

Likewise the young man's father, having consulted with his wife and ascertained the wishes of the girl's parents, consults with members of his family. Here the girl's family is subjected to a close scrutiny. What is their social status? Are there any divorcees in the family? Any habitual criminals? Any recurring physical and mental deficiencies in the family line? Are they not accused of witchcraft or sorcery? So far as the girl is concerned: Is she industrious? Has she not been very lax in her morals? Has she ever had a baby? aborted or miscarried? Is she courteous? Does she respect her elders? When they are all agreed they choose a suitable go-between. Henceforward further negotiations between the two families must be carried on through the medium of the two go-betweens.

It must be observed that once the matter has been referred to the executive councils on both sides, the parents of the corresponding partners on either side recede into the background. This issue is now out of their hands though their wishes are not altogether ignored.

On an appointed day the go-between from the young man's home, reports at the girl's home. He is accordingly directed to his opposite number on their side. Together they appear before a group of near relatives at the girl's home. Their go-between formally introduces him to the meeting and briefly reviews what has already transpired between them. They demand to hear the same directly from the horse's mouth, and so the go-between from the young man's home is allowed to state his case. It must be observed that although everyone can understand what is being discussed, custom rules that he should formally be told about the matter by his immediate junior. Therefore the go-between from the young man's home addresses his opposite number on their side. The latter directly addresses the man who is lowest in rank among those present, and it is the latter's duty to relay the news to his immediate senior and so on until the news reach the man highest in rank among them. It is the latter who is expected to tell the girl's father, who in turn must tell his wife. He may then call for the girl. In this case they would like to know whether she is agreeable to the proposed match.

In olden days it was useless on her part to express dissent because her consent was not essential. Nowadays it is done in good faith because people are beginning to admit that she is entitled to express her wishes on this vital matter which concerns her most. They also do so to ascertain whether the young man has already approached her on the matter. (Some young men are wont to ask their parents to negotiate for marriage on their ~~parent's~~ behalf before they have formally or even informally agreed with the girl concerned.) Using these circuitous methods agreement is eventually reached and the go-between~~s~~ from the young man's home is accordingly informed that all is well and the Maxadi cattle may be paid.

#### IV. Payment of Maxadi cattle.

The go-between from the young man's home goes home to report to the young man's father. Having consulted with his wife, together they appoint a suitable day on which the Maxadi cattle may be ~~paid~~ collected. (It is common to refer to anything paid in terms of cattle. That is why I shall persist to use the term Maxadi cattle.) On an appointed day relatives on the young man's side of the family come together in the central courtyard (lapa) of his mother's homestead to decide on the number of cattle that they as a group can afford. Firstly, the young man's father is expected to announce the number of cattle that he intends to pay on this occasion. Then the relatives, one by one and in descending order, announce their contributions. The principle of reciprocity has to be respected. Supposing the young man's father contributed one head of cattle on the occasion of the marriage of the son of one of those present, the latter is in duty bound to pay one head of cattle or more, but not less. Thus they say on this occasion: "One is not spending but saving" (Xa O lahle O a ipeêla). If a relative fails to respect this principle of reciprocity, he goes down in social prestige. In future when his son gets married, the others may not give generously. When they have formally agreed on the number to be paid, their go-between is instructed to make an appointment with the people of the girl's family. On this day the Maxadi cattle hav

have to be paid.

In both families the father and the mother of the young woman on the one hand and those of the young man on the other, become conspicuous by their silence. Once the matter gets into the hands of relatives on either side, they recede into the background and come in only when expressly allowed to do so by the master of ceremonies. For their protection of their interests it is a general rule that they should be informed of every step taken.

There are tribal variations in the procedure followed. Among the Bakone ba-xa-Matlala payment is made in the morning after Sunrise. Among the Batau the first instalment of Five head of cattle, traditionally called "the lion's paw" (boro bya tau), must be paid in the evening. In the case of an inter-tribal marriage it is the custom observed at the bride's village that must be followed. The Batau method is simpler. On the first evening they pay "the lion's paw" after which they are formally led into the courtyard of the bride's mother, where they spend the night after participating in the evening meal. The next morning they appear at the men's place (Kxorong) to pay the rest of the Maxadi at about Sunrise. As a rule they are not expected to pay them all at once but to do so in instalments until the receiving party expresses satisfaction. Word is then sent to the women assembled in the courtyard to announce the number that has been paid, If they refuse to accept that number, the men are expected to call for some more. On the other hand if they approve of the number given, they will send a girl to proceed to the men's place and snatch away something - a stick or a hat - from one of the men from the young man's home (now called "Bakxonyana"). This is a sign that their Maxadi cattle have been accepted and traditionally they have to follow the girl into the courtyard where they are entertained. Beasts are slaughtered and there is much feasting. Now formalities are relaxed and individuals on both sides enjoy relative freedom.

