

separately and takes these home with her baby. There she must herself take earth with clods in it, mix this thoroughly with the afterbirth matter, and then throw the whole far away in some waste place. The practice of burying the afterbirth by the wall of the hut, which once prevailed, has long since passed away.

The umbilical cord is usually severed with the sharp edge of a blade of 'Tambookie' grass (umngqungu, Cymbopogon validus Stapf ex Burt Davy). It must never be cut with a knife or other metal instrument. The dropping of the cord from the infant takes place usually within about a week. When it falls off, the mother stands up and with a knife or some other implement bores a hole in the wall above the spot where the child was born. There she places the cord and plasters it over.

From the day of birth, or the day following, a mother rocks her baby to and fro through the smoke of certain leaves. She takes embers from the fireplace in the centre of the hut and makes a separate little fire at the spot where her child was born. On these embers she places green leaves of a certain tree (isifutho).² As the leaves give off a column of smoke, she holds her naked babe in her arms and swings it to and fro through the smoke, singing softly to the infant:-

Wotshi-i-i! ukhanyel' int' oyaziyo!
Wotshi-i-i! uphik' int' oyaziyo!
Wotshi-i-i! Hluth' iigusha zabaTswana!
Wotshi-i-i! Hluth' iibhokwe zabaTswana!
Wotshi-i-i! ukhanyel' int' oyaziyo!

This is an invitation to the little one to practise, when it grows up, those depredations and deceptions against people outside the tribe which most tribesmen consider to be not merely excusable but laudable.

Wotshi-i-i! Deny what you know!
Wotshi-i-i! Contradict what you know!
Wotshi-i-i! Rob the Tswana of their sheep!
Wotshi-i-i! Rob the Tswana of their goats!
Wotshi-i-i! Deny what you know!

2. Cestrum laevigatum Schltr.

An old man explained: "One should not confess if he has stolen a goat or killed someone or done any other misdeed. If you know a man has stolen a sheep and you charge him with it, he will deny it stoutly, even if he is actually carrying some of the meat on his shoulder."

The reference to the Tswana is interesting and apparently indicates that at some early stage the Tshezi or their forbears must have had contact with these people. An informant in Bomvana⁷ and said the sacred herd of the Bomvana-Tshezi (to be described later) came originally from Botswana. Many Red Tshezi are quite familiar with the name of Tswana.

Sometimes other tribes are alluded to instead of the Tswana, as I was given Mfengu ("Fingo") as a variant for Tswana in the above; and after the injunction to deprive the alien clan of its sheep and goats the word uyindoda ("when you are a man") may be added. I never heard any other song than this used among the Tshezi, nor did I hear it varied according to whether the child was a boy or a girl. Hunter gives another set of words used by the Mpondo: "Let the thief go out by the door." She says: "some alter it according to whether the child is a boy or a girl, but as in all Pondo magical rites verbal accuracy is not essential." (Hunter 1961: 153).

A woman who lived in Thaba Nchu, where there is a Xhosa location, told me that there the Xhosa grandmothers pass the baby back and forth to each other through the smoke saying: "Deny what you know! Contradict what you know! Another person's thing is yours (into yomntu ngeyakho)!" Afterwards they lay the infant beside the fire of herbs and, taking a string of white and red beads, they walk around the child saying, Camakhwe! Camakhwe! from which the ceremony is called camakhwe - but my informant could not tell me what the word meant. About the rest of the formula she was in no doubt, however. "Another person's thing is yours" meant that if you stole a sheep from another



(Tshomane)

"Smoking" the Baby

over a fire of herbs
(pp. 75-77). White
clay and braid on
skirt ornamental - not
necessary to ritual.



(AbeJungu clan
in Tshomaneland)

Child with Bead Apron

(Tshezi)

A Child-Nurse

She has caught
an octopus at
the seashore and
is taking it
home for food.



umzi you should deny that you stole it, even if found with it - "swear that it is yours!" If others were with you but escaped, do not implicate them - "deny what you know!"

This ceremony has largely died out, it is said. It used to be done morning and afternoon for two or three months after birth, so long as the mother remained at home, that is until she started to go about again to beer-drinks. Its purpose is said to have been to strengthen the child, and to promote its growth, "that it may not experience weariness from stiff joints after a journey" (ingabi namikhinqi), and "that the blood may circulate well" (igazi liphale).³

If the first baby is born at the home of its maternal grandparents, then when the mother has recovered from the effects of childbirth, she returns to her husband's home with her child and with presents such as a new bucket, can, etc. She is accompanied by two young girls who stay with her overnight.

If the special cow or heifer called inkomo yobulunga, given to a bride by her people, is not already at her husband's homestead, but has been kept at her father's place pending the first birth, as sometimes happens by arrangement, it is now brought to the husband's home, and hairs from its tail-brush are made into two necklaces, one for the mother and one for her child. It is a charm against sickness.

"In the second month after birth," said Nomambikolo, "especially if the milk in your breasts is insufficient, you start to give the baby the water in which food has been cooked for adults, with cow's milk well stirred into it. In the third month you start to give it maize porridge, the maize having been ground very soft."

Formerly a child was not weaned until its third year. The men found this a hardship as sexual union must not occur during

3. The custom of isifutho seems to have been very general among the Nguni. See Hammond-Tooke 1956-7: (No. 35) 55, (No. 36) 60, and 1962, 75; Hunter 1961: 152-54; Krige 1950: 66-67; Kidd 1906: 18-19.

this period. "Often," said an old informant, "the father could not wait for two to three years to resume sex relations with his wife (watsiba kunina), and, falling asleep, he overlay the child so that it died. So the desire arose to wean the child sooner - after one year." (Perhaps some decline of polygamy has increased the urgency). So the wife was urged to wean her child, with the help of "the breast of a European" (ibele lomlungu), i.e. a feedbottle with rubber teat, now obtainable at traders' stores. But the time has now been reduced to less than a year. I saw a child of six months being fed from a bottle.

After weaning of the child, there follows the ceremony of painting with red ochre (ukuqab' imbola), when both mother and babe are painted, at least on their faces. This is a kind of coming-out-party. The mother is now free of all restrictions, taboos and ritual uncleanness (umlaza) connected with childbirth, and may resume normal relations with her husband and with the world. The baby has ceased to be a mere infant (asana) of dubious status and has become a child (umntwana), an undoubted little human being. A goat (of any colour and of either sex) is killed for the infant in the cattle-kraal, with words to this effect: "We paint this child, because we see it is a real person. May he [or she] have no pains to trouble him! If pain appears, it should be quite other, having nothing to do with this [i.e. not due to our having neglected this custom]. We have now completed the custom for this child, just as before this day we had not yet done it. Now we are bringing him out [i.e. initiating him]." (Sigaba lomntwana, ngoba siyambona - ngumntu! Angabi nantlungu zimkhathazayo! Kuvel' enye intlungu engadibananga nale. Siligqibile isiko lalomntwana, njengoba namhlanje tesingeka lenzi, Siyamkhupha ke ngoku.)

The request that, if subsequent pain appear, it may be unrelated to this, is so that when such illness does appear they

may know that they have to go to the diviner about it, since it cannot be for neglect of this custom of ukugaba.

Twins. When twins are born, two euphorbia (umhlontlo) trees are planted next to the hut, on the mother's side, about halfway between the door and the back of the wall. The reason for this choice of tree is because the euphorbia produces a "milk" of its own (symbol of the mother's life-giving fluid) though this is not drunk. Indeed these euphorbias must not be cut or injured in any way, lest harm ensue to the twins. A fence of umthunguthi, which is thorny, is planted around them to keep off animals and children. The trees are kept watered, for if one or both should wither and die, one or both of the twins will die.

Twins are not washed anywhere but in this hut where they were born. A large calabash (iselwa) is placed in it to contain warm water for their bathing. Even when they are grown men, and wherever else they may bathe, they will from time to time return to wash themselves ritually in this hut or by these euphorbia trees. The old calabash is preserved for this purpose. The water for their washing, whether as babes or men, is mixed with euphorbia roots; but these must be taken from trees in the forest, not from the trees by the hut. "It is a very ancient custom required by the ancestral spirits (izinyanya)." Even when a residential site is deserted or taken over as part of a field, the euphorbias continue to be respected by others. One often sees these trees still flourishing, when all else is gone.

Happily, no evidence exists to show that the Tshezi ever put twins to death, as some non-Nguni tribes did (Schapera 1937: 269). I found no evidence of their being any less welcome than single children. They are certainly regarded as "different", but in a positive rather than a negative way.

Health. Tshezi babies are as healthy as any others, but they suffer from the very inadequate knowledge of child-care

possessed by their elders (Cf. Barker 1961, passim, for similar conditions among the Zulu).

After weaning they are (in addition to the milk-bottle) fed continually upon thin gruel. They are forcibly fed, their parents seeming to conclude that the answer to all cries, and the supreme way to promote growth, is to feed the child. The porridge is cupped in the mother's hand and held to the baby's mouth and nose in such a way that, as a hospital doctor friend put it to me, "the baby simply has to drink or drown." The consequence is distended stomachs, abdominal pains, gastritis (not to speak of the risk of pneumonia from inhaling the gruel), which cause the infant to cry; when as like as not it is fed more from the cupped hand of its mother. On the other hand, in times of drought and scarcity babies may suffer hunger and malnutrition.

Another thing to which the Tshezi are very prone is the giving of enemas, especially of sea-water. These are given by means of a cow's horn whose perforated tip is inserted in the rectum, while the patient, if adult, assumes an almost upside down position against a rock. Liberal quantities of salt water are poured down the horn. It is especially resorted to when the new maize cobs are maturing in the fields, on the theory that the stomach should be emptied of all its old contents to make way for the new food. The effect on adults may be bad enough, but when done to infants it is extremely dangerous.

Is infant mortality then great? It is difficult to say exactly, as no figures are available, but it is probably "still formidable" as Reader found among the Makhanya of Natal (Reader 1966: 84). A sampling of mothers in Pondoland in or about 1931 showed that 38.49 per cent of their children died before reaching maturity (Hunter 1963: 147). It need not be great, if proper medical attention is sought. But too often infantile diseases are attributed to sorcery. Usually women though sometimes men

are accused of bewitching the babies. Then gangs of pre-circumcised youths beat them. Such women are chased for up to half a mile and beaten all the time on back, buttocks and thighs. My doctor friend told me he had in some instances counted 30 to 40 weals on these parts, while in other cases any count was impossible, as the whole region from back to knee was one great bruise or swelling. No-one thinks of interfering with such chastisement. Although against the law of the land, it is done sub rosa.

2. Childhood.

A Khosa-speaking young man from the Ciskei, who had lived for two years in Tsheziland, expressed disappointment at the manners of Tshezi children. "Children do not hlonipha (respect) an older person. If you tell them to go on an errand or do something, they will not go unless they know you. They will refer to an older person, a stranger to them, as 'that man', 'that woman', 'that person', instead of some respectful term like la mama (that mother) or la tata (that father). When you give them anything, they take it with one hand instead of with both." He also remarked on the addiction of even little boys to smoking - making their own "cigarettes" from brown wrapping paper at the trading store. Nevertheless Tshezi children seemed to me to be no less wellbehaved than others.

In Tshezi homes, children are treated with affection and tenderness. One often sees babies being fondled and petted, not only by both parents, but by uncles and aunts and even by teenage boys. They are kissed and called by pet-names. The little ones respond by exposing their toothless gums and smiling, or extending their little fingers, then suddenly withdrawing and burying their faces in their mothers' blankets, overcome by shyness - responses which elicit further affectionate remarks from their elders.

A mother may take her infant's hand in hers and, beginning

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A mother may take her infant's hand in hers and, beginning

with the little finger, name all the fingers in turn in a sing-song chant:

This is cikicane - [the little finger]
This is nondwayiza - [the third finger]
This is hlanzamaphele - [the middle finger]
This is cizelingakana - [the first finger]
This is great bhontsi - [the thumb]

At the last line she will take the baby's thumb between her own finger and thumb and rotate it or shake it back and forth.

When the baby is a little older it may play a hand-pinching game with brothers and sisters. Two children sit with their hands placed alternately above one another, palms downward. Each hand then takes a gentle pinch-hold of the back of the hand beneath. The children move their hands up and down, singing: Cumbelele! cumbelele! At a cry from one of them of ghabalala! or phangalala!, they suddenly let go and spread their hands out, palms upward. The art is to try to take a sharp pinch of the other child's hands at the call of ghabalala, before it has pulled them away.

1. Boys.

Baby boys and girls run about the yard of the home naked, and even without pubic coverings, in summer, till they are about four years old, when they acquire little blankets or skirts. In winter they may wear shirts, bought at a trading store.

At four or five, little boys are not too young to begin to be taught by their older brothers the rudiments of herding though they will neither be given any great responsibilities nor be required to leave the precincts of the homestead.

By the age of six they have learnt to handle small sticks and to have charges of their own: a few goats or sheep or even calves to take out to pasture. It is a proud day when they are adjudged old enough to herd cattle, going far out on the veld with their older brothers. Here the older boys frequently take advantage of the younger ones, making them "fag" and do all the

work while they loll in the sun or play games.

Cattle and small stock are taken out to pasture, usually at sunrise. At noon the cows are brought back to be milked. Then in the afternoon the herdboys drive all the stock to the river to drink. They change the pastures from time to time, when they see that the grass is eaten up. In the evening the cattle, sheep and goats are brought home and put in the kraal and in the fold for small stock.

Except for turning the cattle out to pasture in the morning and bringing them home again in the evening, or taking them to a river or pond to drink, there is no herding of cattle in winter, as the fields lie fallow. So the boys help in other jobs - going to the forest to chop branches of trees to make fences for their fathers' gardens, or to enclose the cattlefolds. In spring they assist in ploughing, acting as leaders of the ox teams; and when the maize is up, they assist in weeding. Later they are busily employed driving away the birds and monkeys from the ripening gran. Boys like this, for they build or have built for them small beehive huts (like the larger ones in which they will live later, when they go through the circumcision rites) and enjoy a sort of "Swiss-Family-Robinson" existence in these for days and weeks together. They also have high platforms on poles, from which they can see across the tall corn and send flying shots at the marauding birds with pellets of mud, which they flick at them from the tips of long pliant rods. When the maize is ripe, they help with the reaping and the carting home of the yellow cobs in the heavy ox-drawn sleighs.

In the temporary absence of any girls at home, boys may occasionally even have to undertake the girls' chores: cocking, taking care of the home, minding younger children, or even cutting grass, when there is a hut to be thatched.

"So", crowed one youthful essayist at a Tshezi school, "boys are more useful than girls."

ii. Girls. By the age of six, girls have begun to be responsible as nursemaids, carrying their baby brothers and sisters on their backs even when playing games. Later they become very accomplished home-helpers. The following extract, which I have turned into English from a Xhosa essay by a young Tshezi lass, gives a good idea of the work of girls at home:

"The work of girls at home is manifold. Girls fetch water and cook, and they wash the dishes after food has been eaten. They go to the bush and gather wood, gathering perhaps two bundles. When they return, they sweep the house, so that there may be nothing dirty. At the time when fields are to be weeded, they weed too, helping their parents in gardens and fields. At ploughing time, if there are no men or boys left at home to do the milking, a girl will do it. Girls herd out in the pastures, when there are no boys to do the herding. When there are guests at home a girl will prepare food for them; and when they awake in the morning she will give them water to wash with and a towel and oil [or fat] to anoint themselves with, and she will make coffee for them. [This last would be most likely to happen in a School home.]

"When a house is to be built, it is the girls who will make a great quantity of bricks and cut bundle after bundle of long grass [for the thatch]. Girls will smooth the floor of the hut with mud, after it is finished, and then smear it with fresh cow-dung and make the whole place beautiful. On the outside, they will whitewash it with lime, and ornament it at the bottom. At time of harvest girls help with the reaping, carrying the mealies on their heads to the sleighs to be drawn home by oxen. They also cook for those who come to reap. Then girls are summoned to a homestead where there is to be a big feast, they go there and work. Some are told to bake buns, others to draw water and to get fires going under the pots.

