

MABOLA

25.11.1898

File 74, pp. 12-13, 14, 18.

Also present: Zulu

12 Per Mabola, a man aged about 71-73 (Inyati regiment).¹ His father was a Zulu. He came with his father as a young child, so young as not to remember coming. He is therefore a Swazi in every way except by blood. He is married and has a kraal about 600 yards from the British Consulate,² where it has been for over four years to my certain knowledge. He is therefore in the heart of Swaziland and thoroughly well up in affairs.

In conversation, in the presence of Zulu,³ he spoke in the following terms. If a king's daughter married or was married to a man living out of the country, as for instance in Tongaland and Zululand, the *lobola* claimed amounted to as much as 100 head of cattle, and she might be married even though the bridegroom was not a king or prince. The ordinary people's *lobola* consisted of the payment of cattle, at first one or two head, then three. Afterwards this was raised to five, with an additional beast called the *lugege* (which is slaughtered for the girl at the consummation of the marriage). Later on 10 head were claimed.

In the old days Zwide of Zululand used to campaign in Swaziland and carry off many cattle, and he did this even though he had married his daughter Lazide to Somhlola, alias Sobuza, she being his chief wife and mother of Mswazi.⁴

In Jozana's part of the country, near the Ubombo and north of the Usutu river, even in Mbandeni's time, the people used to *lobola* with hoes and goats.⁵ Neck-rings, which were made of copper, used to be sent with a girl when she went to be married; this custom was fairly general in Swaziland. The neck-rings were not fixed as to number and did not represent *lobola* or be *lobola*, although they remained at the husband's. When taken for this purpose, the neck-rings, no matter how many, were known as the *ungano*.⁶ Mabola does not remember having seen or heard of neck-rings being *lobola'd* with; the same applies to beads.

Neck-rings used to be manufactured by Tibeko (deceased) and others about the country. Mabola does not know where the metal was obtained. There was a well-known man called Mrube (deceased) who manufactured items of copper, and weapons of iron. He lived not far from the old Zombode kraal near Bremersdorp.⁷ Mjele, son of Mrube, manufactures still, but only assegais.

Mabola cannot imagine where cattle came from originally. It is said in Swaziland that everything, including man and cattle, came

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from Mkulumgcadi, who however, Mabola adds, has never been seen by anyone. This Mkulumgcadi is the same as the Zulu Umvelingqangi.⁸

13 Beads, like *neck-rings*, are sent with a girl when she goes to marry. They are then known as *isembato*,⁹ and remain at the bridegroom's. In these days, since ravages by rinderpest, natives *lobola* with money.¹⁰ The king, as far as Mabola knows, has never given a general order about *lobola* as to fixing the amount, etc. There is no *umsindo* or public dance in Swaziland as in Zululand.¹¹ Girls proceed alone, i.e. in company with other girls, to the bridegroom's. The father directs them to go. They arrive unknown and *dance* and place the *isembato* beads before the man who is to become husband, although he may not have *been chosen by the girl* but was merely liked by the father of the girl.

In former days girls did not disobey their father's order; nowadays however they refuse, and if a girl should obey her father nowadays it is said, '*He prospers in her*' (because she listens to her father). Now they go to their lovers. Girls disobeyed their fathers in this mostly under Mbandeni. They said they had *qoma'd*, i.e. engaged themselves, and would not be *ngerwa'd*.¹² Mabola cannot account for the reason why girls refused to obey their fathers. He does not know if it was due to European influence, but fancies not. *In the old days an engagement was not marked by the making of beer, and the man did not come into the open. Today, when a girl has accepted a man, she carries beer to him.* Mswazi originated this. He proclaimed that people were not to go round stealthily at night seeking their lovers because there was a chance of their being taken for *abatakati* and thereupon meeting with an accident. They were, he said, to go in open daylight, so as to be seen by all.

