

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--Serolen Setlhaping 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. Willoughby's "Race Problems in the New Africa", "The Soul of the Bantu" and "Nature-Worship and Taboo" 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

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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 ~~triking~~ 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 sisters 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 "raa" which roughly corresponds to the Western term "father" is used to designate not only the actual father of ^{the} individual using it, but also a father's brothers, a prefix being added to distinguish between ^{his} older and younger brothers, raa-mogolo ^(literally great-father) indicating father's older brother, and raangoane (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 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 father.

The term 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 mmangoane (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 morwaare (literally son of ~~to~~ my father) brother is as a rule applied to ~~any~~ ^{the} sons of any individual who ~~may~~ is classed as father ^{or mother} (see above), while moraliare (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 sides are found others which distinguish between brothers and sisters according to age, mogolole ^{or nkgonne} indicating older brother or older sister, nnahe indicating younger brother or sister. There is a term for reciprocal use between brothers and sisters, 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 a raa calls kgantsadi, the term rakgadi (literally female-father) is applied, while the husband of such a woman is also called rakgadi. ^{more rarely} mogatsa rakgadi (literally husband of my rakgadi) may be used to obviate confusion.

To any man whose ~~woman~~ woman who is the husband of a woman called moma the term malome (literally male-mother) ~~the term~~ is applied, while the wife of such a man may be called by the same term, mogatsa malome (literally wife of malome) 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 malome Otsile would clearly indicate mother's brother, because Otsile is a man's name, while malome motlalepula would indicate mother's brother's wife because motlalepula is a woman's name.

Another method ~~used~~ is to attach to the term used the 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 ^{actual (not classificatory)} children, usually the eldest, with the word roa or mama. Thus a man may have the personal name Otsile but also be known as roa-Kabelo, because the name of his eldest child is Kabelo; ~~his wife~~ while his wife in addition to her personal name will also be called mama-Kabelo. In applying a ~~same~~ term common to husband & wife to each either of them it would be usual to add their marriage name e.g. roa-Kabelo or mama-Kabelo as the case might be. Thus we have malome roa-Kabelo, which clearly indicates a man and malome mama-Kabelo which obviously refers to a woman. The same may be said with regard to the common use of the term roakgadi.

The terms roamogolo and mamamogolo are used to indicate grandfather and grandmother respectively. It may be observed that these terms are the same as those applied to mother's older sister and father's older brother. How can we distinguish between these relatives? The use of possessive pronouns in connection with these terms is a way out. Thus your grandfather is always described as roago mogolo, while your father's older brother is always described as roamogolwago, so that the possessive pronoun wago in the case of grandfather is put between roa and mogolo, while in the case of father's older brother it is put between at the end of the word roamogolo. The same applies to the terms mamamogolo which is used for both grandmother and mother's older sister.

Grandparents call their grandchildren - motlogolo
(pl. bomotlogolo). Brown suggests that the terms
retlogolo and motlogolo ^{are} interchangeable, but from my experience I have
never heard them so used by a mochuana, and I
submit that they are invariably differentiated as shown
above.

The corresponding differences in the case of his grandfather and his father's older brother are rragwe mogolo and rramogolwagwe, while ~~to~~ ^{for} the first person, ^{pronoun} the terms are rra mogolo (of my grandfather) and rramogolwake (my father's older brother).

The ^{first born} eldest child of every woman is called ngwana wa maitibolo or briefly just maitibolo. The corresponding Zulu term is mazibuko. The last-born is called gohele (literally "let it be finished"). There are no special terms for 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.

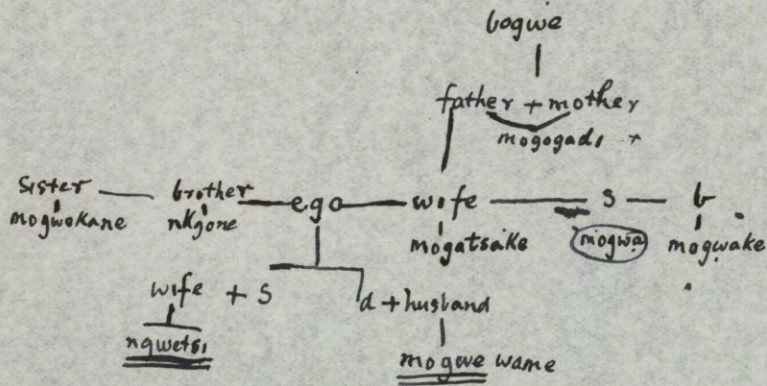
~~The~~ The only persons who are regarded as cousins are ~~what~~ as those usually known as cross-cousins. The children of a man and those of his sisters are cross-cousins and are ntsala properly so called to ~~see~~ one another. ~~Neither~~ neither the children of two brothers nor those of two sisters are regarded as cousins; they are brothers and sisters. The mother's brother (melome) calls his sisters children setlogolo (plural ditlogolo), ~~while a~~

5.

