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Butchery styles and the processing of cattle carcasses in Botswana

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Different ethnic groups in Botswana not only have different ways of butchering cattle, but the different cuts of meat are distributed in a particular way too. This study shows that the distribution of cattle bones in a settlement may yield clues about the gender and social rank of the consumers. Of course, in an archaeological site with several superimposed butchery episodes, such patterns become smeared. Nor do all ethnic groups have the same, clearly defined rules of meat distribution. But nonetheless, the findings of this ethnoarchaeological study point to a new and potentially rewarding way of looking at cattle bone distributions on archaeological sites.

The purpose of my study is to determine if butchery styles can be distinguished amongst different communities in Botswana. I will examine the significance of these styles and whether they exist in the archaeological record. The aim is to see if we can identify social ranking, gender and ethnicity from the way cattle are butchered and the body parts distributed amongst different communities in Botswana.

Different scholars have come up with different definitions of the terms 'butchery' and 'style'. Butchery is the reduction and modification of an animal carcass into consumable parts. It can also be said to be the cutting up of the animal while the meat is still attached to the bones. The techniques used during this process vary according to species, size, purpose and the distance from home. This is to say that if people butcher a buffalo they would apply a different technique from that of when butchering a hare or an antelope. According to Russell (1987) the goal of butchery is the removal of meat from the animal carcass. Binford (1981) claims that butchery is the task of dismemberment. Through it the body of a large animal is partitioned into parts that may be abandoned, transported or allocated for different uses. This is a series of acts beginning when the animal is killed and continuing until the animal is totally consumed. According to Renfrew & Bahn (1996), style may be defined as the manner in which an act is carried out. Style cannot exist except as an aspect of an activity, often a functional one. Style is how an individual does something. It is any distinctive and therefore recognizable way in which an act is performed or an artefact is made. Style resides in the process of making and using the object. Style has a communicative function that goes far beyond ethnicity to give us insights into cultural behaviour. It has to be noted that style can be purposely or unconsciously utilized to communicate and perpetuate tradition (Wiessner, 1989).

In my research, I have conducted a comparative study of the Barolong, Bakwena, Bangwato, Bakalanga and the Hambukushu butchery styles to see if there are any cultural aspects in their butchery practices. Three of these societies are Setswana speaking (Bakwena, Barolong and Bangwato) and the remaining two (Hambukushu and Bakalanga) speak different Bantu languages. Tom Huffman (1996) claims that the partitioning of meat after the killing of cattle reflects social ranking which can also be seen in other material aspects of the society such as architecture. If the beast was butchered for a *musanda* in Venda ethnography, the front half went to public figures who stayed outside the palace, the chief's head counselor received the neck, the brother of the chief who is legal expert (*khotsimokene*) received the front leg, and the bull's back half belonged to those attached to

the palace. The above information suggests that butchery can be cultural and this is the theme that this study is trying to investigate.

Literature review

From a functionalist perspective, butchery has been described as the cutting up of an animal while the meat is still attached to the bones. The techniques used during the process will vary according to the species, their size, the purpose for butchering and the distance from home. Noe-Nygaard (1977) evaluated the taphonomic significance of different types of butchering and marrow fracturing techniques used by different cultures. She was trying to make an estimate of the original number of prey individuals on the basis of number of bone fragments and looking specifically at the different butchering and marrow fracturing techniques. Russell (1987) is also a subscriber of the functional perspective in that he believes that butchery is the removal of meat from the animal for energy returns. Binford (1981) states that butchery is not a single act but a series of acts beginning when the animal is killed and continuing until the animal is totally consumed or its remains are discarded.

The functionalist approach leaves out stylistic variation and culture inherent in the process of butchery. My study attempts to address this cultural and stylistic variation. I was influenced by the work of Terry Childs (1991), who investigated why and how iron smelting furnaces exhibit style among Bantu speaking populations in Africa. She is of the view that the performance of the smelting master and his helpers conveys information. According to Polly Wiessner (1989) style is one of several means of communication through which people negotiate their personal and social identity, whether it be to project a certain image, to mask an aspect of identity, or to raise questions about the person's identity. Scott (1996) claims that food provides a means to emphasize or hide one's differences from others. For example, food can be a means of denoting ethnicity or religion. Social relations in ranked societies are also reflected in food ways (Zeder & Arter, 1996). As a result, biological artifacts, traditionally associated with reconstructing ancient environments and past diets, are increasingly used to build a better understanding of social organization.

Among the societies studied here, cattle are considered to be particularly important animals. Among the Tshidi Barolong cattle acted as a mediating link between production and exchange and a means of forging sociopolitical ties (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Cattle are a very important investment among Barolong men for cattle can bring wives, social status and economic status. Among the Hambukushu, cattle can be sold at any time when one is in need of money. Here cattle represent a repository of wealth.

Methodology

This research focuses on five societies: Barolong of Hebron, Bakwena of Molepolole, Bangwato of Serowe and Mosu, the Bakalanga of Masunga and the Hambukushu of Maun (Fig. 1). The Bangwato, Barolong and Bakwena are Setswana-speaking societies. The Hambukushu of the Ngamiland area, according to Tlou (1985), are matrilineal in descent, succession and inheritance. The population of Masunga are of particular interest because they are an assimilated Peri or Pedi Bakalanga society. Originally they were Sotho-Tswana speakers but have been assimilated into Kalanga culture and customs (van Waarden, 1988).