"Girls work hard at home, so that their mothers are not anxious or inconvenienced when people come A girl prepares food when her parents want to eat, and eats with them. A girl is a great help: if her mother goes away somewhere, the girl will stay behind, and look after the baby, and put a pot ready on the hearth. The baby does not cry, nor suffer injury. She washes it and keeps it clean, and feeds it so that it does not suffer hunger. Then she carries it on her back, till it is sound asleep; and when she has thus put it to sleep, she lights a fire under the pot, so that when Mother arrives everything is alright and she can sit down and give her baby the breast."

What this girl has written reminds one of what Blacking has written of the Venda: "Many children spend more time with their grandmothers or the little relatives who are appointed as nursemaids (zwixele; singular, tshixele) than with their

own mothers, sometimes even during their first year. Their mothers may have to work in the fields, or work for Europeans; an educated woman may teach in the local school, or help look after her husband's general store; and some women just like to leave their children and go to beer parties." (Blacking 1964: 26-27).

iii. Play.

It must not be thought from the above that children among the Tshezi are condemned to the treadmill of perpetual household chores. Far from it! They have time for amusement too.

While out herding, boys will "play house" by tying the tops of the long "Tambookie" grass together to form miniature huts, where they may sometimes be joined by their girl friends.

There is plenty of time for hunting birds, too, while the oxen are grazing or chewing the cud. Boys become very adept at hunting with sticks, especially the isagweba, the recognised short throwing-stick, and I saw a boy of about 13 who had killed three small birds in this way. He had threaded their heads under an ornamental ring around his upper arm, so that they hung down from the ring, and he was carrying them home for supper. Boys also make snares and bird-traps that shew great ingenuity.

Much time is spent modelling in clay. Boys make models of oxen with wide up-sweeping horns and have sham fights with these; or they yoke them two-by-two in teams to draw model carts or sleighs. They make models of buses, like the railway buses they see on the road to Umtata, complete with passengers, and they make little roads on the veld for them to go along. Sometimes they go to the ponds and rivers and catch frogs, which they harness to their little models to pull them. They also dig replicas of dipping-tanks, in which they dip their clay oxen.

Then in summer there is bathing. On hot, steamy days in January and February, the ponds and river pools may be seen

with cattle standing knee-deep in them and the herdboys splashing between the animals. Tshezi boys do not dive or swim under water. They are not proficient swimmers, but they love to splash about.

Stick-fights are common among them for amusement. A long stick is held in the left hand (which is tightly wrapped around with a blanket for protection), and this is used to ward off blows. In the right hand is a shorter stick used as a weapon of attack. Sometimes bouts of friendly rivalry take place between the herdboys of adjoining localities; but sometimes, too, these draw in older brothers and fathers on either side and end up as serious faction fights, in which people are killed. Of course faction fights may arise in other ways too.

I listened to a group of boys of different ages up to about seventeen discussing such fights. All agreed that, though dangerous, they were great fun. Said one: "The thing to do is to confuse your opponents till they hardly know what they are doing and start fighting one another." "You should hit a boy," said a second, "then run away and hit another before the first one can catch up with you." "If things get too hot," volunteered a third, "crouch down near the ground and let the fighting proceed over your head, while you make your escape." It appeared from the conversation that many boys carried knives and would not hesitate to use them on a fallen foe. "Why," said one, "when it has taken me so long to get my enemy down, should I not finish him off?"

Allowance may be made for boyish bragging here. Yet the court records witness to the fact that violence among youths is often grim and real enough, and not only at stick-fights. While I was at Coffee Bay, the ambulance had to come to remove a girl in an unconscious state, who had had her skull chopped open with an axe wielded by a youth, who had been angered by something she had said. And over in Pondoland the papers reported a

faction fight with 54 dead.⁴ One man had had his head struck from his shoulders with an axe. He had fought so desperately that his headless body continued the motions of fighting for some moments before it collapsed - a terrifying spectacle from which all fled.⁵

However, happily, most stick-fights are in the nature of harmless amusements.

Little girls too enjoy themselves making dolls (onopopi, from Afrikaans poppie, a little doll) of maize cobs, which they dress up with old rags, unless an obliging mother makes appropriate dresses for them. These dolls they often carry on their backs as if they were real babies. They make little houses for them and then play at house-keeping by grinding earth between two stones, pretending they are grinding maize to make beer for their dolls; or they play at making porridge or tea, using dark-coloured water.

Little girls love to chase one another about the yard playing "touch" (icekwa). Cwembi is played by two children, whether boys or girls, guessing in which of an opponent's hands a pebble is concealed.⁶

iv. Folk-Tales.

Tshezi children love folk-tales and the Tshezi have their full quota of them. When the day is over, especially in winter, the chores done and the evening meal eaten, children's eyes gleam in the firelight as they listen to mother or father's mother tell the tales of Miss Little-Eyes, The Stag and the Lion, Mpetshetwa and the Frog, or Hlakanyane and the Wolf.⁷

4. A later verbal report brought the figure to 101.

5. On the evening of the day that I was told this I read the following note to Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade":- "Captain Nolan ... rode in his saddle upright some moments after he was shot, his sword-hand uplifted, and was the first man killed (See Kinglake, Vol. V, p. 220)". Sir John Squire (edit.), Selected Poems of Tennyson, London, 1959 : 300.

6. For other games see the Appendix, Note B.

7. For the "Tale of the Field and the Animals" see the Appendix, Note C.

These women, when at their best, often give their narratives with great dramatic power. They impersonate various characters in the story, reproduce the dialogue with precision, demonstrate actions by gesticulation, and change their voices to suit the character impersonated. Their excitement mounts and communicates itself to their listeners, who receive the climax of the story with sighs, ejaculations or laughter, as the case may require.

3. Adolescence and Sex.

From an early age children become familiar with sex matters. Free and outspoken allusions to the subject by adults are overheard by them. One who has had considerable experience of the Qwathi might be alluding to the Tshezi, when she writes: "I have often been shocked and surprised at the freedom and licence in their conversations and discussions. One must understand that to these heathen people such matters are as natural as eating and drinking"⁸ - as they were also to many Greeks and Romans, if Juvenal and other writers may be believed.

Beside a trading store I came on a group of women seated on the ground chatting. A nude baby boy stood before one of them, who was expatiating on his physical development. "What a husky fellow he is getting to be! Look at those square shoulders, those firm buttocks, those sturdy legs! And what is this, that points so jauntily to one side?" - with which she seized the little penis and gave it a playful pull.

The fact that I heard the following songs (the second one more than once) openly sung by boys not yet in their teens also illustrates the uninhibited manner of the people.

8. Broster, J., Red Blanket Valley, Johannesburg, Keartland Press, 1967: 25.

1. Wamcishizela umakoti;
You [Jeke, a local young man accused of adultery]
lay heavily on a young wife;
Wabulala uJeke ngesibumbu
You [the young wife] killed, or destroyed,
Jeke with your mons veneris.
2. Ye-e-eh, nkabi! Ungaphantsi,
Yeh! young buck! She is below,
U-Nomaxhithivane ungaphantsi.
Nomaxhithivane [boys' euphemism for the female
pudendum] is below.

These were not treated as "smut" songs to be sung with "behind-the-barn" leers and titters. They were admittedly risqué, but were sung quite openly and unrestrainedly for my tape-recorder, along with other songs of an unexceptionable sort. The same young boys sang the song of Khwetshube.

3. Yeh, Kwetshube! Awunamali -
Aha, Kwetshube! You have no money -
Awunamali, uza kufa.
You have no money, you will die.

[Khwetshube was a man of the area, who had lain with a harlot, but had no money to pay her.]

As Hunter says of the Mpondo: "Girls between the ages of 8 and 12, and boys between 9 and 14 begin to go to imitshotsho or amagubura, gatherings of unmarried girls, boys, and young men, for dancing and sweethearting (ukumetsha)... They dance and sing, then pair off to sleep together. The couple lie in each other's arms, but the hymen of the girl must not be ruptured. If it is, the boy responsible is liable to a heavy fine." (Hunter 1961: 180).

The umtshotsho or inkongo is a Saturday night dance of boys and girls, at which the girls clap and sing (ukombela) and the boys dance (ukuxhentsa). They stay up all night singing, dancing, indulging in dalliance and toying (ukudlalisa) and in intra-crural and tactual forms of intercourse in which boys lie with their private parts against the girls' private parts, without actual penetration. This is ukumetsha - indulgence in unconsummated sexual intercourse. One boy of about

16 said, "But I don't like to stay through until daylight. It is then that they [older young men] say, Let them beat one another (mababethane) [i.e. let them fight with sticks]. Then boys injure and even kill one another."

The umtshotsho dances have been closed down altogether in Tsheziland by the chief. "It is to make us get circumcised that they close the imitshotsho", a boy said. The only other dance-gathering available then is the intlombe, also held Saturday nights. This however is a dance-party of post-circumcision young men (abafana) and young women. So if the boys want to have a place in it, they have to be circumcised to be in the proper age-set. Chief Danisile himself gave me the same answer. "Why did you close down the umtshotsho dances?" I said. He replied vehemently: "Mabaluke! (Let them get circumcised!)"

There may be various reasons for this insistence on the rite of circumcision. In some tribes it is said to bring in cash for the chief; but I am without evidence for this among the Tshezi.

It establishes patterns of authority. There is a rigidly-maintained distinction in the terms used for boys and men. It would be an insult to call a circumcised man a boy (inkwenkwe). On the other hand, no "boy", even if he is well on in his twenties, is a young man (umfana) until he has undergone circumcision. Until then he has no authority in the tribe, and, as we saw in the last chapter, may not even own a field.

When I asked, however, why there was this emphasis on circumcision, underlined by the drive on it throughout Thembuland in 1968, the answer given was: that it makes boys grow up into men and act responsibly. Faction-fighting, robbery with violence, assaults with long-handled axes - these are attributed largely to uncircumcised youths, and the records of the higher courts seem to bear this out. Not having been circumcised



(Tshomane)

Soliwe,

daughter of the chief,
dressed for an intlombe
dance (pp. 132-137).
Note the beaded tin can
she carries.

(Tshezi)

At an Uludwe Party
(pp. 121-23).

Playing the inkinge
by placing one end
of the bow in the
mouth to steady it
and tapping or draw-
ing on the taut
string with the
stick. (In her lap
the bowl of her
pipe shows.)



these youths are not classified as men and are said to feel no responsibility therefore to act with restraint. They may not attend the intlombe dances, and at the umtshotsho dances they are so much older than the other boys that they act arrogantly and provocatively. They are also said to be the ones who carry axes (amazembe) and cause bloodshed.

Of course initiation rites do not work a revolution in the characters of all those who undergo them - any more than confirmation rites in church immediately transform all those who undergo them. They do, however (at least, so it is said) have a very salutary effect on great numbers if not the majority.⁹

Note

Finger-joint amputation (ngwaka), so characteristic of the Nembu, obtains also among the Tshezi. The last joint of the little finger (usually of the left hand) is the one removed, and it may be done at any age, but is most commonly done in childhood. A tight ligature is first tied around the finger. A man from behind wraps both his arms around the child and holds its left hand, so that the fingers are outstretched. The child is told to shut both eyes tight, and an expert operator (often an old woman) seizes the joint and severs it with one swift back-and-forth slice of a razor-sharp knife; and a lump of wet cow-dung is applied to stop the bleeding. Beer is brewed for the occasion. The operation is said to help a child if it is sickly or given to bed-wetting. The joint is plastered to the top of the hut wall above the door.

9. As one old man put it to me, "as soon as the foreskin is severed, they leave off this business", i.e. riotous behaviour (ngwaka sikwa ujwabi bayi yeke le nto).

CHAPTER VII

INITIATION RITES : MALE

Youth in Tsheziland is characterised by much physical grace and beauty. The Greeks would have admired the athletic forms of these young men with their strong sinuous limbs and their heads well poised on muscular shoulders. The girls, with few exceptions, are full-breasted and broad-hipped, with beautifully arched backs. Their chief ritual concern as youths and maidens is with the rites of initiation.

Male initiation rites take place between the ages of about 17 and 24. Occasionally novices (abakhwetha) may be younger than 17, and sometimes they are past 24, for circumcision has tended to be neglected or deliberately avoided in recent years, till chief or parent insists upon it.¹ In Tsheziland there was the greatest activity in this respect in 1968. I watched Chief Danisile and his secretary chasing a youth over the veld in an attempt to round him up, and one young man in Tshomaneland was seized the day after he returned from the mines and made to submit to the rite. Many go to the mines to escape it. Others go to hospital to be circumcised clinically, but the Reds say: "it is not the same". They allude not to any physical difference in the operation, but to the fact that since it has not been accompanied by the sacrifices, instructions, exhortations and long seclusion of the initiates, it has not the same effect on them psychologically that the genuine home rite has. Many older people, therefore, are eager for its perpetuation. One headman boasted to me that in his whole administrative area there was not a youth of suitable age who had not been circumcised.

Matters begin with a bhunga, or council, of those elders of a locality who have boys of eligible age. They decide that their boys should be initiated during the year. Then they

1. Cf. Ashton 1967: 55, who says that initiation has so broken down that in most parts of Lesotho it is now "almost dead".

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elect one of their number as umnini thonto i.e. owner or head of the grass lodge in which the boys are to be secluded. He is himself father of one of the youths and becomes ritual "father" and head of the whole group. The lodge (ithonto) is built near his homestead, where he can keep his eye on them, and his son becomes "the chief of the lodge" (inkosi yethonto). Also appointed are instructors or guardians of the boys, who will live with them and discipline them throughout the period of their initiation. These guardians (amakhankatha) are chosen for their integrity and competence. Other decisions made in conference are the choice of the day for the lodge to be built, and of the expert (ingcibi) to perform the circumcision.

1. Building a Circumcision Lodge.

I was fortunate to be associated more or less intimately with thirteen initiation groups; six in Tsheziland, six in adjoining Tshomaneland and one on the border between the two. (See Appendix D). The happenings at all of them conformed essentially to a common pattern.

One suddenly heard voices shouting "Ha-ba! ha-ba! ha-ba-a-a!" and traced the sounds to a row of women walking in single file, with long bundles of grass on their heads. They were effusively joyous, dancing, pirouetting and shouting. Sometimes they flung down their bundles altogether to dance and sing for a while before resuming their journey. At other times they varied their shouts with exclamations like "My wild creatures are two: I have shut them in" (izilo zam zimbini: ndizivalele) referring to the novices to be secluded.

