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Needlework displayed included: Children's blouses, cushions, doilies, fancy goods, handbags, jerseys, men's shirts, men's vests, table-cloths, tea-cloths and tea cosies.

Care had obviously been taken in the preparation of these things, and this exhibition showed what the people could do if they wished. It seemed a pity that they did not develop their own markets along these lines, instead of repairing always to the traders' stores. It was an interesting reflection on the ways of the people that, while I had counted over 600 persons at a single beer-drink in Tsheziland the week before, at this show, held only once a year and open to the whole district of Mganduli with an African population of 55,378 (Transkei Annual, 1968: 47) there were not more than 200 people present.

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There are limited opportunities for employment as shop assistants and hotel workers in Tsheziland and Tshomaneland.

Shop assistants (male) earn from R10 to R15 per month (with one man of exceptional ability getting R30 a month), food and accommodation included. Women earn about R8 to R12 per month, food and sometimes quarters included.

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also supplied and kitchen staff the same. One chef I know gets R55. Other hotel servants start at R6 per month with increments rising to R13.

Very few Tshezi are to be found employed in these capacities, however, for the simple reason that very few of them are able to do such work. Employers have to recruit such employees from other more "advanced" communities.

There are other less remunerative positions however, which some Tshezi do fill. Handyman, who sleep out but eat in, get up to R20 a month. Gardeners and other outside helpers get from R5 to R12 a month and their food. Hotel chambermaids get R5-50 to R8 per month with room and meals. House-keeping servants women earn R7 to R12 with food and quarters.

Others go further afield to find work at higher wages in Umtata, Durban, East London and other centres. One man near Coffee Bay goes regularly to work in East London as a hotel waiter, attracted by the much higher wages.

Industry employs some elsewhere in the Transkei. Umtata has the Vulindlela Furniture Factory, the State Sawmills and the Transkei Hilmond Weavers.

The Vulindlela Furniture Factory is about ten years old and employs 140 Transkeian citizens and three Whites. All of the former were originally unskilled and were trained locally in carpentry. They turn out very serviceable tables, chairs and benches, cupboards, boxes, doors, coffins etc., which are marketed throughout the Cape Province as well as in the Transkei itself. The factory, which is under the Khosa Development Corporation, pays wages averaging 26 cents an hour. Labourers start at R1 per diem or R5 per week and work up to the position of foremen at 60 cents per hour or R28 per week. A working week is 46 hours.

The State Sawmills are owned and operated by the Transkei



Government. (Vulindlela buys its timber from them). The Umtata mill employs about 200 Africans and eight Whites. There are other sawmills offering employment as follows:-

Amanzimnyama (Mt Frere), 120 Africans and one White;

Ntywenka, 100 Africans and one White;

Nqadu, about 100 Africans.

Langeni, about 60 Africans.

Wages and categories at these sawmills are as follows:-

Labourers: 50 - 85 cents per day.

Semi-skilled workers: R276 to R576 per annum.

Workmen: R450 to R840 " "

Senior Workmen: up to R1,020 " "

Operators and Lorry-drivers: R366 to R720 " "

Senior Operators and Senior Lorry-drivers: R720 to R1,020 per annum.

Night watchmen: R276 to R492 " "

Clerk, Grade 2: R618 to R1,300 " "

Grade 1: R900 to R1,560 " "

The Transkei Hilmond Weavers also functions under the Xhosa Development Corporation. Articles woven include curtaining, cushion covers, bedspreads, table covers, floor rugs, mural hangings and upholstery. Goods are marketed all over South Africa. Wages average R4-00 a week; and 112 Africans (104 of them women) are employed under the direction of four Whites.

There were said to be some Tshezi employed at the sawmills in Umtata when I visited them, though I could not ascertain exactly how many; but by far the greatest sources of wages are the gold mines of the Republic, for which the Mine Labour Organisations (N.R.C.) Ltd recruits men. They enter into contracts for either six months (180 shifts) or nine months (270 shifts) at a time. Such contracts are renewable



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at the wish of the miner for up to two years. Many traders serve as licensed recruiting agents for the Corporation, receiving R4 for signing on a miner for six months and R6 for a nine-months contract.

Going to the gold mines has become very popular through the years for a number of reasons. Many Tshezi go to escape the irksome restraints of life at home, or to escape the rite of circumcision (though then chief and people lie in wait for them on their return). Others are attracted by the lure of money, or by tales of a great outside world they have never seen, or because they are deeply in debt and must "join up" to pay off their debts.<sup>4</sup> In fact serving a spell on the mines has become a status symbol - one is hardly a man without it as an addition to the initiation rites. Women say of their sons, "He is not a man yet, he has not even been to the mines."

A count of 167 homesteads in the Rini, Ngogo, Jonga and Magcalekeni localities of Tsheziland gave the following information as to the number of men away from home at work:-

Fig. 12

No. of Home-steads	No. of Men	No. at Home	No. at Work	% at Work
167	292	172	120	41.09

Not all those away at a distance from home were working on the gold mines however. Included in the number were those in other forms of employment in urban centres as well, though the majority would be on the mines. Figures supplied by the Department of the Interior of the Transkei Government show that of the total Transkeian workers recruited by licensed Labour Agents for the year 1966 in all fields of employment

4. Recruits for the mines used to be called "funi-join boys", because they came to the recruiting agent saying, "ndifun' u'joyina", "I want to join" i.e. to go and work on the mines.

in the Republic, the percentage distribution was as follows  
(Transkei Annual 1968: 45 (item F)):

(1) For Gold Mines	48.4%
(2) For Coal Mines	10.3%
(3) For other mines and industries	12.7%
(4) For Agriculture (including the sugar industry)	28.6%

The economy of the Tshezi is now supported very largely by the money sent home by workers on the mines. A mine-worker may arrange with his compound manager for a sum to be sent through the Mine Labour Organisations to some member of his family in Tsheziland. This person receives notification through the post that the money has been sent, presents this notice to an agent of the Mine Labour Organisations at a local trader's store, and receives the money. Or the mine-worker may make use of a system of deferred payment, whereby he receives only a portion of his wages monthly and the rest is kept for him, to be handed to him in a lump sum at the end of his contract. If he is afraid that he may be robbed on the long train journey home, he may arrange for his money to be transmitted to him after his return.

The economic benefit derived by the Transkei annually from earnings of migratory labour is given as follows (Transkei Annual 1968: 43, 45):-

(1) Deferred Pay, etc.	R3,500,000
(2) Remitted home personally by workers	R3,000,000
(3) Brought home personally by workers	<u>R2,500,000</u>
	R9,000,000

As, however, the number of all Transkei citizens working in the Republic is given as 278,093, this works out at little more than R32 per worker, and this includes 118,000 "continuously" in employment in the Republic.

The following figures are also significant (Transkei



Annual 1968: 45 (items B, I and H)). They relate to the whole Transkei including Tcheziland:-

Number of workers employed within the Transkei (excluding professional persons, teachers and Government officials, etc.):

	%	No.
(1) Employed by Government Departments	46	15,000
(2) Employed in Industry (including building industry)	5	1,700
(3) Employed by Municipalities	5	1,500
(4) Employed in Commerce (including Hotels, flats, etc.)	17	5,500
(5) Employed in Domestic Service	27	9,000
Total		32,700

Total Cash Earnings per year of these workers is estimated to be at least R4,000,000 (Transkei Annual 1968: 45 (item B)), which, however, is only about R122 per person, or about R10 per month.

Average wages [in rands and cents] paid to workers in the Transkei: Unskilled labourers and Domestic Servants (Transkei Annual 1968, 45 (item I)):-

	Basis	Min.	Max.	Basis	Min.	Max.
<u>Government</u> :						
(a) Males	Daily	.50	.85	Monthly <sup>5</sup>	11.00	18.70
(b) Females	Daily	.35	.55	Monthly	7.70	12.10
(c) Juveniles	Daily	.20	.30	Monthly	4.40	6.60

Non-Government:

(a) Males	Monthly	10.00	20.00
(b) Females	Monthly	5.00	10.00
(c) Juveniles	Monthly	4.00	7.50

Average wages paid in Republic to migratory workers:

	Basis	Variation	Free Food	Free Qts.
		Min.	Max.	
(1) Agriculture	Monthly	14.00	18.00	Yes Yes
(2) Factories	Weekly	4.50	9.00	No No
	[Monthly]	18.00	36.00]	

5. For purposes of comparison monthly estimates are added, reckoning 5½ work-days per week, 22 work-days per month, and a shift of eight hours being reckoned as equivalent to one work-day.

Average wages etc. (contd)

	Basis	Variation		Free Food	Free Qts.
		Min.	Max.		
(3) Building	Daily	.85	2.00	No	No
	[Monthly]	18.70	44.00]		
(4) Railways	Daily	.90	1.40	No	No
	[Monthly]	19.80	30.80]		
(5) Mines:					
(a) Gold	Shift	.34	2.00	Yes	Yes
	[Monthly]	7.48	44.00]		
(b) Other*	Shift	.60	Plus	Yes	Yes
	[Monthly]	13.20	Plus]		

(\*Rates of pay become considerably enhanced in the case of workers who acquire special skill, experience and responsibility in machine operating, etc.)

The total number of Transkeian workers of both sexes in all fields of employment in the Republic is 278,093 (Transkei Annual 1968: 43 (item A)), as against 32,700 employed within the Transkei (ibid.: 45 (item B)).

Taxation.<sup>6</sup> The numbers of taxpayers in Tsheziland in 1968, by administrative areas, were as follows:

Fig. 13

<u>Administrative Area</u>	<u>Headman</u>	<u>No. of Taxpayers</u> <sup>7</sup>
Lower Nenga	Chief Danisile	3,163
Lower Mpako	Zwelivumile Sigidi	1,385
Nzulwini	Zwelebanggo Natshiki	703
Mthonjane	Ndlembula Ngubenambi	563
	Total	5,814

The Tshezi, like all other people in South Africa regardless of race or colour, are liable to pay state and provincial income taxes, if they are in receipt of incomes above the specified minimum amounts. There are also the following taxes payable only by Africans:-

- i. Bantu General (or Poll) Tax, which is R3-50 per annum payable by all males from the age of eighteen, no matter

6. Information supplied by the Magistrate's Office, Mqanduli.  
7. These figures should be compared with total population figures in Fig. 1. p. 51.

what their incomes are, and from which no deductions or rebates are permitted.

ii. Bantu Additional General Tax, paid by men and women married or single, whose taxable income exceeds R360 per annum. However, this is instead of the provincial personal taxes for which Whites, Coloureds and Asiatics are liable. Moreover, any normal tax payable is deducted from this Bantu Additional General Tax. The rates are as follows:-

1. For Men

<u>Taxable Income</u>	<u>Tax</u>
R360 - R480	R0-50
Over R480 - R600	R2-00
Over R600 - R720	R3-50
Over R720 - R840	R5-00
Over R840	R5-00 plus R2-00 for every R120 or portion thereof, by which the income exceeds R840.

2. For Women

<u>Taxable Income</u>	<u>Tax</u>
R360 - R480	R2-00
Over R480	R2-00 plus R2-00 for every R120 or portion thereof, by which the income exceeds R480.

iii. Local Tax. R1 per annum. This is often referred to as "Hut-tax". It is payable in respect of every hut or dwelling (not kitchen huts) by the occupier thereof; unless the occupier is not or has not been married by law or according to custom; or, being a widow is not the holder of an allotment of land in her own right or that of her deceased husband; and with the further proviso that no one shall be liable to pay more than R4 per annum in respect of local tax.<sup>8</sup>

iv. General Levy. This applies only in the Transkei. The amount is R1-00 per annum and is payable by all who pay the

8. Taxation and Development Act, No. 41 of 1925 (as amended). The Act permits of other exceptions, which do not, however, apply in Tsheziland. The Act (as amended) also provides for exemption to be granted by the Bantu Affairs Commissioner to certain Bantu, when through ill-health, etc., they are unable to pay their taxes. Exemptions are said to be granted in large numbers annually.



Local Tax (No. iii, above). It goes to provide hospital services.

v. Special Tribal Levies. Tribal authorities may raise money for special purposes, such as the building of a new courthouse or of a clinic. The amount of the tax and the number of years during which it shall be paid are determined by the tribal authority. I heard of no such tax being levied by the Tshezi while I was there, but their neighbours, the Tshomane, had a tribal levy of R1-00 per annum for three years from January 1, 1968 for tribal purposes.

The law permits of traders lending money to Transkei citizens at rates of interest not exceeding 30% on small amounts.<sup>9</sup> Most traders keep within this limit. Others do not - so three different traders assured me. Some charge 50%. An African added that this was common. "If you borrow £1 you must return £1-10. If you borrow £2, you must return £3. That is the law of the trader." The borrower deposits a beast with a third party, who is responsible to hand it over to the lender if the loan is not repaid. Some traders are said to charge 100%, or pound for pound; and one was rumoured to require interest of half-a-crown per month on every pound he lent. "Of course", one of them remarked to me, "you sometimes have to wait six or seven months to get your money; and besides some of them are wise enough to take the matter to a lawyer and you get hammered."

No wonder an old woman, to whom I protested because she plagued me for money when I took her photo, rejoined, "Well, you Whites enrich yourselves by us!"

9. The Usury Act, 1926 (Act No. 37 of 1926, as amended) stipulates that the following rates of interest may not be exceeded: 30% per annum where the total amount of money lent by one person to another within any period of three months does not in the aggregate exceed ten pounds; 20% similarly on loans of ten to twenty-five pounds; 15% on loans of twenty-five to fifty pounds; and 12% on amounts exceeding fifty pounds.

## CHAPTER XIV

### REVERENCE FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

For the purpose of my discussion, I suggest that the following characteristics mark those activities which I would call "religious": religious activities arise in response to an awareness of Ultimate Reality, towards which is adopted an attitude of reverence as for something sacred, and which attitude manifests itself in acts of worship and propitiation. (I do not include activities which are commonly known as magic, sorcery, and witchcraft). In this sense the Tshezi are truly religious people, because they are also, for the most part, a reflecting and reverent people.

First, then, religious activities arise in response to an awareness of Ultimate Reality. A thoughtful Tshezi man is conscious of another order of existence besides his own. He grapples with the thought of primal causation. Whence have all things come? He goes over in his mind the lineage of his chiefs back to Bomvu, or Xhosa, or some other half-mythical person. Who was before him? Ntu - the first man, the Nguni equivalent of the Hebrew Adam. What was before Ntu? Pure Causation? An impersonal force? However he does not linger over these, but prefers more concrete concepts. So he passes to the idea of a Supreme Being. Who was he?

When the first missionaries came to Wilo in 1830, Stephen Kay heard him called uDali, "the Creator". Old Mdepha, picking beads up off the floor was urged by the missionary to pray. "Yea, yea", he replied, "I do pray; I pray that uDali may give us more cattle, more corn, and more pumpkins." (Kay 1833: 354). This is still a popular concept among both Mdepha's Tehomane and their neighbours the Tshezi. Kay also heard the name uMenzi ("Worker" "Maker"), but was surprised that he seldom or never heard the name uThixo, which was commonly used among the frontier clans; which fact he

felt considerably strengthened the opinion that it was a word of Hottentot origin (ibid. 339). The missionaries brought the name Thixo with them from the Colony. It soon made its way till today it is the only name for the Deity one ever hears among Tshezi and Tshomane. One informant thought they already had it before the missionaries came.