I conducted interviews amongst both men and women whose ages ranged from 45 to 95 years of age. I relied mostly on the chief of the particular society and some elders in selecting my informants. On occasions I went from house to house in search of potential informants. Among the Hambukushu and Bakalanga I relied on interpreters for translation. Among the Barolong, all the people that I interviewed were willing to share their

knowledge with me. In Molepolole, some informants were willing to be interviewed while some wanted incentives or were uncooperative. Sadly one willing informant passed away on the morning of our appointment. Bangwato and Bakalanga were also willing and cooperative during interviews. In Maun, the Hambukushu were very suspicious and thus in most instances claimed ignorance, unless I was introduced to them by my interpreter or an elder. The majority of my informants were not employed and thus they mostly preferred to be interviewed in the late morning hours or late afternoon hours. The interviews, were not necessarily conducted on the basis of a questionnaire. I had some written questions that acted as my guidelines but the interviews were controlled mostly by, or depended on, the direction that informants took and how much they knew.

Barolong of Hebron

Hebron is one of the villages within Barolong Farms which is populated by the Barolong of Montshioa. They are currently under the leadership of Mr. Mokgoetsi Phetihu who is chief Besele Montshioa's representative or *kgosana*. Barolong people were a well developed chiefdom before colonization. They are a Setswana speaking society. Barolong believe that cattle can only be killed by men in the kraal. There has to be a chief butcher who will be responsible for the killing and the supervision of the other butchers. This chief butcher has to be someone with a 'good killing hand' or *letsogo le le monate*. It is believed that his 'good hand' will make the meat tasty. He also has to be an expert in butchery. In the case of funerals, the chief butcher has to be a maternal uncle of the deceased for it is said that he has to be the initiator of all works that need to be done.

Among the Barolong, there are cultural laws that prohibit women from butchering but which allow them to visit the kill site and observe the butchery. Women are barred from butchering because the Barolong label them as weak and lacking muscular strength. Men butcher for their women and children. It can also be argued that ultimately these cultural traditions facilitate male control over women.

The cattle kraal is the preferred location for butchery. According to my informants the kraal is preferred because of its manure (*motshotelo*), which is believed to be a cleansing agent that does not soil the meat. It can also be argued that in fact the kraal is preferred because it is associated with males. A man who has many cattle can afford to butcher an animal for family consumption, and to gain respect he must slaughter in a place where the other men can see him. There is no big ritual performed before the butchering of the animal. The only ritual is when the animal has been butchered for a wedding to prevent 'jealous and dangerous people' from poisoning the meat. Here a traditional doctor performs a ritual on the meat and the pots just before cooking.

Barolong use a very sharp knife to kill their cattle. It is on very rare occasions that a gun can be used. The chief butcher will use a knife to cut the *kgotshane*, just below the skull at the cranial end of the cervical vertebrae. After this, the chief butcher marks the skin to make it easier for skinning. All the informants agreed that the marking ends at the distal ends of both metatarsals and metacarpals. It is said that the phalanges will be skinned later maybe at the time of cooking. After the marking, the other butchers then help the chief butcher to skin the carcass. When the skin has been removed they then start the dismemberment of the carcass.

It is claimed by most informants that the right front leg is removed first. Other informants argued that it really does not matter which leg you start with. After the legs have been removed, the butcher will then open the carcass and remove the digestive system. One or two of the butchers will take these aside and clean them within the kraal. The chest is then cut out using an axe by the chief butcher. This includes the sternum plus some rib bones

(with meat still attached to them). The removal of the ribs (*dithupa*) will then follow. These are divided into big, right side ribs and small, left side ribs. The reason for this kind of division stems from the fact that the Barolong people believe that the right side of the body is the most active and strong. For example, most people use their right hand better than their left. At this point the chief butcher will then remove the *metlhana* (meat cuts from the sides of the stomach plus kidneys and some lower ribs). The *mokua* (hump) is then removed. When this is done the *selalo* (meat cut from the caudal vertebrae and sacrum) is dismembered. Lastly, the head and the cervical vertebrae are dismembered from the rest of the column.

When the whole carcass has been dismembered into the standard Barolong parts, the meat can then be taken into the household and is shown to the wife if the animal is killed for family consumption. After she has seen it, she together with her husband can decide on how to share the carcass among children and relatives. If the animal has been butchered for a funeral or a wedding, the meat will be shown to the elderly men who will be sitting at the *kgotla*. The elderly men will examine the meat cuts to see if the job is well done before giving a go ahead to the cooking of the meat.

