

TSWANA

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Botswana Society, Tswana ('Bechuana') --> OLD orthography, Tswana or Botswana ethnic group; Tswana or Setswana ('Sechuana') Language; Niger-Congo Language family

Population: 3,410,000 in South Africa (2006), increasing

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): tsn ISO 639-3

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Bechuanaland Protectorate; southern Africa, north of South Africa; Tswana is spoken in Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia

1.4 Brief history: Between the 1880s and 1960s, Botswana was a poor country and a peripheral British protectorate also known as Bechuanaland. Since its independence in the 1960s, Botswana has gained international stature as a prosperous and peaceful democratic state. Setswana makes up the fifth largest language group in South Africa and most of the speakers of the language are situated in the North West Province of South Africa which borders Botswana.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Botswana was a member of the British Commonwealth with a multiparty political system; Republican form of governance. The Tswana are divided into eight principal tribes governed by hereditary chiefs. Botswana is now a Democratic state. Botswana has had one of the most fastest growing economies of the world due to the mining of diamonds and its mineral. They have built up state revenues. In traditional rural towns and villages, there has been successful development of health and educational facilities. There are rapidly growing new towns also.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): farms, cattle ranches and water holes; mining

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, and density: 4.5 million people speak the Tswana Language in South Africa



2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): cultivation of grain; sorghum or corn meal porridge is the staple of most Botswana meals enriched in sour milk and/or sugar, and tea



Example of sorghum/corn cultivation

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: cattle, chicken, goat, sheep, fish

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: not found

2.4 Food storage: Grain forms the bulk of the diet for all residents; high reliance of cattle in cattle posts where livestock are kept

2.5 Sexual division of production: tasks are distributed based on gender and age. Cattle care is associated with men; women milk cattle; herders are males and housemaids are females

2.6 Land tenure: 5% of the land in Botswana is freehold, 25% is state land in the form of games reserve, wildlife reservation areas and national parks, and the rest is communal land for tribes such as the tswana

2.7 Ceramics: Bead-work, pottery, basket weaving, wood carving, musical instruments, leather crafts, tapestry



Examples of crafts!

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: none found

2.9 Food taboos: Only salt and water are added to chicken dishes; any other spices are considered taboo

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Wooden mekoro (boats)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): not found

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): not found

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 11 or 12 yrs old

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): not found

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): The Tswana tribe was considered to have the smallest family unit consisting of the mother, father and their unmarried children. In some cases, it also included the married sons and daughters and their families.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): not found

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): not found

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: not found

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygyny is no longer common

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: cattle is the currency for paying the bride price

4.9 Inheritance patterns: A man's eldest son inherits most of the cattle and other property. Daughters are sometimes given livestock, but remains with her brother until she is married, in which case it is transferred directly to the husband. Daughters inherit their mother's household utensils

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Both sexes nurture the children. Usually a young mother is not considered ready to entirely care for her children. They are usually cared for by a relative such as aunt or grandmother.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

"Among the Tswana (in addition to homosexuality among the men laboring in the mines), it was reported that back home, lesbian practices are apparently fairly common among the older girls and young women, without being regarded in any way reprehensible"

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): "Sotho patrilineages were usually endogamous - i.e. the preferred marriage partner would be a person related through patrilineal descent ties".

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Not found

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") this was not found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Information not found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: none found

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) : not found

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? A Tswana woman was always seen as a permanent minor, always under men's authority so they lacked sexual freedoms.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: cattle

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Most likely the grandmother would raise the children if the mother were to

die.

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: not found

4.22 Evidence for couvades: No direct evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): there is a lesser distinction for younger boys as potential fathers

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? *“Agnation is emphasized in Batswana kinship: along with primogeniture, it traditionally had the greatest influence on inheritance of property and succession to office. Individuals were identified with and came under the jural authority of their agnatic group (kgoda, or the diminutive kgotlana); however, the formation of discrete agnatic units was and continues to be inhibited by the marriage system, which permits cousin marriages of all kinds. Patrilineal parallel-cousin marriages of near kin, although practiced mainly by the elite but permitted to all, serve to complicate the principle of unilineality and create ambiguous and overlapping links. Thus, there is a cognatic element to the system, which places emphasis upon kindreds (sing. losika) and gives greater license to individuals to “construct” their social networks than is found in many patrilineal societies”.*

4.24 Joking relationships? None

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: None found

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? *“According to what I have observed from the weddings in Botswana, one thing is certain, a wedding cannot take place without first partaking in what is known as the patlo. The patlo is the ceremony where the bridal price ‘lobola’ is handed over or paid out to the bride’s family. Prior to the patlo, negotiations are carried out back and forth usually by the spouses aunts and uncles to determine the bridal price and how it shall be paid out at the patlo. The patlo is known as the traditional wedding, thus after the ceremony, the couple are known and can be referred to as married. The bridal is paid out in the form of cattle or cash equivalent to the price of purchasing the requested number of cattle. If the couple wishes, then and only then can they proceed to have what they call a ‘white or church wedding’ where the bride wears a white dress, and walks down the aisle as is the custom of most weddings around the world. Food and drink are prepared for the reception”.*

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? not known

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage is preferred inside the community

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriage is arranged by both families. There are many cases in which the man chooses who he wants to marry.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: no, it has become more common for both parties to decide whether or not they are interested in marriage.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Men did organize for warfare, but percent of adult males due to deaths to warfare was not found.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: *“A period of warfare, political disruption, and migration commonly termed the difiqane (Zulu: mfecane) characterized the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The difiqane engendered a period of chaos, during which the Tswana experienced varying degrees of suffering, impoverishment, political disintegration, death, and forced movement. At the same time, however, some groups, particularly the western Tswana chiefdoms, eventually prospered and strengthened to the extent that they incorporated refugees and livestock”*