What is Thixo like? To this most Tshezi will answer, "We do not know." When I asked an old man why he and his people believed that Thixo existed at all, he said: "We say that Thixo exists, because we see astonishing things come to pass, and of things of every sort we say that they are done by him. The diversities of tribes and their languages - all that is done by Thixo." Another old man argued from the necessity to postulate not a Wonder Worker but a Universal Helper. "Thixo exists, because in regard to everything we do, we say: May Thixo help us!" Thus the Tshezi believe not only in the Divine existence, but also in Divine providence.

God, however, is remote and mysterious. The Tshezi prefer to approach him through the medium of more proximate and comprehensible beings. These are the ancestral spirits (izinyanya). They regard them very much as a devout Catholic regards the saints, that is as persons whom death has translated to the unseen world, where they can use their powers as intermediaries with God on behalf of the living.

For the Tshezi believe firmly in a future life. Death does not end all. It is less like a full-stop at the end of a sentence than like a comma in the middle of one. "Who are the spirits?" I asked numbers of people. They answered, "They are people who die." "Do animals survive as spirits?" Some said, "No"; others "It is not clear", or "We do not know." "Do children become spirits?" "We have never heard



that they do", said some, and others, "There is no spirit of a child." "And women?" "Yes, women too become spirits", was usually allowed. About men, however, there was never any doubt, especially about heads of lineages. They do not believe that death is a great leveller. Habitually thinking hierarchically, they carry this over into the next life. Nor do they think that people in the next life are very different in character from what they were before. Tshezi "saints", though influential, are not necessarily holy. They may benevolently send abundant rain, rich harvests and good health; but if angered they will as readily send drought, blight and sickness.

So the Tshezi have an attitude of reverence towards the other world as for something sacred. They revere the spirits and pray to them. "These are our gods" said one of them to me at a sacrificial ritual. And they expect them to prevail upon Thixo to remove curses and send them blessings.

"And where does God live?" I asked one old man. He replied, "In the air, because God is everywhere and so is the air." Another said that God lives in the sky (ezulwini), probably for the same reason: the sky is everywhere. So also do the spirits live and move about in the air over us, hovering about the homesteads and especially over the cattle-folds when sacrifices are offered. This is a very ancient concept.

The important thing about these izinyanya is that they are still part of the tribe - its most venerable part. They are ever present to it, conscious of the activities of their living representatives; and when a man dies, he is, in the Biblical phrase, "gathered to his people (Gen. 25: 8, 17).

The head of the family or the lineage is the ritual leader, the liaison between the living members and their

spirit ancestors. The chief as head of the royal clan is the supreme ritual leader of the whole tribe. If he is too old and feeble to carry out his duties, the ritual leader may delegate his powers to his eldest son. He himself, however, must sanction what is done and bless it with his presence.

Old Molosi of the Tshomane must have been ninety years of age if not more. He was blind and feeble and had a thin, reedy voice. He had long since handed over the conduct of affairs to Manganga, his eldest son. He himself sat all day long in the sun by the cattlefold, wrapped in his thoughts, but he was regarded with affection and respect.

When the time came for the propitiatory sacrifice of oxen for the two intonjane girls of the umzi, we men were all gathered in the cattlefold with the herd. We sat in a circle all around the inside edge of the enclosure. The first ox to be offered was roped and flung down on its left side. Manganga was ready with the ritual assegai. Then there was a pause and a silence that could be felt. The blind Molosi was slowly led in by the hand and given a place of honour to the right of the entrance. Old and weighed down with years he was a venerable figure. In a short time now he must inevitably be "gathered to his people". Plainly they thought of him as virtually an ancestral spirit already. When he was seated, he turned his sightless eyes in the direction of his son, and they proceeded with the offering, which was to propitiate the ancestors and pray to them that the intonjane girls might make successful marriages and bear strong healthy children. So there they all were: the men of the lineage and their friends of the surrounding homesteads; the ancestral spirits, invisible in the bright air of the kraal; and the aged father as a link between the two.

I once discussed the slaughtering of cattle, asking if a man simply killed a beast whenever he wanted to, or whether he had to consult with others first. My informant gave me a shocked look, and insisted that he must consult, because the cattle were not his only. They belonged to the family. He must summon to his umzi all the men of his family who lived near enough to attend. They would sit in conference at the cattlefold. Nor would they be the only ones present, he assured me with solemnity. The ancestral spirits would be there. For the cattle were theirs too. They had helped in days gone by to bring the herd to its present strength, and they were interested in every beast. Then the man would say that a certain cow was old, and he thought it was time to slaughter it; or that he proposed to offer another one as a propitiation; or whatever the case might be. All the family would confer and finally agree. Then the spirits would agree too, and there would be peace.

So too are the ancestors interested in the tribal land. After all, it was they who wrested it from others in battle long ago, or acquired it by peaceful negotiation in exchange for cattle. They cultivated it, or hunted over it, built their homes on it, and finally were laid to rest in it. They left it to the living as a sacred trust. They are still interested in its prosperity and its produce.

When a man dies, there will be placed in his grave, as we shall see, a certain amount of seed (of maize, millet, pumpkins and the like) for him to take as a present to the ancestors, and the spirits will be invoked to help and prosper the living in return for this new seed sent them from earth.

Particularly are the izinyanya interested in the social and political structure of the tribe. They are not pale and ineffectual, but powerful shades, and the ancestral spirits



of the great chiefs are the most commanding. The chieftainship of the tribe is a sacred institution, which the living must maintain and revere. When the peppery Cape Governor, Sir Harry Smith, frustrated by the misdeeds of Sandile of the Ngqika (Anglice, "Gaikas"), announced that he deposed him from the chieftainship and placed over them as chief instead the Hon. Charles G. Brownlee, the Ngqika no doubt said politely, Siyeva (We hear), and then went away and paid little attention. Much as they respected Brownlee, they could not think of recognising as chief one who was an alien and had been so arbitrarily appointed (Theal 1919: 93,94). Of course, it sometimes happens that a reigning house is overthrown and a minor house rules in its stead, but only if there is a reason for it that it is felt will be approved by the ancestors.

As the chieftainship is sacred, so also is the family. The paterfamilias must be held in awe; the grandparents in proper if affectionate respect; older brothers must be deferred to by the younger; and men everywhere respected by women and children. Yet those who are strong should help those who are weak, sons caring for widowed mothers and helping younger brothers with cattle for ikhazi.

Ancestral spirits are concerned to maintain the tribal customs. This is a logical conclusion from the fact that it was they who established these customs in the past. Thus, if a woman, after marriage, is ill or barren, the diviner who is consulted may say it was due to neglect of the intonjane or initiation rite. It is the common practice of diviners to attribute illness to a failure of reverence in the neglect of some custom or the withholding of some sacrifice to the ancestors.

It will therefore be seen that a belief in ancestral

spirits and the necessity for revering them is a bulwark of conservatism. It is probably the chief reason for resisting change. To its credit is the preservation of the integrity and unity of the tribe through many years of war and migration. On the other hand the Tshezi and their neighbours for a hundred years have been held back from Christianity, education and technological progress by fear of offending the izinyanya. It is to the interest of chiefs and headmen, many of whom are illiterate, to maintain the status quo. If the belief in izinyanya helps to keep their chieftainship inviolate, they will be interested in preserving it; and nothing is more repellent to most white men than the abject servility shown by these people even to minor members of the reigning house. One thinks of the proud Zulu or Ndebele warrior grovelling before his chief on hands and knees. While I have never seen Tshezi or Tshomane doing that, I have sat in a hut where several of their headmen were drinking gin, and have listened to the fulsome language and abject behaviour adopted towards them ad nauseam.<sup>1</sup>

So do the Tshezi have a sense of awe towards the supernatural world and towards things in this world conceived of as being sanctioned by the spirits of that unseen world. In Otto's phrase they have "the idea of the holy". They do not hold sacred things in light esteem, or "secularise" them, and so become what ancient Esau is said to have been: "a profane person" (Heb. 12:16). Here are some illustrations.

After old Molosi had been seated in the kraal and the oxen had been sacrificed as described above, a man in his later thirties arose, danced about and beat a tattoo with his sticks. Molosi was shocked. Though he could not see,

1. And I do not mean only the praises of an official imbhongi, or court-praiser, which are a different matter, no more to be taken literally than our use of "your humble and obedient servant" at the end of a letter.

he could hear. Rearing himself upright and turning in the direction from which the sounds came, he cried out in injured tones: Makungadlalw' apha! Makungadlalw' apha! ("Let there be no playing here! Let there be no playing here!") To the old man, whose interests and desires were materialistic enough ordinarily, this was a solemn moment. The cattle-kraal was a sanctuary; its floor of dried cow-dung was an altar, on which lay outstretched the bodies of the propitiatory offerings; the bright air was peopled with the spirits of ancestors, who had just heard with gratified acceptance the bellowing of the sacrificed animals; and over in a hut, in pitch darkness, behind a screen, with heads and faces covered in black kerchiefs, sat the two intonjane girls, as they had done already for two months, sick (for so the onset of the menses is regarded), and for whom health and future fruitfulness as mothers was asked. Was this a time for levity? The old man could not have been more shocked had he been an Anglo-Catholic witnessing levity at a celebration of High Mass.

Again I was at an intonjane at a homestead in Tsheziland. After the cattle-racing, which is the high point of the concluding festivities and which is attended by much jubilation, there ensued another of those periods of great earnestness and solemnity. The men formed up, four or five abreast, and, with sticks upraised in their right hands, slowly marched or danced across the inkundla behind the cattle. They alternately pointed their sticks toward the cattle and then lifted them upright again. After passing between two of the huts, they moved out onto the veld, where they left the cattle, and then wheeled and turned back to the kraal, where they sat down. All the way along they chanted in unison a deep-throated and harmonious chant of prayer to the



ancestors. It was most moving - a chant used only on solemn occasions such as advancing to battle in the old days and at intonjane celebrations such as this. Then the women took over and performed the dance in a circle called umngqungqo. This, too, was marked by earnestness and solemn chanting, as the women slowly moved in an anti-clockwise direction, round and round, with uplifted rods or wands. There was a complete absence of the frivolity that had characterised the arrival of the racing cattle a short time before; and by the same token the young women, who were so conspicuous in that, were absent from this umngqungqo dance. By these acts and chants, the people say they "call upon the ancestors" (ukunqula), to obtain their benediction.

We cannot dismiss this religious activity by saying it is prompted solely by fear. It is prompted quite as much by other things: love, for instance, love for one's own, one's own family, one's own neighbourhood, one's own clan, one's own recently departed and still sorely-missed loved ones.

This reverence for things sacred is seen also in the respect paid to the dead. The head of the homestead is buried in a place of honour by the entrance of his cattle kraal. Not only that, but if, in time, the site should be deserted and be re-allocated to someone else for a field, the new owner will not desecrate the grave by ploughing over it. He will plough all around it and encourage shrubs to grow on it to mark it off from such possible desecration in the future. One often comes upon such circular patches of shrubbery or trees in the midst of a field. Nor can the showing of such respect for the dead be attributed simply to superstitious dread of contact with graves. No such superstitious dread has prevented the Tshomane from carrying off the grave stones from the old cemetery at Wilo,

which was once the mission station of Morley, founded long ago by the Methodists. Nor does superstitious fear of the dead prevent Africans from mowing lawns, watering flowers, and performing other tasks in cemeteries in the cities.

To come to the last part of my definition, the Tsezi and their neighbours express their reverence for supernatural authority by acts of worship and propitiation. These are well divided by Mokitimi into two categories: Obligatory and Voluntary (Mokitimi in Hellmann 1949: 559).

The former occur especially at critical junctures connected with the rites of passage of birth, puberty, marriage and death. At birth a beast or a goat is killed, after the baby is weaned, in the ceremony of ukuqatywa ("to be painted"), after which mother and baby are painted with red ochre. At initiation ceremonies cattle are sacrificed. At marriage there is the custom of ukutyisa (or ukudlisa) amasi, with the killing of a beast, which is the real umtshato, or marriage. In connection with all these offerings the ancestral spirits are praised or invoked and besought for blessings on the living.

Voluntary offerings are made in cases of illness and other misfortunes, or simply when the spirits appear to people in their dreams and request a sacrifice.

Mantizi, a woman among the Tshomane, had been ailing for nine years with some wasting disease (She appeared to me to have either cancer or consumption). Both her father, who was living, and her grandfather, who was dead, were diviners. For the last five years, u-Tom' or Dlalibombho, the grandfather's spirit, had been appearing in her dreams saying: Mtanam, ndifun' ukutya ngawe. Ndifun' inkabi yebhokhwe, notywala busilw' apha endlini. Ndizifuna ezinto ngenxayawe, kuba uyagula. Ndifuna ukuba uphile. ("My child, I

wish to be fed by you. I want a male [castrated] goat, and beer brewed here in the hut. I want these things for your sake, because you are sick. I want you to get well.") So they sought for a white goat, which, when it had been obtained, her father offered up in the kraal; and prayer was made for her recovery to the ancestral spirits at an intlombe yamagqira, a "dance of doctors" at her home.

In former times voluntary sacrifices were made in rain-making ceremonies in time of severe drought, the chief calling on the spirits of dead chiefs to send rain. Although this is no longer done, all now go to the church to pray. The Transkei in 1968 was suffering from one of the worst droughts in living memory. One of the Sundays in July was appointed by the Tshomane chief, Dalingozi, as a day of prayer for rain. The little Anglican church near Ngcwanguba was crowded with over 200 people. Next day the African priest told me more than half of them were Reds.

Religion cannot operate in a vacuum. It must have institutions, sacrifices and mediating officiants of some kind. Without these there may be an ethical system, but hardly a religion.

The holy of holies of a Tshezi home is the ubuhlanti, or cattle kraal. It is strictly barred to women and is sacred to cattle and the ancestral spirits. Here the sacrifices take place. Ordinary killings for meat may happen anywhere. Ritual killings must take place here.

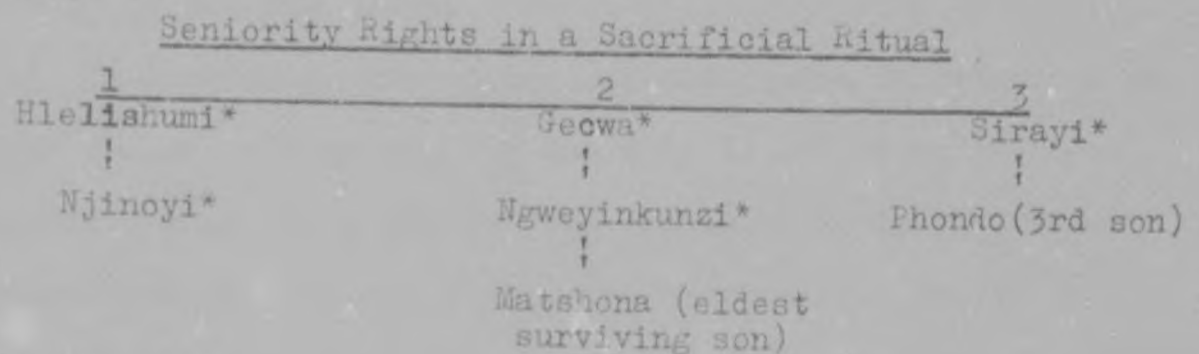
As there must be institutions and sacrifices, so must there be officiants. The Tshezi have a system like that of the pre-Levitical patriarchs of the Old Testament, in that the head of the house officiates as the mediator of his people with the other world. He offers sacrifices on their behalf. They are meticulous in determining who has the



right to officiate. Primogeniture counts, as the following instance shows.