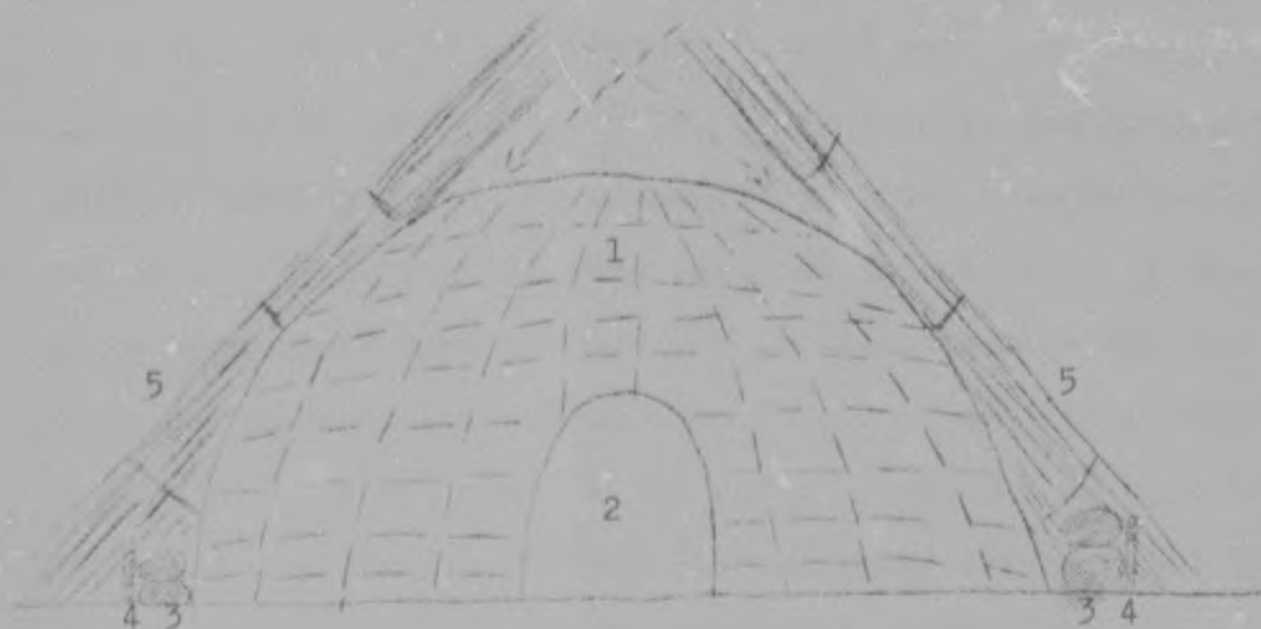
Following such a group of women, I found their men-folk busy building the framework of a lodge for them to thatch. Saplings from the forest, their bases sharpened, were lightly stuck in a circle in the ground. Then a couple of men went around and made deep holes between the saplings with stout, well-sharpened stakes, which they hammered into the ground with

the back of a hatchet, and which they rotated and then drew out again. Then the sapling poles were moved into these holes, over each of which a lump of wet cow-dung had been placed. As they thrust in each sapling, they rotated it, withdrew it, pushed the cow-dung further in, and then drove the sapling well down again, so that it was firm, with the dung serving as cement.

Then the tops of the saplings were bent in to form the roof, with crosspieces inserted and tied with "monkey-rope" from the wild vine (Rhoicissus digitata) which they call uthwazi. The crosspieces are supported on poles thrust under them, so as to raise the roof and make it strong and firm.

Next, "monkey-rope" and withes were intertwined through the upright saplings to form the walls; and around the bottom of the wall outside and about a foot from it stakes were driven into the ground about three feet high. Between these and the wall of the lodge bundles of long grass were laid horizontally.

Fig. 3 An Initiation Lodge



1. Framework of roof and walls.
2. Entrance.
3. Horizontal bundles of thatching grass.
4. Stakes.
5. Upright bundles of thatch to be bent over at the top to cover roof, with more grass laid over them on top and all around.

Twenty-one men worked or gathered about the structure. Three of them sat on the ground. Using pen-knives, they shaped wooden 'needles' (utulo) 2 to 2½ feet long, for 'sewing' the thatch onto the lodge. This thatch had been prepared by 44 women who sat in a group by themselves, taking the grass (some of which had been hauled here by sleigh the day before) and re-arranging it in neat small sheaves. They kept up a continuous chatter and humming, broken in upon now and then by one of them shouting the usual ha-ta! ha-ba! or jumping up to execute a weird dance in imitation of that called umtshilo, which is executed by novices themselves, and consists of pelvic gyrations and jerks accompanied with skyward jabs of the extended arms and forefingers. The only other persons present were five small boys, silently watching the work of their elders from a respectful distance. There are always numbers of small boys watching the initiation rites.

As soon as the men had finished their woodwork, the women took over the thatching. Around the outside of the bottom horizontal layers of grass other bundles were now placed upright, leaning against the wall, their seed-filled tops protruding upwards where the framework inclined inwards to form the roof. These bundles were fastened to the frame of the lodge with grass rope in parallel circles, sewn in and out by means of the wooden needles. Then three of the older women climbed up onto the oval of the roof. I was not as much surprised at the frail structure bearing their weight, as I had been earlier when it bore the weight of several men, who went up to fasten together the ends of the saplings before the upright poles were thrust under them.

So the "beehive" lodge was ready for its occupants. Usually these number five to ten; but one of the shelters I saw was built for a single lad and his guardian. I asked why they did not save themselves trouble by letting him go to one of the

other shelters, of which there were many about. "Yes", was the reply, "it would be easier. Over there they are initiating several boys and over in that direction three; but these things go by localities. A novice should be initiated in his own residential locality (ilali), among his own relatives and their neighbours. So even if there should be only one of them, we build a lodge for him."

2. The Sacrifice.

I accompanied Hlikalitye, an expert operator, to the circumcision at another lodge. We arrived at the homestead of the principal father about 1.20 p.m. to find a crowd, which grew to fully 150 people. The women sat together in a circle beating on the ground with sticks that made a thudding noise. Every now and then one or two arose to dance. All this was accompanied by chanting, which was interrupted now and then by cries of ha-ba! ha-ba! ha-ba-a-a!

Over by the cattle-kraal sat the men, to whom cans of beer were distributed. Occasionally one of them would invite a woman, who would come over, kneel down and take a drink from his beer-can, and then return to the women's group over by the huts. These women may have been wives or relatives.

At about 2.45 p.m. men from a neighbouring homestead arrived, leading, flanking and following a novice, whose head was hooded by his blanket. They conducted him to a hut, where there were already two other novices. These youths had been dismissed with farewell parties at their own homes. The father of one of them killed a white goat. The father of another had not been able to afford a sacrifice. But all would partake of the main sacrifice of one of the cattle belonging to the ritual "father" of the lodge at this main homestead. Accordingly, while the last novice was being conducted hither, sounds of joy filled the air. The space between the huts and the kraal became filled with people, women engaging with women and men with

men in sham fights with sticks, shouting, chanting, leaping and generally fomenting excitement. It was a day of rejoicing, for new men were to be brought into being and this is always a happy occasion.

The head of this homestead made a speech, other men calling the more noisy revellers to order. He said he had decided that the time had come to circumcise his son, and what a great occasion it was in this homestead. He was followed by the boy's aged grandfather - who was so overcome by emotion that he broke down and wept. Others spoke on behalf of the other boys.

The cattle had been driven in from the pasture and now crossed the courtyard into the fold. There was renewed yelling, chanting and stick-fighting. Indeed, this became a regular accompaniment to the proceedings from that moment.

One of the oxen had been selected to be ritually offered inside the kraal. It was now secured by a leather rope around the base of its horns, held taut by two strong men. Another man passed around its back and, with a thong, fastened its hind legs together. Then the beast was toppled over on its left side, with its head towards the entrance to the kraal. This I found to be the invariable position for the cattle when sacrificed.² Then the head of the homestead came with the sacred spear (an assegai which in every family is handed down from generation to generation and may be used only for ritual killings) and thrust it into the abdomen of the animal, making a cut four or five inches long. The beast bellowed twice. The spear was pushed up diagonally towards the heart, which was pierced or the aorta severed. The stomach began to bulge through the incision and was pricked with the spear, so that there poured a fluid from it mixed with partly-digested grass.

2. Hunter found that the Mpondo as invariably threw the beast on its right side (Hunter 1961: 248).

There was no blood, however; all bleeding was internal.

That the animal was dead was determined by pressing a finger against an eyeball to see if there was any reaction. Then the men skinned the carcass quickly and began to cut up the meat, putting the pieces on freshly-cut branches of acacia thorn, which had been brought into the kraal by boys to serve as trays. The first part removed is always the right foreleg and shoulder - reserved for the person or persons for whom the sacrifice is made. It is called the umshwamo. Then a large, flat, thin piece of flesh from behind the right shoulder, including the shoulder muscle, is cut out. It is called intsonyama and is ritually the most important piece of all. It is cut into a long string of collops, which must be at once roasted and given to the person or persons for whom the sacrifice is made, before any other part of the animal may be eaten by anyone else.

Accordingly, some men now lit a small fire inside the kraal and put the intsonyama meat on it. Then the novices were brought from their hut. As they crossed the courtyard there was increased shouting and cavorting by the crowd there.

The youths were made to sit on the ground just inside the kraal. Their guardians then brought the half-roasted intsonyama meat and tossed some of the little pieces for them to catch in mid-air. Most of the meat, however, was simply placed in their open hands. The first piece they had to masticate once or twice and then spit out. The rest they could eat and swallow. When they had consumed about half the meat, very small children of both sexes were chosen to come and eat up the rest, which they did eagerly. The reason for this choice is that the intsonyama is reserved to the people for whom the sacrifice is made, but small children may eat it, as they are not yet quite "people".

Then the head of the homestead and of the lodge, flanked

by other men, harangued them. He reminded them that they were about to become men and must give up bad and childish ways, such as stealing, assaulting and generally behaving irresponsibly. They must respect the ritualistic customs. They must not disgrace the tribe. Others punctuated his address with similar remarks. All the time the chanting, cries and stick-fighting went on outside, some of the leaping women advancing to the very entrance of the cattle-kraal and hammering on it with their sticks, but running back again without actually entering it - the kraal being forbidden to women.

3. The Circumcision. At last the young men (their heads hooded) were led out again across the courtyard to a spot not much more than a hundred yards from the homestead. There, hidden by the long grass and the contours of the land, stood the very neat lodge which had just been finished. All the women followed, but stopped halfway. They stood in a long line, at a respectful distance, lining the brow of the hill, and seemed strangely quiet after all their recent noise-making. Before the lodge however, several men engaged in stick-fighting, while others cried "Hili-kiti! hili-kiti! hili-kiti-ti-ti-ti!" (sometimes "Nkili-kiti!") the men's counterpart to the women's "Ha-ba, ha-ba ha-ba-a-a-a-a!"

The youths were led past the lodge to a spot close by in the grass. Here they were instructed to sit side by side, their blankets open, their knees apart. The man who was to circumcise the novices showed me his instrument for the operation. It is called umdlanga and is just an assegai-head with three or four inches of haft. Till that moment, he had kept it concealed. I felt the edge - it had been honed to razor sharpness. The guardians indicated that all was ready. What followed took only seconds. The operator advanced to stand in front of the first boy; and then, in what seemed like parts of but a single act, he bent down, seized the prepuce, severed it

with one slice, and flung it over his shoulder into the grass. Then he went on to the other boys and dealt with each in the same way.³

Before each youth, on his blanket, had been placed a handful of earth to receive the drops of blood; but very little bleeding occurred. From cans the men applied a mixture of earth and water to the boys' foreheads. Not one of the boys uttered a cry or even gasped or winced. It is a point of honour to act as if there were no pain. The first boy leaned back on his elbows, but seemed not to be fainting. The third one made jokes with his attendant.

Another man stood by, holding between small sticks a number of leaves of a plant called indlebevu.⁴ He gave me three or four, which I found soft and woolly on the upper side, about three to three-and-a-half inches long, and about an inch wide in the middle - something like the leaves of Cape silver-trees, but softer in texture.⁵ These were wrapped by the guardian (there was one for each youth) around the wound and tied on with black braid (ichele) bought in a trading store.⁶ In the olden days sinews of oxen were used, or strips of goat or sheep-skin.

Then the boys stood up, bent over (one almost doubled) and were led around the back of the lodge to enter from the farther side, that is from the right as you faced the entrance. This too was attended by hardly a sound from either the men or the distant line of watching women.

3. The operator began at the left of the row and worked towards the right. Among the Thembu, Laubscher says: "He starts from the right-hand side of the row and works towards the left" (Laubscher 1937: 122).

4. Apparently a contraction of indlebe yemvu ("the ear of a sheep", which resembles the leaf in shape and softness). The plant is a species of Helichrysum (possibly Helichrysum scapiforme Moeser).

5. In other places iswadi is preferred. It has an onion-like bulb, whose layers peel off and are used for this purpose.

6. At another lodge the operator did this. It is not a service of guardians only; it is said any man may perform it. The operator tied the leaves round in this case with an ity-eba, or long strip from inside the bark of an umthombe tree (Natal Fig, Ficus natalensis (Niq.) Hochst.).

Then the crowd left to resume feasting and drinking at the homestead. As we walked away, a sleigh drew up, laden with some of the meat from the sacrificed beast and from the goat killed at home for one of the youths. This meat was now taken into the lodge for their consumption.

A few further items must be added to the description I have given.

i. At the time of the initiation rites the youths each receive a new name, called "the manhood name" (igama lwesido-da). Often the names are very honorific: Jongilizwe (He-who-Gazes-on-the-World), Dalikhwezi (Creator-of-the-Morning-Star) etc.

ii. At another circumcision which I witnessed, the women sat at some distance beating on a hide, chanting, shouting, leaping and dancing with uplifted sticks. One, as I approached, charged and struck me head-on (or rather chest-on), but seemed not even to notice she had done it - she was almost in a trance with fervour and excitement.

Their cries I tape-recorded as follows:

Ho-he! Ho-he! Ho-he!

(Expressions of jubilation)

Ha-li! Ha-li! Ha-li!

(Ditto)

Ndalunywa! Ndalunywa!

(I am being bitten) i.e. seized with the pains of labour - a mother referring to the time she brought forth the boy now being circumcised.

He-le! He-le! He-le!

(Exclamations of jubilation)

Ha-ba! Ha-ba! Ha-ba!

(Ditto. Hurrah!)

Ha-da! Ongazalanga makavale ngayo emnyango!

(She who has no son, let her close with it the door). That is, let her stand in the door of her hut, looking on wistfully at the rejoicing of others, who have sons being circumcised over at the lodge.

Ho-ya! Ho-ya! Ho-he!

(Sounds of jubilation)

The men over by the ithonto were uttering their cries
toc:-

Izilo zam zibini, ndizivalele! [repeated three times]
(My wild creatures are two, I have shut them in!)

This cry has apparently been stereotyped to "two", no matter
what the number of the novices may be.

Vula! Vula! Vula! amasend' enkwenkwe!

(Expose! Expose! Expose! the testicles of the boys).
That is, let his blanket be opened and his knees spread apart
ready for the circumcision.

iii. At this circumcision, too, it was a guardian or instruc-
tor (not the operator as in Laubscher: 122) who said to the boy,
"Yithi ndiyindoda!" (Say I am a man!) and the youth replied,
Ndiyindoda! (I am a man!) An elderly man said this charge and
response were usual, and when I told him it had not been done
at the Mqapeni circumcision he said, "they must have been tipsy
and forgotten it."

iv. After circumcision has taken place at a lodge, other
boys may from time to time be added to their number. At Jojweni
(where I was staying at Ngwanguba for a time) they started with
five on June 29th. On July 2nd they circumcised another. On
July 3rd another was rounded up in the morning and one more in
the evening. The former had only just returned from the gold-
mines. Another had run away and was pursued by the men, but
whether they caught him or not I do not know.

At one of these subsequent circumcisions I saw the wound
again wrapped in Helichrysum leaves and tied round and round
with a strip of bark of the Natal fig. (The iswadi seems not
to grow around here). Then the guardian gathered the novice's
blanket around him and demonstrated how he must walk, doubled
up and head covered by the blanket to the lodge, "like a baboon
by the river". As in this position, and with his head hooded, a
novice cannot see very well where he is going, another man
walks in front to guide him (or them) to the door of the shelter.

It may be thought that the doubled-up posture is occasioned solely by the soreness of the circumcision, but this is not so. Months later, long after the wound is healed, the novices wash in the river and return all the way to the lodge in the same awkward position. At the end of their seclusion, Thonga initiates, walking in procession like this, are said to do so in imitation of the gait of the chameleon, a creature credited with wisdom and prudence which they should now possess too (Junod 1962: I, 93).

In the case of one boy his guardian's care of him was most touching. He gathered up the earth-pile in the blanket for the boy to hold between his legs all the way to the lodge. There it was again spread beneath him as he sat, and his guardian further attended to his wound and its dressing. Then the earth was removed. The boy was shown how to sit with his feet crossed and his knees apart, so that his wound should not be constricted between his thighs.

v. In preparation for the initiation rites the youths have to shave their heads completely. Some pre-circumcision boys like to let their hair grow very long, and have it hanging about their heads in long tails, treated with fat; **they** like to play with these tails by tossing their heads from side to side.

vi. Tshezi, like other tribes, are going through a period of transition in which many of their customs are being modified and "streamlined". Thus it used to be the practice for the guardian to pick up the severed prepuce, cover it in earth and then tie it in a corner of the boy's blanket. Some days later the youth and he, taking care that they were unobserved, would repair to a secret place and there get rid of it. This was to avoid its falling into the hands of sorcerers, who would use it for bewitching matter. When I remarked to the operator that, in contrast to this, he simply flung the foreskin over his shoulder into the long grass, in the presence of others, he said: "Yes,



(Tshezi)

A Novice at the
Door of his Lodge



(Tshezi)

Novices Wearing
Prepuce Covers



(Tshezi)

Initiates Leaving
Their Lodge

on the last day of
their seclusion.

but we know the people here. They are all either relatives or friends of these youths and would not think of bewitching them."