Among the Madihl<sup>a</sup>ba people, the cattle are driven to the girl's home in the afternoon. The young men at the latter's

kxôrô are expected to blockade the entrance into the village and stage a sham-fight with the "Bakxonyana" before the latter are allowed to enter their village. The cattle are driven **into** the men's place (ka kxorong) and are formally presented.

Among the Bakone ba-xa-Matlala the procedure is different. When the men from the young man's home (Bakxonyana) arrive, they are met with no apparent interest. Every body seems to be indifferent to their presence. The go-between on the bride's side meets them at the main entrance, taking care to communicate only with his opposite number on their side, and leads them to a spot in the interior of the kxôrô, where the piercing morning Sun may shine straight on them, while they face in its direction. Here they sit until the corresponding group on the bride's side is ready to receive the cattle. When the latter are ready, an announcement is made through the ~~the~~ go-between in the words: "Let us hear them!" When their go-between has communicated this intelligence to his opposite number on the other side, proceedings formally begin. There is only one presenter and a corresponding receiver. They are the go-betweens on either side. Let us call them "A" and "B". A stands up and says: "Rara!" i.e. Father. B replies: "Ngwandaka!" i.e. my child. A then presents the first cow, describing its colours and giving the name of the relative who has paid it at the same time. Every contributor must be made known publicly. This has a psychological effect on the contributors for they take pride in paying more. As a rule the cattle from the young man's father are the first to be presented. B receives them and announces them to members of his group as if they were not present when A presented them. All the beasts presented must be penned in the kraal so that those present may see them and thus become official witnesses that they have been paid. When one of them is presented "**in absentia**" as it were, an explanation must be given as to why it has not been possible to bring it along. Where money is paid, it is announced in livestock values. For example, 10/- = one goat; £1 = one sheep; and £3 = one cow. Such money must also be produced and counted publicly. Since every beast has to be

presented individually, proceedings take the better part of the day. Amongst the Bakone ba-xa-Matlala the presentor is not expected to pay over all the cattle at once. He must therefore pretend that all have been paid and only reluctantly pay some more when the group on the other side declare their dissatisfaction. It is not uncommon for near relatives (e.g. father's sister or mother's brother on the bride's side) to demand their own beasts. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that what is paid upon their request will go to them as individuals. They do so in the interest of the bridal party as a whole.

When the men are satisfied that enough cattle have been paid, they send a messenger to inform the assembly of women in the courtyard, saying: "Go and announce the number of the cattle to the mothers of the child!" The latter, having heard their number, may, if not satisfied, declare their wishes by replying: "Let them wash down our throats." (A ba re hlatswê mexôlô) That is to say: Give us some more. When satisfied with the number paid, they will reply: "If you man at the men's place are defeated, so are we defeated" (Xe lena banna le fentšwe kuwa kxorong, le rena re fentšwe).

Having received the latter word from the women, the men will speak through their spokesman and say: "If the rhinoceros is bigger than the calf, make it pass with an assegai." That is, give us some more. Having consulted with members of his party A may present another beast, but he may ~~say~~ also plead that there are no more cattle to be paid in by saying: "The hole extends no more" (Mošima o sekhutlô). They in turn may reply and say: "Get a stick and probe it a little further" (Nyaka phata o xwaišê)! The rhinoceros cow having been paid, a messenger is again sent to announce it to the assembly of women in the courtyard. If the latter are not satisfied they ask for some more in the name of the bride's mother, saying: "Let them wash down our throats" (A ba re hlatswê mexôlô), or "Let them cut our throats" (A ba re ripê mexôlô), as they please. The last payment having been made, the women are accordingly advised. They send a girl to proceed to the men's place and snatch away something from the Bakxonyana, and they follow her into the court-

yard where they are entertained. Among the Bakone it may be any courtyard within the premises, but not that of the bride's mother. Beasts are slaughtered and there is much feasting.