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: The causes of the killing as mentioned above was due to warfare and political disruptions

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): None found

4.18 Cannibalism? No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Not found

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): not found

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc., wealth or status classes): *“The Tswana people are noted for their many clans, each with its own culture and dialect. There are, however, certain elements of Tswana culture that bind them, such as the use of cattle as currency and similar traditions of ancestral worship”.*

5.4 Post marital residence: The wife and the husband shared a home.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Not found

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): *“Traditional Tswana society included men, women, children and “badimo” (ancestors, living dead, having metaphysical powers). A Tswana does not think in terms of individual rights, but of responsibilities to his family and tribe. The father is to be obeyed and respected by his wife and children at all times”.*

5.7 Joking relationships: None

5.8 Village and house organization: *“Also like the Nguni, most Sotho people lived in small chiefdoms, in which status was determined in part by relationship to the chief. Unlike the Nguni, Sotho homesteads were grouped together into villages, with economic responsibilities generally shared among village residents. Villages were divided into wards, or residential areas, often occupied by members of more than one patrilineal descent group”.* Recently, 44% of Tswana households are female headed.

5.9 Specialized village structures (men’s’ houses): Property was owned by village chiefs. Property ownership of women were cattle as dowry from marriage.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Hammocks

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc.: *“The Tswana tribe is divided into many different locally autonomous chiefdoms and tribes. Each tribe manages its own affairs but there are considerable differences between the tribes in Botswana and those in South Africa. During the apartheid years, South African Tswana tribes lived under the jurisdiction of the South African government in the Bophuthatswana homeland. The Tswana chiefs who were recognized under the previous government still claim their status and the right to rule their people, even though the homeland system has now been abolished”.*

5.12 Trade: None found

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Women were once excluded from religious or political meetings. They do most of the care taking of the children and the home. The men are of higher social statuses than women. However, in recent years it is increasing common for women to make some of the decisions and men to care for the children as well. Division of labor is dependent upon social class and education.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: not found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): *“Batswana have an extensive local pharmacopoeia. Medicines (ditlhare [“trees”] or melemò) are used for treating ailments in humans and animals, for fortification, protection, fertility, injury, making rain, and so on. Batswana seek medical help from a number of sources, including clinics and hospitals, traditional practitioners, and Christian healers. Western medicine is more or less universally acknowledged for its ability to treat symptoms, but other healers are frequently sought in order to address the causes of illness and misfortune”*

6.2 Stimulants: None found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): *“There are many ceremonies to mark lifecycle events: these include birth, the end of the three-month postpartum confinement, several marriage ceremonies, bride-wealth payment, and death. Increasingly, funerals have become the most elaborate life-cycle rituals”. Also, “Allocation into an age-set or a regiment (mophato) marked the beginning of adulthood. A regiment consisted of men and women of roughly the same age who had been initiated at the same time. The chief would create a new regiment every four to seven years, when eligible 16-20 year old boys and girls could be initiated together. The regiment would also include a member of the chief’s family who, from then on, would be the accepted leader of the group. In earlier times, the boys underwent a rigorous initiation process that included circumcision and seclusion in the bush. The initiates were subjected to hardships and taught the laws, traditions and customs of their people. However, this practice disappeared during the 1930’s because European missionaries persuaded the chiefs that it constituted immoral behavior”.*

6.4 Other rituals: Women practice witchcraft

6.5 Myths (Creation): None

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Leisure and recreation activities include soccer (boys), music and drama

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: None

6.8 Missionary effect: Not found

6.9 RCR revival: None

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: *“Death is usually considered to have both natural and supernatural causes. Traditionally, men were buried in their cattle kraals and women in the compounds. Small children were buried under houses. Many people are still buried in this fashion, although cemeteries are increasingly used. Funerals are highly elaborated, expensive, and can last up to a week. Livestock are slaughtered during the funeral to feed guests. Priests and, often, traditional healers preside over funerals, administering rites to the bereaved that are directed toward exorcising thoughts of the dead from the living so that they will not “go mad” from their grief. After death, elders become ancestors (Badimo) .People who die with regrets are believed to become ghosts (dipoko); their souls remain in the grave by day but rise at night to haunt the living”.*

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No

6.12 Is there teknonymy? None found

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.); Ancestor worshipping; Christianity. Gender and religion are linked, men are the spiritual healers. *“Totemism has long been a feature of the Tswana culture and refers to the veneration of an animal, plant or an object. Each individual associates himself or herself with a specific totem. Many existing Tswana myths and legends explain why certain totems were adopted.*

Association with a particular totem carried with it certain responsibilities and traditions. Should a member not act according to the rules, that person would have to undergo a purification ceremony to prevent misfortune”.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: yes

7.2 Piercings: yes

7.3 Haircut: yes

7.4 Scarification: none

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): *“Women of different statues wear beads. There are few specialized arts. Beadwork is practiced by some, and children are often adorned (sometimes for protection from malevolent forces) with beads and other decorations. Compounds and houses are often beautifully designed and painted”.*

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: patterned scarves, beads and hats

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Both male and female wear beads

7.8 Missionary effect: None

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: **decreasing**

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Not found

8.2 Sororate, levirate: None

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them): Did you know! “Sol Plaatjie, a famed novelist and founding member of ANC, was a Tswana!”

Numbered references/ USEDUL WEBSITES!

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