Hlelishumi died many years ago. Recently he had been appearing to his nephew Phondo in dreams, asking that a goat be sacrificed and beer brewed for him. It was Phondo's duty to provide these things, which he did. But he himself could not offer up the goat, being but the third son of a third son. The following figure shows the relationship of the people concerned.

Fig. 14



\* Deceased.

Hlelishumi, Gecwa and Sirayi were three brothers, born in that order. When Hlelishumi died his heir was his only son Njinoyi, to whom passed the right to preside over rituals. When Njinoyi died without issue, the right of sacrifice passed to the house of Hlelishumi's brother Gecwa. Gecwa died, and he was succeeded by Ngweyinkunzi. On Ngweyinkunzi's death the seniority and priestly rights passed to his eldest son. When this son died without issue, these privileges passed to Ngweyinkunzi's second son, Matshona, who was my employed assistant. If Matshona were dead, his eldest surviving son would officiate. If Matshona had no son, then the right would pass to one of Sirayi's sons, Sirayi himself being dead. As Phondo is only his third son, however, and both of Phondo's older brothers are still living, it will be seen how scant are the chances of his officiating as head of this extended family. So they had

to send for Matshona to stab the goat.

When it becomes apparent that a man is going to die, all other people vacate his hut, except some men who stay as watchers. Some of these are members of the family, the rest are men of the "locality" (ilali). When the person has died, they go to tell the family and to comfort them, "so that they may not cry aloud". However it is usual for women to wail at a death (Cf. Hammond-Tooke 1962: 228-29; Soga n.d.: 152-3). Leaving some in charge of the body, the rest of the men go to dig the grave.

In digging a grave today the old custom of making a recess in one side to receive the body is not often followed. Instead, when the grave is deep enough, a further narrower excavation of just the right size to receive a coffin is made in the bottom of the grave, leaving a shoulder of ground on each side. Into this excavation the body is lowered. Across the top of it, resting on the shoulders of ground, are placed short lengths of pole, and these are covered with sods of earth. School people all use coffins now. Reds do not, but bury people in their blankets as before. The deceased's mat is placed in the grave for his body to lie on. However, if a person dies in hospital, as now often happens even with Reds since an ambulance service is provided, then the corpse is sent home in a coffin (ibhokisi, a box), and he is buried in it. Then his mat is spread on top of the sods resting on the cross-poles.

When a woman dies, the same procedure is followed. Men watch over her (ukugcina, to guard), until she dies. Then women are summoned to prepare her body for burial.

While it is the duty of the eldest son, as heir, to see that his father receives proper burial, Tshezi and

Tshomane always speak of the youngest son as "burying" (ukufihla, to hide away) his father. By this they mean that it is the duty of the youngest to prepare him for burial. If he is only a child, men will assist him, but he must put the final touches to the arrangements, while the men guide him with such instructions as "take hold here" or "fix this". Also he must close the eyes. The knees are drawn up, so that the body may be buried in the foetal position, and the private parts are wrapped in the blanket. When they reach the grave, this boy should go down into it and lay his father in it properly, being told for instance to place a pillow of stone or wood under his head. The men help him if he is too young to manage alone.

The youngest son thus "buries" his father, I was told, "so that he may receive a beast (inkomo)". Even if he is only a small child it is done, "because he will have no part in the inheritance (ilifa) which goes to his elder brothers, so his father must leave him something." But sometimes his actual work is not much more than make-believe, especially if he is very young. "It is only a picture", as one man put it (ngumfanekiso nje). He puts his hand on the corpse as it is placed in the coffin or in the grave, and he is lowered into the grave itself for a moment and then drawn out again. Then he is presented with a beast. No one "buries" a woman in this way, since no one can inherit from a woman.

This youngest son (or grandson, if the youngest son himself should be away from home) is ever afterwards treated with the greatest respect, especially by the women. Florence, my housekeeper, explained that her father-in-law should have been buried by his youngest son, Florence's husband. But Mthonjane, as his name is, was away at the mines. The duty would then have devolved upon his son, had



there been one, but there was not. Mthonjane's next older brother had a son, but he was a mere infant, incapable of discharging such a responsibility. Mthonjane's eldest brother had a son, who was old enough, although "he was just a boy - he had never been to the goldmines." So he went down into the grave and buried his grandfather (uninakhulu). "Now", Florence continued, "we do not use his name. We call him other things, since he buried a great person."

Women do not follow a corpse to its burial. They remain quietly and sorrowfully seated at a distance, while the burial is carried out entirely by men. The person's more intimate personal possessions (pipe, sticks, etc.) are broken in pieces and thrown into the grave. In the case of clothing buttons are first removed. Junod (1962, I :140), says that the reason the Thonga do not allow buttons, iron, brass etc. in a grave, is because these things outlast the corpse, and so may cause harm to the deceased or to people of the deceased's homestead. Also they may bury with the dead person a quantity of seed (imbewu) of maize, millet, pumpkin and other things. They ask the ancestral spirits to continue to prosper this umzi, and "in return", they say, "we send you new seed from here on earth." If it is an old man who is being buried, people may cite the proverb, kungafa intaka endala, amaganda ayabola, "if the old bird dies, the eggs go bad", i.e. if you neglect to observe the customs at the death of an old man, disaster will follow. Beadwork is torn to bits and flung on the piled-up earth, with which the beads are mixed before it is shovelled into the grave. When the grave has been filled, a slight mound is raised over it, on which cuttings of turf are placed so that the grass will grow.

The men then go to the river and wash their hands repeatedly and thoroughly. On their return they conduct

women to the grave, that they may take part in placing stones to mark the grave, beginning with relatives. The stones are placed in an oval around the grave, one of the men showing the women where to place them. Then the women also go immediately to the river to wash their hands. In time the mound levels down and the grass grows, leaving only the oval or rectangle of stones to indicate the spot.

After burial a goat is killed to feed those who came to help. It is called ibhokhwe yehlaba, "the goat of the hlaba". Ihlaba means deep-seated earth, as at the bottom of a grave.<sup>2</sup> Beer is not brewed, "because this is a bad occasion - it is not a feast." But beer may be bought at another kraal and brought here for refreshment for the grave-diggers and any other helpers.

Next day another goat yehlaba will be killed for the boy who "buried" his father. Ever since he came out of his father's grave, he has been kept in seclusion with his mother in her hut, not coming out to partake of the first goat with others. But the next day he is "brought out", and when his own ibhokhwe yehlaba has been killed, he partakes of it with his mother, "as this one must not be just like the goat for his father", that is the one eaten by the helpers. This boy is left behind to stay with his mother. "We women do not touch this child. We give him a different name. We do not lay hold of him, or even touch anything that belongs to him; because you see we used to have respect to that man, and now we treat the boy also as if he were our father -

2. Hunter 1961: 228-9, and Hammond-Tooke 1962: 231 say that among the Mpondo and the Bhaca respectively it is a beast and not a goat that is killed and that it is called inkomo yokuhlamba (the beast of washing). Soga n.d.: 323 says the beast or goat of "washing of the hands", is the one offered at the time of mourning (uzilo). As usual details vary. See also Krige 1950: 165.

we pay him respect, because he buried a great person."

As a rule there is no delay in burial. A person dies, the grave is dug, and he is buried as soon as it is ready. After the goat of ihlaba has been eaten, the helpers return to their homes.

There are sometimes variations in details. A dead person's effects may be burnt instead of being buried with him, and if a burial takes place late in the day the goat yehlaba may be killed the following day.

When a man has died, a ceremony of mourning (izila) should be held for him, usually after an interval of a month or a year, or even longer.<sup>3</sup> Ukuzila means to mourn, but literally "to abstain from food". A beast will be killed, but it is not a sacrifice (idini): spirits are not invoked. All the meat must be eaten there at the homestead in one day - it must not be carried away. People say, "we are accompanying him on his way (siyamkhapha) we are sending him home (siyamgodusa)". These expressions are also used of eating the goat yehlaba at the burial. The izila ceremony is a sort of final ukugodusa, "so that he may not trouble those that remain (angakhathazi abahleliyo)".

After a lapse of a year or more, relatives of the deceased may suddenly wake up to the fact that he is fading from their thoughts and has not appeared to them in dreams since he died. Then they say it is necessary "to turn him around (ukumguqula)", that is to keep him from going altogether in a direction away from them, or "to bring him back (ukumbuyisa)", in a ceremony involving the sacrifice of a beast.

One man said it was done only for the owner of a homestead or one of his male relatives.

<sup>3</sup>. One informant said it could be on the day of the burial. See also Soga n.d.: 323.



Another, however, said it was done also for women, though on a reduced scale, there being brewing of beer but no killing of an animal for a woman. Furthermore, he said that whereas in the case of a man it was he himself who was turned about or brought back, in the case of women, as also of diviners, it was not they themselves but their amatyala (animal forms representing spirits) (Hunter 1936: 321). For a diviner each member of the family places two white beads on his, or her, grave in the presence of other diviners, to the accompaniment of beer drinking and dancing (ukuxhentsa).

This ukubuyisa, or ukuguqula, is done especially for someone who dies far away from his home. The head of the homestead addresses the people prior to the sacrifice, saying: "People of ours, in doing as we are doing we are bringing back So-and-So who died in battle or at the goldmines." The idea is that since the man died so far away, his spirit cannot find the way home, so he must be brought back by this rite.

It is also often done when a man moves away from his place of residence and builds a new homestead in another locality, "so that my father may not go looking for me, but may know that I am now at this place."

But, finally, it is also done equally as much for someone who has died at home and in the same locality, but who does not appear in dreams. This is the factor that determines that there must be an ukubuyisa ceremony. "We do not see him in dreams (esimboni emaphupheni)". This may be because the man died far away or his heir has moved residence, so that the spirit cannot locate his descendants; or it may be that he knows perfectly well where they are, but he and they are simply growing apart.

If after ukubuyisa there is again a time when the person

does not appear in dreams, the ceremony is repeated - but not in full. Beer is brewed, but no animal is killed.

Ukubuyisa is more strictly observed for one who was head of a homestead than for lesser persons, because as an ancestral spirit he can affect the well-being of his whole lineage (Cf. Krige 1950: 169-70).

Where a person has died violently, burial customs are affected considerably. The differences can best be brought out by discussion of a particular incident.

Near Nenga store is a home at which I had witnessed an intonjane ceremony. A fortnight later I was back for the burial of the girl's mother. This woman suspected a neighbour, whose husband was away at the mines, of having an affair with her own husband. He did not come home one night, so she hid a panga under her blanket early next morning and went over to her neighbour's home to have it out with her. Though her husband was not there, a quarrel soon rose, and in the ensuing melee it was the panga-bearer herself who was killed - with her own weapon.

They showed me the grave which they had prepared for her. It was a long way from the homestead, down a steep incline and across a rivulet, in a waste spot covered with long grass. This is the first difference. One who dies by violence (ingozi, danger, as the Tshezi say) or by accident (ukwenzakala) must be buried far from her home, lest the ingozi come there too. Ordinarily a woman would be buried behind her hut, or somewhere else nearby.

The grave was about five feet deep, with the usual depression in the bottom for the body. Here came another difference. Her body was laid in the ground with her back to her husband's homestead and her face turned away from it. In an ordinary burial a woman is buried facing her home,

while the head of the homestead is buried by his cattlefold facing his great hut. This burial with the back to the home is called ukufulatheliswa (to have the back turned upon).

A third difference is that the body must not be taken to the person's home (again lest the ingozi should come there), but straight from the scene of death to the grave. In this case the woman had been taken to hospital and died there. The van, awaited all afternoon, brought her body back late at night and stopped at the top of the ridge; but late as it was they carried her body straight down to the grave and buried it, making a circuit to avoid the homestead.

A fourth difference is that the women are not taken to the grave to place stones about it.

A fifth is that there is no killing of ibhokhwe yehlaba (the goat for washing off the grave soil).

And finally, there is no mourning. Immediately the relatives pass among the people, even attending beer-drinks as usual.

All this is not heartlessness towards the unfortunate deceased. It is aimed at discouraging the ingozi (which is almost personified in the imaginations of the people) from following up its relationship to the homestead. People say that if they mourn, the ingozi will feel it is loved and wanted, and so will visit the home again.

Similar differences apply in regard to death by drowning. The person is buried on the river bank, far from home, and no mourning is made lest the spirits who drew him under into the river be offended and cause more disaster. In a case of ingozi, mourning is to be avoided, lest it attract further mishap; in a case of drowning, it must be avoided, lest it offend the river spirits.

Women may not eat of the produce of a field in which



their husband's father was buried. Indeed they may not enter the field at all, even to work it, unless a goat is first of all sacrificed.

Then the following year the ceremony of "trampling the grave" must be performed for them before the harvest, or they will not be able to partake of it. A beast is sacrificed and beer brewed, and they are said to be "trampling the grave". After that they may eat and enjoy the freedom of the field. "They no longer hlonipha that place, but may walk close to it."

The Tshezi would have much sympathy with the Platonic concept of ideas except that they think not of Ideas but of Forces. There is a Supreme Being, who is the self-existent possessor of vital force, and He imparts force to all lesser beings. After him come the great founding fathers of clan and tribe, each a great force. Then follow all the ancestral spirits in their order of primogeniture. Finally there are those people now living on earth. There are also forces of lower orders of existence - animals, vegetables, minerals. The Tshezi concept of force as I understand it, has much in common with that of the people described by Father Placide Tempels (Tempels 1969: 61-64). But it must not be carried too far, as Father Tempels himself seems to realise when he warns against calling such people "dynamists" or "energists", "as if the universe were animated by some universal force, a sort of unique magical power encompassing all existence" (Tempels 1969: 53).

The Tshezi believe that forces are manifested in a variety of ways. For example, some people have a "shadow", a mysterious power whereby they are able to cast a spell

of awe and dread over others and command their obedience.<sup>4</sup> Particularly chiefs and diviners are often said to have it. "You meet someone and instinctively you fear him, even though you may never have seen him before. You draw back from him. You cannot look him directly in the eyes."

Such influence may be acquired or heightened by the use of "medicines", with which one washes the body, allowing them to dry on one.

It is also said to be acquired by killing people. "A man kills someone, then another and another. When he has killed, perhaps, four people, he will have a shadow."

Ellson, my assistant, said:

"A young man came to the Lagoon Hotel [at Coffee Bay], when I was a waiter there. He was servant to a white man from Johannesburg. Oh, how we feared that man [i.e. the servant]! He kept to himself very much - he never spoke to us - even the girls remarked on it and were afraid. If he looked at you, his gaze was so penetrating that you could not hold your eyes steady: you had to turn away. Somebody said: 'Oh, that man must have killed many people to have such an ithunzi!'"

Animals, too, may be the repositories of powerful forces, and as in the case of the "shadow", the Tshezi assessment of their power tends to reflect in many ways their social value.

There is a sacred herd of Tshezi-Bomvana cattle held to be of miraculous origin, regarded with awe, and carefully guarded at the great places of the chiefs, to be used only for ritual purposes. Actually the herd exists in two sections or in two separate herds: the Ndongolo and the Bolowane kept respectively at the "great place" of the chief of the Tshezi at Qhogi, and that of the chief of the Bomvana near Madwaleni in the Elliotdale district. Once

4. For the idea of a beneficent shadow, cf. the Bible: "They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Acts 5: 15.

they were one herd, as once the Tshezi and the Bomvana were one people, and were known probably by one name. But after Tshezi had moved out and headed a clan of his own, as right-hand sons do, and the Bomvana and the Tshezi had come to occupy separate territories, the herd was divided into two.