v One more point about the payment of Maxadi cattle. At the very onset, when A opens proceedings, he must indicate whether they are ready to pay all the Maxadi cattle that may be required at once, or only part of them. If the former, he announces: "I have come to ask for a gourd of water." Or simply: "A gourd of water" (Sexô sa meetse). If in addition they desire to take the bride immediately along with them, he is also expected to make an announcement to that effect and to pay some more cattle. This usually takes place when the village of the bridegroom is a distance away from that of the bride. It is to facilitate the "Xo lata custom" which will be discussed later on. It may also occur when it is felt that the immediate presence of the bride at her home-in-law is an absolute necessity; e.g. when the bridegroom's mother is aged and there is no one available to help her in managing the household. At the same time if there are any mitigating circumstances, such as extreme poverty, A must make them known so as to get the sympathy of those concerned in the matter. There is evidence to the effect that in times of scarcity hoes and other commodities were accepted as articles for paying Maxadi. They were also announced in livestock values; e.g. a small hoe = one goat; a bigger hoe = one sheep; 3 to 4 hoes = one cow, and so forth.

Secondly, individuals who are willing to contribute to the Maxadi of a young man but have nothing at the present time may pledge the boxadi of their unmarried daughters as their contribution. The names of these daughters are mentioned in public and in due course when one of them is given out in marriage, one of the cattle must go to the family that has been promised.

Thirdly, another may give a stone ("Ba bala mafsika"). This is a promise to give something at a later date as a contribution. Such a promise is vague and indefinite and gives the man freedom to decide on what to give. But it is interesting because it shows how the people co-operate in these matters and how a poor man without any cattle may be helped to get a wife. It is not

uncommon for a man to get married without paying any Maxadi but promising to do so in future. If he does not do so in future he may lose his legal rights over the children, of the marriage,

Once the Maxadi cattle have been paid the wedding feast formally begins at the bride's home. Two head of cattle are generally slaughtered - one for the general feast, and the other specially for the Bakxonyana. Where the people are too poor to afford two head of cattle, only one is slaughtered but certain portions of its meat must be set aside to be used specifically by the Bakxonyana. There is a special man to supervise the proceedings and to see to it that the slaughtered beast is divided according to traditional custom. The chest is sent to the Chief as a special gift (it is called Mohlobolô). This is a kind of tribute to the Chief. Every man who has contributed to the Maxadi is entitled to a special portion of the meat. Every official invitee among the women who has brought a gift - the commonest gifts are beer, mealie-meal, or grain; and nowadays gifts of money are given - is entitled to a special portion of the meat and a calabash of beer, according to the substance of his gift. Thus a man is appointed who is known to be skilled in dividing such meat so that there/~~can~~<sup>may</sup> be no complaints. Another is appointed to supervise the beer-pots and to divide the food among the people, each according to his needs. Food is served in quantities to groups arranged according to the different ~~sephelohs~~ Wards (dikxôrô) from which they come. Members of one Kxôrô are further divided into smaller groups on the basis of age.

Young men participate in the slaughtering and are rewarded by being given pieces of meat, called Makobêla, which they file round small sticks. We shall soon learn why their pieces of meat are filed in this manner.

#### V. "Thopa," i.e. the Secret.

An interesting feature of Pedi marriage is a special ceremony for the young men and girls called "Thopa," i.e. the Secret. The slaughtering being over all the unmarried young men present on this occasion queue up in one of the courtyards, each one still preserving his "Makobêla." All the unmarried girls of

the corresponding age come round to choose husbands. One of them carries a sleeping mat in her hand. Having carefully inspected the young men in the queue, she deposits the mat in front of the young man of her choice. The latter is not expected to decline. One by one, and using the same mat, the girls in their turns choose pseudo-husbands for the duration of the wedding. More than one woman may choose the same man. He automatically becomes as it were a "polygynist" for the duration of the wedding period. On the other hand the girls may deliberately avoid choosing a certain young man in the queue. The latter will be forced to do without a partner for the entire period - a painful experience because it carries with it some social stigma. When all the women have selected, the joint group of young men and girls repair to a special hut, designated for their ~~occupation~~ accommodation and once they occupy it, no other person may be admitted. That is why it is called "the secret hut" (Ka thopheng). In this hut they cook, eat and drink and sleep together. The young men supply the meat.

This is a kind of practising school for the young men and girls, and the purpose it serves is not far to seek. Among other things it facilitates courtship by deliberately reversing the order of things - the girls and not the young men, take the initiative. Some young men avail themselves of the opportunity and soon another marriage<sup>is</sup> celebrated. This ceremony is today only celebrated among Pagans.