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 morwarre or moralarre (son of my father 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 morwamome or morabramome. This is of course due to the father fact that the Bechuanas are strongly patrilineal - child belong to the father they owe their existence to him much more than to the mother in common Bechuan parlance. The woman's child-bearing powers 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 have none or may by means of witchcraft prevent the ^{good} seed implanted in her by the man from developing into children.

Relatives-in-law

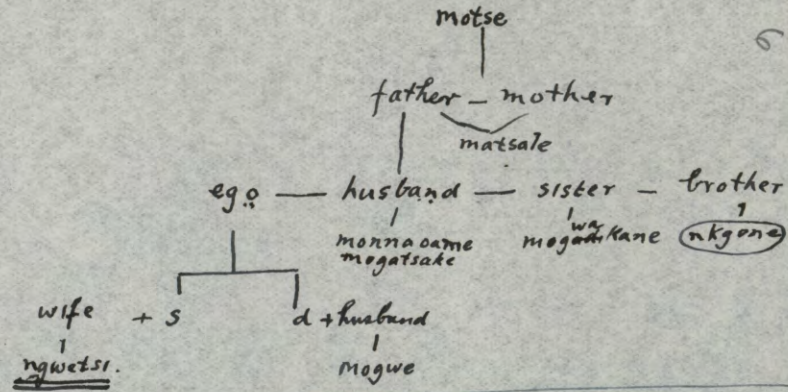
Man - speaking



- The reciprocal use of term mogwe - enters into almost all affinal relationship terms
 (a) between spouses (b) between brothers-in-law (c) between son-in-law + parents.
- ngwetsi stands by itself - Nkgoe e metsi
- Matsale " " " - One who has given birth for me.
- No special term for wife's sister - a potential wife if younger
- " " " husband's brother - a potential husband
- Man's home in law - bogwe, wife's home-in-law - motse
- Wife's sister only person with whom you can be at ease at home especially younger, where traditional respect for age is inoperative
- Husband's brother only person with whom wife can be at ease, especially younger who is not likely to take father's status, possible husband
- Husband's sisters restrained - because cattle given for them provide lobola for brother's wife or cattle given for them will go to brother
- Husband's brother easier - because they inherit wife's lobola talking lower; in case of wife's re-marriage her lobola will help to find wife for younger brother