According to Soga and to an informant of my own (from another part of this same Mqanduli district) the boys, before they are circumcised, give away their old blankets to their friends and receive new blankets from their fathers or guardians. But the Tshezi and the Tshomane say: "Not here". Again Soga says that before circumcision the novices are taken to the river to wash and are then circumcised on the river-bank. But all to whom I spoke said again: "Not here". I myself never saw the operation performed anywhere else but a few feet from the lodge. Perhaps the Tshezi have modified their practices, or perhaps they were always different. In any case the practices show many minor differences in detail from place to place, though in essentials they are the same.

4. Life in the Lodge.

During seclusion the guardians help the novices to smear their faces and their whole bodies with white clay (ingceke), which they retain throughout the period of seclusion, renewing it as often as necessary. The Tshezi dig the clay from one spot on the coast near Coffee Bay when the tide is out, and people come from far and near to get it.

The boys and their attendants sleep on mats on the floor, or on homemade bedsteads made of cut saplings. They cook on the usual central hearth and have pots and other utensils lent to them by their people. Until their wounds are healed, the following rules must be observed. They may have no soft foods. Meat and boiled grains of maize (linkobe) they may have, the grains cooked whole, not husked or crushed; they must drink water from the river, preferably muddy - no clean water and no beer; they must not eat with their hands, but be given the meat by their attendants at the end of little pointed sticks. The linkobe maize they can pick up themselves, but with calabash

spoons and not with their fingers (the reason is said to be a matter of hygiene - lest they have touched their wounds with their fingers before eating). As usual these rules are observed with less strictness by some than by others. After their wounds are healed they may eat and drink anything brought to them by their relatives and approved by their guardians; and they are no longer confined to the precincts of their lodge, but may go about and even visit their own homes during the day to assist with chores there. The easing of this latter restriction, especially, is marked by a ceremony called ukojiswa, lit. "to be roasted for". As the time for this ritual approaches, the women again sit in a ring and supply the musical background by thudding on the ground, or on a hide, with sticks, chanting and now and then leaping up or dancing. When the men move to the lodge, the women follow part of the way, as before, and then seat themselves at a distance to resume their accompaniment.

At the lodge the youths are brought out and seated on the ground. The men sit near them in a group, and the "father" of the lodge or his representative makes a speech to the effect that this is the ritual known as ukojiswa, that it is performed to enable the youths to leave the lodge, and that if they should be found at home without the ceremony having been performed, they would be the objects of ridicule. The family goats having previously been driven up, one of these is now seized and flung on its side, and its throat cut with a knife, a basin being held under it to receive the blood.

At one such ceremony a small boy was ordered to take the knife and cut the animal's throat. He protested, saying he did not know how to do it; but the men shouted and urged him on till he did it. Afterwards I asked them why the boy had done the killing - was he perhaps related to the "father" of this lodge, whom I knew to have been prevented by illness from being present? No, they replied, it was nothing like that, it was just



(Tshomane)

Women Sham-Stick-
Fighting On Circum-
cision Day.

(Tshomane)

Ukojiswa
(pp. 105-106).

Receiving the
intsonyama meat with
crossed hands (as is
sometimes done).



that "he is young, his blood is pure" (umtsha, igazi lakhe lihle). I learned from further inquiry that if an animal is slaughtered by an innocent boy, the meat always "tastes better" than if it has been killed by an adult, who has lived long enough to have committed many misdeeds.

After the animal has been skinned, the right leg is removed as umshwamo; but I was told by three or four of the men at one ceremony that in the case of this ritual it could just as well be the left leg - it makes no difference. The intsonyama meat is roasted and fed to the youths on sneezewood (umthathi) leaves, together with roasted ears of maize. In one case the maize and meat were eaten together in alternate portions, the novice receiving the meat in crossed hands (not tossed to him to catch in the air). In another case the young men were served the maize cobs first. From these they had to eat away a complete circle of the grains all around the centre of the cob. To do this they kept turning the cobs in their hands. The remainder was hung up in the lodge to be burnt with everything else at the end of the period of their seclusion. Then they were given the knobs of intsonyama meat, which they themselves picked up with their fingers and ate without the benefit of either pointed sticks or crossed hands. As usual there is much variation in detail. The essentials are the eating of the ukojiswa sacrifice by the novices and their friends and relatives, and the intsonyama being roasted with sneezewood leaves and eaten by the initiates with roasted ears of maize.

The length of time for the male initiation rites is supposed to be six months, and perhaps this was once generally observed. It may still be the case, if things are propitious - for example if they began immediately after harvest and the youths have nothing to do in the six months or so till ploughing season. But many things conspire to shorten the time nowadays. The "boys" may be married men with families of their own to

take care of; there is the everpresent necessity to go to the mines (or elsewhere) to work for wages to buy food; and there is the decline in the enthusiasm for the old tribal ways. Often now (probably in most instances) seclusion lasts for two months and the novices "come out" or graduate in the third month.

In the case of a novice who is married, his wife is supposed to return to her own people's home and live there while her husband is undergoing the rites. After the ceremony of "being-roasted-for", he may visit her there periodically and have marital relations with her. Early next morning however, he must go to the river and wash himself all over before returning to the lodge and re-applying his white clay; and he must do this each time he visits her. Some said both man and wife have to wash.

In the period before "being-roasted-for" that is before their wounds are healed, the novices naturally do not seek sex relations; but these are forbidden even to their guardians and some say also their expert operator or "surgeon", until after the roasting ceremony has been performed for the novices.

Circumcision is so falling into neglect that when, under the influence of the chiefs, there is a round-up, it is often the case that the initiates are married - some with three or four children. Moreover under the stringency of the times (resulting in a scarcity of cattle) and the growing moral laxity (which is widespread) more boys are making girls pregnant, and the families, to save payment of the fine for pregnancy (usually five head of cattle), agree together that the boy should marry the girl, on condition of the fine being included as part of the ikhazi cattle. Some youths, it is said, are thus married at fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Much of the instruction in the lodge has to do with sex. At one ukojiswa ritual I witnessed, a man kept thrusting his

stick into the thatched wall of the lodge and drawing it back and forth, in imitation of the act of copulation. At the same time he shouted Nyo, makwedini! (The vulva, boys!) The young men from inside the hut had to shout back, Ngqashi! (a khwetha euphemism for the more vulgar nyo). All this was explained to me by some of the men, including the one in charge. It is the usual way of greeting novices. "Listen", one of them said, as we sat at a distance from the lodge. He raised his voice and shouted, Nyo makwedini!, and back on the breeze came the faint answer from within, Ngqashi.

After being "roasted-for", a great deal of sex play is allowed to the initiates. Their girl friends join them at night, not in the lodge but out in the veld, where they lie together in dalliance; but they (both youth and girl) must repair to the river in the early morning to wash, before the novice may return to the lodge and the girl to her home.

Girls never go to the lodge itself, unless they are bona fide sisters of the initiates, coming to bring food or other necessities. Other women must keep away. If any of these should bring food, they must place it at a distance, to be fetched by the guardians. The reason is that women are said to have umlaza (ritual impurity). Especially are certain women izigqwathi to the novices, i.e. they are in a category prohibited all association with them during their initiation period. These are those called "mothers" (onina), biological classificatory, the latter including at least mother's and sisters-in-law and maternal grandmother, and some also father's sisters-in-law. If a novice sees any of these anywhere, he must immediately cover his head and face in his blanket (gqumathela). In some tribes this restriction used to be, and perhaps still is, very strict. If a novice went abroad he had to be accompanied by a small boy whose duty it was to warn him at once if any married women showed up, however far away,

whereupon the novice had to crouch down by the side of the road and cover his head till the woman had disappeared. This is not so among the Tshezi. They wander all about the public roads, fields, trading stores, sometimes not even troubling to hood their heads if there are none of their "mothers" about. The women whom they need not avoid include their sisters, half-sisters, unmarried girls and amadikazi (unmarried women who have borne children). They are not "prohibited women" to them. Once I saw two women about to enter a lodge while it was being constructed, desiring to look within. They drew back shyly, but were encouraged by men who said, "You are not prohibited women". If a novice, after the ceremony of "being-roasted-for", is going to visit his home, all the prohibited women are warned to go off to the trading store, or to a beer-drink, or to hide by the river till he has returned to his lodge.

Much of the time at the lodge is given to dancing, sometimes the youths of one lodge visiting those of another for the purpose. The young men stand in a row in their white clay with their blankets closely folded around their loins, so as to leave the upper-part of their bodies and their legs bare. Each holds one stick. Sometimes they hold the stick in both hands over their heads and point it first to the left and then to the right, as they dance up and down on their toes. Sometimes they bend right over, pointing the stick into the ground. Again they hold both arms aloft and make stabs upwards into the air with the forefinger of the left hand and with the stick held in the right hand. Meanwhile an instructor and some young boys beat with sticks on an oxhide stretched out on the ground, making a rhythmic thud-thud-thud. Every now and then the instructor leaves off beating to go and encourage the dancers or to demonstrate some step or posture to them.

At a lodge at which I was present, two novices from another lodge came on a visit and danced. One was said to be an

excellent dancer and was asked to show his skill. He was certainly very agile and also not ungraceful at times. He was especially good at pelvic jerks, in which the others did their best to imitate him. These movements were very suggestive and were greeted with enthusiastic praise by the instructor, who shouted: Khangela! Ngamadoda! "Look! They are men indeed!"

This is the posturing in the famous umtshilo dance, which novices used to perform at their various homes as they visited them in turn. They each wore a grass-skirt (umhlambi) and a high, pointed head-dress (ingcambane), as seen in tourist photographs. These dances in full regalia are said still to be seen in Bomvanaland. In Tsheziland, however, they had to be stopped, because they were the occasion of faction-fighting. People praised their own novices and disparaged those of others - then out came the sticks and the assegais, and people were killed.

Now the novices are reduced to this dancing without costumes beside the lodge, with only their guardians and a few boys to watch them. Yet a guardian told me the exercising in this dance was their principal "work", or discipline, during their spell of over two months (the time spent in that particular lodge).

Novices may also spend time hunting in the bush with dogs. There is still some small game about: monkeys, wild cats, blue-buck and, of course, birds.

5. Graduation.

On the day appointed for the end of their seclusion, in pre-dawn darkness "when there is only one bright star", the youths rise and go down to the river to wash, accompanied by their guardians and friends. This washing is very important. Not only must all the white clay be removed, but all the pollution of boyhood, which it is thought may have become deeply engrained in the skin itself, must be washed away. The scrubbing takes all morning. A fire may be lit on the river bank,

especially if the morning is cold, for the young men to warm themselves between ablutions.

Meanwhile younger men round up all the oxen they can and drive them down to the river to bring the initiates home. At about noon one sees and hears them making their way back to the lodge. The oxen have been formed into a rough circle or oval, in the midst of which are the boys and their guardians. The latter hold up blankets to form a rectangular enclosure, within which the initiates walk naked and doubled-over, so that no part of them shows but their feet and shins below the blankets. I watched one group proceed like this a distance of two miles, the oxen in front and on both sides of them. The men, perhaps 25 in number, walked with uplifted sticks, some beating two sticks together and all chanting in their deep bass voices a song expressive of their long-standing feud with the Mpondo: Abafuni Mampondo - hayi, hayi! - atsho amadoda (They do not want the Mpondo - no, no! - the men say).

After arriving at the lodge, the cattle are halted to one side. The blankets, which seemed to be those of the novices themselves, are tossed into the lodge, presently to be burned.⁷ The youths sit on the ground by the shelter. Their guardians bring "fat" (amafutha) to anoint them. The proper thing is hog fat, which should be placed in a lump on each head and then rubbed with the hands to flow down over the face, neck and shoulders. Now, however, they have jars of vaseline or of pomade, bought at some trader's store. Each novice has a large smear of this put on his head, from the nape of his neck to his nose; and then he has to spread this all over his head, face and shoulders. More is supplied to rub over his arms and body. Then he is ordered to stand up and rub more all around his loins, down his legs and over his feet. No part of the body

7. An informant at another lodge, however, said the young men proceeded to the river already naked, leaving their blankets behind in the hut.

may be left untouched.

Then presents are brought: new blankets, headkerchiefs, mats and sticks. The stick is that of manhood (lwesidoda) long, straight and pointed - quite different from the two gnarled and heavily-knobbed sticks a novice carries. Little boys are summoned to carry some of the things home for the novices, who wrap themselves in their new blankets and hood their heads. Then they march away up the hill to the homestead of the "father" of their lodge, and must not look back, even if their own guardians should say to them, "Look, your lodge is burning!"

As soon as they have gone a short way, some men set fire to the lodge. All their old possessions - blankets, sticks and the like - are consumed in a huge bonfire of fierce flames. The novices may be told to sit down with their backs to it, while their guardians run back to help the men quell the fire, if there is danger of the veld catching alight and endangering nearby homesteads. I never on any occasion saw one of the novices look back. It is said that if one did he would become feeble-minded.

When all day long the fire is over, the men rejoin the novices on the hillside, and, driving the cattle before them, resume the march, singing again their song from the river, Asifuni Mampondo! (We don't want the Mpondo!). Perhaps a group of women fall in behind, their "mothers" (but the youths are hooded, and anyhow the seclusion period during which they are not supposed to see their "mothers" is ending), and they too sing a song: Ilanga latshona. Camagwini Mampondo! (The sun is setting. Mercy, you Mpondo!). Many of their songs have to do with the Mpondo people, whose paramount chief they killed 150 years ago, while they were still living in Pondoland.

After arriving at the homestead, the initiated are ushered into the cattlefold and made to sit down either just to the

right or to the left of the entrance. Some little time is taken to arrange their smart new blankets neatly about them. Then a can (ibhekile) of beer is brought, the youths thrust their feet out beyond their blankets, and a man goes down the line dipping a brush of twigs into the can and sprinkling some of the beer onto the feet of each novice. The young men then have to rub this beer with their hands all the way up their bodies, as far as they can make it go.

Now follows the giving of the charge or exhortation (ukuvala). Some venerable-looking man is deputed by the "father" of the lodge to address the novices, if the "father" does not do this himself. "Today," he begins, "separate yourselves from things evil,⁸ so that we may know that you are men. May your speech be gracious among the people. Do not fight. Even if anyone tries to pick a quarrel with you, do not retaliate unless you are actually assaulted. Once and for all leave the irresponsibility and waywardness of boyhood behind." Then he may give advice to each in turn and by name. To one he says: "Forget these quarrels you had in the past with your father. Honour your father - do not despise him, because he is old." To another whose father is dead, he says: "Have regard to your father's brothers and respect them (ugcine oyihlokazi, ubahloniphe)."⁹

He is followed by other fathers and male relatives who give similar charges. The seated novices appear very subdued, listening respectfully with their heads bowed and their eyes fixed on the ground.

Next comes the giving of presents (ukusoka). Here in the cattlefold it is the male relatives who bring presents. One may give a sheep or a goat, another a fowl, another a hat; but

8. Not merely "profane" things, but things disapproved by the Tshezi moral code.

9. These were all parts of a single speech actually heard. For another charge in extenso, as recorded by tape-recorder, see the Appendix, Note E.

usually it is money (five-cent and ten-cent pieces) which is passed by the boys to one of their number at the end¹⁰ to be handed by him to one of the guardians to keep for them. Larger items in kind are not usually brought, but are announced by the givers to be collected later at their homesteads.