It is generally agreed that nowadays the Thopa is modified. There is a growing tendency for the young men to use the occasion for sexual indulgence. When defloration results in pregnancy, the case is dealt with in the ordinary way. The young man responsible pays the traditional fine which is two head of cattle if he does not marry the woman. Hence M----, an old woman, remarked: "Nowadays the girls never sleep in the secret hut because they are afraid of being deflowered. Boys of today are careless and unscrupulous and abuse this privilege." Opinion generally is that in the past the couples slept together quietly and the young men never dared to interfere with the girls. In



those days when collective responsibility was an efficient check on the morals of the individual it is understandable why there was no interference. Those who tried and were found out were ridiculed publicly for their lack of manners.

Another function of the Thopa was <sup>to</sup> introduce the two sexes to one another. In olden days boys and girls, once they approached the stage of puberty, were kept apart as much as possible. Boys spent most of their youth and early manhood at the cattle-post while girls always remained under the direct control of their mothers, even sharing the same hut with them at night until they were married. It is therefore understandable why it was felt necessary to introduce the sexes to one another in this manner. Nowadays since boys and girls become familiar to each other in early youth, this ceremony has become a mere formality, and there are signs that it will not be continued indefinitely.

Having passed the night together in the secret hut, the girls rise early in the morning to pursue their domestic duties - fetch water, pound corn, make the fire, and do the cooking. When the young men rise each one of them is served with water for washing. According to custom he is expected to pay something for it - a bangle, wire wristlets, beads, or as is the practice of today, money. These articles are dropped into the basin immediately after washing. The girls carry away the dirty water and before they dispose of it, they collect their presents. These payments in gifts continue through out the period of the Thopa which may last for several days. Having washed they settle down to enjoy their morning meal ("Ba fihlola").

#### VI. The bridal party at the bridegroom's home.

When the wedding feast is over at the bride's home, the women prepare a special meal called "Thšima". They also prepare a special calabashes of beer, collect grain in baskets, put the personal belongings of the bride together, and co-operate in giving her some of the most essential household articles, such as mats, cooking pots, water-pitchers, and so forth, in order to give her a start in life. When all is ready they come together in order to give her advice and to instruct her on her duties as a wife. Her father's sister (rakxadi) takes precedence

in these matters. In her absence it is the woman who comes next in order of seniority who will take her place. A woman who is known to have been obviously successful in maintaining friendly relations with her relatives in-law is invited to come and give her counsel and to advise her on how to get on well with a husband and with relatives in-law. Another speaker will be selected, not only for her command of the language, but also for her good commonsense and her words of wisdom. This is usually the most august moment for the bride because it emphasises for her the formal breaking of relations with her family. Many women sob continuously as the different speakers take their turn. Only women attend this ceremony.

When the women have finished what they have to say, word is sent to the men who come round to join them, together with the bridegroom, if he is present. The first speaker among the men addresses himself to the young man. ~~Pointing~~ Pointing at the bride he says: "Here is your wife; take care of her. Remember that yours is the body and ours is the head. The elephant's tusks are never too heavy for it. If you neglect to provide for her needs, do not bluff yourself with the idea that the duty is too much for one man. We all have our duties to perform. When you get tired of her, do return her to us alive." Other speakers enumerate the different duties expected of a man and exhort him to perform them diligently and conscientiously. As a rule men are given the first opportunity to address them. They all tend to say the same thing in different words. When they have exhausted themselves, the master of ceremonies turns round to the women ~~and says~~ with the injunction: "Now it is your turn, women."

The first speaker among the women says: "Woman, here is your husband. Please look after him as all good wives do their husbands. Do not despise him. Obey all his commands. If he sends you out at dead of night, carry out all his commands even though it may be raining heavily, for he is your chosen husband. From today put away all your bad ~~manner~~ manners of unmarried life lest you put us to shame among the people of your husband's

village." Another says: "When your husband comes home late in the night or early in the morning, do not refuse to open the door for him when he knocks, neither should you ask him where he comes from. To do so is to provoke a quarrel between the two of you." This is in keeping with the Pedi policy of appeasement. The dominant idea among them is that it is better to tolerate moral injustice than to try and assert one's rights at the expense of the peace of the home. Thus it is not uncommon for the young man to be advised always to announce his approach to his own house by singing, whistling, or making any other polite form of noise. "To do so is to warn any man who may be with your wife at the time to steal ~~away~~ out of the premises, taking precautions not to be seen. In this way both partners avoid suspicion and therefore live together happily." When every one has had his say, they adjourn to get ready to accompany the bride to the village of her relatives in-law. The Bakxonyana bid farewell (ba kxopêla sefata) and prepare themselves to return home with the bride.