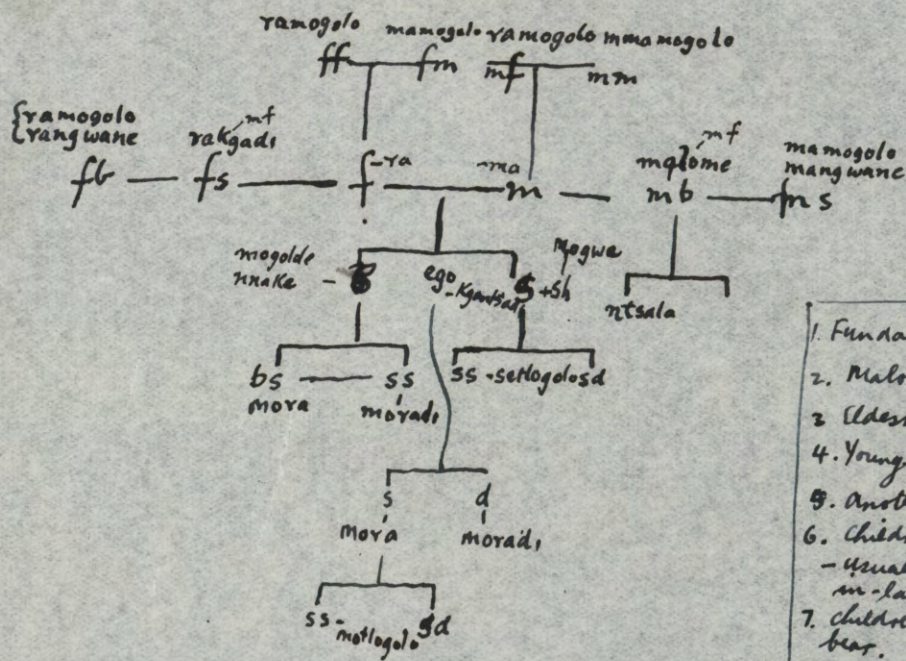
Relatives in Law

Woman - speaking



- brother must kept on good terms with sister's sons because their mother's lobola either got them or will get him a wife
- Children marry in order of seniority - all brothers helping to find lobola for one another
- Sisters divided among brothers - the lobola for each sister helping to provide a wife for a brother
- mother's brother's daughter a preferred mate for cattle return to place whence they came - Hence this girl very prominent in the marriage of father's sister's son - May lead a mock fight against girls of bride's home
- Place of mock fights today taken by Choir Competitions Dance " "
- Bride is supposed to weep bitterly at wedding to show her parents-in-law how sorry she is to leave such a good home for a rather indifferent one
- Best man's chief job in modern weddings is to take care of weeping bride
- long harangues at weddings to (a) wife - obedience to husband not to team in practices - wistfulness
 " " " be unfaithful
 " " " jealous
- (b) husband - work diligently for his wife
 - to refrain from using stick
 - to remember that he is married - keep away from girls

Relatives - Man-speaking



1. Fundamental terms - Pora & Moma - other compounds of them
2. Malome & Rakgadi - male mother & female father
3. Oldest child - matsibole - Kgosana
4. Youngest child - Bohole - the spoiled child of the family
mohumaqadi
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.

8 Kinship Terminology of the Bechuana

Father	- - - -	Roa	Son	-	mora
Mother	- - -	Mma	Daughter	-	moradi
Sister (m.s.)		Kgantsadi	Brother (w.s.)	-	Kgantsadi
Brother (of own father & ^{another} mother)	-	morwane			
Brother (own mother & ^{another} father)	-	mogolole or nnake	- but morwane if father is married to such mother of another child.		
Sister (own father & ^{another} mother)	-	Kgantsadi			
Sister (own mother & ^{another} father)	-	Kgantsadi			
Elder brother (m.s.)	-	mogolole or nnake	Younger brother ^(m.s.)	-	nnake
Elder brother (w.s.)	-	"	Younger sister ^(m.s.)	-	nnake
Elder sister (m.s.)	-	mogolole or nkgone	Younger brother (w.s.)	-	nnake
Elder sister (w.s.)	-	"	Younger sister (w.s.)	-	nnake
Father's brother	-	no special term	Brother's child (m.s.)	-	ngwanake
Father's elder brother	-	ramogolo	Younger brother's child ^(m.s.)	-	ngwanake
Father's younger brother	-	rangwane	Elder brother's child (m.s.)	-	ngwanake
Father's brother's wife	-	mmamogolo or mangelwane	Husband's brother's child	-	ngwanake
Father's brother's child	-	morwane or morahone			
Father's elder brother's child	-	"	Father's younger brother's child	-	morwane or morahone
Father's sister	-	ratgadi	Brother's child (w.s.)	-	?
Father's sister's husband	-	ratgadi	wife's brother's child	-	?
Father's sister's child	-	ntsala	mother's brother's child	-	ntsala
mother's brother	-	malome	sister's child (m.s.)	-	setlogolo
mother's brother's wife	-	malome	husband's sister's child	-	setlogolo
mother's brother's child	-	ntsala	Father's sister's child	-	ntsala
mother's elder sister	-	mmamogolo	Younger sister's child	-	ngwanake
mother's younger sister	-	mmangwane	Elder sister's child	-	"
mother's sister	-	no general term	Sister's child (w.s.)	-	ngwanake
mother's sister's husband	-	ra	wife's sister's child	-	ngwanake
mother's sister's child	-	mogolole or nnake (Kgantsadi)	mother's younger sister's child	-	mogolole or nnake
mother's elder sister's child	-	"	brother's elder sister's child	-	"
mother's younger	-	"			

Father's father	- ramogolo	}	Son's son (m.s.)	- motlogolo
Father's mother	- mmamogolo		Son's daughter (m.s.)	- motlogolo
Mother's father	- ramogolo	{	daughter's son ^{m.s.}	- motlogolo
Mother's mother	- mmamogolo		daughter's daughter ^{m.s.}	- "
			daughter's son	- "
			daughter's daughter	- "
Husband	- mogatsoa		Wife	- mogatsoa
Wife's father	- mogogadi		daughter's husband (m.s.)	- mogwe
Wife's mother	"		" " (w.s.)	- mogwe
Husband's father	matsake		Son's wife (m.s.)	- nguetai
Husband's mother	"		" " (w.s.)	"
Wife's brother	mogwake		Sister's husband (m.s.)	mogwake
Wife's sister	-		Sister's husband (w.s.)	mogwake
Wife's brother's wife	-		husband's sister's husband	-
husband's brother	-		Brother's wife	- mogokane
husband's sister	mogokane		brother's wife	-
Wife's sister's husband				
Husband's brother's wife				
Son's wife's parents	- bomogogadia mogwake			

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.