Then the novices are told to rise and follow a man, who leads them out of the kraal to a hut set apart for them. Here they drop their blankets and paint their bodies with bright red clay, which is dug up locally, is ground when dry between the stones normally used for grinding maize, and is mixed with water in a can. The guardians are as insistent that every inch of the body shall be daubed with this clay as they were about the fat. Now they are no longer novices, (abakhwetha), but initiates (anakrwala, from ikrwala, something which begins to ripen).

After the red clay has been applied, the "mothers" (biological and classificatory) come to present them fowls, armlets, anklets, money etc. It is important that the red clay be applied first. In one instance where proper arrangements had not apparently been made, it was proposed that after the presents had been given by the male relatives in the kraal, the young men should go and sit outside and receive the presents from their female relatives. The women said, "How can we do that before they have painted themselves with red clay?" The man who had given the charge said, "We will have them cover their heads with their blankets" so they did; but the women would have none of it, and they were supported by several men who said, "Quite right! it is the custom." The change from the white clay, washed away at the river, to the red clay apparently so changes the status of the young men, that, once they have been painted with the red clay, the prohibition against their

10. The inkosi yethonto, or "chief of the lodge", according to one informant, i.e. the son of the principal father.

"mothers" seeing their faces is cancelled.

There follows a great beer-drink called an umgidi, which lasts usually for two days and may be attended by many hundreds of people.

After that the initiates are taken home. One comes upon them walking silently in single file accompanied by a band of men and women singing and shouting. They go to the homes of each initiate in turn, drink a little beer at each, and then separate at the last one. The initiation rites are over, though the red clay must be worn for a week or two longer.

A closing word must be said about the custom of ukusul' umdaka, lt. "to wipe off the dirt." This requires initiates to have sexual intercourse with a woman to get rid of ritual impurity. A married woman explained:-

"The day they emerge from the lodge is usually a Friday, followed by the umgidi on Saturday and the accompanying of them home on Monday.¹¹ The Friday night they sleep alone in their hut [the hut reserved for them at the "father's" homestead]. The following night they will hunt (zingela) for a woman - girl, unmarried mother, married woman, it matters not - to lie with her. Women who do not want to be subjected to this will go home early from the umgidi to avoid it. Others are only too ready to remain! Or they find a woman who is drunk and seize her. They do not drag her into their hut, but lie with her outside somewhere. They may all have intercourse with her, or they seize several women. If not successful that night, they will try again subsequently till they have accomplished their purpose, because they cannot shave their heads till they have done so."

I was told of a woman who was walking with a man, when some initiates swept down on them, bore her off to the bush and lay with her one after the other.

This practice is said to be on the decline everywhere, since the law of the land defines it as rape, and it is actionable before a magistrate, if anyone wants to take action. The practice still occurs among the Tshezi and other tribes, however,

¹¹. Imigidi and other beer feasts are usually held at week-ends when traders' shops are closed and other distractions at a minimum.

and there was a case awaiting preliminary hearing before the chief while I was there. But many people do not take legal action, from a disinclination for police, lawyers and the magistrate's court.

It is in anticipation of this, therefore, that in the exhortation the young men are urged not to have intercourse with another man's wife. Various informants said that ukusul' umdaka should be performed on an idikazi (an unmarried woman) preferably one who has already had a child or two, or the young man should betake himself to a town "location" and take a prostitute. In such cases, where the woman is a consenting party, no action is taken, and the Tshezi Reds find little fault with it.

Some women were very cynical about the exhortation ceremony, averring that the deliverer of the charge and those charged alike all did the things condemned in these speeches. Nevertheless, after being present on a number of these occasions and having observed the evident sincerity of the participants, I cannot believe that the whole thing is a tongue-in-cheek performance. Nor can I believe that chiefs and headmen would go to such lengths to make all youths undergo these rites, if it were believed that they had no effect and in fact were not even expected to have any.

If the son of a chief is approaching the time for circumcision, other youths may wait to undergo the rite with him. It is gratifying to be able to say, in after years, that one was initiated with the chief. But the rites are not essentially different, though, if the chief is wealthy, they may be observed with more lavish feasting. When the actual circumcision takes place, one of the other lads is done first, "to clean the spear" (ukusul' umkhonto) for the chief's son, who is circumcised next.

CHAPTER VIII

INITIATION RITES : FEMALE

The following is based on seven of these intonjane intiations, six of which I witnessed in Tsheziland and one among the Tshomane. The rites among both tribes are said to be exactly the same - any differences being such as may be found between two initiations within the same tribe.

1. Entering the Hut.

When a girl has her first menses, the news is conveyed to her father by her mother, or by one of his other wives. She says, "I see that our child is not well - her blood is bad", so the father says, "We must thombisa her."¹ He calls together his male relatives and says: "I want to put this girl of mine inside yonder, behind a screen, for she has pains which it is necessary I should fully deal with there on her behalf." They agree that it should be done, and they fix a day.

On the day appointed the women of the homestead tell two young women chosen as attendants to introduce the girl into the hut of seclusion. This is usually one of the huts of her own home set apart for the purpose, though if none is available, they may get the use of one in an adjacent homestead. The girls stretch across the back of the hut a rope, over which a large grass mat (and perhaps also a blanket) is hung, so as to form a screen stretching right across the hut, except for a narrow space at each end for a passage-way. Behind the screen the novice sits. The screen is called ikhusi (or inkusi), umkhugane (or inkugane). Girl friends of the novice cut bundles of a very soft, silky grass called inxopho (variants ixopho and ixhopho), to spread in a thick carpet on the floor of her hut.

If the onset of menstruation occurs in most girls between

1. ukuthombisa: to put her through the rites, to make an offering to the ancestral spirits for the first menses. From ithombo, a small fountain, a flux of the blood, uku-thomba, to menstruate for the first time. Hence intonjane, a girl in this state.

the ages of twelve and sixteen, it seems that nowadays ntonjane ceremonies are seldom if ever held immediately following the first menses. None of the nine girls involved in the seven initiations I witnessed appeared to be as young as that. Five of them were married and looked as if they ranged in age from 22 to 26 years. Three were unmarried and of the last one I am uncertain what her status was. But I should say that none was under seventeen years old. The shortage of animals for sacrifices and of food for the many visitors who attend an intonjane, together with the prolonged absence of male relatives at the mines and the decline of interest in old customs, causes many a father to postpone the ritual - perhaps in the hope of escaping it altogether. Then an illness of the girl later on (even subsequent to her marriage) invites the attention of a diviner, who attributes it to neglect of the intonjane ceremonies and orders them to be carried out.

The father tells his wife to call women from the other homesteads to come and help her chant (ukutsholoza) while they go round and round in a circle in the courtyard. He kills for them a pig or a fowl or two. This killing is called the umngendlini, "the entering into the hut."

2. The Isibande Ceremony.²

The father again consults with the male relatives and makes arrangements for the isibande ceremony on a certain day. It may be anything from a couple of days to a week after the novice has entered her hut. It is the sacrifice of a goat by the senior man of the homestead - her father or, if he is dead, her brother. If two sisters are being initiated together, a goat will be killed for each of them. A sheep will also be killed,

2. I do not know the meaning of the word isibande. Kropf gives: "isi-Bandē, n.4. A certain kind of long aromatic grass, used by lying-in women and menstruating females" - possibly, therefore, the same as the i(n)xopho grass of the ntonjane hut, but whether this is the connection with this ceremony I cannot say.

not as a sacrifice to the spirits but "just for meat for the people."

The goat is held down on its left side in the cattle-kraal, its head towards the entrance. The head of the homestead brings the ritual spear (izaka or ikwane), passes it between the front and the back legs of the animal, slaps the spear on the goat's spine, and then makes a brief stab in the chest or abdomen of the animal, causing it to bleat loudly. At this point at one ceremony, an old paternal uncle of the novice shouted: "That's good! we deliver the girl from her serious condition today" (Heke! intombazana siyikhupha umnyama namhlanje).

The stab is not fatal, and the goat is killed by cutting its throat with a knife. The blood is caught in a basin. This sacrifice of the isibande is said to be "for the ancestral spirits of this homestead (izinyanya za lomzi) so that the novice and her people may have health and prosperity and that she may bear many fine children."

The sheep is killed next, near the goat or outside the cattiefold altogether. (In one instance a pig was killed instead of a sheep). Since it is not a sacrifice the sacrificial spear is not used. The animal's throat is cut with a knife. Sheep are never used in sacrifice, because they do not bleat or bellow, and this is absolutely necessary, "so that the ancestral spirits may hear." Sometimes when a speared animal cries, the men in the kraal call out Camagu! (Be propitiated!) - a prayer to the ancestral spirits - or they say Heke! icamagu livumile (Good! the spirit has agreed).

After the goat has been skinned, the right leg and shoulder are taken to the novice's hut for her and her attendants. The intsonyama (shoulder muscle) is colloped and roasted for her on a little fire in front of her screen. When ready, the pieces are taken to her by one of her attendants or by her brother, and she must pick them out of the dish or from the

foodmat with a sharpened piece of stick - she may not touch them with her hands.

All the morning of this ceremony and during the actual sacrifice of the goat in the kraal, the married women must keep dancing in a circle over by the huts, going round and round in an anti-clockwise direction and singing.

3. The Seclusion.

The novice should remain secluded in her hut for more than two months, emerging in the third month. If, however, she is already a wife with home duties awaiting her, things are "speeded up for her" (uyakhawulezelwa). The time may then be reduced to ten days or even a week. Nowadays, girls are often married without having undergone the rites. If such a young wife falls ill at her husband's homestead, she must return to her parents' home to undergo them. It cannot be done at her husband's place, for it is not his, but her, ancestral spirits that have been offended. One may therefore see novices with babies sitting behind the screen.

During seclusion the girl or woman is never alluded to by name, but simply as intonjane. Her father and his brothers, her mother and her sisters, and their respective wives and husbands, are all excluded from the hut; but her own brothers and sisters and her father's sisters may come and minister to her. All men of other homesteads, however, though they may enter the hut, are supposed to be prohibited from going behind the screen. If they transgress, they may be fined some of their bracelets. This detail, however, like so many others, appears to have undergone modification. At the initiation in Tshomaneland, I was told there was no prohibition against people of either sex visiting behind the screen. They seemed astonished to hear of it, and thought it inhuman to deny the girl company when she was cooped up for so long.

Throughout the seclusion period the novice is not supposed to leave the hut during the day. Even to answer the calls of nature she should school herself to wait till night falls. How strictly this is observed I do not know. If she has to go out in daylight, she must be heavily swathed in blankets by her attendants to shut out the rays of the sun. This long-continued existence in darkness, coupled with daily ablutions in water infused with the roots of "Tambookie" grass³ induces such a bleaching of the skin as I should never have believed possible, had I not myself seen some novices with skins of an astonishing lightness and transparency at the end of their seclusion. I elicited no information about the significance of the light skin; but as light-skinned women are much admired, this may be part of that preparation for marriage which is the raison d'etre of the whole initiation rite. I shall suggest another explanation later.

The novice's food is prepared for her in her hut. She may not eat it in her hands, but must pick it up with a pointed stick or a spoon.

4. The uLudwe Parties.

While the novice is secluded, her young friends, male and female, come every evening to gather in the main part of the hut before the screen and to pass the night together there. They are supervised by an older woman or women, usually sisters of the novice's father.⁴ They are said by some to sleep in pairs, each under one blanket (ukugula). Informants differ as to what happens then. Bomvana and Tshezi informants averred that no ukumetsha (unconsummated sexual intercourse) takes place in the hut. For that they must go out into the long grass. One young Thembu man asserted that they need not leave the hut

3. Cymbopogon validus Staph ex Burt Davy.

4. Among the Thembu all interior proceedings and personnel are also in charge of a supreme male officer called an idindala (Laubscher 1937: 143), but the Tshezi have no such official.

for this (Cf. Laubscher 1937: 146). Possibly it differs tribally or even according to the inclinations of the woman or women in charge. This gathering of the youth of both sexes every night in the hut is called an uludwe. It is generally agreed by the people that it leads to licence, which is condoned provided that it does not result in pregnancy. One young woman, in presence of the person in charge of an uludwe, felt no embarrassment in describing to me the delights of sex play on such occasions.

Another time in the novice's hut my curiosity was aroused by patterns in white clay on the walls. They seemed to represent frames with vertical rows of white dots inside them.

Fig. 4



(It must be remembered that whereas our sketch is in black on a background of white paper, the original was just the opposite - white clay patterns and dots against the black or dark-grey mud walls of the hut). The young woman in charge explained the purpose of the sketch to me. (Women in charge of the initiation proceedings in the hut are called amankazana or amakhankatha, but the former word here has no connection with its other and derogatory sense of a woman who has lost her virtue. It is used simply of a woman living at her father's homestead. She may in this case even be a married woman, but is called inkazana by a special usage of the term).

This young woman explained the usage of the dots (amachaphaza) as follows:

A young man may bring his own girl friend to the party, or he may be assigned a partner after he gets there by one of the women in charge. The women keep watch to see if the youth and his girl slip out to metsha. Every time one of the girls thus "goes out to the grass" one of these white dots is placed above the rest in her row. The women depute other girls to watch in case they themselves should fall asleep. Those placing the dots know which girl is represented by which row of dots and who is her uludwe partner.

The young man "lies on the girl's breasts" or "she reclines on his arm", "and they kiss", but "he must not impregnate her". "So long as pregnancy does not occur, no one thinks anything of it". Even the parents "know what the dots are there for". The nkazana women too are not too hard on them, "provided nothing goes wrong". If a girl is made pregnant, then there is trouble. The parents demand to know who was responsible. The tell-tale dots show which girls "went out" and how often, and the women know with whom she was associated. Then the young man is brought to book for it.

Sometimes dots (also called amaqanda, eggs) are placed on walls by young men themselves who are proud of their adventures.

5. UmTshato.

This word describes the final climaxing ritual of a marriage and also of the initiation rites of girls. It serves to remind us of the close affinity between the rites and marriage in the Tshezi mind, for the one is a preparation for the other. This is further underlined by the fact that, behind her screen, the novice sits with her headkerchief flat on the crown of her head and down over her whole face in the approved manner of a bride (a practice known as ukugungxa).



(Tshezi)

Novices and Their
Attendants in
Their Hut

Note edge of screen
(grass-mat) at left.

(Tshezi)

Behind the Screen

One novice is
already a married
woman with child.



(Tshezi)

The Sacrifice (In the Kraal)

Inserting arm to seize the
aorta and sever it. The
animal's right front foot
is placed behind its right
horn to be out of the way.

The great event of the day of the umtshato is the sacrifice of one of the cattle. Long before it happens, from early morning, married women form a ring in the courtyard near the huts and dance round and round in a circle to the accompaniment of singing and clapping. Periodically, and during the sacrifice itself, they perform the dance known as umngqungqo, which is like the other but much more solemn, accompanied by a deep and earnest chant, and without any hand-clapping or jubilation. This dancing is to invoke (ukunqula) the ancestors. It is essential to girls' initiation sacrifices, both isibande and umtshato. It is not done when offering sacrifices (amadini) for the sick. Informants said, "We simply kill them". The offerings for a girl undergoing initiation, however, would be incomplete without it.

The cattle are brought from the pasture and driven into the cattlefold. The other oxen at a ritual killing (and this applies to all such occasions, not only initiation) must enter the kraal and continue there till the animal to be offered has been caught and killed, after which the rest are driven out to leave room for the cutting up and distribution of the meat.

The following occurrence seen and heard on one such occasion is typical. Three men stood by the cattle kraal. The one in the centre was the head of the homestead. He called out to the women to desist for a moment from their dancing, that he might address all present. "Wait a bit, you women", he said. "Listen! On Tuesday we started to bring things to a close [referring to the isibande]. Today we are concluding altogether, asking that these girls from this home [the novices in this case were two] may flourish and bear strong children and enjoy good health at the homesteads of their husbands; so that it may not be said, when they are sick, that it is because the customs were not observed for them. For the elder girl I offer this grey ox; for the younger one, here is a black ox."