The sacred herd is held to be co-eval with the people themselves and its continuance to be vital to their well-being. Accordingly, one strand of tradition asserts that it was found by one, Nyokana, who was before even Bomvu, at a place called Gqili in Swaziland, and before that the cattle had come from the Tswana. All that, however, would have been long before the people were called either Tshezi or Bomvana.

More often, the cattle are said to have "come out of the river". They are "river cattle" (iinkomo zomlambo). This brings us again to the mysterious River People. Some aver that these are different from the ancestral spirits (izinyanya). Others tend to identify the River Folk with the ancestral spirits. Hunter says: "Xhosa speak of 'people of the river', whom some of them say are ancestral spirits..." (Hunter 1961: 264). This tendency to equate the two is pronounced when speaking of the river cattle.

As to the river from which they emerged, many say "from the Kukaphi", a river in Pondoland. But, before they fled to Pondoland the Tshezi and Bomvana lived in Zululand, and before that, apparently, in Swaziland. Tyelinzima, the Tshezi chief, told Cook that when his people moved down from Zululand, "they brought their cattle with them", and he was referring to the sacred herd (Cook n.d.: 121). It is held that the River People may move from one river after a long time and take up residence at another, just as earth people move their homesteads (ukufuduka). Perhaps then the



cattle were originally held to have emerged from a river in Swaziland (perhaps Gqili, above mentioned, was a river) and the ancestral spirits or River People moved from there to Kukhapi, when their earth folk came thither.

These sacred cattle are small like Jerseys, brown or dun in colour, having sharply pointed horns; they have long, slightly-reddish hair in their ears and a "beard"; and by nature they are said to be aggressive and turbulent and fond of fighting.

The Tshezi say the cows cannot be mounted by the bulls of other herds - indeed these cannot even approach them. Their own bull calves are castrated. Even if they were not, however, they would prove infertile (Cook n.d.: 126). These cows have to be impregnated by a bull from the river, which comes out at night to visit them, returning to the river before dawn. It is not confined to the Kukaphi, but may emerge from any river. "No one ever sees it, except those at the chief's great place who guard the cattle, and they will not tell. It is a great secret." One woman told me she believed she had seen it as a girl, however, and said it lived in a pool in the Nenga river. It was mud-coloured.

The Bororo, or Cow Fulani, of western Africa also believe they received their cattle from a certain local river.

"There is said to be a 'spirit' bull which lives on the inaccessible top of the tall, precipitous Wase rock, near the summit of which the Fulani aver there is a considerable pool of clear water. The bull is said to beget heifer calves, and to descend to the sandy plain at the foot of the rock on Thursday and Friday nights: all cows and heifers which he mounts on these nights will produce heifer calves ..... The legendary bull, being a 'spirit', does not, of course, age with the passing of time ..... Also in the Wase area is a pool which never dries up .... In this pool, also, is said to be a bull endowed with similar powers." (de St Croix in Jeffreys 1948: 182-187).

Bhoyana Mxambaniso, the diviner, said that, as other tribes had their venerated animals (lion, leopard, etc.), so had the Tshezi. "It is this thing that lights up in the river", and he encircled his eyes with his thumbs and fore-fingers, "the beast of the river (inkomo yomlambo), the bull of the Ndongolo, that emerges at night, It is their supreme ancestral spirit."

These cattle are herded by boys with other cattle and may be shouted at and beaten with sticks, as other cattle are. They need to be treated with certain "medicines", gathered and placed on embers to make a smoke to strengthen them and intensify their powers. This was done by order of the "people of the river". But the cattle were so menacing (Chief Danisile described them as "wicked", khohlakele) that the treatment was relinquished, lest it heighten their energies to the pitch where they killed people.

The Ndongolo may not be used for common purposes like bridewealth, nor may they be slaughtered for meat. Except as ritual offerings "to the river", they may be slaughtered only when they grow too old, and then on the chief's orders. Then the meat may be eaten only by men (any men, not only those of the chief's place) and by old women past child-bearing. People with any ceremonial uncleanness (umlaza) are not permitted to eat the meat, and this includes women who menstruate or young girls whose menses may be expected to be near. Milk of these cattle is also drunk only by men, or by small children and old women of the royal house.

These cattle have a protective relationship with the chief and his relatives. If some hidden evil menaces the royal people, they receive warning by the Ndongolo running in from the pasture and careering about the homestead, till the owner of the homestead comes out and shouts to them to

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These cattle are herded by boys with other cattle and may be shouted at and beaten with sticks, as other cattle are. They need to be treated with certain "medicines", gathered and placed on embers to make a smoke to strengthen them and intensify their powers. This was done by order of the "people of the river". But the cattle were so menacing (Chief Danisile described them as "wicked", khohlakele) that the treatment was relinquished, lest it heighten their energies to the pitch where they killed people.

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These cattle have a protective relationship with the chief and his relatives. If some hidden evil menaces the royal people, they receive warning by the Ndongolo running in from the pasture and careering about the homestead, till the owner of the homestead comes out and shouts to them to

stop. They do not want anything that is "not right" (enga-lunganga). " If they were shut in, they would break out of the cattle-kraal and run about the courtyard." "If a man had returned from an improper sexual tryst, or was a sorcerer, and the cattle saw him, they would chase him, even if they had to separate him from among others."

Their chief function, however, is to provide ritual offerings "to the river". Once this was done by the Tshezi "every fourth year in spring" (Hunter 1961: 258) as a security measure against incurring the displeasure of the ancestors. But it might be done also at any other time, and if it was shown to the chief in a dream that the "people" at the river wanted meat.

Many tribes have certain pools in rivers that are sacred to them for one reason or another (Cf. Hunter 1961: 259; Cook n.d.: 128). Ancestors may be buried thereabouts. A great chief may have "graduated to the river" as a diviner. Strange lights and eerie sounds may be held to indicate a haunt of ancestral spirits.

For Tshezi and Bomvana the historic sacred spot is at the Kukaphi river already mentioned. According to some, the pool is in a forest. Others speak of two pools, beside the river, the larger of which is called "the pool of the men" and the smaller "the pool of the women." Hunter was told that the Kukaphi was in eastern Pondoland (Hunter 1961: 259). All my informants placed it in western Pondoland, where the Tshezi-Bomvana lived before they came down over the Umtata river to occupy their present territories in the early nineteenth century. One said it was "just this side of Port St John's." Another located it in the same region when he said it was "between the Umzimvubu and the Umgazi." An old Bomvana told me it was west even of the

Umtakatyi river in Ngqeleni district, where the Tshezi who did not migrate live still.

When an offering "to the river" had been decided on by the chief,<sup>5</sup> careful preparations were made. An elderly woman was chosen to make many little bags or baskets of imizi.<sup>6</sup> When these were finished, she had to fill them each with various seeds of the Tshezi crops: maize, millet, pumpkins, etc. Then the mouths of the bags were sewn up.

Other women brewed quantities of beer at the chief's great place. All the wives showed respect by wearing headkerchiefs hanging down over their faces like brides.

When all was ready, the Ndongolo cattle set out, driven by men appointed by the chief. All of them had to be Tshezi, of course,<sup>7</sup> for this was a clan ritual, the most important of them all. They might drive the whole herd; or, if they were too many, take some of them; or, if the herd had declined greatly in numbers (for its numbers fluctuated) the Ndongolo might be accompanied by other cattle. The men took also the reed bags the old woman had prepared, and some of the beer. The beer at the chief's place might not be drunk till messengers returned from the river, nor might the people drink water. If someone was overcome by thirst, he might slake it with a little water mixed with mud.

The party travelled at night, its members resting with the cattle, concealed in the forests by day. When near Kukaphi they divested themselves of their blankets, which they hid in the forest, and went naked to the river, under cover of darkness. They put the little bags on the river bank, and then drove the cattle near, singing and beating sticks.

5. One old informant said the Bomvana and the Tshezi chiefs consulted together on it.

6. "A rush used for making sleeping mats". Kropf-Godfrey 1915: in loc.

7. And Hunter 1961: 257, adds: from "the chief's clan."



One of the Ndongolo was sure to go further than the rest in the direction of, or into, the pool and stand gazing into the water. "This is the one!" the men would exclaim. Then the river was said to surge upwards and engulf all the cattle, returning them again presently with one of them branded by having a portion of its ear clipped out. It proved to be the very one that had stood gazing into the water. (According to one informant the river returned new cattle in place of those taken, one of them branded for sacrifice).

This animal was then killed. The meat was cut up and piled neatly on the skin with the beer the men brought. As the men lifted their voices in song, the river was said to heave again, swallow up the meat and beer, and then return a portion of the meat to the bank for the men. They roasted it and ate it, and if any was left they destroyed it with fire, for it might not be carried away. Once more they sang, and for the last time the river rose and took everything away; horns, embers, ashes - not a vestige of the sacrifice was left.

The men departed, naked as they came, and picked up their blankets in the forest. They continued their homeward journey by night, sleeping in the forests by day. Driving the cattle before them, they arrived back at the chief's great place by night. A beast was killed for meat, but not one of the Ndongolo. A feast was made of the meat and of the beer at the homestead which awaited their return.

As usual there are variations of detail in narration. One says that when the river gave back the cattle, one of these had been slaughtered for the men by the River People or the spirits, and was replaced on the bank for them nicely cut and tied up (ibotshiwe). A Bomvane said that when they came home again, the men received from the chief

one of the sacred cattle to kill and eat for themselves, after they had washed and purified the chief with "medicines". And so on. But substantially the accounts are consistent with one another.

Hunter says: "The organization of the expedition ukinikela<sup>8</sup> illustrates how the chief of a clan, as its senior male relative, is its religious head. The ukinikela of the ama-Tshezi is a clan ceremony, which emphasizes clan solidarity and dependence upon the chief" (Hunter 1961: 263, 264). She says, too: "If commoners felt it necessary to make an offering to the river (ukunikela emlanjeni) they could only do so through their chief" (Hunter 1961: 256).

When commoners offered to the river, the same forms were observed, the head of the family choosing men from his own relatives and using his own cattle instead of the Ndongolo. "A woman could not go, even if she were the person who was sick."

All the indications are that this important tribal ritual has come to an end, and that the Ndongolo herd is almost, if not quite, extinct.

A reliable informant, whose appearance indicated that she was in her early sixties, said she had witnessed a departure of the Ndongolo for Kukaphi, when she was a girl of about eight. This would give us a date around 1916. On the other hand Danisile, the chief, said that the ritual had not been in his lifetime - that is, since at least 1940. This period 1916-1940 falls within the long chieftainship of Tyelinzima, during whose reign so many customs are said to have either declined or become extinct.

Fortunately, there is a contemporary written record that helps us. Hunter states that the Tshezi offered to the river in 1931. This may well have been the final occurrence of the ritual.

8. "To give to" the river.

Tyelinzima, the last great Red chief of the Tshezi, succeeded his father Phali about 1894-6. During his minority his older brother (of another house), named Gwidya, was regent of the tribe. He is said to have predicted that, after his death, the ritual would not be observed, "because this one, for whom I am acting, does not care about these things." "He was right", said my informant, who had these things from his father. "From Tyelinzima this essential custom (isiko) died out, and that is why our country has declined so much." It was not the sheep and the goats that were to blame for the shortness of the grass and the consequent scarcity of milk, he declared. It was the persistent droughts; and these in turn were a punishment for the cessation of the Ndongolo offerings at Kukaphi: "they don't give anything there any more." From a cow one got now only an utshebulane of milk, or an intshula, or even an igqwetha (three cans holding a gallon, a gallon-and-a-quarter and a gallon-and-a-half respectively), whereas a cow used to yield a full pail or more.

On the heels of neglect came, according to others, cupidity. From Tyelinzima's time on, say these people with indignation, the Ndongolo cattle have been - sold. If there are any stragglers left at all now, these have become so interbred with common cattle, that they retain little at all of their original character. "The bull of the river (inkunzi yomlambo) had long since ceased to visit them, in consequence of which they interbred with others and lost much of their physical appearance", said a grandson of Tyelinzima, a relative of the present chief. Another informant said it was rumoured that the royal clan were now trying to retrieve the situation by buying back the few cattle that were left, including one of them said to be



in the hands of a Tshezi man near Umtata.

According to Chief Danisile and a half-brother of his who was a headman, there are still seven of these cattle, though deteriorated from inter-breeding, at the Qhogi great place. Danisile arranged for me to photograph the Ndongolo cattle at his homestead, but when I arrived, they were not there. The reason given was that the present head of the Qhogi homestead was at loggerheads with Danisile and refused to let the cattle come.

In conversation with the chief and his secretary, one day, reference was made to several customs that had ceased to be observed. I said to them: "Why then, do you say that taking of these cattle to the river will not pass away - that it will yet again be done?" They answered: "Because it is our health (impilo).". In other words, though some customs might pass away without loss, this one was vital to the very life and well-being of the tribe. The conversation then proceeded as follows:-

Myself: "If ever it is done again, how will that come about?"

Jongezweni: "Perhaps there will come a great sickness. Tshezi from across the Umtata and from elsewhere will complain that this one and that one is sick and ask that something be done. Or some important member of the chief's family will sicken."

Danisile: "Yes, and it will be revealed to us in dreams."

Jongezweni: "That's right! The reigning chief will be told in a dream that the thing must be done."

Myself: "Or perhaps you will visit a diviner, and he will say it must be done."

Danisile and Jongezweni: "No! no! Absolutely not! This thing has nothing at all to do with diviners. It is a thing of the chief entirely. It will be revealed to him, when it must be done."

So hope "springs eternal" in some Tshezi breasts, but most seem resigned to the cessation of the custom. "There

are none of these cattle left, none at all", said one emphatically; and another: "they are finished utterly (tu! tu!)" "However," the latter continued, "they still take oxen to Kukaphi, though no longer Ndongolo, and slaughter one on the river bank. The River People are said to come in the night and take the meat away. It is done from time to time after some big sickness or other trouble like the murder of a man, when the diviner says the people yonder want an offering."

Though the Ndongolo have thus declined or disappeared altogether in Tsheziland, the Bolowane are said still to be numerous and flourishing in Bomvanaland.

## CHAPTER XV

### DIVINERS AND HERBALISTS

Although there are some differences between diviners and herbalists, one cannot draw too definite a line between them, or insist that only the latter are doctors. For diviners too use herbs as remedies and cure people thereby. The generic term for "doctor" (iggira) is applied to both diviners and herbalists (see Kropf's Dictionary in loc.) and also to hospital doctors and even, now, to Doctors of Divinity!

The Tshezi know nothing of a priestly clan or a tribal priest. The nearest approach to the latter was the old-time itola, an officiant whose duties included rain-making and "doctoring" the army to make it invulnerable in war. But the last itola of the Tshezi was Ngozi, who was also Tyelinzima's personal attendant in the matter of chief's medicines and who died in the lifetime of Tyelinzima, who himself died at a great age in 1954. It is therefore better to speak of diviners as ritual leaders or officiators rather than as priests who act as mediators between a deity and all comers.

Diviners, as such, do not offer priestly sacrifices at all. They diagnose that a certain sacrifice should be offered, and then the family or lineage head offers it; though diviners help with certain other ministrations and prayers.