The Barolong have certain meat cuts which are associated with either men or women (appendix, Table 1). The Male butcher receives *mothobiso* which are miscellaneous cuts. Men receive *mokoto*, which are the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, metapodials, phalanges, half of the heart and a quarter of the liver. Mature women past child bearing age receive *ngati*. The meat cuts that are associated with men are processed, cooked and eaten by men only at the *kgotla* or the kraal. The meat cuts that are associated with women are processed, cooked and eaten by women in the household. Barolong strongly believe in sharing the meat of a butchered beast with their siblings and even with their neighbours. This is usually done when the beast has been killed for family consumption during winter. There is minimal sharing of the beast when it has been killed for funerals and weddings because meat is for guests and mourners. This, however, does not affect the gendered meat cuts such as *mokoto*, liver, *ngati* and head plus cervical vertebrae. The head and the cervical vertebrae are always given to the in-laws of the owner of the animal when it has been killed for family consumption. This is done to show the father in-law that his daughter is well provided for. When the animal has been killed for funerals or weddings the head plus the cervical vertebrae are given to the maternal uncle of the deceased or the bride or groom. The front leg is normally given to either one's elder brother or one's most senior son. It is also said that instead of a front leg, one can give his senior brother the hump (*mokua*) as a sign of respect since he is the senior and the leader. The young brother or son is given the hind leg because he is considered a follower. *Motlhana*, which is made up of meat cuts from the sides of the stomach plus the kidneys and some lower ribs, is for the elder sister or daughter. The skin is for the owner of the animal, while the horns can be discarded in a rubbish heap or be put on the poles in the kraal as ornaments. Some informants claim that the legs are for family consumption together with the ribs. The chest can be given to the wife or the mother of the owner of the animal. Ribs can be for family consumption or can be given to the herder together with the *magwaha* (folds of meat from inside and outside the proximal end of the front legs and the upper part of the chest). The *selalo* (meat from sacrum and upper caudal vertebrae but without the tail) is given to the chief butcher. The other butchers are given *magopelo* (miscellaneous meat) to share among themselves.

For funerals and weddings it is the men who cook the meat because they use big pots and the meat will have to be pounded into *seswaa*. This is the communal meat that is eaten by mourners or wedding guests. During these ceremonies women can only do the minor cooking when they make stew. When meat is for family consumption, cooking is mostly

done by women and mature girls. When the animal has been butchered for family consumption, after the sharing of the carcass the remaining meat will be made into biltong which will then be cooked and eaten sparingly. In the case of weddings and funerals the remaining meat is shared among relatives.

Men eat *mokoto* at the *kgotla*. This meat includes the tail, thoracic vertebrae, lumbar vertebrae, and metapodials. As they eat they toss the waste bones into the fire. To eat the marrow from the long bones boys are assigned to cut or break the bones with an axe along the diaphysis. When they have eaten all the marrow the bone can then be tossed into the fire. Boys will be given the phalanges to eat. They would also discard the waste bones by tossing them into the fire. This does not in fact mean that they make sure that the bones are completely burnt. Thus in most cases bones end up being just slightly burnt. Meat from the femur and the humerus are mostly eaten by men at the *kgotla*. These kind of bones are cooked whole with very small meat pieces still attached to them and these will be eaten using a pocket knife. To eat the *mashetla* they assign young men to chop them at the proximal ends using an axe so that they can be easy to chew. After this, the bone can be cut along the diaphysis to extract the marrow. When finished the bone can then be tossed into the fire. The tibia, ulna and radius are eaten by women. These bones are called *mosetlatse*. They are processed in the same way as the femur and the humerus. The waste bones can be thrown into the fire or the rubbish pit. From the above information on who eats what, we can see an expression of gender across space and the social ranking from the way the carcass is consumed and shared. Men have certain meat cuts which they can eat and discard in the *kgotla*. The *kgotla* is described here as men's locality and *mokoto*, femur, and humerus as their meat cuts. Women have *mosetlatse* as their meat cuts. The cutting up of the bones for the extraction of the *mashetla* and the marrow is the job only for the boys.

Overall, it can be said that the Barolong people of Hebron have a distinct style of butchering, processing, eating and discarding cattle bones. They have gendered meat cuts which are eaten and discarded in their specific and respective gender locations. At times females, when they clean the homesteads and the *kgotla* area, collect these discarded bones and discard them in the rubbish pit just outside the back of the yard. Thus there can be secondary deposition of these bones. Sometimes dogs also tamper with the bones and remove them from their initial discard locations. Gendered cut marks and chop marks can also be identified in the Barolong assemblages. This is due to the fact that most chop marks are done by males when they butcher and process the bones. It has to be noted that for women to eat marrow from their specific bones, it is the males who cut up the bones for them.

Bakwena of Molepolole

Molepolole lies fifty kilometers West of Gaborone. Bakwena are a Setswana speaking patrilineal society. They have a paramount chief who sits at the main *kgotla* and headmen who are responsible for the various wards in the village. At the time of contact with the Europeans, Bakwena could be described as a proto-state society.

Bakwena cattle can only be butchered by men. These men can either be the relatives of the owner of the animal or just friends from the ward. Of these butchers, there has to be one who will do the actual killing of the animal. This man has to be expert with a gun. There also has to be a chief butcher (*morathi yo motona*). He has to know all the standard traditional parts of the animal and know how they are dismembered. Women can never try their hand at butchering animals because it is believed unethical. The other reason why they cannot is that when men slaughter they are in fact doing it for their women and children, so

there is no reason for women to interfere, for the meat will eventually be taken to the household.

For slaughter, a man would choose an old beast (*mokodue*). This is mostly done during winter. Cattle can also be killed for wedding celebrations and funerals. Here a young and healthy beast will be selected. Cattle can also be killed for cash exchange. Bakwena can also butcher for *mogoga* service. Cattle can only be butchered in the kraal. The reason is to avoid stray bullets from injuring people. Also, the kraal is believed to be the house of cattle and thus that it would be proper for the dung to be left in the kraal. There is no ritual that is performed before the killing of the animal. However in cases of funerals and weddings a ritual might be performed on the meat before cooking. In most cases Bakwena use a gun to kill their cattle, it is on very rare occasions that a knife is used.