The bridal party carries a special piece of raw meat and a sleeping mat for the husband. The women all over begin ululating and singing:

"Our child is going,	(Ngwana wa rena o a ya,
We are being dispossessed	Re amoxwa ke ma-rua-kxomo)
By those who possess cattle."	

With this song they announce their departure. As they move towards the main entrance they are joined by the Bakxonyana.

By arrangement all the young men belonging to the bride's Ward block the main entrance so as to prevent the party from going out. Under the circumstances two things may be done: either the Bakxonyana have to pay a fee before being allowed to go out, or they must force an exit, in which case a sham-fight takes place. The symbolism of this action is to "demonstrate the love of these people for the bride by dramatising their unwillingness to let her go. It is also to test the affection of the Bakxonyana for her."

All along the way the bridal party stop at intervals and refuse to budge unless persuaded to do so by some gift. They

stop more frequently as they approach the young man's village. Here they are met at the entrance (kxorong) amidst drowning ululations and hysterical dancing. The women of the young man's mother's age-group receive them by singing the following song:

(Solo) "Mmê o tllile!	(Chorus) Tlala o tla nya!
(Mother has come)	(Starvation disappear)
Re tla ja mathuma,	Tlala o tla nya!
(We shall enjoy better meals)	(Starvation disappear)
Ma-šilwa ke mmê.	Tlala o tla nya!
(That prepared by our mother)	(Starvation disappear)

Reputed bards recite appropriate stanzas for the occasion. The women at the young man's home receive whatever the bridal party has brought with, and likewise do the men. Members of the different age-groups are assigned different huts. There may be a second feast at the young man's home, depending on their ability to provide for one - nowadays it is becoming a general rule, but it was certainly not so in the past.

#### VII. Miscellaneous Customs.

##### (a) The ritual of "cutting the child."

Very often the bulk of the people who have accompanied the bride return home after participating in the evening meal consisting primarily of "Thšima." The special messengers from the bride's home carry the head of a goat and its skin with them. The head is given to the men in their Ward who are expected to break off the adjoining vertebrates from the neck to give to women of their corresponding age. The skin is given to the principal best man. He is expected to bray a woman's frontal apron (thethô) using this skin. Where a second feast is held at the young man's home, they wait until it is over. If a "child is to be cut," they do not go until the latter ceremony is over.

Early next morning the unmarried young men go out into the veld to "cut the child" accompanied by girls of their corresponding age and status. The group fasts ritually until the ceremony is over. Their fast is called "Lexotšana." The young ~~men~~ girls cook a special ~~dish~~ dish which is ladled neatly into a well scrubbed wooden bowl (moxopo). Carrying this dish they go out of the village singing the following song:

"Makxotongwane 'a kxala tša morula tšwa ngwakong!"  
(Ye that we are expecting come out of the hut)

They camp in the forest and here under the direction of the

master of ceremonies they cut two short poles of unequal dimensions. The shorter one represents a daughter and the taller one, a son. These two poles are trilled and trimmed with beads and their entire surface is smeared with fat and red ochre. The master of the ceremony then gives instruction that the babies be fed. They pretend to feed them with the porridge brought from home, while they also help themselves to it. The ritual fast is now broken and the party settles down to eat. This ritual dish is called "Molëkišô." According to some informants; the party does not break the fast until they return home. Similarly all the people at the young man's home who have come from the bride's home fast ritually until the "babies" are brought home. In this case the party that goes out to "cut the babies" do ~~not~~ not taste of the Molekišô. They carry it about <sup>ostensibly</sup> feeding the babies at regular intervals. When they arrive at home singing and dancing jubilantly, they are met by the older people at the entrance (kxorong). The old people recite appropriate stanzas and formally receive "the babies." The senior man in the lineage group of the bridegroom formally gives them names, and now they enter the kxôrô feeling very proud of themselves and the "babies." All those who have been fasting now break the fast and with this ceremony feasting comes to an end. The bridal party now returns home together with the bride. The "cutting of the child ceremony" is therefore at the same time the "giving of names ceremony."

(b) Consummation.

When all is over a senior male relative of the young man accompanies him to his relatives in-law. Here he presents him to them in the words: "I have brought you a visitor." After being entertained, he returns home leaving the young man behind. At this juncture the girl's mother gives ~~her~~ her a sleeping mat and instructs her to prepare a bed for the husband in one of the huts. She knows by this that the marriage has now to be consummated as she will have been fore-warned.