Formerly, there was an order of professional men who prepared an impi for war; but under "white" rule war was forbidden. Similarly the iggira lemvula (the rainmaker) no longer functions. Two orders, however, are still active; diviners (amaggira) and herbalists (amaxhwele). In some ways these are like our diagnosticians and specialists respectively.

The herbalist, if he is not sure what ails his patient, may send him to a diviner, to make a diagnosis. He then treats the patient accordingly. On the other hand a diviner may have a patient whose ailment is simple and merely needs herbal remedies. The diviner, who is too busy propitiating ancestral spirits or foiling sorcerers, may then send him to the herbalist for treatment. Diviner and



herbalist cooperate. Bayancedisana, "they help each other", it is said.

Diviners are distinguished by two different methods of procedure. Some are amaggira awokuvumisa ("doctors who prompt assent"). These put a number of leading questions to the group who have come to consult them, such as: "You have come to see me about a pig?" "About a horse?" "About a child?" The groups seated in a semicircle before the diviner keep up a continuous rhythmic clapping of hands, and after each question they answer, siyavuma ("we assent"). It is like a game of "cold" and "hot". The people unconsciously show excitement as the diviner gets near the truth, until he guesses right. "It is a child." Now what is wrong with the child? "It is lost." No. "It is ill." The clapping is louder, and the cries of siyavuma more excited. He has got it. Now, who has bewitched the child? The group have most likely come, already biased in their minds against someone. By shrewd questioning the diviner "smells out" the unfortunate one. From this came the old name for such diviners, izanuse, from ukunuka, to smell, to follow a scent; but one seldom, in fact almost never, hears this word in Tsheziland today.

The other class of diviners are amaggira awombelelayo, from ukombela, to dance and sing and clap hands as an accompaniment to a diviner's ministrations. This method seems commoner than the other, and I attended three such diviners' dances. The diviners, some male, some female, were beautifully ornamented with white beads. I did not see the things that characterised the old-time pictures of "witch-doctors", that is skirts of monkey-tails, inflated ox-bladders in the hair, necklaces of horns, claws and so on. White is the diviners' colour. They wear white blankets and great quantities of white beads, with a chaplet of such beads around the head and long strings of them dangling from it as a marked feature. The diviners were attractive and their demeanour gracious and appealing. As they sang their

incantations to the spirits, they were accompanied by the head of the homestead, relatives and friends from the neighbourhood, and by other diviners or neophytes who were "studying" under them. They danced and sang with hands and arms upraised, often with movements of much grace and beauty, the men holding their sticks upright. In one dance I saw, the sick person danced in the midst of a group with upraised arms, while the rest, including the diviners, hovered about her with gestures of tenderness and solicitude. In another the woman diviner, with agility and grace, led the dancers in a long single file that snaked in and out amid the huts all around the homestead, sometimes doubling back on its own track. In all these doctors' dancing rituals ukuxhentsa is a prominent feature - the dancing up and down in one spot, on toes and heels, with muscles made to ripple all up and down the torso. All this is to invoke the spirits to help, and bless, and heal.

Illness not due to "natural causes", as is a cold, for instance, or any other slight indisposition (umkhuhlane), is thought to be sent by the Creator, or by the ancestral spirits, or it may be the work of malign though unseen beings. For, if there are friendly spirits, there are also beings of malevolent nature: vindictive spirits and witches who employ familiars. These will be discussed in the chapter on witchcraft and sorcery.

The Tshezi have a synoptic world-view, a total concept of existence, very much as Christian Scientists have. The meat and beer of their ritual feasts are to them something like the bread and wine of the Eucharist to Christian people - sacred symbols of a spiritual fellowship not only with living kin in family and tribe, but with unseen kin in the world of spirit that is ever near them. Thus, a discussion of the activities of diviners and herbalists complements what I have said in the previous chapter about religious beliefs.

The process of becoming a diviner begins with a dream

or dreams, usually of a terrifying nature. The ghost (umshologu) of a deceased person appears to someone in nightmares, "calling" him or her to become a diviner. Hence the process itself of becoming a diviner, or the person undergoing it, is often called umshologu. Umshologu means "one who is sick to become a diviner", said some of my informants, while others declared simply "umshologu is ukuthwasa" (to fall "sick") as a novice diviner.

After this call in dreams the person usually goes into seclusion for a while by a river or in some other remote spot. Mongameli, a very old diviner among the Tshomane, thus described his experience:-

"I dreamt I was going to a cave first, under some spekboom trees. [He subsequently found the cave by day and recognised it]. While I was at that cave, I got lost one night, and there came wild creatures which lay on top of me. They flapped their ears - they had trunks [Elephants]. They gave me power to discern the leaves of trees. [That is, to understand those with medicinal properties.] So I grew sick. In my sickness I became a thief going to steal calabashes [of milk] yonder at home. I stayed at the cave, but brought the calabash there to tip it to my lips. When it was empty, I would take it back and put it in its place.

"On a day when people came to fetch me away, I lost my reason and became mad. My own father said: 'Leave him: let him stay there in the cave.' So I was left and lived on in the cave.

"One night people came, who were the Qhakancu [Hottentots or Bushmen]. They stood in a row before me. One stepped out from the rest and prophesied, saying: 'We say, do like this; we Qhakancu say, do like this.' I responded in agreement with these Qhakancu.

"I suddenly realised what it was the Qhakancu had come there for. They had come for dagga: they wanted to find out where dagga could be found. Since I had been a long time in that cave, did I not know where dagga occurred?

"I revealed the place by divination, saying, 'it is at Lusikisiki.'

"After that it happened that medicinal herbs began to be revealed to me, which I pounded and prepared for the sick, who were indicated to me as I slept. Well, it came about, that I saw that a person who had been ill recovered. So I administered medicine to one person as a drink, to another as a lotion, to yet another as an enema. When I did that, suddenly they would return to health and strength. The end of it all was, that I found myself become a diviner. What was I then? I was a neophyte [Lit., a "boy"]



(inkwenke). A neophyte is also called isigogo]. But though I was but a neophyte, I was none-the-less a diviner.

"I stood apart from the things indulged in by other children and became a recluse, impelled thereto by my being a diviner, until the important crisis (ixabiso) came of my circumcision. When circumcised, I separated myself entirely from all youthful immaturities.

"I worked hard at divination and healing; and when I applied remedies wherever I went, concentrating on this matter of the sick, the person to whom I gave medicine was cured.

"In that dream if a person was barren and I gave her those medicines which I had been shown when I slept in the cave, that person, who had been barren, conceived and bore children. I have people like that even here in this country and now that I am old."

In order to become a diviner, a person spends a considerable time training under another diviner. Before this, the neophyte has a white goat killed for him (or her). The ceremony is called ukuvuma ukufa, "to consent to die", "because one may resist, or one's people may be opposed". The killing of the white goat signifies the consent of all to the person's becoming a neophyte. In the speech made before the goat is killed it is said that "this child consents to die". It is called "dying", because ukuthwasa is regarded as a state of real illness in which the person dies to an ordinary way of life and is re-born as a diviner. To resist is perilous. A half-demented man who died at Coffee Bay while I was there, and who used to go about the country ringing a handbell, talking to himself, hanging white rags on poles and swearing at people, was said to have come to that condition by resisting the call to become a diviner - akavum' ukufa, "he will not consent to die".

But preceding and following this ritual of consent there are other things to be done. Mphandeni, a diviner in Tsheziland, elucidated:-

A person begins by having the Xhosa sickness [umbilini wesi Xhosa, lit. "the inward distress of the Xhosa", a condition of fear and anxiety, regarded as a sure sign that a person is being summoned by ancestral spirits to become a diviner]. It is found that he cannot be treated by a herbalist or a hospital

physician. He cannot come right unless he is treated by a "white doctor" [Fully-fledged diviners, who are distinguished by the wearing of white bead-work, are called "white doctors"]. When he is treated by such a doctor, he will begin to see things [i.e. in dreams] for himself.

When he is going to be treated, a can is bought for him by his family in which all his medicines will be prepared for him. The first medicine is that for initiation, which he keeps lapping while being treated. [He must not lift the can with his hands - it must rest on the ground and he must lap its frothy contents with his tongue like a dog].

The first thing he will see, when things begin to appear to him, will be Xhosa beer. Again there will appear a white bead called icamagu. Once more there appears an ubulunga necklace plucked from the tail of a cow [the ubulunga cow of his mother] and decked with white beads.

There follows the goat of agreeing to be sick (ukuvuma ukugula), this goat being eaten with beer and with white beads of consent, all these things having previously been "shown" to this person.

"White beads of consent" alludes to the fact that the person who is undergoing ukuthwasa sits on a mat in the courtyard, after dancing by the diviners, and every member of his (or her) family in order, down to the smallest toddler, comes and places two white beads from a common pile into the palm of his hand. He puts all the beads aside to be made into a special necklace or necklaces for him to wear as a diviner. The ceremony of the beads is called ukuruma, i.e. to support by a contribution. It signifies the family's consecration of a member to the office of a diviner and their willingness to supply him with the things needed for his office. Then follows the ritual drinking of beer by the neophyte and all his relations, and then a general beer-drink of the family and all friends and visitors who may have turned up. Later comes the sacrifice of a "beast to reveal sickness" (inkomo yokuthyila ukugula), i.e. so that the ancestral spirits may give the emergent diviner clairvoyant powers enabling him to diagnose the sicknesses of others. The sacrifice is accompanied with beer and the giving of white beads, making a graduation party, when the status of doctor (igqira) is conferred upon him by the

diviner who was coaching him. All the diviners present perform the ukuxhentsa dance and many diviners' songs are sung. However it is said "the sickness of a diviner never ends" - he keeps on "seeing" things he must do to please the spirits.

Neophytes often exhibit mental distress, so that they keep crying out. People then have to hold them and give them their medicine to lap up, and they have to perform on their behalf the songs and dances of diviners. The process of becoming a diviner is attended by much sickness, including, in particular, a severe pain in the side (ihlaba, lit. a stabbing). Near the Gxwa'oni forest in Tsheziland I saw a homestead with a wood-and-grass shelter a few yards away just like the lodge I have described in connection with male initiation ceremonies. It was for a neophyte who was "sick". He lived in seclusion in this lodge. No one went in unless he was heard crying out with pain, whereupon someone would try to see if he could do anything to help. The neophyte need not be quite alone. His wife or a close friend may stay with him. But strangers and more distant relatives do not come there. He has his medicines with which to anoint himself (ukupehlelela).

Ellson Mathi, a Ngqika born and reared among the Thembu, described how his sister became a diviner.

"About 1953, while she was still at school, aged 12 years, she suddenly went queer in the head. She could not proceed with her lessons, and when the teachers spoke to her she did not reply. She got up, and, being afraid of the people, she ran away, and when the teachers questioned her she ran again. They told the other children to go after her. She was caught by boys a long way from school. The teachers sent to call her parents, who took her home, and when she got there she behaved in the same manner. They took her to the diviner, who said she was sickening to become a diviner too.

"They asked Rorwana, the diviner, to treat her. Two cans were bought for her, one for medicines, the other for her beer, so that whenever beer should be brewed at home and she should be visiting there [from Rorwana's place, where she stayed about two years under instruction and treatment as a neophyte] she should have beer in her own can. Her can would be



filled and she would drink first, before the rest of the family could. Then she would take her empty beer can back to Rorwana's when she returned.

"After she had been given her two iibhekile cans, a goat was killed yokuvuma ukugula ("to agree to the sickness" i.e. to consent to her becoming a diviner). From its wet skin thongs were cut, with the long hair still on them, for her to wear around her arms and ankles. After that another goat was killed, the skin of which was for a sleeping mat for her.

"This sickness to be a diviner came not from her grandmother simply, or from her grandfather, as some say, but from her ancestral spirits collectively.

"The goat whose skin provided her with a mat is sometimes called the goat to enlighten death (ibhokhwe yokukhanyisa ukufa).

"When the diviner had finished treating her [the whole period of ukuthwasa covered about three years], he brought her back to live in her own home again. It was said: 'The camagu ancestral spirit has agreed - let her return home.' And the song the diviners sang that day said likewise: 'The camagu has agreed - let her return home.' That day a beast was killed at her home, and there was beer. After that she was a diviner and worked for herself. The diviner that treated her was given a beast.

"Now, if beer is brewed at her home, they still fill up her can first. It is put aside, at the place she occupies in the hut. Then she drinks with family and friends from the other cans. Meanwhile her own can remains untouched for two days. On the third day she drinks from it first, then the people of her family in any order. If she is away the practice of filling her can first and putting it aside is still observed. On the fourth day her father (if he were dead, it would be his son) takes her place in drinking first. Only the family drink with her from her can."

Bhoyana Mxambaniso is a very renowned diviner of Gcaleka origins from Bomvanaland. His account of his initiation contained some new elements. His ukuthwasa started when he was a lad, before he was circumcised. The "sickness" seized him suddenly one day.

"My ears seemed suddenly to open, so that I could hear every little sound. My eyes too opened and I saw everything. Then I was taken with the most griping pains in the stomach, so that I yelled and ran away - as if I could escape it like that! - but I was silly in the head. They caught me and brought me back. Then doctors came and gave me medicines - powder to inhale and other medicines to swallow.

"Later I was taken to the sea. I threw two white beads into the sea, and each of the diviners followed, throwing in two white beads. Then I went in with the diviners and we bathed in the water.

"From there we went home and did the idlankomo

dance and song. Beer was brewed and we killed a white goat. I received the intsonyama meat and the right foreleg of the goat, and they poured its gall over my head and I rubbed it on my head and shoulders. I took skin from the face of the goat and tied this around my wrists. I tied skin from the two forelegs of the goat around my upper arms. The meat was eaten and the beer drunk. Medicine was prepared in a can and was made to froth with a whirling stick, and I lapped it (ukurabula), crying Camagu! - Then I got well again."

Another form of ukuthwasa is by means of an ancestral spirit that appears in dreams as some wild creature or other thing, and which the Tshezi call ityala. The Tshutsha clan, who live among the Tshezi, claim seven amatyala in whose guise their most important ancestral spirits appear to them. These are:-

Umoza emiqhokrwani: "the wind of rocky places".

Onomyayi: "black crows".

Iinyamakazi ezity' umbona: "the animals that eat the maize", i.e. monkeys.

Iinyosi: "bees".

Amahlamvu emehlweni: "small leafy branches before the eyes", i.e. a leopard, which peeps between the leaves of the forest.

Umlilo: "fire".

elentaba, elinomboko: "of the mountain, having a trunk", i.e. an elephant.

These seven are the guardian spirits (izihlwale) of the Tshutsha especially. "Each spirit has its own medicine" (ityala ngalinye lineyeza lalo). There were many other lesser spirits, they said, which were not amatyala.

Members of other clans hold that other animal forms used by spirits include the python (ugqoloma) and the lion (ingonyama). There have been no lions or elephants, and probably no pythons either, in Tsheziland for many years - hardly within the lifetime of any living Tshezi; yet the belief in their occasional appearance, even apart from dreams, lives on in the minds of some of the people. It is a matter of ukuhlonipha not to mention the names of the ityala forms directly, especially the larger ones, but to refer to them by oblique allusions, as is done in the cases of the leopard and the elephant in the above Tshutsha list.

Bhoyana, the diviner, would not refer directly to the elephant when talking to me, but placed his forefinger on either side of his mouth pointing downwards to indicate tusks.

