

# Glossary of Setswana Terms

---

## Note on Pronunciation

Setswana is pronounced much as it is written, with a few key exceptions (Matumo 1993):

‘e’ may be pronounced either as *ey* in the English *they*, e.g. *malome*; or as *e* in *then*, e.g. *akere*

‘g’ is pronounced like *ch* in *loch*, e.g. *gae*

‘i’ is pronounced *ee* as in *deep*, e.g. *masimo*

‘kg’ is pronounced as a guttural *k*, e.g. *kgotla*; *dikgang* is therefore *di-KHang*

‘ng’ is pronounced like *ng* in *sing*, e.g. *ngaka*

‘o’ is pronounced like *oa* in *boat*, e.g. *motse*

‘th’ is pronounced as an aspirated *t* as in *take*, e.g. *motho*

## Glossary

<i>(go) aga</i>	to build
<i>akere</i>	right?; isn't it?
<i>Ao!</i>	expression of surprise (interjection)
<i>bagolo</i>	elders
<i>batwapeng</i>	family (lit. people of the courtyard)
<i>bana ba bommaboipelego</i>	children of the social worker (often used for orphans)
<i>bana ba motho</i>	siblings (lit. children of a person)
<i>banyana</i>	girls
<i>batsadi</i>	see <i>motsadi</i>
<i>Batswana</i>	Tswana people
<i>bogadi</i>	bridewealth (see also <i>lobola</i> )
<i>botho</i>	personhood; connotes dignity, respectfulness, and humane behaviour
<i>dikgang</i>	see <i>kgang</i>

<i>ee</i>	yes
<i>gae</i>	home or home village
<i>gareitse (gakeitse)</i>	we don't know (I don't know)
<i>hei! / haish! / heela!</i>	hey!; expressions of surprise, insistence, or fatigue (interjections)
<i>ija! / ijo!</i>	expressions of surprise, annoyance, or sympathy (interjections)
<i>isong</i>	fireplace, hearth, or outdoor kitchen
<i>(go) itirela</i>	to make or do for oneself; to make oneself as a social person
<i>kagisanyo</i>	harmony
<i>kagiso</i>	peace
<i>kana</i>	actually, as it happens (interjection)
<i>kgang (pl. dikgang)</i>	issue or problem; topic of discussion, argument, or earnest debate; a disputed question or contention; also news to share out, separate, or resolve
<i>kgaoanya</i>	child abuse
<i>kgokgontsho ya bana</i>	chief
<i>kgosi</i>	paramount chief
<i>kgosikgolo</i>	customary court or tribal administration
<i>kgotla</i>	at home (referring to one's natal home or home village)
<i>ko gae</i>	in the courtyard or at home (i.e. the yard one stays in)
<i>ko lwapeng</i>	at the place of
<i>kwa ga ...</i>	jealousy
<i>lefufa</i>	courtyard; house; family
<i>lelwapa (pl. malwapa)</i>	bridewealth (see also <i>bogadi</i> )
<i>lobola</i>	love
<i>lorato</i>	uncle (specifically, mother's brother)
<i>malome (pl. bomalome)</i>	see <i>lelwapa</i>
<i>malwapa</i>	farmlands
<i>masimo</i>	noise; disturbances
<i>medumo (sing. modumo)</i>	mother of
<i>mmago/mmagwe</i>	uncle's wife; female uncle
<i>mma malome</i>	man or husband
<i>monna</i>	my man or my husband
<i>monna wa me</i>	age regiment
<i>mophato (pl. mephato)</i>	tribal polity; nation
<i>morafe (pl. merafe)</i>	