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Each ox is then prepared for sacrifice in the manner already described under male initiation rites. The ritual spear is used to stab the underside of the beast, making a small incision, from which no blood comes, but through which a portion of the stomach may protrude. The animal bellows a couple of times, which is usually received in silence, though sometimes someone makes an exclamation, such as an invocation to the spirits to be propitiated. The animal is dispatched, either by the spear being pushed diagonally to the heart, or by another man severing the spinal cord at the neck with a sharp knife. Twice I witnessed a ritual killing in the "oldfashioned" way, as follows. After the stabbing another man took over. He enlarged the incision a little with the spear, then, kneeling down, he inserted his hand and moved it on up toward the heart until his whole arm disappeared up to his shoulder. Twining his fingers around the aorta (umxhelo) he wrenched it asunder. Earlier writers have given shocking details of this mode of killing - the man departing "reeking with blood", others taking a part of the trailing entrails and devouring them "while yet warm", and the animal rising and standing in agony for some time before expiring (Shrewsbury n.d.: 238-39, and Cook n.d.: 112-15. The latter includes photographs). I witnessed no such horrid details. The hind legs of the beasts were tied together, so that they could not have risen to their feet had they tried; and after the one or two bellows that followed the initial spear-thrust, they seemed to be in a semi-comatose state. The killing appeared to be as humane as slaughter ever can be; only a little writhing and the anguished expression of the eyes of the beast told their tale of suffering. In one instance the man had his arm inside the animal for at least five minutes - I had ample time to change the film in my camera - and he told me afterwards that the ox was so old and tough that he had experienced unusual difficulty in snapping the artery.



(Tshezi)

The Anointing

Part of the gall of the sacrifice is poured on the novice's head, behind the screen (p. 126).

(Tshezi)

Ritual Eating of
Intsonyama Meat
(p. 126)

Behind the screen in the hut of seclusion. Note: meat must not be touched with her fingers, but picked up with a pointed stick.



Then the animal is skinned and the meat cut up. The right foreleg and shoulder are reserved to the novice, and the intsonyama is roasted immediately in her hut and given to her to eat. While the intsonyama is being roasted, the gall bladder is brought behind the screen and part of its contents are poured on her head as she kneels. She rubs it over her head and face with her hands. More is poured on her palms to rub on her chest; then a final lot to rub on her feet. The rest of the gall is taken to be poured over the reticulum (vide infra) in the kraal, but the bladder is returned to be kept in the novice's hut. Meanwhile all the men in the kraal sit waiting and looking at the other meat, until word is brought to them that the novice has eaten the intsonyama. "It is medicine to make her strong and well."

This is how the meat of a sacrificial animal is cut up and apportioned, whether at an initiation or some other rite.

After the umshwamo and the intsonyama portions have been removed, as detailed in the preceding chapter, the butchering proceeds as follows:- the right hind leg is cut away, then the beast is turned over, so that the left shoulder and the left hind leg may be removed, followed by the breast (isifuba), liver (isibindi), lungs (imiphunga) and intestines (amathumbu).

The meat for the men includes the breast, the liver, the reticulum, also called the omasum or second stomach (iswili), the lungs, the thin suet (umhlehla) from around the intestines, and the diaphragm (isiqwanga).

Women are given the intestines, and the ibele (the udder in the case of cows, or the genitals and soft flesh surrounding them in the case of male cattle), a leg, the sirloin (umqolo), the ribs (imbambo), and the tripe (ulusu).

Girls get the rump steak (isinge, or amangondo), the left forequarter (umkhono wasenxele), a part of the thigh called uthethe, and some other lesser portions.

Boys (but only indboys) get the silverside (icongwane). Older boys are simply given pieces by the men.

Dogs are given unwanted pieces by their owners, and also some of the blood.

There is also a regular order in which the meats are eaten:-

(1) The roast meats. This is on the first day, the day the ox or the cow is sacrificed. The person for whom the sacrifice is offered eats the roast intsonyama. The men eat the roasted liver, lungs and thin suet. While waiting for these to be ready, they eat the reticulum raw, with some of the gall poured over it. They also roast portions of the flanks and diaphragm, which they share with others - even casual passers-by.

The women roast the intestines, and they also stew the ibele and some other meats. These are the only meats stewed this day.

(2) The boiled meats. These belong to the second day, the great day of the feast, called "of the cooked things" (wezipheko), that is boiled or stewed meats including the briskets.

(3) On the third day, the feast of a sacrifice is really over. The men eat up what is edible of head and feet, and collect and burn the bones. The novice or other person on whose behalf the beast has been sacrificed, eats the rest of the umshwamo meat (the right quarter) with her attendants or friends. It has been reserved to this third day.

The idea seems to be that a sacrificial feast should be bounded by the eating of the intsonyama at the beginning and the rest of the umshwamo at the end by the person for whom the sacrifice is made; with everyone partaking of the rest of the meat in between.

6. The Cattle-Racing.

The umtshato sacrifice at an initiation of girls is often delayed till about noon to accommodate late-comers. In the

afternoon excitement mounts as the cattle are awaited. They have previously been taken by men and boys to some spot, which may be up to several miles from home, whence they are to be raced back.

In the actual racing (ukuleqa), the cattle are not so much driven as led. From the time they are calves they are trained to respond to particular calls and whistles of the men. On the day of a race, the men at the starting point bring the herds together by calling or whistling. Then boys or men on horseback run in front of them and the cattle fall in behind, entering into the spirit of the race, on their own account, with evident excitement and gusto. There may be only one small herd, that of the novice's homestead, or there may be two or three. In the olden days these cattle races were great affairs, with many herds of a locality competing together and people lining the hills to watch them pass by. It meant as much as a Derby or Ascot race does to some Englishmen.

As the time approaches for the cattle to return, the younger women go over the ridge to meet them, beating sticks, waving blankets and shouting. The men leave the cattfold and go to sit at an elevated spot near the homestead to watch. The older women stand outside the huts, their faces excited and expectant. After a while the first of the girls come back over the ridge shrilling ki-ki-ki-ki-ki, jumping, dancing and waving their upper blankets over their heads. The women at the huts lend their voices, shouting and singing: iqham lama-Mpondo livili, o-ya-ho! I could never get any explanation of the meaning of these words. The nearest was a suggestion that it is a corruption of isiqham' samaMpondo lisile, which might be interpreted "The conduct [isiqham, lit. the fruit] of the Mpondo is ridiculous, or preposterous."

Cattle, horse-riders, men and women, all crowd into the courtyard now, and pandemonium reigns. The women are singing

and shouting. Sham stick-fights between men and men, women and women, are going on. The horses are restive and champing. On one occasion a horse reared and came down on an old man, its hooves gouging a great piece of flesh off one of his legs and injuring his collar bone. Such accidents, however, are not usual.

Calm settles down, as different men begin to praise their respective herds. A member of one clan shouts rapidly: "We are here, O cattle of Zakhumbi, of the one-breasted woman from overseas, of Nomosele, of Nothimbedolweni, of Nophenge, of Mgojwane, of the son of Jongisa." When he pauses, the young women kikiza (emit shrill cries of ki-ki-ki!) darting forward to the oxen praised, bowing down, and smiting the ground with sticks or with their upper blankets, and then falling back again.

Another breaks out with: "Cattle of Vengwa, of Ndovela, of Velabadume, of Mponxile - they have ticks, caused by you women, because you bathed there where they drink - cattle of the grey-haired son of Phenya, be helpful to us even tomorrow." Again the young women dart forward and make obeisance with shrill cries.

After praising the cattle or, perhaps rather, the ancestors through the cattle, the men line up in a column, four or more abreast behind the animals, and conduct them right across the courtyard on to the veld, where young men (abafana) take them away. The men wheel and march back across the courtyard to the cattle-kraal, where they sit down. As these men march forth and back again, they make rhythmical stabbings or pointings with their sticks diagonally upward into the air behind the oxen, and sing the song about the Mpondo already mentioned, or that other deep-throated and strangely-moving chant called umhobe, said to be an old war-chant.



(Tshezi)

Grinding Maize
to Make Beer

Note household utensils: grain-basket, three-legged pots, dishes with water to dampen the maize, hand-broom, and grinding stones. The maize is ground on the large stone by means of the smaller one held in the woman's hands.



(Tshomane)

The Finished Product

Thirteen barrels of beer for a big ritual feast.

(Tshomane)

Discussing Distribu-
tion of the Beer

An ibhunga or council inside the cattle-kraal.



7. The Coming-Out of the Novice.

If her father or guardian can afford it, there will follow in a day or two a great beer-feast, which may last two days.

Afterwards, the novice "comes out" from her seclusion. This is accomplished usually in three stages.

(1) First day: ukuphethulwa kwenkusane, "the turning of the screen." The screen is turned so as to hang on one side of the hut (either side) instead of across the back as hitherto, and the girl sleeps behind it in this new position for this one night. No one could tell me the significance of this - no one remembers any more having even heard what it is.

In the evening some of the soft ixopho grass, which had been removed from the floor of the novice's hut in the morning at the turning of the screen, is taken "to the mountain" (enta-beni). There it is set on fire and the novice and her attendants leap over it. They strip naked in the novice's hut, and "go to the mountain" to a spot where the fire will be between them and home. Then they run a race to see who will get back to the hut first, leaping over the burning grass en route. According to many other informants it is not the ixopho grass that is fired but a large tuft (isicithi) of the tall "Tambookie" grass of the dry veld. Probably both are true, the dry grass from the hut-floor being used when the growing veld grass is too green to burn. The gall-bladder of the sacrificed beast is flung into the fire just before the girls jump over it, the bladder having been preserved in the novice's hut for this purpose.

Anxious not to leave anything to hearsay, I asked to witness this ceremony of "going to the mountain" (which incidentally is a conventional phrase, the origin of which is quite forgotten - the ceremony still takes place a hundred yards or so from the homestead even if it be situated in the middle of a plain with no mountain anywhere in sight). Immediately I regretted my request. My friends were manifestly embarrassed -

torn between courteous anxiety to please me and evident shock at my apparent wish to see their daughters running in the nude. I withdrew my request, with apologies for my ignorance of their conventions. I mention the matter here to show that these people do have their conventions, just as we have. Uninhibited in many ways they may seem to be, but they are not innately immodest as a people, nor sunk in an abyss of depravity, as too many casual European observers assume.⁵

(2) Second day. The rest of the ixopho grass is removed in the morning and burnt, and the hut is smeared. The screen is now taken down altogether. That night the intonjane and her attendants sleep for the last time in the hut, but in the ordinary manner without any screen.

(3) Third day (morning). Accompanied by girl friends and attendants, the initiate returns to her mother's hut and is then said to have "gone home". The strictness of her bridal manner of wearing her headkerchief is relaxed, and in another few days she may discard it altogether.

She is now a woman properly eligible for marriage.

What do these rituals all mean to the people? Often they are themselves puzzled and maintain that they perform them simply because it is the fixed custom (isiko); that it was so before they were born, or their fathers; and that it must be observed lest the ancestors be offended and send sickness. But now and then someone reflects and offers an explanation. Manganga of the Tshomane said the initiation ritual was a parallel to the process of birth. At birth the babe emerges into the world after months in the seclusion of its mother's womb. Then

5. As a woman Miss Monica Hunter (now Professor Monica Wilson) had the advantage of me in being allowed to witness this part of the ceremonies in Pondoland. See her Reaction to Conquest 1961: 172, where, however, it is evident that Mpondo young men are not altogether excluded.

it passes through the fire in the rite of isifutho, in which its mother passes it to and fro through the smoke of certain leaves. So the novice is secluded in the darkness behind the screen (dependent, one may add, on others for her very food, and her skin bleached till it becomes light as that of a newborn babe). Then she emerges and passes through the fire "at the mountain". It is a new birth out of childhood into womanhood (Cf. Laubscher 1937: 136-37, 144).

ADDENDUM TO INITIATION RITES,
MALE AND FEMALE : THE INTLOMBE

After the initiation rites the young men and women qualify to become members of an intlombe. This is a dance-club for young people. The club is organised on the analogy of white authorities made familiar by colonial rule.

First, there are the inspekthazi ("inspectors"), numbering usually two or three respected and experienced seniors, who have been attending intlombe dances for years, some of them even becoming grey-headed. They are more often called simply abelungu (Whites), referring to magistrates.

Then comes an ibhunga, or council, of other senior members.⁶

Next is usajanti, the "sergeant", like the sergeant of police at the Kwaaiman police station. His duty is to discuss offences against rules of the intlombe, which are strict.

Under the sergeant are the "police" (amapolisa), who assist him in his work, especially that of directing the singing and the general conduct of the girls. A policeman is also called ufokisina, though I do not know the origin of this term.

Then there is a girl called intlabei, the one who starts the songs that accompany the dances.

⁶. Others place this above the abelungu.

Every intlombe has a regular, recognised set of rules governing the conduct of its members. For instance:-

1. An ikrwala (a male novice just initiated) must give place to his seniors. If the hut is too small to hold all the members of an intlombe who have come to this particular dance, the initiate must stay outside. If the crowd is extra large, all those up to two years beyond the novice stage must stay out.
2. Girls who have only recently emerged from the umtshotsho dance of the pre-initiate boys and girls and become members of an intlombe must be distinguished from their seniors in dress. These new girls are dubbed onomtshotshwana (the little umtshotsho people).
3. A young man of the intlombe may not talk to a girl during dancing, or when the dance is halted at intervals to be addressed by the leader.
4. He must not remain seated while someone is speaking to him.
5. He must not be quarrelsome or stubborn.
6. He must not take a girl out of the hut in which a dance is in progress without having first obtained permission from the leader.

If he offends in any of these or certain other ways, he is arrested by the "policeman", who takes him to the "sergeant". The "sergeant" charges him before the "white man" (umlungu). "That umlungu is the magistrate" (ngu mantyi ke lowo mlungu). The "sergeant" prosecutes and the "magistrate" gives judgment. If the matter cannot be disposed of in this way, he is taken before the bhunga, the highest authority, corresponding to the Transkei Parliament in Umtata.

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Saturday, dance all night, go home Sunday morning, and return at mid-day to dance all Sunday afternoon. Finally the proceedings are brought to a close at sunset. The party takes place all the time inside the hut. One afternoon when I asked them to come out in the sun, so that I might take a photograph, they regretted their inability to do this, saying it was against the rules.

Some 50 to 60 young men and girls dance in concentric circles and semi-circles, as follows:-

Fig. 5



1. Circle of young men.

2. Circles or semi-circles of young women.

In the centre the "sergeant" (3) and a "policeman" (4) confront an accused (5) before the "white man" or "magistrate" (6).

The outer circle of young men dances (ukuxhentsa) in an anti-clockwise direction. Each young man holds a stick upright in his right hand. Every now and then some girls leave their circle or semi-circle to join the outer one of the young men moving along with them in the same direction for a while, then returning to their own circle again. Or sometimes the girls in their own circles move clockwise, going in the opposite direction to the young men. It is all very rhythmical and musical, the girls singing and clapping, the men opening and shutting their lips rapidly to produce explosive sounds while

perspiration pours down their rapt faces. Both girls and men stamp their feet, though this happens only in the outer circle. The inner circle of girls is apparently there mainly to supply the music. If they really wish to dance, they join the outer circle. All girls sing and clap, however, whichever circle they are in.

Around the wall stand older men and women, together with children, as spectators, with many more outside the door.

At intervals the "sergeant" calls a halt. He addresses the group on some matter of consequence to the intlombe, or admonishes a defaulter (if there is one before him just then), after which the intlabele strikes up again and the singing, clapping and dancing are resumed.⁷

About sunset on Sunday afternoon the intlombe comes out. This can be a brave show of men and girls in their blankets and beads. The dancers form a column, six or eight abreast, youths in front, girls behind, and dance slowly right across the courtyard. The upper parts of their bodies are bare, except for their abundant beads shining in the sloping rays of the sun. They stand for a few moments, listening to some closing remarks from their leaders. Then the intlombe breaks up quietly. Its members go their separate ways or sit about awaiting the beer-drink that is to follow.

