

## TETELEKU ka NOBANDA

14.6.1899

File 73, pp. 1, 13, 25.

- 1 14.6.1899. *Lobola*, Natal, per Teteleku, chief, son of Nobanda.<sup>1</sup> [For references to evidence in support of these views of Teteleku, see p. 4.]<sup>2</sup> Lives about 4 miles from Maritzburg; knew Sir Theophilus Shepstone well;<sup>3</sup> was often consulted by him on native law and custom; has 18 wives and 50 children.

Teteleku says that *lobola* was in no sense a purchase, there is no such sense about it. He is himself about 64 years of age and has always taken a deep interest in this and other old customs. *Lobola* is a pledge or guarantee of good faith. Here are Teteleku's words, '*U m tata njena umuntu lona, u ya ku m lungisa njena, ufunga ngani na? A vele-ke umyeni lona o tat' umtan' o muntu ati, "Wo, uku tata kwami loku, ngi m tata nje a be ngo wami, isifungo sami ngi zo bek' izinkomo ku yise, uma ngize ngi buze-ke uma se ngi m ona ukuti izinkomo lezi nga ngi fungelani ngazo?"*' That is: 'By what token is there to be an assurance that the person you take will be well and truly looked after? The husband then will come forward, he who has taken a person's child, and say, "Yes, the token given by me on the occasion of my taking her as my own is cattle which I will place with her father so that with these in his possession I shall be answerable for any wrongdoing on my part; it will be said: On what account did you give these cattle as a token?"' More than this. *Lobola* means also that the husband assures the girl's father that her children by him will inherit his estate or such portion of it as has been assigned or allotted to her house.

Teteleku's father Nobanda never came from Zululand but from near the Tugela above Ntunjambili and near Greytown. In the old days, i.e. as far back as Teteleku knows, the *lobola* given was the skin of a duiker (*impunzi*). This skin, as also the *dondo* or *amasongo* and *izimbedu* that followed in later years, was merely a guarantee that *lobola* would be given in the shape of cattle as soon as cattle could be obtained.<sup>4</sup> It so happened that many years elapsed sometimes between the giving of the skin and marriage, and the procuring of cattle, but the guarantee given was rarely if ever forgotten and a claim would invariably be made by the children or grandchildren. The *amasongo* and *izimbedu* were, Teteleku believes, manufactured by natives in the same way that they make iron.

## TETELEKU

13 14.6.1899. Marriage, Natal, per Teteleku. [Vide p. 1.]<sup>5</sup> According to the old customs the chief consent necessary for a marriage to take place was that of the girl's father, for the father was the person best able to see if a man could comply with the guarantee to be given for the proper care and protection of his daughter. The father had to bear in mind the interests of the whole family, and in giving his permission would have to be satisfied that the match would be a good one from this the higher point of view. He had therefore to protect the honour of the family which the girl, being concerned only with her own interests, would probably pay no proper regard to. Thus it was that when, a girl having engaged herself to a man, this man was found by the parents to be unworthy, it became necessary for the father to override the girl's wishes and cause her to be married to someone he deemed more suitable. The girl in such a case was 'bound' (*bopela'd*), but if there was any way of meeting the girl's wishes the father was greatly influenced thereby.

25 14.6.1899. Contact with Civilized Races, Europeans, Natal, per Teteleku. [Vide p. 1.]<sup>6</sup> Teteleku tells me of a native doctor called Magenge who many years ago left this part of the country (Natal) for Portuguese territory in the direction of Delagoa Bay. When there, the doctor obtained some salampore (*itshodo*) or similar material;<sup>7</sup> he returned with it and some drugs etc. peculiar to the Tongas. With this salampore he performed some tricks and made those who saw him believe that he performed a miracle (*umnyama*).<sup>8</sup> People did not know what this material was.

*Amasongo* and *izimbedu* did not come from the Portuguese but were made by native blacksmiths in the way that they had learnt to make iron.

The natives round about Maritzburg were independent of Zululand but were always afraid of those people. As soon as there came Europeans to Durban, these natives took courage by seeking and obtaining the protection of the Europeans against the Zulus.

Generally speaking, European laws are not compatible with native custom and sentiment.

Several of Teteleku's family (boys) have left home (deserted), but they visit occasionally. No girls have deserted. He has 50 children and 18 wives.

Natives often refer to their old laws and customs in conversation though they may seem to be fading from view.

The Boers were the first to attack the Zulu power.

13 [22.6.1899. The chief Teteleku was found dead in his hut this morning (no suspicions). I had arranged to have another long talk with him on Saturday. I regret extremely that this is impossible as I felt I had discovered a man.]

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Teteleku of the abakwaMpumuza people was a chief with adherents in the Umgeni Division and seven other Divisions. He lived in the Swartkop Location a few kilometres west of Pietermaritzburg. In colonial documents his name is variously spelt

## TETELEKU

as Teteleku and Tetelegu, variants which carry slightly different pronunciations. We here retain the variant used by Stuart; modern practice is to use Tetelegu. A photograph of him appears in Harrison, ed., Natal: An Illustrated Official Railway Guide (1903), p. 65, and in Twentieth Century Impressions of Natal (1906), p. 213; see also the frontispiece in Lambert, Betrayed Trust (1995).

<sup>2</sup> In the original the note in parentheses appears as an insertion in the upper margin of the page. The reference is to File 73, p. 4, where Stuart cites evidence in support of his argument that the handing-over of cattle or other visible tokens in *ukulobola* transactions represented less a payment than ‘compensation for loss of the girl’s services’.

<sup>3</sup> Theophilus Shepstone was Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1845 to 1876. He died in 1893.

<sup>4</sup> Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 115-16, gives *indondo* (pl. *izindondo*) as ‘Solid brass ball, about an inch thick, and having a hole through the middle, for wearing round the neck as an ornament ...’. On p. 597, he gives *isongo* (pl. *amasongo*) as ‘Brass or copper ring worn in former times on the upper-arm ..., hence, brass bracelet ... worn on the wrist ...’. On p. 27 he gives *ubhedu* (pl. *izimbhedu*) as ‘... band or flat ring of solid brass worn originally round the neck, as a decoration of the highest class, by Zulu chiefs in olden times (the custom having become already obsolete in Shaka’s time)’.

<sup>5</sup> The reference is to Stuart’s note on Teteleku above.

<sup>6</sup> The reference is to Stuart’s note on Teteleku above.

<sup>7</sup> Bryant, Dictionary, p. 650, gives *utshodo* (*ushodo*) as ‘Dark-blue cotton-gauze or veiling ...’.

<sup>8</sup> Bryant, Dictionary, p. 390, gives *umnyama* (*ummmnyama* in his spelling) as ‘... quality in a thing for causing ill-fortune, evil-influence ...’.