The spirits that appear as amatyala are those of famous deceased diviners. When one of these appears in a dream to call someone else to the profession of a diviner, the neophyte is said to -thwasa to that ityala. It thereafter continually reappears and is said to be his or her (the neophyte's) ityala. So one may -thwasa to the lion, or the elephant, or the leopard. "Amatyala are the askings of people who are dead" (zizicelo zabantu abafileyo); "so that, if a person gets sick, it will happen when you go to the diviner, that he will say, it is the amatyala of your people, who are asking for a certain thing [such as a sacrifice] and so you provide that thing."<sup>1</sup>

Then there is ukuthwasa "to the river". But to understand that we must know about the belief in "the people of the river" (abantu bomlambo).

The Tshezi, like the Tshomane and the Thembu, believe in the existence of a mysterious "people" who live under the rivers. "They have homesteads like ours and beautiful cattle." "Yes, they have fowls and pigs too - indeed there is nothing they do not have." "It is beautiful there."

Drownings are the doing of the people of the river, who summon earth people to join them in their abode. "When someone sinks under the water (utshonile) we say he has been called (ubiziwe) by the river folk." "There is no weeping (akulilwa), or the river folk will be angry, and kill him. Otherwise he will return."

It is said that "every people has its own river". The Nyawuza are said to have theirs somewhere in Pondoland. The Tshezi have theirs at Kukaphi - also in Pondoland, where

1. Cf. for the Mponds, Hunter 1961:321-2. Hammond-Tooke does not find it among the Bhaca, (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 248.)



they once dwelt. The river of the Lungu clan is the sea, because the two shipwrecked white men from whom they trace their descent emerged from the sea. However diviners may -thwasa to any river; for the River Folk are present under all rivers - if they are rivers large enough for people to drown in them.

According to Chief Danisile's court, those diviners who -thwasa at rivers get their summons from the River People. They go down into the rivers and are said to stay under water for about four days at a time. While "under the river", they are being instructed in divination by the River Folk. They are told to come back from time to time for further instruction. Through these diviners the River People then have contact with earth folk. They call a diviner and give a message for him to pass on to the people in the upper world.

Bhoyana said wistfully that only some are favoured to become diviners by being called to the river. "They go there, go into the water and remain under the water as long as may be necessary to learn to be diviners." When they emerge again, they are fully-fledged members of their profession and need not go through all the other rites and processes required for other diviners, when they -thwasa.

One of the most famous of Xhosa Chiefs, Gcaleka, graduated "to the river". (See Soga 1930:142-144).

According to some, the River People are not the same as the ancestral spirits (izinyanya). They differ from them (1) in being visible sometimes and (2) in having straight, soft hair.

The best account of the River People is by Laubscher (Laubscher 1937: 1-7). He says that, according to the Thembu, a river 'person' is half human half fish, with a beautiful head of flowing hair which it dries in the sun while sitting

on a rock, but that it quickly dives into the water when an earth person appears.

I shall now describe some diviners' seances (iintlombe and izisusa) that I saw and comment on them.

The first was a ceremony of ukuruma, such as I have already alluded to. I witnessed this in Tshomaneland in July, 1968.

A woman diviner and her several neophytes were observing the ritual on behalf of one of these neophytes named Noti, who was of this homestead, belonging to a man called Jinoyi. Jinoyi, however, was dead, and Gwebixhala, his son, was now head of the homestead.

When I arrived, from attending another seance, it was to find the dance of the diviners being brought out from a hut into the courtyard. Here the usual ukuxhentsa dancing took place in a circle, with one senior man being particularly agile in the muscular rippling of the torso (ukutyityimba). The singing and dancing were accompanied with a drum (a metal barrel, the ends of which had been knocked out and filled with oxhide instead).

Then the diviner in charge made three of the neophytes sit on a mat in the midst of the circle, with Noti in the middle. A quantity of white beads, bought by her brother Gwebixhala at a trader's store, was placed on a mat in front of her. Now, at the bidding of the diviner, her relatives came, and in silence each handed her two of the white beads from the little mat. She put them on one side. The beads would afterwards be made up into a necklace for her to wear as part of her professional attire.

Then followed the equally solemn and silent drinking of ritual beer to the ancestral spirits, praying to them to bless Noti. The relatives drank from the beer can in the

following order: First Noti, then her brother Gwebixhala as head of the family, then their uncle (uyise omncinci, "little father") Riyolisile, then Matshona, younger classificatory brother (umninawe) of Gwebixhala, and then the sisters (odade) of Gwebixhala and Riyolisile, then the little children of this extended family, and finally the wives of Gwebixhala, of Riyolisile, and of a younger brother of Riyolisile who was not himself present.

With this the ceremony concluded, and the people broke up into groups for beer-drinking.

The dance of the diviners for Mantizi was a gathering of sixty to eighty people. Four other diviners were present besides her father, Mongameli, and were decked out in white beads. With other persons, they formed a circle, dancing about the sick woman, who herself danced with them. The men held sticks, and the women danced with their hands upraised, the palms outward. They danced mostly in one of the huts round the hearth, but they also came outside and danced in a circle in the courtyard for a time.

At other times they sat in the hut drinking beer, clapping their hands and singing songs. I noted that the front of the hut was occupied by women sitting on either side of the door, while the men sat at the back. It is said that at these gatherings the diviners are a law unto themselves, so that they need not observe rules as to seating etc. as others are supposed to do.

Mongameli said that as soon as they began searching for a white goat for the sacrifice (for there was no such animal in his possession) his daughter began to recover (ukuvuka). She had previously lain prostrate and listless, very thin and indisposed. Certainly, though still emaciated, she showed no listlessness now, but threw herself into the



dancing, which was so vigorous that some of the diviners perspired and panted. Some weeks later I saw her again and was astonished to note how improved she appeared to be in health.

One often reads of diviners in the old days wearing "skirts" of monkey tails about their loins. But Mongameli's "skirt" (umthika) was of strips of cow-hide with the hairy side outwards, and it was the only thing of the sort I saw anywhere in 1968. Over his head, when he is officiating, is suspended a cloth banner with the words: Nanko uGqira wabantsundu nguGwal'lomoya ngunyana kaDlalibombo eMqanduli kwesikaDalingozi. ("Here is the doctor of the dark-skinned people, it is Gwal'lomoya, son of Dlalibombo, at Mqanduli, at Dalingozi's area").

At another homestead in the same tribal region I witnessed another isisusa for the "casting away, or burning of beads" (ukulahlwa, or ukutshiswa kwentsimbi).

When a diviner dies, his beads are kept, until the head of his homestead kills a goat and prepares beer and invites other diviners (former friends and associates) to come and destroy the beads. Ordinarily it is done any time from a month after the death. In the case I witnessed, the diviner (a woman) had died six years before at her home some little distance away. Her son had been unable to attend to this matter for lack of a goat and of maize for the beer. In the meantime he had moved his home to the new site where it was done.

At daybreak the invited diviners took all the dead woman's beads to a spot some distance from the homestead and burnt them. After lighting a fire on the veld they took beadwork of all kinds, item by item, broke it in pieces and threw it on the fire. A dead diviner's beads must never be

Diviners' Dance

At the destruction  
of a deceased  
diviner's beads  
(pp. 289-290).

Diviners and  
Relatives Dancing

in hope of the cure  
of a member of the  
homestead, for whom  
a sacrifice has been  
offered (pp. 288-  
289).

allowed to fall into the hands of others, who may be ill-disposed and use them for sorcery. This makes it very difficult for collectors to buy genuine doctor's beads.

Later that day a goat was killed "just for meat".

This was the day for the intlombe. An isisusa is a gathering of diviners for which beer is brewed. It includes intlombe, which means simply the dancing. If there is no beer provided, it may be just an intlombe or something else, but it is not an isisusa.

The chief doctor present was uMarasi, a woman. Richly bedecked with beads, she led the singing and dancing in one of the huts. There was the usual ring around the fireplace in the middle of the floor, the uplifted sticks, the circle of spectators seated around the wall, chanting with the dancers and clapping their hands. Presently the group "came out" into the courtyard, led by Zwelandile, head of the homestead, and a group of men. Marasi was very obviously in charge and looked up to by all. She had her own daughter for a neophyte.

After dancing in the courtyard, the whole group formed into single file and followed her in snakelike undulations between the huts and all around the homestead, Marasi sometimes doubling back on her tracks. Then they returned to the hut in which the dancing had begun.

The afternoon ended with beer-drinking.

Mphandeni a Tshezi diviner near Coffee Bay explained why an isisusa was being held at his place.

"The origin of this gathering was a great man - my grandfather - who appeared in my dreams. He appeared in this manner: I dreamt I was carrying my doctor's assegai. I met with an incamazana (an animal), which I stabbed with my assegai. The wound was under the ear.

"This incamazana then turned into a man and spoke - it was my grandfather. He said, 'Why do you stab me?' I answered and said, 'I ask forgiveness, I did not realise it was you. I thought it was an incamazana.' So I spoke. I said he should come and let me pour



medicine into the wound, so that he might recover. His answer was, 'Could you make me well? Could you make me well?' He kept repeating the query.

"I did not reply - I already knew the thing I had to do to seek forgiveness. I brewed beer, I killed this goat for appeasement, and I called other diviners to come and sleep here and dance."

Such a diviners' gathering usually occupies two days, on the first of which the sacrifice is eaten and the beer drunk, and on the second the diviners' dance (ukuxhentsa) takes place.

Another isisusa among the Tshezi was kwaNdatsha (at Ndatsha's homestead) near Zithulele mission. No fewer than 25 diviners and neophytes were present, one of the oldest of them wearing a cap of some wild animal skin - another feature seldom seen any more. The purpose was to cure a daughter of this homestead, herself a diviner, who had been mentally distressed for five years. She was short and hump-backed, but wore the white beads of a fully-fledged diviner. Matunzana, as her name was, had graduated under a diviner who had not finished the business properly, and that was why she had been sick all these years. When Bhoyana had taken over and was now making her well (ukuphilisa) in her sixth year. He had treated her first at her husband's homestead as it was believed to be his ancestral spirits that were troubling her. But her own ancestral spirits had appeared to her in dreams, showing her that they were involved too, so now he was helping her to propitiate them at her father's homestead.

The previous year a white goat had been sacrificed for her here, and the day before I came its "bones had been burnt". This phrase is sometimes purely formal, meaning the winding-up of an affair, and not necessarily the literal burning of bones. On the day of my visit, there was dancing and drinking of ritual beer. There was no killing, except for some fowls for the diviners. The following year an ox

would be offered.

Dancing was in the huts, round and round the fireplace, in the usual anti-clockwise direction. Every now and then the sick woman would call "Camagu!" whereupon the dancers would stop and she would address the company, telling some detail of her illness and thanking the diviners and the people assembled for their help in the present ceremonies. As usual, everyone murmured camagu at the end of each sentence. In one speech she broke down and wept.

Then they moved outside, and with a crowd of men before them and women in the background, the diviners danced for some time. Then Bh-yana and other men discussed the division of beer, and the day and all its ceremonies ended with the beer-drinking.

At Thayamile's homestead, near Mount Packard mission in Tsheziland, there was another isisusa of several diviners organised by a woman diviner, Makhamu. It was for Mantlome who had the ukuthwasa sickness. It was exactly like that at Ndatsha's: a white goat had been killed for Mantlome two years before but its "bones were burned" only the day before, and on this day there was the ukuxhentsa dancing of the diviners in the hut, with the putting on of full regalia and beads (ukubingqa) before going out to the yard. Then followed the beer drinking, and the following year a beast would be sacrificed for Mantlome. The hut of the diviners, I observed, had grass on the floor all around the walls with mats over it for sitting and sleeping, the centre of the floor being left bare for cooking and dancing.

One of the diviners' songs in these affairs is as follows:-

Athi, icamagu livumile, ho-ha-ho, ho-ha-ho,  
Athi, icamagu likaTata, ho-ha-ho, ho-ha-ho,  
Malibuyele ekhaya, malibuyele ekhaya!

They say, the camagu has agreed, ho-ha-ho,  
They say, the camagu of Father, ho-ha-ho  
Let it come home, let it come home.

Icamagu means an ancestral spirit. It also sometimes means the animal that is sacrificed to propitiate the spirit (or spirits).

When I asked, if the words malibuyeke ekhaya ("let it come back home") had reference to the ceremony of ukubuyisa after a person dies, I was told, "No! that is quite a separate thing. This means that the ancestral spirit had turned his back on his living descendants in anger - like this [and my informant turned her back on me, with uplifted hands, to indicate the averted aspect of the ancestor]. Malibuyeke ('let it come back') means let it be like this [and she turned to face me with smiles], that is let the spirit return and be favourable again to his people. This is called 'to turn' (ukugugula) the spirit - to turn it around, to make it change its mind."

#### A Tshutsha Clan Ritual

The close relationship between "religion", "divination", and "medicine" and the complementary roles of religious functionaries and diviners, is well illustrated by an interesting series of rites of the Tshutsha clan.

At the home of Bhekumthetho above Coffee Bay, there was an isisusa samatyala, a gathering to placate the ancestral spirits (those appearing in animal form) of the Tshutsha clan. Bhekumthetho was the son of Nokengane, son of Sinaphule (or Naphula), son of Mjikeliso, son of Tyeba, son of Ngqengqa; and it was said to be Ngqengqa's ityala in particular who was troubling them.

When I arrived at 9.30 on a Friday morning - for these ceremonies usually take place at a weekend - I found that a diviner was in charge of the ritual. His name was Bhoyana Mxambaniso and he was already present with three neophytes. He was a member of the Tshawe, the royal clan of the Xhosa



people, and had been brought from his home at umDwara in Bomvanaland, because he was highly regarded and this was a very important ritual.

For thirty years and more many of the Tshutsha people had been troubled with recurring sickness. Babies died without apparent cause; and the birthrate itself was held to be quite below normal. "Our men may even have children by mistresses (amankazana), but when they go in to their own wives, these do not conceive." Some 28 years previously, on advice of a diviner, a bull had been sacrificed at the home of Mjikeliso, the then clan head; but the troubles continued. Some eight years later another ritual killing was made, when Gezenga had succeeded Mjikeliso. This time an ox was sacrificed. Now, the troubles still persisting, recourse had been had to this diviner, Bhoyana. He had ordained the present clan sacrifice at the Tshutsha great house, the head of which was now Bhukumthetho, a young waiter at an East London hotel, who had come home to be present for the ceremony. Bhoyana diagnosed that the sacrifice must be that of a bull "that had never been castrated" (ergazange yophe, lit. "that had never bled"). This had been the weakness of Gezenga's sacrifice. It had been an ox. It must be a bull - and all of one colour.

Only members of the family and a few others were present when I arrived. During the morning, the rest kept coming in groups of twenty or thirty each. The women carried buckets and cans of beer on their heads. They came, singing and chanting. In front of them and beside them, the men danced and beat sticks. As soon as a new group approached the homestead, the home people went out to meet it, the diviner and neophytes in front. Chanting and beating sticks, they led the group into the courtyard and to the door of a hut. Here the women carried their contributions of beer inside. The song with which they were greeted and brought in was:-

Taruni, maMpondo, bayekeni!

Yehake, maMpondo!

Have mercy, Mpondo, leave them alone!

Really, you Mpondo!