An intlombe is a well-organised society of the young men and women of a given geographical area, so that the members live within convenient distances of one another. It is not organised with reference to political boundaries or on clan or tribal lines. Members of contiguous tribes may ignore boundaries to form an intlombe. The dances are held the year

7. A defaulter who continues to be rebellious may eventually be fined as much as R10, it is said. If he refuses to pay, he is expelled from the intlombe. A girl may be fined a vat of beer. When it is drunk (said one informant) she must stand beside it and confess to everyone what she has done wrong and promise not to do it again.

around at week-ends in various parts of the area. A sample of their songs is:-

Khawuye eGoli, Nomalana.

Ndingatshona, hawu-le-le, Mama.

Ho-o-o, ndibalek' eGolide,

Kuyabanda, ilanga latshona.

"Go to the goldmines, Nomalana."

"I might sink [in them] Mother, alas!

"Oh-o-o! I have fled from Johannesburg;

"It is cold [there], when the sun has gone down."

At one of these intlombe dances my attention was directed to a young man who, on that occasion, had received no fewer than four decorated bead handbags from different girls. This is a kind of sweethearting by exchange of presents. The young men in return give the girls money. This particular young man turned out to be one of the "inspectors" or "magistrates" of the ntlombe. He was a most engaging young fellow.

Ukumetsha he said, though not universal after an intlombe, was quite common, if one were attending not with a casual partner but with a sweetheart. Nor did the exchange of presents necessarily mean this, though it might. He said that if he or his girl-friend were caught, he would be fined five head of cattle, but if he made her pregnant, seven. He added that misdemeanours of "inspectors" were more heavily punished, because of their position and because they were supposed to be an example to the others.⁸

The modus operandi he explained as follows. He would go to the girl's home and get her father's permission to take her to an intlombe. At the end of it - as now - he would take her back to her home and hand her safely over to her father. Then he would hide in the long grass at an agreed spot near her home. That night when her father was fast asleep, she

8. For fines for seduction see Maclean 1906: 66, 115; Seymour 1960: 227-30.

would steal out (ukucwecwa) and join him, even if he should have to wait for her "till four o'clock in the morning" (He had learnt on the mines the white man's ways of telling time - indeed many such returned men, though still Reds, now carry wristwatches).

"What if her father wakes before she returns?" I asked.

"Ah!" he said, his eyes wide with alarm. "That is a risk we have to take."⁹

9. Another man told me how, having waited in the grass half the night as a youth, he was discovered by the dogs, which barked so loudly that the girl's brothers came out and he had to run for his life!

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE

Marriage among the Tshezi, as amongst other African tribes, is as much a matter between two families as between two individuals (Cf. Hoernle 1925: 484-492; Seymour 1960: 65).

Among Reds¹ marriage very often begins with the personal and mutual choice of two young people who have met and been attracted to each other, and then the arrangements are made between their two families.² There may still be instances of girls being forced into unwanted marriage. I was told of a girl in a neighbouring tribe who hanged herself to escape from such a situation; and from several I heard of a case where an unwilling girl was chased all day by her brothers and beaten with sjamboks till in the evening she bled from the mouth and died. But such cases are exceptional, as Hunter says also of similar cases among the Mpondo (Hunter 1961: 189).

I. The Marriage Process.

The Preliminaries.

It is polite for a young unmarried man to consult his father about the girl he desires, for he looks to his father for the cattle to be paid for his first or "greatest" wife.³ Later, if he desires more wives, he must provide his own cattle for the transactions (Seymour 1960: 65).

1. Tshezi fully recognise the distinction between "Reds", i.e. people who adhere to traditional beliefs, customs and dress, and "School people", those who have adopted the ways and beliefs of the churches and schools (Cf. Mayer 1961: 20).
2. Soga n.d.:270-71, concedes that there is a "measure of truth" in the charge that Xhosa marriage "rules out love in the marriage contract", because "the arrangements made for a girl's marriage are conducted entirely by the parents, the girl has little or no say in the matter ... it is the universal custom of all Bantu tribes ..." He goes on to say, however, that as love is the common heritage of all races "it may safely be asserted that there are more love marriages among the Bantu than are suspected by people of other races."
3. If his father cannot provide them all, relatives may be asked to assist. (Cf. Hunter 1961: 123; Krige in Schapera 1937: 114).

If the father approves, he tells his son to send a young friend of his, or a male relative, to negotiate with the girl's father. The parents inquire to see that the young couple are not of the same clan (Cf. Soga n.d.:229; Hunter 1961: 184). Then the girl's father says that he cannot decide everything without consulting his other male relatives and appoints a day for the young man's emissary to meet with them.

Before that day the girl's father speaks to her mother, who with one or two other women may look to see if the girl is still a virgin, in which case she is worth more cattle. If she has lost her virginity to her suitor, he may be rejected as a husband. If she has been deflowered by someone else, he will be sought out and, if apprehended, fined five head of cattle.

However, if all is well, on the day appointed for meeting her male relatives the bridegroom's messenger returns, "bearing a bottle". This is a modern development. Since it has become legal for liquor to be sold to Africans, hardly any contract seems to take place without the presentation of "a bottle", i.e. of gin or brandy.

If the bridewealth has not already been determined, it may be fixed at that stage. The usual number of these marriage or ikhazi cattle, as they are called, is eight (Cf. Laubscher 1937:161), but occasionally as few as six or as many as ten or fifteen are agreed upon.

Marriage Payment.

Ukulobola means to pay cattle, or other things such as horses, sheep or goats, or even money, to the father or guardian of a girl, in order to be allowed to take her as a wife. I never heard any noun corresponding to this verb among the Xhosa-speaking Tshezi, and none is given in Godfrey's edition of Kropf's Xhosa Dictionary. Xhosa call the

provide them all. It is also customary to give to the bride's mother a beast, called yesiphipho. The verb ukuphipha means "to clean an infant after it has had a ^wnotion of the bowels"; hence the yesiphipho beast is given to the bride's mother in recognition of the fact that she has nurtured and brought up the bride from infancy. It is generally given to her by her own husband, i.e. the bride's father, and may be from the ikhazi. The Tshezi seem to know nothing of an isinyaniso (a beast of truth, see Soga n.d.: 228; Hunter 1961: 191; Hammond-Tooke 1962: 103) to seal the engagement, but I was told that discussions might be opened with the gift of a beast called umvulamomo (the opener of the mouth).

Transfer of the Bride.

On the occasion when the bridegroom's messenger has returned to the home of the bride's people bearing his "bottle", and if the ikhazi amount has been agreed on, the men will then summon the mother of the bride to appear before them with her daughter. A younger brother of the bride's father will say to the mother: "Today we are destroying this child of yours [i.e. she will cease to be yours], because she has long been wanted by the son of So-and-So". The girl may begin to cry, even though her whole heart is set on marriage. She is then ordered back to one of the huts, by one or more of her senior relatives, where she smears herself all over with red clay - while she continues to cry all the time because she knows this order to smear indicates she is to be given in marriage.⁴ Painting with red clay

4. Soga n.d.: 229, says: "Some girls submit stoically, others break out into lamentations and tears, and either go through the process of smearing themselves mechanically or refuse to do so entirely; then the women have to do it for them." Cf. Seymour 1960: 155: ".... generally a girl only realizes she is to be married when she is told to wash and to paint her body with red clay"; and Hunter says that among the Mpondo "when a girl leaves her home to be married she is obliged by custom to weep and make a fuss about going", so much so that parents may arrange privately with the groom to abduct her from a spot a distance from home because they "do not like to hear their daughter cry" (Hunter 1961: 188).

we have already seen as a ritual accompanying the passing of a baby into childhood, and of a youth to manhood. In this case it is one of the rites attending the passing of a maiden to wifehood.

Shortly afterwards the girl is taken to the bridegroom's home by a group of her people, led perhaps by her uyisekazi (lit. young father i.e. her uncle) carrying uplifted a long stick anointed with fat. The girl keeps up her sporadic weeping, as it must not be thought she is glad to leave her home. Near the bridegroom's home, however, she is told to keep quiet for it must not seem, either, as if she regrets coming to him. Her uncle and his group receive beer for their refreshment and return, leaving the bride at the home-stand of her bridegroom. The couple are now entitled to live together.

If it be asked whether they are now "married", the answer is, Yes, as we understand the term. However, to a Tshezi marriage does not mean one event, a wedding, but a whole series of events whereby a daughter of one family is transferred to another family and from the status of a daughter to that of a wife. These events may be spread over a long period of time. Among the Mpondo, Hunter says concerning the final marriage ceremony, that it "may be delayed indefinitely; often women have grown-up families before it is performed" (Hunter 1961. 200). Among Tshezi too it is often delayed, at any rate until after the first child is born. But from the time the ikhazi is agreed to and the down payment accepted, the couple are entitled to live together in a matrimonial state, on the assumption that the remainder of the ikhazi will be paid. I am speaking of the Tshezi particularly, though the same is also true of some other tribes.

What if the rest of the ikhazi cattle are not paid? That depends. The bride's father may reclaim his daughter and her children. In the case transferred from the Mqanduli Tshezi court to that of the Elliotdale Tshezi, it will be remembered, a man complained that in his absence his father-in-law had taken his wife and given her to another man, because he, the complainant, had not completed his marriage payment. As the case was transferred, I cannot say how it was disposed of, though most cases are decided in favour of the complainant. It is not usual for the matrimonial estate to be broken up. More often a compromise will be reached, perhaps as a result of the father taking his daughter back to his home and keeping her there till her husband comes to terms. The husband may agree to go to the mines to obtain money to buy the cattle he owes his father-in-law; or he may agree that his wife's father shall have first claim on her eldest daughter's ikhazi, when she in turn arrives at marriageable age, and so obtain what is owing to him. If through circumstances beyond his control he cannot pay the balance owing, he still does not forfeit his rights. In the case of the widow in the Tshezi court who sought to maintain that her children did not belong to her late husband but to her father, because her husband had made only a down payment on her ikhazi and had then died before he could pay the rest, the judgment of the court was quite against this. They said in effect: "Your husband and your father agreed on the amount of the marriage payment. Furthermore, your father agreed to accept certain cattle as down payment. If then your husband died before he could pay the rest, that is unfortunate; but it does not alter the fact that these children belong to your late husband and to his agnatic lineage."

Before going further, it is necessary to give some

thought to Xhosa terms here. Umtshato is translated in a Xhosa-English dictionary as "marriage" or "wedding", but if we import into the Xhosa umtshato the idea associated with the English "wedding", we shall be thinking that the couple have not been living together hitherto, or, if they have been doing so, then in the parlance of the church they have been "living in sin." The Xhosa have no such idea. On the other hand, if we render umtshato by "marriage", we give to a term for the final ceremony only, the meaning (in a Xhosa mind) of the whole succession of events by which a girl is transferred from her father's homestead and family to those of her husband and becomes integrated to the latter. Moreover umtshato is not the climactic ceremony in a marriage alone. It is also the climactic ceremony of a girl's initiation rites, as we have seen (pp.123 ff.). I have not been able to discover any root meaning of the word umtshato. As used in this section, it means the culminating ceremony in the series that constitute the process of marriage. The one event of the series without which marriage cannot exist at all (certainly among Reds) is the marriage payment.

The verb ukuzeka means to "take to oneself", or to "incur" something. In the present context it is used of a man taking to himself a wife with a view to an ultimate umtshato with her.

The case of a Tshomane woman is characteristic of both them and the Tshezi, and serves to illustrate this section on the transfer of a bride and the difference between being fully married in an umtshato and being taken to wife (ukuzekwa).

Though this woman's marriage payment was not complete, she had three children. Two were of her father's home. She had borne them out of wedlock. The third was of her husband's

(cont.)

RELATIONSHIP	ADDRESS	REFERENCE	RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP	ADDRESS	REFERENCE
Father's Elder Brother's son (m.s.)	<u>Mkhuluwa (e)</u>	<u>umkhuluwa (e)</u>	----	---	---
Father's Younger Brother's son (m.s.)	<u>Mninawa (e), or</u> <u>Mfowethu</u>	<u>Umninawa (e), or</u> <u>umfowethu</u>	----	---	---
Father's Bro- ther's son (w.s.)	<u>Mnakwethu</u>	<u>umnakwethu</u>	----	---	---
Father's Bro- ther's daughter	<u>Dade wethu,</u> <u>Mntakabawo</u>	<u>udade wethu,</u> <u>umntakabawo</u>	----	---	---
Father's sister	<u>Dade Bobawo, or</u> <u>Dadobawo</u>	<u>udade bobawo, or</u> <u>udadobawo</u>	Brother's child (w.s.) (m.s.)	<u>Mtana womnakwethu</u> <u>Nyana (son)</u> <u>Ntombi (daughter)</u>	<u>umtana womna-</u> <u>kwethu</u> <u>unyana</u> <u>intombi</u>
Father's sis- ter's husband	<u>Myeni kadadobawo</u>	<u>umyeni kadadobawo</u>	Wife's brother's child	<u>Mntakasibali</u>	<u>umnta ka-</u> <u>sibali</u>
Father's sis- ter's child (son or daugh- ter)	<u>Mzala, or Mza</u>	<u>Umzala, umza, or</u> <u>umnta kadade boba-</u> <u>wo</u>	Mother's brother's child	<u>Mzala, or Mza</u>	<u>umzala, or</u> <u>umza</u>
Mother's brother	<u>Malume</u>	<u>umalume</u>	Sister's child (m.s.)	<u>Mtshana</u>	<u>umtshana</u>
Mother's bro- ther's wife	<u>Mkamalume (Them-</u> <u>bu: Malumekazi)</u>	<u>umkamalume</u> <u>(umalumekazi)</u>	Husband's sister's child	<u>Mntakasisi</u>	<u>umnta kasisi</u>
Mother's sister	<u>Ma, Mama, or Makazi</u>	<u>umakazi, or udade boma</u>	Sister's child (w.s.)	<u>(son) Nyana</u> <u>(daughter) Ntombi</u>	<u>unyana, or</u> <u>umnta kadade</u> <u>wethu</u> <u>intombi yo</u> <u>mntakwethu</u>

5. Or either child may be addressed as Mntanam and referred to as umntanam.

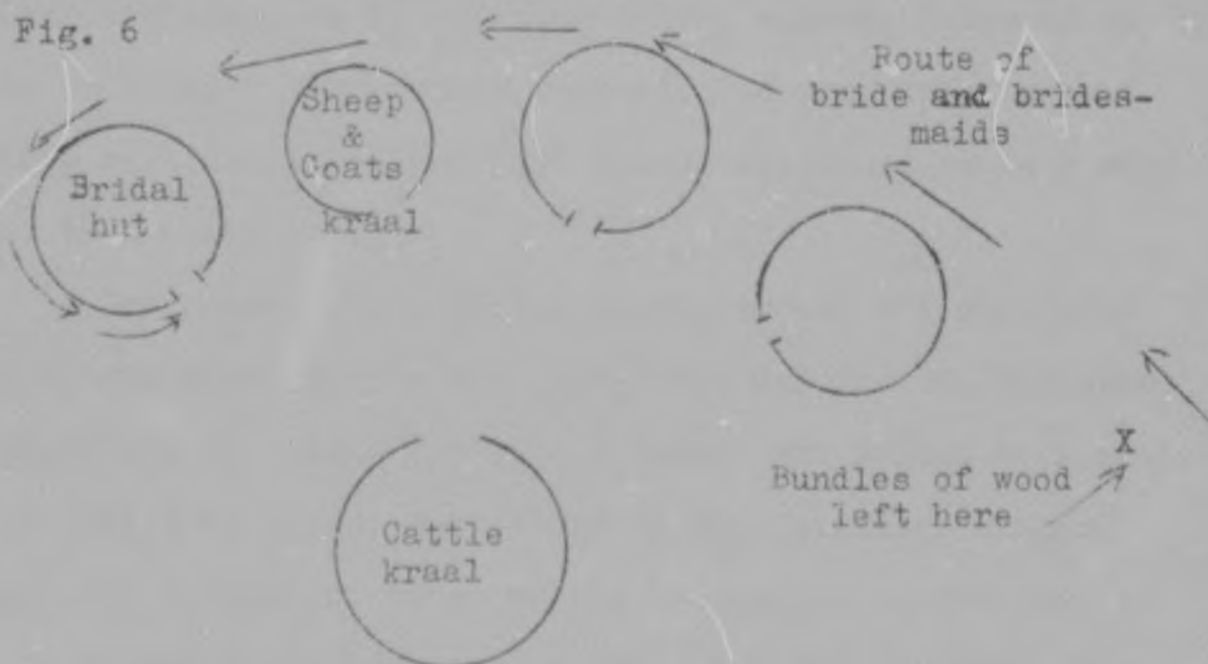
more after the woman has gone to her husband's home by which time she may already have a child by him. The Tshezi say that the bride's father needed all this time to collect the gifts which he must give her as a bride: clothing, baskets, eating mats, sleeping mats, beer-strainer, pot, bucket, hoe, sickle, can, barrel and dishes; or the bridegroom has needed the time to complete payment of the bridewealth cattle; or some mishap may have delayed matters. Thus when the bride was originally brought to the bridegroom's place, her people may have said to her: "We are not ready yet for your marriage ceremony; we say, wait here: we shall return." But when all things are ready, a day is appointed for the umtshato. What follows is based on two such ceremonies that I attended among the Tshezi and on information from a large number of people of both sexes. And here it is necessary to introduce two more Xhosa words which have no exact equivalent in English. An umtshato is simple or elaborate, among the Tshezi, according to whether the marriage is an ulwendiso or an uduli; while the latter word also means simply "bridal party" in any kind of marriage.

