by means of walls each about four feet high. This ensures privacy for the occupants of each segotlo, and the lolwapa ensures a certain amount of privacy for the family as a whole.