Immediately after the animal has been killed, it is skinned by the chief butcher and his helpers. The skin is marked from the inside of the distal end of the cervical vertebrae down to the tail and then from the stomach down to the distal end of the metatarsals and finally from the chest down to the distal ends of the metacarpals. When this is done, the butchers then remove the skin. Legs are usually the first parts to be dismembered from the carcass. But there are different opinions as to which leg goes first. The belly is then opened and all the digestive system removed. One of the butchers will then start cleaning them inside the kraal. At this point the lumbar vertebrae will be split down the middle creating the left and right *metlhana*. This will be followed by the *bobadu* (caudal vertebrae plus its attached meat). The head plus the cervical vertebrae will also be dismembered. The thoracic vertebrae (*lesatswane*) is cut in two.

There are some meat cuts that can only be eaten by men, boys or women among Bakwena (appendix, Table 2). These meat cuts, just like among Barolong are eaten in the specific gender locations within the homestead. Women process, cook and eat *ngati* (omasum and meat stuffed into it) in the household. Elderly women get *mohubu*, which includes pancreas and some pieces of meat. Men get *mokoto* which includes rumen, half the thoracic vertebrae, reticulum and two ribs to cook and eat at the kgotla. Butchers eat *lenyeme*, which is the meat found between the stomachs (rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum), while butchering in the kraal. Sharing of the carcass can only be done after an agreement between the husband and wife. Most of the informants are of the view that the senior child gets the front leg as a share. This is due to the fact that the Bakwena people associate the front leg with leadership and in their custom the first child in the family is believed to be a leader. The second child, who is believed to be a follower will be given the right side *motlhana*. This is so because the right side is believed to be stronger than the left side. The third child will get the left side *motibana*. The two youngest children will be given hind legs each because they are believed to be the great followers. One informant argued that in fact there are no meat cuts that are specifically for certain children. He believes that one can give his children any meat cut that he feels is appropriate for that child. In funerals and weddings the paternal aunt is given the hind leg while the paternal uncle gets both the intestines, the liver, and four ribs. They take these meat cuts to their respective homesteads for their personal consumption. The grandmother of the deceased is given the *mohubu* which includes pancreas (*ngati*) and some meat pieces. This will be cooked for her by women and she is to eat it at the place of the deceased where the funeral service is held. Widows and widowers are given the metapodials so that they can eat the marrow. It is believed that the marrow from these bones has some healing element for these people. Men get the femur and the humerus. Women get the ulna, radius and tibia. The proximal ends of the bones are chopped with an axe into small pieces and can be eaten as *mashetla*. To extract the marrow the diaphysis is chopped and split across. The gendered

meat cuts are exclusively cooked by their respective gender. Meat that is set aside for family consumption is mostly cooked by women. In cases of funerals and weddings men might cook the meat that will be made into *seswaa* (pounded meat).

Gender is also represented across space, in that men will eat their meat away from women and women will eat their respective meat cuts in the household. The Bakwena homestead is organized into different levels. First, there is the family household within a sub unit of a particular ward which is also a sub unit of the *kgosing* ward. Each family has three homes, these are the homes in the village, *masimo* (lands) and the cattle post. Cattle can thus be killed at the cattle post or brought to the village alive and be killed there. A ward is composed of relatives and other people who are under the headman. The *kgotla* area is always at the center of the ward and has the communal kraal next to it. This kraal can be used when one wants to butcher his animal in the village. For funerals, the animal will be butchered in the kraal and then the men's meat will be taken to the *kgotla* area and be processed, cooked, eaten and discarded there. Meat cuts that are ascribed to specific people such as uncles will be taken to their respective homesteads and be eaten there, but not necessarily on the day of the funeral. The rest of the meat that will be eaten by people who have come for the funeral will then be taken into the homestead and be processed and cooked there by both men and women. The mourners will eat this meat within the homestead of the deceased and at the same time discard the bones there. These bones will be removed later during the cleaning of the yard and be deposited on the rubbish pit. Dogs can also tamper with these bones by removing them from their original locations for gnawing.

Bakalanga of Masunga

Bakalanga of Masunga are an assimilated Peri or Pedi society. They are currently under the leadership of Chief Masunga. They are a patrilineal society which was a chieftdom at the time of contact with the Europeans. Cattle among Bakalanga of Masunga can only be killed by young men. Generally this takes place in the kraal, but they can also kill in the yard or just outside the yard. There has to be a chief butcher who will be responsible for the actual killing of the animal. Women are prohibited from butchering cattle: to kill such a big and resourceful animal brings status and is reserved for men. Cattle can be killed for wedding ceremonies, family consumption and for funerals. For family consumption an old animal will be selected and this is mostly done during the winter. For the funeral of a male, an ox (mostly the deceased's favourite) is selected. For the funeral of a female, a cow will be selected.