<i>moraka</i>	cattle post
<i>mosadi</i> (pl. <i>basadi</i> )	woman
<i>motsadi</i> (pl. <i>batsadi</i> )	parent
<i>motse</i>	village
<i>motsetse</i>	confinement
<i>motshelo</i> (pl. <i>metshelo</i> )	savings group
<i>Motswana</i>	Tswana person (singular)
<i>mpona!</i>	look at me!
<i>mxm!</i>	expression of annoyance, frustration, or derision (interjection)
<i>ngaka</i>	traditional doctor
<i>ngwana</i>	child
<i>nkuku</i>	grandmother
<i>na</i>	me or I
<i>myaa</i>	no
<i>puo</i>	conversation or discussion (of difficult matters); a case to be tried
<i>rrago/ragwe</i>	father of
<i>seabe</i>	a portion given; a share
<i>segotlo</i>	backyard
<i>seswaa</i>	stewed and shredded meat, common at weddings and funerals
<i>Setswana</i>	the language and culture of the Tswana
<i>sjambok</i>	a rubberised whip (Afrikaans)
<i>sotlega</i>	scorn
<i>tirisanyo mmogo</i>	cooperation; working together
<i>tlakwano</i>	come here
<i>tlhokomelo</i>	care
<i>(go) tsamaya</i>	to go
<i>wena</i>	you

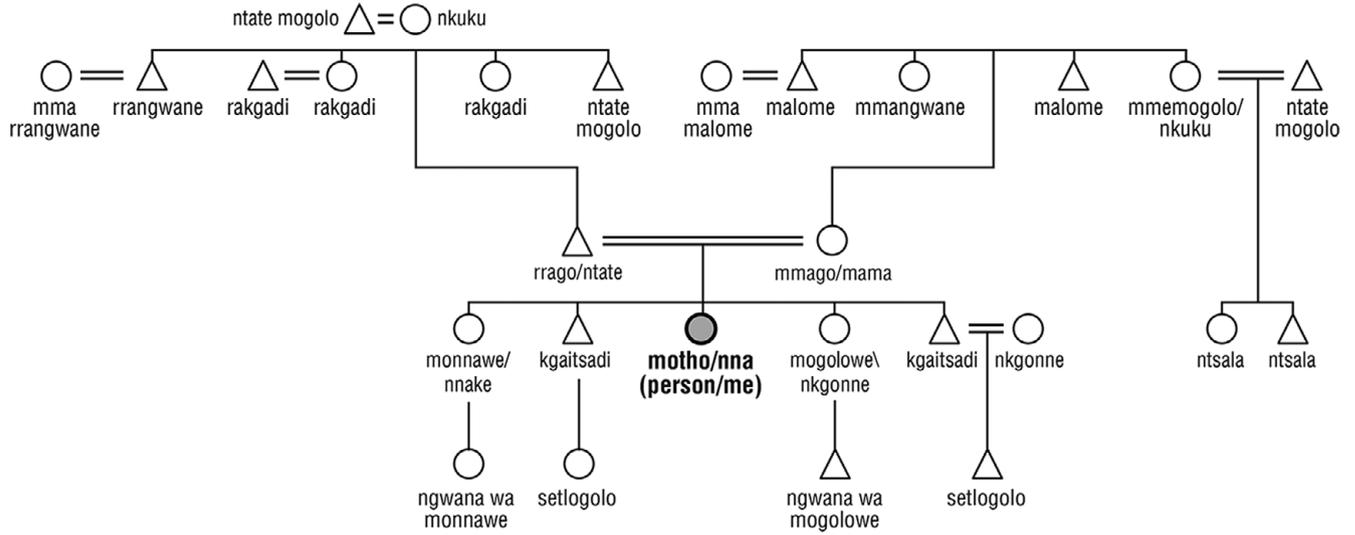


Figure 12 Tswana kin terms.

**Kin Terms**

Kin terms in Setswana are complex, fluid, and sometimes interchangeable, and they do not translate readily into English. They distinguish on the basis of relative age and relative sex, and there are different terms used to identify relationships in the third (his/her), second (your), and first (my) person. Here, I have distinguished them by generation for ease of reference, although roles and terms frequently move between and across generations (Figure 12).