(a) An Ulwendiso (The Giving of a Daughter in Marriage).

At a homestead near Coffee Bay a young man of the Tshezi clan of amakham was marrying a girl belonging to the Nzila clan. In fact they had been living together for well over a year, but the umtshato had been delayed by the death of the bridegroom's father. Of the bride's twelve bridewealth cattle, nine had already been paid, and the last three were to be handed over on that day. The bride had gone back to her father's home, in order that she might proceed from it to the bridegroom's homestead, just as if she were coming for the first time. Her father had killed a goat for her, and the previous evening she had been brought

to her husband's home by three men, five bridesmaids or companions of about her own age and (like her) all wearing their headkerchiefs down over their faces, and two older women who acted as chaperones (amankazana).

The bride and her maids went to collect firewood. It was expected that on this first morning they would demonstrate what a fine bride this home was getting by rising early to go and collect firewood and/or water at the river. At about 10.30 they returned in a long single file, each with a large bundle of wood on her head. Near the homestead they put down their heavy bundles, then quietly and modestly continued to walk in single file behind the huts and around the last one, which was the bridal hut, to approach its door from the far side.



This is known as ukucweza, i.e. to show respect by avoidance or passing at a distance.

Everyone now awaited the approach of the bridal party, that is a group of men and women of the bride's people, who come bringing cans and buckets of beer and other presents. Their arrival is the signal for festivities to begin, and it is announced by a man who acts as herald and something

of a clown, and is referred to as Nozakuzaku.⁶

About 11.30 he appeared on the summit of a nearby ridge, shouting and waving his arms to attract our attention. Then he vanished, but soon appeared again at the head of the party shouting "Look! look!" They came slowly over the ridge and down the slope singing all the time.⁷ There were about twenty of them, the men walking in front and on either side of the women, who carried the beer.

At the bridegroom's home the women began to dance and sing in lively response. Some darted forward to meet the party. One had a sickle and rushed about pretending to cut grass, calling out "Here at home we do like this!" Others made a play at hoeing the turf, or seized lumps of dry cow-dung which they used as if they were round stones with which they pretended to be grinding maize, saying, "This is how we do it here." Yet another shouted, "We want this bride." They were demonstrating what her duties would be as a wife at that homestead.

The bridal party walked slowly across the courtyard past the bridegroom's male relatives and friends who were seated by the cattlefold, then turned and walked back again. As they went along, surrounded by the laughing, singing, welcoming crowd of women of the bridegroom's home, one of the bridal women dispensed gifts. She flung sweets, apples and oranges (generally bought or begged from traders or school people) through the air and then more solid gifts like tin cans and enamel dishes. As these bounced off people's bodies, the local women and children ran about

6. According to one of my informants, Nozakuzaku is of the bridegroom's umzi. "He is among those who go to ask for the girl." This agrees with Soga n.d.: 228. But according to all my other informants, including Chief Danisile and his secretary, he is of the bride's party, which tallies with Laubscher 1937: 170, cf. 165 et seq. This is typical of the confusion that obtains in regard to details of these tribal customs.

7. In the second marriage, they advanced in silence.

with shrill cries and laughter to pick them up.

A barrel of beer provided by the bridegroom's people stood in the courtyard, the froth standing up from the brim and being blown off every now and then by the wind. The leader of the udui (bridal party) addressed the bridegroom's people: "Now then, we ask for a beer-barrel. As for that beer sitting over there, we know not what it may be for. We want a barrel into which we can pour our own beer. I have not arrived empty-handed, hungrily coveting the beer of this home. Give instructions about a barrel, that I may be satisfied." This was largely conventional speech, it being understood that the beer brought by the bridal party was a present for the bridegroom's family, while the bride's party in turn would be "treated" by the people of this homestead. The barrel was provided. The women danced about the beer vats, singing songs such as this one:-

"U-yoho, ndabaleka.

(Oh, yoho, I am running away).

"Ye, Mayi - Mayi,

(You there, Mayi - Mayi),

"Ndiyichol' into yakho."

(I picked up something of yours).

"Yiyole kuwe!"

(There it is with you!)

"Yo-ho-o, ndabaleka."

(Oh! oh! oh! I am running away).

But none could explain the allusion of these words. The bridal party walked carefully behind all the huts to the bridal hut at the end, approaching it from the rear, to show that they wished their daughter to show respect at this homestead. In the bridal hut the men sat on the left and the women on the right. The bride and her five young bridesmaids with their headcloths down over their faces and their backs against the wall, sat silently in the background



(Tshomane)

Part of Women's
Section

at a big beer-
drink.

(Tshezi)

Dancing Round
the Beer

The beer was
brought by the
bride's party at
a marriage feast
(pp. 147-149).



on the women's side.

The bridegroom's elder brother, who had succeeded his father as head of the homestead, now entered with other men to discuss the handing over of the last three bridewealth cattle. They were grazing on a hill opposite and would be driven to the home of the bride's father on the following day by the returning bridal party. The sheep and goats had been brought in from the pasture. A boy brought a large, castrated goat and held it by its horns at the door of the bridal hut. It was offered as a present to the head of the party with words to the effect that this was the real umtsha-to of their daughter.

Two men of the bridal party, then slaughtered the goat over by the cattlefold.

On the following day the bridegroom's family provided them with a sheep to kill for meat "to take home" with the three cattle; and the festivities were concluded. The three animals, the goat killed for the bride at her father's home, and the goat and the sheep at the bridegroom's home, are normally the only animals killed.

Such is the usual ulwendiso giving of a daughter in marriage. At the other marriage which I attended, the presents brought to the bridegroom's homestead included 9 brooms, 1 vat, 7 cans, 3 large three-legged pots, 6 dishes, 7 mats, 14 baskets, 1 very large can and some other items.

(b) An Uduli.

My informants said there was a difference between an ulwendiso and an uduli marriage, despite the fact that the word uduli is also used of the bridal party at an ulwendiso. In general ulwendiso is much more common and on a modest scale. A full uduli marriage is possible only for the wealthy. The bride and bridesmaids commonly number ten

persons altogether, and there are also eight men and three women in the bridal party. They bring from the bride's home an ox to slaughter, and give one side of the animal to the bridegroom's people. The bridal party stays for two months, so that there is greater expenditure in hospitality. Then another beast is slaughtered for the marriage feast.

The bride and the bridesmaids are also ceremonially "viewed". They kneel and uncover to the waist, so that their beauty may be appraised and approved by the male relatives of the bridegroom.

On the day of the marriage feast, Nozakuzaku goes before the bride and her maids as they come out of their hut and spreads mats by the bride's father-in-law in the courtyard. When the bride reaches the spot, Nozakuzaku hands her an assegai, which she hurls into the cattlefold, so that it stands quivering upright in the dried cow-dung floor. Then she and her bridesmaids kneel on the mats. One of the women attendants comes and wraps around the father-in-law a special blanket (inkethe), which is always large, woolly and white and is characterised by wide black stripes at the ends flanked by narrower ones. This is a present from the bride and her people. Then they rise and go over to another part of the courtyard and kneel by her mother-in-law on the mats which Nozakuzaku brings there. Here the attendant wraps a cotton blanket (isitofu) round the mother-in-law. All the time Nozakuzaku and someone representing the bridegroom entertain the people with song and dance and the women trill.

When the bridal cattle are to be taken back to the bride's home by the bridal party, a girl of this homestead goes over to the cattle-kraal. She puts a wooden bar across the entrance and declares: "These cattle are not leaving."

One of the bridal party then produces a one-rand note and places it on top of the wooden bar. The girl takes it and says: "I shall open a way for you." She removes the bar, and they take the cattle and go.

As they leave, the bride and her maids come and usher them forth. When they are beyond the homestead, she turns back. They say: "Stay here in your new home, and behave yourself well." So they depart.

When they return home, the women come out trilling, and the bride's mother commonly exclaims: "They are coming in, the cattle of my daughter; here is the reward of childbirth."

II. Related Customs

Ukuthwalwa (To be Abducted).

This occurs when the prospective bridegroom arranges for a number of his male friends to waylay the girl somewhere and carry her off (with as much force as may be necessary) to his home. The parents are left in the dark, so that they are not able to prevent it. Three or four days later they are told where their daughter is. "Meanwhile, the young man has slept with her all those days, so she is ruined (wonakele) now - she is no longer a maiden. And so her parents have difficulty in objecting, even if they do not want the young man."

Often, however, there is a good deal of connivance in connection with abductions. The parents may favour a union of the two families, but the girl may be reluctant to go to the young man. So he is encouraged to abduct her, while they turn a blind eye on the proceedings. Or it may be the other way round. The girl is all for it, but it is her father who is obstinate. So she goads on her lover to carry her off like another young Lochinvar.

However it may be, when they seize her, she must affect

great distress, shrieking, biting, scratching and generally "carrying on", lest she should cheapen herself by appearing too willing to be married. Even at weddings of School people a regular farce sometimes ensues when the time comes for the bride to sign the wedding register: for as long as possible she refuses, tittering, dropping the pen and in general pretending to be most reluctant to go on with this business, for which she has actually been preparing herself with blissful anticipation for months.

Inkomo Yentambo (The Cow of the String).

In some tribes this is called inkomo yobulunga⁸, but yentambo seems more common among the Tshezi.

This cow or heifer is given to a bride by her people, to be brought to her husband's homestead. It is hers to keep. Hairs from its tail-brush are made into cords or strings to hang around the necks of the mother and her children, and are supposed to ward off evil and secure health. The reason for the cow of the string is obvious. The bride's ancestral spirits are those of her father, and must therefore be placated with hairs from one of her father's cows.

The bride should not drink the milk of her husband's cattle until her own cow of the string has calved, so that she can drink its milk first. In an uduli marriage this cow, therefore, is usually brought with the bride to her husband's homestead, and usually too it is already in calf, so that after it arrives it may not be too long in calving and producing milk. This is still the ideal; but some people now speed things up by permitting the bride to drink the milk of her husband's cows as soon as the cow of the string

8. Soga n.d.: 205, 232. Soga translates: "the cow of rightness." The Bhaca do not have this custom at all. See Hammond-Tooke 1962: 238.

has arrived (if it did not arrive actually with the bride), without waiting for it to calve.

After the intambo or ubulunga cow has calved, the bride's father or guardian comes and takes it home, leaving the young heifer as "the cow of the string". Or if it had been delivered of a bull calf, he will take that home, leaving the mother behind. So the increase is removed, leaving one cow or heifer.⁹ It is really a member of her father's herd, but seconded to her for her use.

But sometimes the bringing of this cow of the string may be long delayed. I attended a ceremony called utywala benkomo yentambo (the beer of the cow of the string) at a homestead near Coffee Bay. Khiya, by origin a Mpondo of the Nyawuza clan, had married a Tshezi girl Noyise about twenty years before, but it had been only two years since her cow of the string had been brought to Khiya's homestead. Even then the usual ritual had not been observed, and it was that which was to be done.

Noyise had gone back to her father's homestead, that she might come from there to her husband's home with a party of people in imitation of an uduli group. Beer was brewed both at her father's homestead (ikhaya) and at her husband's homestead (umzi). The following day she set out with the party of her people to her husband's place. There were six

9. Cf. Laubscher 1937: 94: "After the cow has had several calves, the father of the bride goes to her kraal and takes back all the cattle with the exception of one cow..." Hunter, too, says "most" of the calves "belong to the father", but goes on to say: "A woman's inkomo yobulunga and its progeny are the inheritance of her youngest son" (Hunter 1961: 237). Soga, likewise says the "progeny" of the animal remains the personal property of the woman (Soga n.d.: 206). So also Seymour 1960: 100. Either the father of the bride makes only one visit for the removal of surplus ubulunga cattle, after which all progeny remains with the bride, or (as often in native custom) there is considerable variation in practice.

in the group, including Noyise herself as bride, and two women called by courtesy "girls" (iintombi), though they were long past that stage. They arrived at sunset, carrying one can of beer, which they gave to the people of the "bridegroom's" homestead. They slept there that night.

Next day Noyise's people plucked hairs from the tail-brush of the cow of the string (brought two years before and for which this beer was brewed) and put them around her neck. A goat was killed for them, called "the goat of the people of her home", and they gave one side or half to her husband's people. In the late afternoon they went back home, leaving Noyise and her cow with her husband.

As a rule there is no dancing at this rite. But because Noyise happened to be a diviner, five other diviners (including the diviner under whom she had studied) came to dance for and with her, so that they might pray to her ancestral spirits asking that she might benefit in health by the necklace made from the hairs of this beast.

Ukudlis' Amasi (To Cause to Drink Sour Milk).

The ceremony of ukdlisa, or ukutyisa, amasi took place so that the bride might be sufficiently integrated to her husband's home that she might eat of its food. As the greater includes the less, amasi or curdled milk (yogurt) was taken as representative of all food; though it had to be milk that was drunk, because of the transfer of cattle as bride-price and the importance of the taboo on the husband's cattle.

A beast or a goat was killed and the ancestral spirits invoked, that the bride might be recognised by them as a member of this homestead and might keep well and bear many healthy children. The bride drank some curdled milk from her husband's cows. At an uduli wedding this ceremony

Florence, who was my housekeeper, had married a man whose father's name was Bhasayi. Consequently, she never referred to the railway bus, which daily passed her home from Umtata, as ibhasi, but instead called it iteksi (the taxi), to avoid the syllable bhas in her father-in-law's name. Nor could she ever refer to ascending a river along its banks by using the common term ukukhweza, for the syllables khweza were an important element in Nomakhwezane, another of her father-in-law's names. She had to say thambeka instead. It will readily be imagined that women develop a language almost of their own, which makes it difficult at times for a stranger to follow them.

Analogous to these hlonipha words of the married women are those used by circumcised youths during their period of seclusion, constituting a dialect of their own, called isikhwetha.¹⁰

This avoidance of names can also often be the occasion of frustration, as when a woman goes to the local store-cum-postoffice to ask if there is a letter for her husband, and, when asked his name, bashfully refuses to repeat it, so that it has to be learned by enquiry from others. If a wife does refer to her husband, she calls him "the father or the brother of So-and-So."

Especially, and at all times, must a Tshezi woman show great deference to her father-in-law. She may not expose her breasts or remove her headdress, in his presence. "He must see no more of her than her face, arms and feet." She may not go to that side of the hut where he sleeps, and if she sleeps in the same hut with him and others, she must wait for him to lie down and turn his face away before

10. A number of these words are given in the Appendix to Kropf's Xhosa Dictionary where they are followed by a "K" in brackets.

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