Before the door of the hut one of the men addressed the diviner: "Guide us, sir, and show us all things. Do not grow weary. Uphold us, just as you explained things to us before. We went and fetched you, so that you might show us once more" (Sikhokele, nkosi, usibonise yonk' into. Unga-  
dinwa. Usiqingqise, njengoko wawusibonisile ngaphambile.  
Siye sakuthatha, ukuba uzokusibonisa kwakhona). Bhoyana replied: "You are right, O man of the Tshutsha, because this thing we are doing is a beautiful thing. It is desirable, that even a person at a distance should see that something is being done there among the Tshutsha. We are bringing back the spirits today" (Unyanisile, mfo wakwaTshutsha, kuba  
le nto siyenzayo yinto entle. Kufuneka nomntu ekude abone  
ukuba kukho into eyenziwayo phaya kwaTshutsha. Sibuyisa  
imimoya namhlanje).

People began to be negligent about going out to meet and bring back the incoming parties. Gwebixhala, a leader of the home party, exhorted them: "People of ours, do not get tired. Every time a beer-can approaches, a person should rise up and join us to meet them. The sun will set with us still doing this, and tomorrow's sun too. It is undesirable that anyone should say: 'No, as for me, I am tired'. Now, let us keep doing this, even though we get swollen feet" (Bantu bakuthi, maningadinwa. Umntu, lonke  
ixesha kukho ibhekile ezayo, makaphakame sibahlangabeze.  
Kwakutshona ilanga sisenza le nto, nelangomso. Akufuni  
mntu uthi, Hayi, mna ndidiniwe. Ngoku siza kudumbha  
inyawo sisenza le nto).

In the diviners' hut, under the watchful eye of Bhoyana himself, the medicines for the purification of the clan members were being prepared. Several very large

three-legged pots, together with some large cans or tins, stood there filled with water. The neophytes had gathered the "medicines" from the forest. There were two varieties principally: uzindwendwe, which I was unable to identify, but which made what the diviner described as "the lotion of the guardian spirits" (ubulawu bezihlwele)<sup>2</sup>, and gobeliweni (the agapanthus), which made "a lotion for purification" (isihlambezo). To make the lotions the plants were stripped of foliage and bark and were then mashed and ground to pulp by a clansman, using the grindstones with which women grind maize. The "medicines" were then put into the various pots and tins. I noticed that one of these was already covered with a layer of white foam. Bhoyana said this was induced by the addition of a third preparation, which he called isihlambezo samadobo, "the lotion of the long grass". (Identity unknown, and diviners seemed unwilling to show me the whole plant but only peeled portions or roots of it.) He took a forked switch and thrust the fork of it down into the pot. Then he twirled the other end rapidly between the palms of his hands. This had the effect of stirring the mixture into a veritable lather of foam. Some of the contents of this pot were then transferred to other vessels around.

About 1.30 p.m., when all things were in readiness and most of the people had arrived, the men and boys were all summoned into the cattlefold. Women sitting by one of the huts, whence they could see into the kraal, were ordered to move away. Then the men and boys all stripped naked and lined up to approach Bhoyana and his assistant doctors, who stood in the centre of the fold with quantities of the lotions in containers at their feet. Bhukumthetho came first followed by his little son. Next would have come

2. Isihlwele, a group of guards, like a chief's retinue; hence the spirits regarded as guardians.



other sons of the great house had there been any; but there was said to be only one, and he was away at the mines. So there came next the heads and their sons and brothers of each of the other Tshutsha houses. All knelt one by one before Bhoyana, who poured quantities of the purifying water over their heads and shoulders, so that it ran down their bodies, and they spread it all over themselves with their hands. Even the smallest children were thus purified. After the fathers had put on their clothes and blankets again, they went out to collect the male infants from their mothers' arms and brought them in to be washed. One mite seemed no more than a fortnight old; and many protested with loud cries as the liquid was poured over them.

After the men came the Tshutsha daughters, in the order of these houses. They were purified outside the kraal, however, around to the right of it as one stood facing it from the huts. The women stood in close formation, so as to form a great oval, screening the proceedings from view. An elderly Tshutsha man stood with his back to the circle to warn away any curious males who drew too close. One by one the women advanced to the doctor and his acolytes within the oval, stripping to the waist as they did so. As they knelt they removed their skirts, which others held for them for a moment, while the water was poured over their bodies. Then quickly they put on their clothes and took their places in the surrounding circle.

This ceremony was solely for the members of the clan. None but Tshutsha men and boys were allowed inside the cattle-kraal. Even as a visitor I could not enter, though I was readily permitted to stand at the entrance with African visitors to observe the proceedings.

Only Tshutsha women were washed. Those women who had married into the clan, however, had to honour (hlonipha) their husbands' ancestral spirits by wearing headkerchiefs

down over their faces, in the manner of brides, and sitting together in a group by the huts. This covering of the face (ukugungxa) had already been observed by them for about week and would continue, Bhoyana told me, until he gave permission for them to return to ordinary head-dress, which would be on the Sunday or Monday, at the end of the whole ceremony.

After the rite of purification came the sacrifice.

All now assembled before the entrance to the kraal, men and diviners in front, women behind in long rows. As Bhekumthetho was young and inexperienced, he had arranged for an uncle of his to take the lead here. Standing beside his nephew, this man, whose name was Fanisile, said:-

"Well, there it is, O Tshutsha! Today - yes! - this child of my elder brother has gathered us in this great number to this homestead of Sinaphule for this custom, which it is proper should be done now, called 'Of the Ancestral Spirit' - that spirit described as 'of the tusk'.<sup>3</sup> Today then he turns that spirit to be favourable to us again.

"Our being present today in such a large gathering is not my doing. It is that of this child Bhekumthetho, scion of Sinaphule - whose home, also, this is. That brings us to the present moment when we are here to the last man. Here he is - of the younger brother of Velem

"I cannot imagine that our cry is any other than this: 'We ask! We desire! We desire health, we desire possessions, we desire offspring - that these penises of ours may be virile, so that we may have children, that by which we continue to be (esingayo, 'by which we are'), so that when we die we leave children, we leave a heritage (inzuzo)'."

The men now all entered the kraal, whither the sacrificial animal and two or three other beasts had already been driven. The bull was a fine black one and appeared to be of a better breed than the common run of stock, and it had been obtained by Bhekumthetho in exchange for a heifer. It took some subduing inside the kraal, but was eventually roped and flung down on its left side, head towards the entrance. Fanisile, who had made the speech, advanced, slapped the prostrate bull on the spine with the sacrificial spear (which,

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3. The elephant.

however, he did not pass between the legs of the animal), and then stabbed it in the abdomen. He made quite a lengthy incision. The bull bellowed twice, and then the spear was quickly thrust upward at an angle toward the heart. The animal was soon dead.

Then they skinned it and cut up the meat, beginning with the removal of the right shoulder and foreleg (umshwamo). "Trays" made of a certain species of forest creeper called udwabe had been prepared for the cuts of meat. Bhoyana told me that for this particular sacrifice only this plant could be used. Moreover all the meat must be consumed on the premises and none could be carried away.

The ritual meat of the right shoulder muscle, called intsonyana, was cut into long strips, roasted in the kraal, and eaten in tiny bits, the first by Bhukumthetho the second by his little son, the next by Fanisile and his son, and so on through all members of the Tshutsha clan present, men, women and children. Except for some other roasted minor meats, all the rest was left to be cooked on the following day (the "day of boiled meats", eziphekiweyo) on which day also it must all be consumed.

On the second day, a Saturday, was the ritual dance of the diviners.

Bhoyana and his three assistants were joined by half-a-dozen women diviners, who were also neophytes under him. They were resplendent in their white beads, armlets of goats' hair and white blankets. Bhoyana carried a beautifully shaped and beaded stick as a staff of office. They danced before the entrance to the kraal in the bright sunshine. It was the Xhosa form of ukuxhentsa known as uMhala, in contrast to that of the Mfengu; that is, they did not go round in a circle, nor make grunting noises and movements of the lips. They stood in one place, prancing agilely up and down, and making muscular ripples of their torsos, and now and





Diviners' Dance

Bhoyana and his neophytes. Note the beaded diviner's stick in his right hand (pp. 299-300).

Honouring Their  
Husbands' Ancestral  
Spirits

Wives of Tshutsha clansmen sit respectfully by with headkerchiefs lowered over their faces (pp. 297-298).



then by turns they took a few steps forward to the kraal and then back again. Only the diviners danced, the people looking on, and the women clapping and singing to give the rhythm.

After the dancing was over, Bhoyana, who was in charge of all proceedings so that nothing was done except upon his instructions, gave orders to the men to enter the kraal and distribute the meat to all, which they did. A few men not so engaged, and a crowd of women, respectfully accompanied the diviners back to their hut. Here I was also welcomed. A little more dancing followed, of the same sort, and then we all dined on portions of the sacrificed bull. First came a cup of soup, from its bones. It was delicious; and I must say that the meat that followed was some of the tenderest and juiciest that I have ever tasted.

Cooking and eating the meat occupied the time far on into the afternoon. After that Bhoyana returned to the kraal and gave instructions concerning the next part of the ritual.

The men, as usual, sat over by the cattle kraal. Beer cans were distributed to their leaders, while the rest grouped themselves about them to get their share. Now and then a man would call to some woman to come over and have a drink from his can. Most of the women, however, sat over by the huts and were served there.

The drinking took the rest of the day, so that the men's dance (umdudo) was crowded out, Bhoyana saying regretfully that they were too preoccupied with the beer to be able to attend to it.

This ceremony had lasted for two whole days. I returned on the Sunday afternoon to find the diviners and the people of the homestead still there, but almost all the others were gone.

Now the bones of the sacrifice were being gathered up to be burnt. Most of them had already been flung on the

fire as soon as the meat had been eaten off them. I saw the very last of them being gnawed by the children that Sunday afternoon, and then they were burnt too.

I learned subsequently that the hide of the bull was sold and that the money received for it (80 cents) was given to Bhukumthetho's widowed mother.

Bhoyana had requested, as payment for his services, R2 from the head of this house and 50 cents each from all the other men of the clan. But on Friday I had been present when a great discussion arose, with much going to and fro between the group of Tshutsha clansmen seated out on the veld and the diviners in their hut. Finally, Bhoyana had been obliged to reduce his fee by 50% to R1 from Bhukumthetho and 25 cents each from the others. In the end, however, he only got R5-30 in money, plus a sheep and a fowl. The people said they could not afford more.

On Monday, when almost everyone had left, Bhukumthetho and the people at his homestead ate up the umshwamo meat, that is the right foreleg and shoulder. The bones were kept to be "burnt" by Bhoyana himself, when the homestead again had sufficient maize for the beer and could afford the other expenses incidental to the ceremony. This might be the following year or the year after that. It should certainly take place within three years, I was told.

This is always the order of eating at ritual killings: intsonyama and other roast meats the first day, boiled meats the second, and then the umshwamo meat at the end.

Diviners do not only receive information from the spirits about sickness and the appropriate medicines (amayeza), and about sacrifices to be made to counteract various evils. They are thought also to acquire supernatural powers to "see" beyond the veil of sense.

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Henry Horner, of the "Hona" clan, described in an earlier part of this work, tells how his room was entered

by a burglar while he was a few miles away at work, and all his things were stolen. He told his employer about it, who sympathised but said, "What can one do about it? Even if the police should be called, they will never trace him."

Some time later, when Henry was almost ready to reconcile himself to his loss, he remembered a woman diviner whom he knew and who lived at some distance off. In his spare time he went to see her. She told him who had stolen the goods. She said he would find them hidden in a box of a certain description at the burglar's homestead.

Now the police were called, and Henry went with them to the man's home. Sure enough in his hut was a box such as the diviner had described, and which was found to contain the stolen things.

"Could not the diviner have learnt about it in some ordinary way?" I asked.

"Certainly not!" declared Henry. "She could not possibly have known in any ordinary way."

Such tales could be multiplied.<sup>4</sup> Their narration greatly strengthens the belief of the Tshezi in the powers of the diviners.

Though the reach of Tshezi credulity is great, critical faculties are not left altogether in abeyance. One hears remarks like, "Those fellows (diviners) are liars"; "though there are many more diviners today than before, they are not as good - many of those today are charlatans"; and at one isisusa I attended, a man who was credited with much knowledge of such things, was asked to observe carefully what medicines the doctor was using, lest they be not the right ones and he should try to collect his fee afterwards as though he had used the proper herbs and roots.

Though people will tell you that there is a great

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4. Remarkable instances from his own experience are given by Laubscher 1937: 42-45.

difference between diviners and sorcerers: "a diviner cures, a sorcerer kills" (iggira liyaphilisa, igqwira liyabulala), yet the gap is often narrowed, so that a diviner may be suspected of having prostituted his profession and become a sorcerer, or of having always been a sorcerer pretending to be a diviner. One old man, long resident in Tsheziland, said to me: "A diviner of today is all one with a sorcerer because present-day diviners graduate to the mpundulu.<sup>5</sup> They start by bewitching and after that become diviners."

On a visit to the Tshumane-Tshezi country in 1956, I was told that in 1954 three Mpondo "witchdoctors" came over the Umtata river and took the road through the Ngcwanguba forest. They were waylaid, and all three were killed and buried there. There was a big court case about it, and the people were in fear of reprisal by the Mpondo. Eventually the Mpondo did come - 500 strong - killing fowls, pigs and other small stock; but the police came down from Umtata and persuaded them to return to Pondoland, before a real battle developed.

In 1962 ten Tshezi youths appeared in the magistrate's court in Mganduli on a charge of murdering two "doctors" (whether diviners or herbalists is not clear from the records). There had been trouble in 1954 between the administrative areas of Lower Mpako and Nzulwini in Tsheziland. One of the murdered men, Maxamba, had offered to supply the young men of Lower Mpako with "medicines" to make lotions to wash themselves, so as to render them invulnerable against those of Nzulwini. They accepted, and paid him R120 for these herbs. In the subsequent faction fight eight young men on the Lower Mpako side were killed. So they went to Maxamba and demanded the return of their money. He refused to give it back. They asked repeatedly, and as often he refused.

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5. A fabulous creature.



At the end of November, 1961, they asked him again, but without success. Three days afterwards there was an umtshotsho dance in Lower Mpako, where it was learnt that Maxamba was at his home. The umtshotsho was dismissed, and instead a meeting was called by the accused, at which 22 youths in all were present. At this meeting it was decided to proceed forthwith to Maxamba's homestead and kill him, should he still refuse to return their money.

"We were armed with battle-axes", said one of the accused.<sup>6</sup> "We all went to the kraal of Maxamba, and when we arrived there we found both the deceased, Maxamba Siswenye and Ntikiyake Maxamba. When we approached the hut, both came out and Maxamba then ran back into the hut ... and Ntikiyake ran to the garden. We chased him, surrounded him and killed him with axes. We then went to Maxamba ... We also killed him with axes in the hut."

Maxamba tried to prevent them entering his hut, using a bush knife and an assegai, with which he attacked them as he continually refused to return the money. Three of the accused were related to him and two resided at his homestead. All had firmly believed him when he told them his herbs would protect them in battle. One of them said in court: "Maxamba said he could save us from death in fight and I believed him. He let us down, and many of our boys died in fights. Had he given us our money, we would not have killed him."