The chief butcher, before he kills the animal swallows a pinch of salt to show that he wants the meat to take in the salt and be tasty when cooked and eaten. A traditional doctor can also be assigned to perform a ritual on the dung so as to protect the butchers and the remaining stock from dangerous and jealous people. Bakalanga of Masunga on most occasions use an axe to butcher their animals. On very rare occasions people use a gun or a knife to kill their cattle. After the killing, the animal's skin is marked with a knife. Some people mark the skin from the cranial end of the cervical vertebrae down to the tail and from the sternum down to the legs. Others start from the cranial end of the cervical vertebrae to the proximal end of the metacarpals and from the belly to the proximal end of the metacarpals. Other informants claimed that they in fact skin the legs to the distal ends of the metapodials. After the skinning is completed the butchers dismember the carcass. The butchers can choose to remove the digestive system or the legs first. When they dismember the legs they mostly start with the front legs and finish with the hind ones. The chest (which includes four ribs from each side and the sternum) is removed using an axe

and then the remaining ribs are removed independently. The head is cut independently or can go with the cervical vertebrae. *Telwane*, meat from pelvic bones and around the pelvic area is dismembered. Then there remains the thoracic vertebrae which will go with the lumbar vertebrae.

The head is only eaten by men (appendix, Table 3). It is said that it used to go with the cervical vertebrae in the olden days. The chest is for women because it is fatty and it will make them happy. The tail is eaten by elderly women. Phalanges are eaten by males, boys and their fathers. Women eat their meat cuts within the household while men eat theirs either at the *kgotla* or within the household. Animals that had been killed for funerals and wedding ceremonies are not shared, except that butchers are always rewarded with *magono* (miscellaneous bits of meat). Bakalanga can marry more than one wife. The senior wife gets the chest, the second wife gets the front leg while the junior wife gets the hind leg. However, this is not standard because informants differed a lot, some suggested that it is in fact the other way round. These patterns are said to apply even to children. An elderly man within the family gets the head. The senior paternal uncle is given the front leg while the junior paternal uncle is given a hind leg. The head is processed and cooked by the men at the *kgotla*. The phalanges are cooked together with the head. Women do most of the cooking especially when the animal has been killed for family consumption. Men eat the head, reticulum and the phalanges (with the boys) at the *kgotla* area or just at the household. Women eat their meat cuts (plus bones) from the pelvic area within the household. Long bones such as femur, humerus, ulna and radius are eaten by both men and women. When they eat these, they cut out the proximal end and chop it up into chewable pieces, then the diaphysis is cut across to extract the marrow.

Hambukushu of Maun

Hambukushu people are a non-Setswana speaking society in the Northwest District of Botswana. In Maun, I interviewed the Hambukushu from the Riverside ward who are under headman Masike. This ward is made up of the Hambukushu from villages such as Beetsha, Shakawe and Xakao. These people have long been living in Maun and one can say that to some extent they have adopted some of the Batawana ways and other ethnic groups that they have been living in contact with. Some of them have even intermarried. The Shashi ward is mostly populated by the Hambukushu from Angola who came as refugees but are now Botswana citizens. The Shashi ward is located on the outskirts and to the east of the village. The Hambukushu are a matrilineal society and thus their butchery style may be different from the other societies studied.

Only males (both the young and the elderly) butcher cattle among the Hambukushu: women never butcher cattle here for it is believed that they lack the masculine strength associated with butchery. Cattle can be killed at the *kgotla* next to a big tree. The animal may be tied to this tree in order to restrict its movement. Cattle can also be butchered in the kraal. Cattle can be butchered for the ritual cleansing of the family of some sickness, to mark the reaping festival, for funerals, wedding celebrations and in exchange for millet. To kill, the animal is hit with an axe on the forehead. Then the butchers dismember the carcass. It has to be noted that the Hambukushu do not skin their animals except when it has been killed for a funeral ceremony, because the skin will be needed to wrap the corpse.

Legs are the first items to be dismembered from the carcass. The digestive system will then be removed after the carcass has been opened. The chest will be divided into two. This will be followed by the head and the cervical vertebrae. The phalanges will also be cut off from the legs. From the Shashi ward they claim that the front leg is dismembered first so that the digestive organs can be easy to remove. This is followed by the right hind leg and

then four lower ribs. When this is done they will dismember legs and ribs from the left side. The two halves of the pelvic bones and the caudal vertebrae will also be dismembered. The variation in butchery that is found among the Hambukushu from the Riverside ward and the Shashi ward can be said to be due to cultural influences from other societies. For example, the Hambukushu of the Riverside ward have long been living in close contact with the Batawana, Bayei and Baherero and thus maybe they have borrowed some ideas from them.

Among the Hambukushu the head is the only meat cut that is gendered (appendix, Table 4). It can only be given to the father of the owner of the animal, his paternal cousin, or he can have it himself. The carcass is not shared if the animal has been butchered for a funeral, a wedding or a reaping festival. Here people come and eat the meat until they finish the whole animal. When the animal has been butchered for family consumption the butchers are rewarded with cervical vertebrae. The children will get the chest and the heart while the herd boys get the phalanges. Besides being given the cervical vertebrae the butchers can at times be rewarded with a leg. The Hambukushu from the Shashi ward claim that the owner of the animal gets the four ribs, two from each side. The maternal cousin of the owner of the animal gets the chest, while the paternal cousin gets the cervical vertebrae plus the head. The herd boys will be given the metapodials and the phalanges. The senior child is given the hind leg while the youngest gets the front leg. The hind leg has more meat and thus has to be for the senior sibling. The junior sibling must be given the front leg because it has less meat. Men do most of the cooking. It is claimed that only on very rare occasions do you find women cooking when the animal is butchered for ritual purposes.