Three old women commenting on the latter said: "In olden days it was no easy task for the woman. She might never have seen the man before - all the arrangements having been made by

parents on both sides." Then one of them sharply turned round to me and said "My son, it is a painful experience. Although we do not approve of your free-choice marriages, I think they are better than ours in which a woman marries a man she may have never seen before."

Pedi views on these matters are gradually changing. The view is beginning to spread that marriage without love is burdensome, if not actually cruel in its unnaturalness. When they condone the choice of a young man which they previously opposed, they say: "If a child insists on playing a mokhura trumpet, carve it and let him play on it" (Ngwana a llêla nakana ya mokhura, sêhla o mo neêlê a letšê). When one day he comes back to them complaining about his wife, they remind him of the above words. Nevertheless young men and women of today are gradually asserting their right to choose their partners independently. They say:

"The heart eats what it desires."  
(Mma-pelo o ja se-rati)

(c) "Hoeing the morêthsê."

During the first hoeing season after the marriage, the young woman (ngwetšî) makes an appointment with the mother-in-law for the purpose of helping her to hoe the lands (mašimo). She invites her friends to go and assist her in making an impression on these lands. Her mother supplies the seed. They put in a day's work on them and return home singing and dancing. Later in the season they come back to weed them. On the latter occasion they bring some beer to give to the father-in-law. He shows his appreciation of the gift by slaughtering a goat for them. They eat its meat and carry away the head which they later give to the men in their own kxôrô. This is called "Morêthsê."

(d) "Xo lata" and "Xo beka" customs.

x There remains two other customs to be discussed, namely, the "xo lata" and the "xo beka" customs. The question as to which one comes first is left arbitrarily to the individual. Briefly the "xo lata" custom is the custom by which the young man is officially permitted to pay nocturnal visits to the girl for the purpose of consummating the marriage. While he is not

at all debarred from visiting his wife publicly, it would be considered bad manners on his part if he allowed himself to be seen by other people when he leaves the woman's hut. As a result he has to steal into her hut when the rest of the other members of the family are fast asleep and must leave the hut before daybreak. The penalty for breaking this rule is "public ridicule."

In the "xo beka" custom it is the parents of the young man and not the young man himself, who play a prominent part. After some years the young man's father pays a cow to "ask for permission for the daughter-in-law to come to his homestead." This having been formally accepted, a party of relatives from the woman's home bring her to his kraal, carrying a lot of gifts to give her a start in life. This formal coming home of the bride as it were is called "xo beka."

(e) The pot ritual.

At the young man's home the young woman lives together with her mother-in-law. She ~~is yet~~ <sup>has</sup> no independent ~~status~~ status and may not cook separately. Although she is a married woman she may not join other married women when they go to wedding feasts, or visit the home of some bereaved relative to express their condolence. So long as she has not been officially introduced to them, they do not count her as one of themselves. This formal introduction is made through the "pot ritual."

After serving an indefinite period of probation, it is decided that she should be admitted into the society of women. As this implies an independent status for her, preparations are made to build her courtyard and huts. When these are ready, all the women who have some status in the Ward assemble in the courtyard of her mother-in-law. ~~It is~~ To mark the occasion the father-in-law may slaughter a beast for their entertainment, but he is by no means bound to do so. She is not supposed to eat anything until the other women have partaken of the ritual meal. Fire is drilled by the lešana method and on it one of the woman cooks the porridge. As she does the cooking the daughter-in-law is advised to take heed of what is happening. When all

is ready they sit round/eat apparently indifferent to the new member of the family. On the other hand she is expected to watch them from where she is and to pretend that she is not hungry at all. When they have stopped eating, their spokesman calls her round. Then she formally gives her a pot of her own with the following injunction: "Mother, take this pot and do your own cooking in it. Take embers from our fire and make your own on which you will cook for your husband and children. I admit you into the society of women. Watch your elders carefully to learn what is expected of you in your newly acquired status, the status of womanhood." Then she addresses the women at large: "Fellow-women, here is your child. Kindly take care of her and give her all the necessary assistance." Any other woman who feels disposed to say something is at liberty to do so. The ceremony being over they disperse leaving her to do her cooking as instructed. Henceforward she learns the duties of a woman by the method of actual participation. Finally, on the next public occasion, she is ritually thrashed with a pliable wand "to initiate her into the company of other women in the Ward."

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