A diviner is said to receive a beast, or R40, for bringing a neophyte through the process of ukuthwasa. For

6. Case 33/1962 in Mqanduli Magistrate's Court Records, in the archives of the Transkei Legislative Assembly, Umtata. The "battle-axe" is a small, sharp iron axe fixed to a wooden handle about three feet long, which can be swung with terrible effect, while the fighter holds in his left hand a long stick (isigqigqi) with a piece of blanket (ugulo) wrapped round his hand. This stick is for defence, but is so sharpened that it could be thrust right through the body of a man coming towards him. If the enemy approaches closer than the length of his isigqigqi stick, the young man swings his battle-axe at his head. These axes are confiscated in considerable numbers by the police, the handles burnt and the axe heads buried.

curing someone of umfufunyana (a mental ailment I shall describe later) the charge of a herbalist is reported to be R50. Commonly a first visit to a diviner for diagnosis (ukuxilonga) costs 50 cents. Then follows the ukhozo, lit. "a kernel or seed of grain", i.e. a payment as an earnest of more to follow. This may be anything from R2.25 to R5.00, in return for which the diviner or a herbalist proceeds with the treatment, making medicine (ukukhanda iyeza) and administering it. When the patient is cured his healer receives a beast called "the beast due on account" (inkomo yomlandu). If the patient has a relapse, the herbalist or the diviner, must return and treat him without further remuneration.

There is no doubt that a few of these men become very wealthy. Every now and then the newspapers will carry the story of one said to be "a millionaire". Most famous of them all is Mr. Krotso Sethuntsa, who is credited with fifteen wives and lives in a large European-style house near Lusikisiki, Pondoland, with other establishments elsewhere in the Transkei. He is said to eschew banks and to purchase new cars with notes brought in suitcases. He claims to get orders for medicines by mail from people living as far away as Dallas and Chicago in the United States. One picture in the press showed him seated at a table counting bundles of notes piled before him, with a view to buying virtually all plots offered for sale in areas zoned for Africans in towns of the Transkei.<sup>7</sup>

Few diviners or herbalists attain to such riches. Most of them have to be content with much more modest returns. Nevertheless the returns are by no means negligible. There are other advantages too. A doctor has status and influence. He is respected and feared. People address him as nkosi, "chief", for he is as important as a headman. For women the

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7. The East London Daily Dispatch, July 20, 1968. See also the Durban Daily News, June 16, 1966.

profession has great attractions. They have freedom from restraint, so that they can go about the country even to great distances. Husbands are said to be reluctant to let their wives become diviners, for fear of losing their hold over them. Then there are the fees which they receive and can keep, so that they are owners of wealth in their own right (Cf. Hammond-Tooke 1962: 245). It is no wonder, therefore, that even more women become diviners than men. Moreover they seem to be so constituted as to be more susceptible to the emotional stresses and functions of the ukuthwasa process. They are probably more psychic.

In view of all this, there may be many persons who are allured by the prospect of becoming diviners, and who may dream dreams and hear "calls" without being aware of ulterior motivation in their minds. Others, however, in view of the "Xhosa sickness" that must be endured, say they would rather not be diviners if they could help it.

I found no evidence that doctors practising in Tshezi-land had to be Tshezi, or that conversely there was preference for those who were of alien clans. Everything depended on the reputation of the individual doctor. One naturally tried to enlist the services of the best practitioner one could get or afford, but, if not satisfied locally, there was no reason why one should not go to another tribe to consult a renowned man there. Thus some Tshezi go to consult Krotso at Lusikisiki in Pondoland.

Nor do doctors in Tsheziland, as far as I could discover, belong to any guild or association transcending tribal, national, or linguistic boundaries. They do not organise themselves, even at the local level. Each practitioner is independent, though he (or she) may have a following or "school" of neophytes to whom he is



ministering<sup>8</sup> during their novitiate: and diviners may invite others of their profession to join in and assist them at rituals and seances. Of course the fact that all doctors, whether they are diviners or herbalists, belong to the same general profession makes for a certain esprit de corps among them, and sets them apart as a loose-knit brotherhood of people of common interest. But organisationally there is no community among them.

Ukuthwasa is held by the Tshezi generally to be a genuine form of illness, of which the symptoms are such things as hysteria, sharp pains in the side, dullness, anxiety, palpitations, hallucinations, irritability, suspicion, solitariness, - in fact almost any sort of "abnormal" behaviour. The "sickness" is a "call" from the ancestral spirits, to neglect or resist which will result in loss of the senses (ukuphambana) or complete insanity (ukugeza).

Laubscher allows that there are some instances of genuine "mediumship" among doctors, "which can be manifested at times as sensitivity to people's thoughts and emotions and on other occasions as the presentation of a mental picture to the medium of what is desired to be known" (Laubscher 1937: 45); and avers further that to deny the existence of these psychic abilities, "because we cannot advance an explanation suitable to our scientific conceptions is to be not only unscientific but irrational" (ibid. 46). Tyrrell says that in certain bodily states "extra-sensory perception" seems to occur (Tyrrell 1946: 201).

Most genuine cases of ukuthwasa sickness, however, seem to belong in the category of mental disorders - psychopathology. Laubscher found that 54.5% of African

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8. I prefer to state it like this rather than to say that he is "training" them, because neophytes are supposed to be trained by the ancestral spirits directly. But as the period of initiation (ukuthwasa) is viewed as a "sickness", they attach themselves to a graduate diviner, who attends them and ministers to them.

male patients in the Queenstown Mental Hospital and 67% of African female patients were schizophrenics, and many if not all of these had been asserted by their people to be undergoing ukuthwasa (Laubscher 1937: 275, cf. 42 and 225). Manic-depressive, epileptic and other psychoses were also diagnosed by him (Laubscher 1937: 5, 274).

Divination I did not find to be hereditary among the Tshezi or the Tshomane. Each individual novice must be "called" for himself or herself. If the call comes to members of two successive generations in the same family, this seems to be regarded as largely coincidental. Nor did I find any clear evidence of "possession" i.e. of an ancestral spirit entering the body of a novice to take control of it. The ancestral spirits communicate with diviners (whether novices or initiates) from outside, through dreams or other forms of communication, as through animals (amatyala). Hunter says the same of the Mpondo (Hunter 1961:322). Mqotsi, however, allows that among the Xhosa the idea of spirit-possession underlies their conception of ukuthwasa, but says this is "unobtrusive" (Mqotsi 1957:183), while Hammond-Tooke says of the Bhaca more positively: "a person ill with ukuthwasa is thought to be possessed by the shade of an ancestor" (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 245). In so far as ukuthwasa sickness may be psychosomatic, it is possible that the initiation rites do bring relief and composure of mind. Mqotsi discusses this and cites Nadel as stating that the catharsis which shamanism offers may well have a therapeutic effect in stabilising psychoneuroses and "reducing a psychopathic incidence which would otherwise be much greater" (Mqotsi 1957: 174). Certainly the Tshezi believe initiation is a cure - indeed the only cure.

Finally, one cannot rule out the possibility that the symptoms of ukuthwasa may be affected or even artificially induced. The experiences of other and earlier diviners

become stereotyped and institutionalised, and then are subject to imitation by others in turn, who may even be self-deluded and unaware of any affectation. Considering the prestigious position of diviners in the community, it is too much to believe that many people are not drawn to cultivate symptoms that would make them eligible to enter the profession; and there is uncritical readiness on the part of others, including diviners, to accept their symptoms as evidence of the ukuthwasa condition.

The problem is one of vocation. Those who want to do something unusual must present some evidence of calling (e.g. long hair for the budding artist in a middle-class business family). Ukuthwasa is partly a psychosomatic response arising from the stress of role confusion, of anxiety about deviation, partly a protection against condemnation for deviance, partly a self-support mechanism, a desire for greater experience, a badge of office (behaving as a social group demands), as well as a genuine response to heightened awareness of being.



## CHAPTER XVI

### WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

The distinction whereby witchcraft is held to mean the use of invisible, psychic means, and sorcery the use of visible, material "medicines" (Hunter 1961: 275, 290; Hammond-Tooke 1962: 278, 289; Evans-Pritchard 1937: 21, 387) seems somewhat "blurred" among the Tshezi. As Hoernle says: "All the other South African Bantu seem to have merged into one the conceptions of witchcraft and sorcery, kept distinct by the Venda and the Shangana-Tonga" (Hoernle in Schapera 1937: 242).

As among the Mpondo (Hunter 1961: 274) and the Bhaca (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 264-5), not all sickness among the Tshezi is attributed to the evil machinations of witches and sorcerers. Lesser ills, like stomach-ache and influenza, may be attributed to natural causes, especially among people who have come in contact with Whites and so have learnt the rationale of infection. School people are more likely to be of this persuasion than Reds, though the number of the latter who patronise scientific doctors and hospitals is large and is continually increasing. The number of illnesses attributed by Tshezi to natural causes is therefore also on the increase.

If, however, an illness is at all puzzling, or is persistent despite the use of ordinary means to check it, the people (including many in the School category) are quick to fall back on the traditions of their fathers and attribute illness to God, or to ancestral spirits, or to sorcerers. Witches or sorcerers (abathakathi) are believed to travel through the air at night, or to employ familiars like baboons, or to cast spells, or to use bewitching matter which they conceal about the homesteads of other people, in order to cause sickness, disaster or death. The belief in such nefarious doings is so general among the Tshezi as to be

practically universal. (As will be shown later, the proportion of Tshezi who have embraced Christianity at any one time has always been almost negligible in proportion to the total population).

In former times one of the functions of Tshezi doctors was to "smell out" (ukunuka) the perpetrators of witchcraft, i.e. to detect them by professedly clairvoyant powers. These culprits were then tortured to make them confess and were often cruelly put to death. After the Tshezi came under Cape Colony rule by the annexation of Thembuland and the placing of the Tshezi themselves under the jurisdiction of the Mqanduli magistrate, so that they began to pay hut-tax in 1886, such things could no longer be done without breach of the law and heavy penalty (Act 24/1886, 11: 171, 172). But over the river among their neighbours in Pondoland such horrors continued unabated, till that country was annexed to the Cape in 1894.

In 1893, about four years before he came to Tsheziland as the first Christian missionary to that region, Mr (afterwards Rev.) Samuel Holt was accompanying another missionary on a tour of the Transkei. He wrote:-

"In Pondoland we had the sad privilege of seeing a recent 'smelling out' case. Because he had been deemed guilty of causing the death of a child through witchcraft, he had been seized and cruelly maltreated, and there the poor fellow lay on a mat in his hut, his undressed wounds gaping and suppurating and giving him great pain! It appears that his tormentors tied him by the ankles to the roof of the hut, and then raising the lower part of his body from the ground until only his head and the tips of his shoulders touched it, they threw hot ashes upon his naked flesh, while three or four assegai stabs in the back and arms were also given, and his head battered with knobkerries. The little 'diversion' was saved from becoming monotonous by the unwelcome visitors killing and eating the pigs belonging to the unfortunate victim. Perhaps they meant to kill him outright; however their surcharged stomachs induced deep sleep, during which the poor creature, by a superhuman effort, managed to untie the fastenings, and more dead

than alive to crawl away to a place of safety."  
(South African Pioneer, August 1893, 12).

Such things were all too common in the Pondoland of those days and were a contributing factor leading to annexation (Brownlee 1923: viii).

When Mr Holt commenced his work as missionary to the Tshezi, the hills before his mission were dotted with homesteads. In time there came to be but one left. What became of the others? Some may have moved in the ordinary way. Others were as certainly believed to have been abandoned because someone in them had been accused of witchcraft. Though the law of the land now prohibited the killing of such unfortunates by clubbing or stabbing them, by roasting them with fire or with heated stones, or by pegging them to the ground, smearing their bodies with honey and leaving them to be devoured by ants, there yet remained one way of getting rid of them with little chance of being detected - poison introduced into their food. The person died and was buried. How was a solitary magistrate thirty miles away to know? And even if he did know of the burial and had his suspicions, how could he go around digging up bodies on suspicion over a wide district with many tribes and thousands of tribesmen, especially when he had no more than a handful of police under him and only one already-overworked district surgeon to conduct post mortems? It is different today, when the machinery of administration has become more developed, and communication and transport much more efficient, with telephones and motor-vans, not to mention helicopters! Happily in 1968 I found the hills before Mount Packard mission again fully occupied. Indeed with the increasing shortage of land, it would be unlikely that any hill in Tsheziland would remain long deserted now, if it was at all suitable for residential sites.



That the belief in witchcraft is still very much alive in the minds of the people is proved by cases that still come before the courts of chief and magistrate, like that of the woman chased from her husband's home and beaten by youths (her husband not defending her), so that she had to flee for refuge to her father's homestead, because she was accused of being a sorcerer (pp. 62-63).

In extenuation of the behaviour of these unsophisticated people, it has to be remembered that they really believe in sorcery and witchcraft and often are quite ignorant of the law of the land. Of the ten young men previously mentioned (pp. 303-304) who killed two doctors because one of them had taken R120 from them for herbs to protect them in faction fights, and which proved unavailing, a police sergeant said in court:-

"These boys surrendered themselves at an appointed place where I met them and not at Kwaaiman [the police post]. I know that superstition is strong amongst these people. Knowing their mentality, I would think that they would act fully believing in the herbs they paid for ... the accused are very illiterate .... I have been stationed at Kwaaiman for 16 years. They know very little about coming to a Native Commissioner's Court for civil redress." (Mqanduli Magistrate Records).

Sir Walter Stanford, who became first Chief Magistrate of the united Transkeian Territories in 1902, wrote:-

"Ordinarily I would recommend commutation of the death sentence where murder follows on a charge of witchcraft, recognising as I do that the perpetrators of the crime firmly believe that their action is absolutely necessary to protect their own lives or the lives of members of their family from the devilish practices of the wizard or witch duly 'smelt out' by the isanuse, the witchdoctor or priest." (MacQuarrie 1962: 87).

Addressing the biennial congress of the South African Nursing Association in Pretoria in 1968, Dr M. Walker declared that a majority of rural Africans and a large number of urban Africans, including some with science degrees, as

well as trained hospital personnel, believed illness to be produced by witchcraft. She said that of 765 African patients questioned in 1962, 75% of rural patients and 40% of urban patients answered that their illnesses were due to witchcraft. "Most African patients, whether literate or illiterate, ascribed their affliction to the evil machinations of vindictive relatives or other enemies, who produced ill-health through sorcery or black magic." (Daily Dispatch 1968, October 2).

The practise of magic may be either deliberate - the person knowingly using occult means to bring harm to others - or involuntary, as when the medicines one has used on one's person for protection may, without one's knowledge, prove harmful to others with whom one comes in contact. Intentional sorcery is "criminality incarnate, an intrinsically evil influence in the universe which can manifest itself only through a human being." (Krige 1947: 11).

It was just this possibility of being a sorcerer unwittingly, that made it so difficult to deny accusations to that effect. A person might stoutly aver that he had never consciously bewitched anyone; but how was he to know but what, when he was asleep, his soul might have left his body and gone flying throught the night on missions of evil?<sup>1</sup>

Coming to conscious and intentional sorcery, the familiar said to be ~~most~~ widely employed by wizards and witches is Thikoloshe (Zulu: Tho-). He is described as mischievous and sprite-like, but also as lending himself to be used by sorcerers for real evil. He is also lustful and fond of women and young girls. He is small, about two feet high, baboon-like and hairy; and, according to a woman informant, "the penis

1. According to Hunter 1936: 309, the Mpondo hold that no one can practice witchcraft without being conscious of it; but Hammond-Tooke 1962: 278-279 represents the Bhaca as believing that people can be "unconscious" possessors of malignant powers.

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