

GEDHLE

27.12.1898

File 74, p. 98.

- 58 Gedhle is of the Baca tribe (chief Cijisile), Ixopo. The *inxala* or *unkosi* is the feast of first fruits, at which the chief eats the *uselwa*.¹ After this ceremony all the tribe may then eat mealies, pumpkins, etc. The chief eats the *uselwa* several times during the day. After *eating*, he walks out, followed by the assembled company. He stamps the ground with his feet and spits in a certain way, the object of this being to *strengthen the blades of grass*, those growing, and cause them to be succeeded by others at the proper season. Anyone who eats mealies etc. before the chief *tastes the new crops* is fined. Those who work for white people do not all comply with the custom. *The spirits* are not in any way invoked. [The feast seems to last one day.] At cockcrow next morning the chief *eats the uselwa* [for the last time]. People proceeding to attend the festival will shout out even late at night to neighbouring kraals, saying, '*He ate the meat of a beast that died, and got diarrhoea.*'

11.8.1899

File 73, p. 68.

- 68 Per Gedhle, who has just returned from the north part of the Alexandra Division, whence I had sent him for native curios. He spoke to several natives some miles (say 10-20) from Mzinto about the Indians who are numerous in the direction in which Gedhle went. Natives consider Indians are very industrious when hoeing etc., for they plough up hill and down dale for miles! Natives, however, complain a good deal about Indians because they are pushing them off land they have bought or say they have bought. Natives are unable to tell if land has been bought or not. Had rinderpest not cleared the cattle off, there might have been some serious disputes with the Indians.

17.8.1899

File 73, p. 69.

- 69 Today Gedhle had a conversation with a native *kehla* (elderly) called Mapeka, who lives on Crown lands² three or four miles or so from Umzinto to the left of the road going to Park Rynie. He lives close to a coolie. The coolie was placed in his present position by a white man. The coolies are men of ability. The natives have cause to complain because coolies do not permit native cattle to go into their *harvested fields*. Should cattle get into the *harvested fields*, which are very extensive, coolies will get angry very quickly, and

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swear and use terms of abuse. It is fortunate rinderpest has broken out and killed cattle, for natives would have quarrelled with coolies in this matter.

Generally speaking, Mapeka says, there is no objection except the above to the coolies, although it must be added they buy land, plough extensively, disregard native gardens, and so force natives to leave and build elsewhere. Coolies are not neighbourly and, more than this, they have an idea that they are of higher standing than the native. Gedhle was not satisfied with the validity or force or reasonableness of the objections brought by Mapeka against the coolies. No fault was found against those living in the town.

17.8.1899

File 73, p. 83.

83 I sent Gedhle out today to try and get me some old curios. He went to Mapeka's kraal about three or four miles from here (Mzinto) and had the following conversation with him. [For particulars about Mapeka (see above,)] *Spoons, snuffboxes of the sort worn in the ear, bone or horn sweat scrapers, izindondo, and hoes* of native iron are no longer *carved* or *forged* in this part of the colony. Nor is there any of the old iron left. No native *works metal* now. This failure of the natives to make their things dates from the coming of the white people to the country. *Izindondo* used to be made but are not often seen now. They are heavy iron rings and were and are still used at the marriage ceremony. They are affixed to the *isidiya* or long leathern skirt of buckskin (duiker) worn by the *bride*. The skirt is tied well above the loins and the *izindondo* are affixed at the sides of the *skirt* and at the bottom in front. The *isidiya* is a (special) kind of *skin skirt*. Gedhle can give further particulars about *isidiya* and *izindondo*.

Iminaka - red or copper-coloured beads but of metal and similar in design to *izindondo* - used to be made; also *amatusi* [rings or bracelets for the upper part of the arm - *amasongo?*], and *hoes fixed onto handles* and made in the shape of axes; also *assegais*. All these things, Mapeka says, are no longer manufactured; he cannot say where they are made. Gedhle remarks that the holes in the *izindondo* are made by the iron, when in a molten or soft (red hot) condition, being beaten round or poured about a stick. This stick is afterwards removed, leaving a hole. *Izindondo*, Gedhle says, used to be used for *lobola* purposes.

Notes

¹A type of gourd.

²At this point in the original the words *ntela kabili* occur as an interlinear insertion. *Intelakabili* means 'double taxation', as in the case of a tax on crown land in addition to a hut tax. (See Doke and Vilakazi, Dictionary, p. 790.)