The Hambukushu practice of cattle butchery differs in several ways from the other groups studied. In killing the cattle with an axe blow to the head and dismembering the cattle carcass without skinning it we see a style that is unique to the Hambukushu. The sharing of the carcass does not include many different people and this is also a unique feature. The Hambukushu's communal eating of the animal until it gets finished on festive occasions and the funeral ceremony shows that these people are related. Men and women do not have to sit in a specific location when they eat, and this means that their discard pattern will be concentrated in one location. The Hambukushu live close to each other and there is always a big tree in between some of the homesteads. After they have butchered they will congregate in one location, mostly under this tree and eat their different meat cuts. The discarded bones will later be thrown in the bush haphazardly during the general cleaning of the household.

Bangwato of Serowe and Mosu

Bangwato are a Setswana speaking society under the chieftainship of a paramount chief. Bangwato people can be said to have been a proto-state before coming into contact with the Europeans. This is evidenced by the number of different *merafe* (societies) that were under Bangwato rule such as Basarwa, Bakalanga, Batswapong, and Babirwa. Men are the only people who can butcher cattle among Bangwato people. There has to be a chief butcher who will be responsible for leading and directing other butchers. This chief butcher also has to be a gun expert. Among Bangwato, women are referred to as children of their husbands and thus are not allowed to butcher because it is believed that they are weak and fragile. This, however does not mean that they are cut off from the product of butchery. For example, a husband can butcher a beast because his wife has given birth.

Cattle can be killed in the kraal or within the household. The reason for killing them in the kraal is because they will be enclosed and thus easy to control. They can be killed in the household if they have been transported from the cattle post to the village or *masimo*. Cattle can be killed to provide meat for funeral services, when a wife is confined to the

house after birth (*botsetsi*), wedding celebrations, and family consumption. They can also be killed so that the meat can be sold for cash which will then be used to meet the family's needs. A ritual is performed on the cow dung (*moswang*) by the family traditional doctor so as to protect the meat and the remaining livestock from evil people. This is mostly done when the animal has been butchered for weddings. Bangwato kill their animals using either a gun or a knife. To kill the animal, they cut the *monyetsane* (just below the skull on the cranial end of the cervical vertebrae). The animal skin is marked from the chest down to the tail and then from the chest to just below the lip. The skin that hangs on the cervical vertebrae is cut and removed. The marking is then done from the chest down to the distal end of metacarpals and from the belly to the distal end of the metatarsals. When this is done the skin can be removed with ease. Legs are dismembered first. It does not really matter which one is removed first. After this, the chest is dismembered, followed by the ribs (*dithupa*), the head plus the cervical vertebrae, *metlhana*, digestive system, *telwane* (genitals), caudal vertebrae and the thoracic vertebrae.

The Bangwato also have some meat cuts that are associated with different genders (appendix, Table 5). *Mokoto* meat, which includes the thoracic vertebrae and reticulum, is associated with men. The head is specifically for the maternal uncle. The phalanges are for the boys. *Bobadu* which includes the caudal vertebrae is for women. The *mothana* is said to be the softest and juiciest cut only fit for celebrated people (such as the bride and the groom) on their special day. When the animal has been killed for family consumption the senior child gets the front leg while the junior child gets the hind leg. The paternal uncle gets the intestines and nine ribs. The maternal uncle gets the head plus the cervical vertebrae. The maternal aunt gets the *mothana*. The mother of the owner of the animal gets the rumen. The chest is for the children of the owner of the animal who are still at home. The women are given *bobadu* to eat among themselves. The chest can also be given to the *kgosi*. This is due to the fact that it is very fatty and thus considered good for the chief. The chief butcher can be rewarded with *telwane* or *nama ya tshiamo*. The other butchers get *magopelo* to share among themselves. The herder can either be given *telwane* or the heart plus the pancreas. The eyes are for the elderly man within the family. Men eat *mokoto*, boys eat phalanges and metapodials, and women eat *bobadu*. In some households metapodials are eaten by male elders. Men cook their respective meat cuts as do the women. In cases of ceremonies such as weddings and funerals both men and women cook the meat together. In cases where the beast has been killed for family consumption it is mostly women who do the cooking. Long bones such as the femur and tibia are cut into two across the diaphysis before being cooked. Bones used to be collected and sold to European traders for cash. Nowadays they are mostly collected and thrown into the rubbish pit. Overall, Bangwato dismember their cattle in their own specific way. They have meat cuts such as *bobadu* and *telwane* which can only be found among them. The way the carcass is shared is also unique to them. For example when a man has killed for his family consumption, he has to give also to the *kgosi* to acknowledge his high status.

Status

Men are usually given a high status when compared to women in a Setswana social setting. This high status can be communicated through the way in which a wife talks to her husband, a sister relates to her brother and even through the sharing of food at meal times or during the sharing of a butchered cattle carcass at a broader family level. In most cases people are conscious of this status phenomena. Table 6 in the appendix shows the status associated with the different anatomical elements of butchered cattle. The table shows that

males such as the elderly men had high status and junior males such as children or herdboys were given low status, while women are mostly of medium status.