When Mbandeni sent an *impi* composed of various regiments to fight in Sotshangana's, alias Manukuza's, country on the occasion of the dispute between the princes Mawewe and Mzila,¹³ he gave the Inyati regiment permission to take girls, that is, gave them girls to have sexual intercourse with so that when at the front they would know they had left girls with child who would bear them children. These girls were the men's own sweethearts, but Mswazi's order meant that no *lobola* was to be paid for them. After the regiment came back nothing was said as to *lobola* by the girls' fathers until after Mswazi's death. In the next king's reign, Ludonga,¹⁴ the girls' fathers came forward to claim *lobola*, which was then paid. It should be stated that even in Mswazi's lifetime some of the Inyati regiment who had taken the girls used to take cattle and place them at their father-in-law's as if *sis'a'd*, whereas in reality they were for *lobola*, for they could not see how they could take other people's children without paying for them.

According to Mabola the *lobola* custom is essentially an *umtengo*, i.e. a purchase, and for this reason [but see also note on p. 96 by Zulu].¹⁵ the woman when she goes to her husband is separated from her home. When she dies she is buried at her husband's. Her *dhlozi*, it is true, keeps watch at her father's kraal as well as at her husband's. When a beast is killed it is invoked by the father, but the woman is buried according to the mode or fashion prevailing amongst her husband's people, for people are of different customs, i.e. in Swaziland people are buried in different ways according to their own family or tribal customs. One is buried with his or her face looking

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east, another looking west and so on. That a woman should have to conform in this way and at such a time to her husband's people's custom is in itself a proof that *lobola* is a purchase. The breaking of the family custom of the woman shows she no longer belongs to her father and so is like purchased property.

- 14 *Inzingumu* or *izindondo* are small brass balls hung on string and worn only by women, especially *wives of the chief*.

.... <Linguistic note omitted - eds.>

- 18 A man who *manufactures* battle axes is Nkomonye, at Mgudeni. *He is of the Mamba people*. He is not one of Maja's men. *Ingcumu* or *indondo* [usually in plural] are small brass balls with holes in them for inserting string. These are made in Swaziland and are ornaments.

Notes

- ¹The iNyathi (iNyatsi) was an age-group formed by the Swazi king Mswati.
- ²Presumably the consulate at Bremersdorp (Manzini), administrative capital of Swaziland under the 'protectorate' established by the South African Republic in 1895.
- ³Zulu was another of Stuart's informants. His evidence will appear in a later volume of the Stuart Archive.
- ⁴Zwide was chief of the Ndwandwe in the early nineteenth century. Somhlolo (Sobhuza) was chief of the Dlamini-Ngwane, or Swazi, from c.1815 to c.1839. His son Mswati (Mswazi), usually regarded as the founder of the Swazi kingdom, ruled from c.1845 to 1865.
- ⁵Mbandeni (Mbandzeni) ruled the Swazi from 1874 to 1889.
- ⁶See also the evidence of Giba and Mnkonkoni in Stuart Archive, vol. 1, p. 150.
- ⁷Zombode (Zombodze) was one of the Swazi royal *imizi*.
- ⁸The name of the first being in Zulu mythology.
- ⁹Literally, a covering.
- ¹⁰Rinderpest destroyed large numbers of cattle over much of southern Africa in the late 1890s. For an account of its effects see Van Onselen, 'Reactions to rinderpest in southern Africa', Journal of African History, 13 (1972).
- ¹¹I.e. at a wedding.
- ¹²*Ukangena* (pass. *ukungemwa*), literally, to enter, also means to take to wife the widow of a deceased male relative. In the present context *ngemwa'd* is used in the sense of a woman's being taken to wife when she is already engaged to marry another man.
- ¹³Soshangana(e) was founder of the Gasa kingdom on the Sabi river near the present border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. On his death in 1858 his sons Mawewe and Mzila disputed the succession, the former with the backing of the Swazi under Mswati (not Mbandzeni, as claimed by Mabola), the latter with the backing of the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay. See Bryant, Olden Times, pp. 456-7; Bonner, 'The rise of Dlamini power', pp. 192 ff.
- ¹⁴Ludvonga (Ludonga) succeeded Mswati as king of the Swazi, but died in 1874 while still a minor.

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¹⁵The reference is to p. 96 of File 74.