Should we come across cattle skulls in the archaeological record this study indicates that they probably were consumed by males and they would have been of high status in all the five societies. Barolong, Bakwena and Bangwato would also have associated the cervical vertebrae with high male status. The lower part of the vertebral column would have been for males but categorized as medium status. The middle part of the vertebral column (lumbar) would have been consumed by adult females and is of medium status. The rest of the bones are all of medium status regardless of who eats them, only with the exception of the phalanges (and the metapodials in the case of Bangwato) which are eaten by boys. Bakwena have four status categories for their bones (appendix, Table 6). The skull and the cervical vertebrae are ascribed high male status. The lumbar vertebrae and the caudal vertebrae are given medium high status and are consumed by females together with the scapula. Ribs fall under medium-high status but are consumed by men. The rest of the bones have medium status regardless of the recipients. Only phalanges have low status and are consumed by boys. Bakalanga of Masunga only have three categories of status for the anatomical elements (appendix, Table 6). High status is ascribed to skull and the vertebral column and are consumed by men. Medium status is ascribed to anatomical elements such as the sternum and the pelvic bones which are consumed by females and the other elements such as femur, radius and tibia which can be consumed by adults regardless of sex. Low status is given to metatarsals and metacarpals and phalanges which are mostly consumed by young males. Among Hambukushu, the concept of the animal seems to be much more fluid because when compared to the other societies most of their anatomical elements do not have any status ascribed to them. It is only the skull, cervical vertebrae, metatarsals, metacarpals and the phalanges that are given status and specific recipients. Bangwato have their own pattern similar to that of Barolong, Bakwena and Bakalanga whereby the skull and the vertebral column are of high male status. However, it has to be noted that here there is a unique anatomical element (sternum) which is given very high status because it is consumed by the chief (*kgosi*). Anatomical elements that are consumed by both male and female adults are given medium status. Lastly the phalanges and metapodials are of low status for they are consumed by young males or herders.

The above mentioned elements will be discarded in their respective gender locations within the settlement but some will be disturbed by dogs and even people during the cleaning of their yards. Even so, it can be said that we can distinguish the different societies through their distinct discard patterns. Status and gender can be discovered in the anatomical elements themselves and their discard locations within the site. I believe that if we examine the distribution of bones on archaeological sites we should be able to identify certain patterns of things like gender, ethnicity and social status associated with these bones.

Conclusion

My case studies among Barolong, Bakwena, Bangwato, Bakalanga, and Hambukushu have demonstrated that different cultures do butcher and process cattle carcasses in different ways. This phenomenon will result in patterned and potentially different bone assemblages because of different sharing, eating and discard patterns in all the societies. Butchery style can be used to communicate ethnicity. This is evidenced by as simple a fact as the slaughtering itself. Barolong believe that cattle must be killed in the kraal using a knife; Bakwena and Bangwato are of the view that if you have a gun then you kill the animal with

it in the kraal; Bakalanga use an axe, either in the kraal or just outside the yard; and Hambukushu kill their cattle with an axe next to a big tree.

Both dogs tampering with bones after discard and the collection of bones by humans during cleaning routines can be said to be taphonomic agents that filter some bones out of the assemblages. This will thus lead to a clouding of results but that does not make the concept of butchery style valueless to archaeologists. Some patterning of bones will survive in the archaeological record. Multiple episodes of butchery may also mask the patterns. One might get different body parts which complete a carcass but from different butchering episodes because the same individual can be a brother, a son and an in-law and his wife a sister, mother and cousin to different people. Hence, over several butchery and distribution episodes each household may receive different body parts. Nevertheless, this research has shown that butchery style cannot only be taken to be functional as studies of scholars such as Binford (1981), Lyman (1994), Russell (1987) and others have argued. It has demonstrated that just like iron smelting (Childs, 1991) and San projectile points (Wiessner, 1983) butchery is also cultural and thus it can inform us on issues of ethnicity, social relations and social settings, such as gender and rank in societies.

Appendix

Table 1. Status, gender and recipient of cattle body parts among Barolong

BODY PART	RECIPIENT	STATUS	GENDER
Head & cervical vert.	Father in law or maternal uncle	High	Male
<i>Mokoto</i>	Men	High	Male
Hump	Men	High	Male
Front leg	Elder brother or senior son	High	Male
Hind leg	Younger brother or son	High	Male
<i>Mothana</i>	Elder sister or daughter	Medium	Female
Chest	Wife or mother of animal's owner	Medium - high	Female
Skin	Owner of animal	Medium	Male
Ribs	Family	Medium	Male
<i>Selalo</i>	Chief butcher	Medium - low	Male
<i>Magwaha</i>	Herder	Low	Male
Phalanges	Boys	Low	Male

Table 2. Among Bakwena

BODY PART	RECIPIENT	STATUS	GENDER
Head & cervical vert.	Maternal uncle	High	Male
Front leg	Senior child	Medium - high	Both sexes
Right <i>mothana</i>	Second child	Medium	Both sexes
Left <i>mothana</i>	Third child	Medium - low	Both sexes
Hind legs	Paternal aunt or youngest children	Medium	Both sexes
Intestines, liver & four ribs	Paternal uncle	Medium	Male
<i>Mohubu</i>	Grandmother	Medium - low	Female
Metapodials	Widows and widowers	Medium - low	Female
Phalanges	Boys	Low	Male

Table 3. Among Bakalanga

BODY PART	RECIPIENT	STATUS	GENDER
Head	Elderly men	High	Male
Chest	Senior wife	Medium - high	Female
Front leg	Second wife or senior paternal uncle	Medium	Female
Hind leg	Junior wife or junior paternal uncle	Medium - low	Both sexes
<i>Magono</i>	Butchers	Low	Male
Phalanges	Fathers and boys	Low	Male

Table 4. Among Hambukushu

BODY PART	RECIPIENT	STATUS	GENDER
Cervical vertebrae	Butchers	Medium - low	Male
Chest & heart	Children	Medium	Both sexes
Hind leg	Senior child	Medium - high	Both sexes
Front leg	Youngest child	Medium	Both sexes
Leg (any)	Butchers	Medium	Male
Head	Owner of animal or paternal cousin	High	Male
Phalanges & metapodials	Herd boys	Low	Male

Table 5. Among Bangwato

BODY PART	RECIPIENT	STATUS	GENDER
Head & cervical vert.	Maternal uncle	High	Male
Chest	Chief	Very high	Male
Front leg	Senior child	Medium - high	Both sexes
Hind leg	Junior child	Medium	Both sexes
<i>Mothlana</i>	Maternal aunt	Medium	Female
Rumen	Mother of the animal's owner	Medium	Female
<i>Bobadu</i>	Women	Medium	Female
<i>Nama ya tshiamo or telwane</i>	Chief butcher	Medium	Male
<i>Telwane</i> & heart & pancreas	Herder	Low	Male
Phalanges	Boys	Low	Male
Eyes	Elderly men	High	Male
<i>Mokoto</i>	Men	High	Male
<i>Magopelo</i>	Butchers	Low	Male

Table 6. Comparative table of status assigned to body parts among the five studied societies.

BODY PART	Barolong	Bakwena	Bakalanga	Hambukushu	Bangwato
Skull	High	High	High	Med – high	High
Cervical vertebrae	High	High	High	Medium	High
Thoracic vertebrae	High	High	High	None	High
Lumbar vertebrae	Medium	Med – hi	High	None	Medium
Caudal & sacrum vertebrae	Med – low	Med – hi	High	None	Medium
Sternum	Med – low	Medium	Medium	None	Very High
Pelvic bones	Medium	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Humerus	Medium	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Ulna & radius	Medium	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Femur	Medium	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Tibia	Medium	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Scapula	None	Medium	Medium	None	Medium
Metatarsals & metacarpals	Med – low	Low	Low	None	Low
Ribs	None	None	None	None	None
Phalanges	Low	Low	Low	None	Low

Notes

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Mophato wa Matsosa Ngwao

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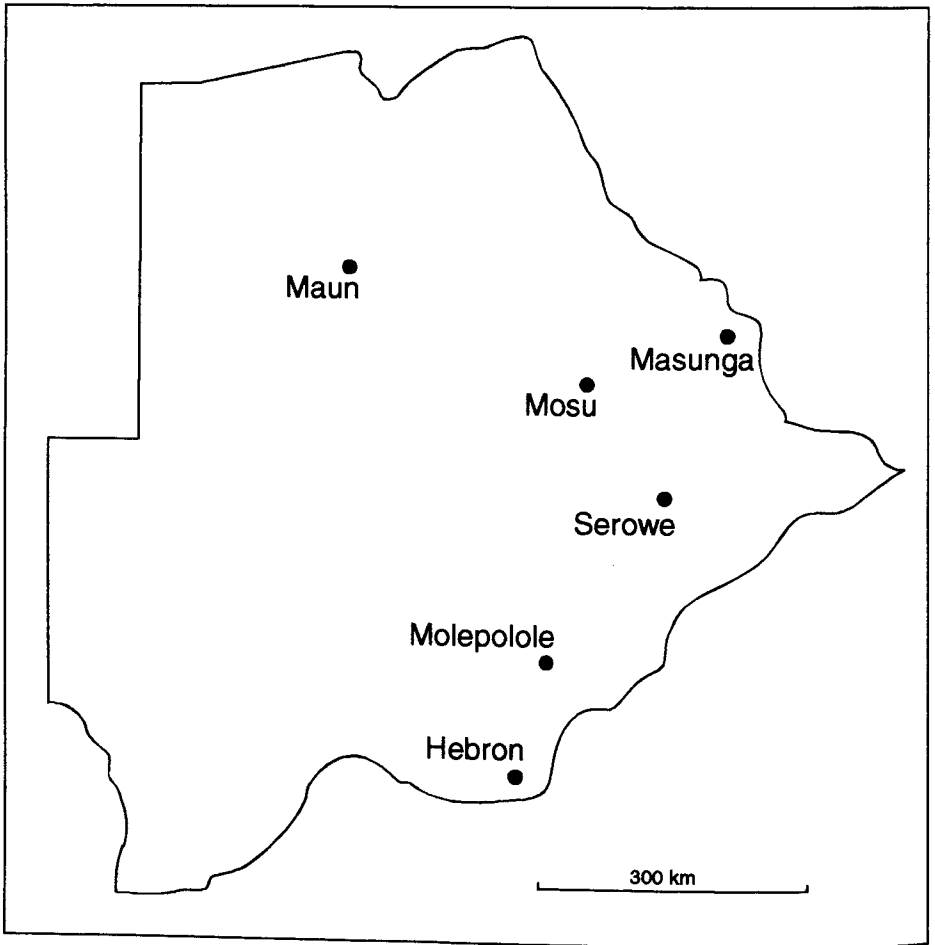


Fig. 1. The areas mentioned in the text.