

N12.1 undated
(1941)

STATEMENT OF CHAMANO RAMABLANE.

I am a brother of the late Chief Sintemula.

In or about October 1939, Chief Sintemula died. About one month later his brothers and sister met at Sintemula's location to appoint the new Chief, together with the Paramount Chief Mpefu. That is the custom. Before we met we informed the Native Commissioner that we intended to choose a new chief. He agreed to us doing so.

Those present at the ceremony were: the Paramount Chief Mpefu, Chief Kotamo, Chief Mameo, Induna Toni, Induna Maerula, Tshbidso, Biera, Ramkhuba (all brothers of Sintemula except Mpefu) and Msifo (sister of Mpefu) and myself, also brother of Sintemula. We chose Peter Sintemula as the successor the chieftainship because he was the oldest son of Sintemula. His mother was the second wife of Sintemula. The first wife had no child.

We thereupon notified the Commissioner that Peter had been chosen as chief. He said he was pleased at the choice and asked all the members of the family who had agreed to the appointment to give in their names so that the list could be sent to Pretoria. No one disagreed with the choice.

We were afterwards informed by the Commissioner that the Native Affairs Department had stated that we had made our choice too early. They said it was the custom to wait a few months or even a year before appointing a successor. We told the Commissioner that he had said we should appoint a new chief immediately according to our custom. It is true that formerly it used to take 6 months or a year before a new chief was chosen. That was probably because the relatives were afraid to tell their people that the chief had died. But nowadays the custom is to choose a chief as soon as possible : we are living under the Europeans and they always want to have a chief with whom they can have their dealings.

All that the Commissioner could reply was that in Pretoria they insisted that we wait for 6 months.

Some time afterwards (perhaps in June, 1940) the Chief Native Commissioner, Lowe, paid us a visit. He called the whole of Sintemula's family and the whole of the tribe together. At the meeting he said he was not there to choose a chief. He would come back later to see about that: he had some investigations to make. From that day Chamano Ramablane was to act as chief. When we said we did not know what he wanted to investigate he replied that he did not want an answer from us. He said we had to just listen to him. He would come back

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later but he did not know when. We all agreed to his instructions as we did not know what else to do. From that day Peter and I worked together in the position of Chief. This lasted for about 8 months.

During the period of this 8 months a certain German doctor of Philosophy was making some investigations. He has translated English books into Venda. He has married the daughter of a German Missionary (Rev. Gesk), who has worked among us.

This doctor enquired how Sintemula married his wives and how Peter was chosen chief. After we had explained he said he would take his evidence to Pretoria. After collecting the statements he said that George was chief as his name was written in the books.

George is Peter's younger brother by many years. His mother was Sintemula's 4th wife and has an older brother by his mother. Peter was born during the war of the Vendas and Boers. He also commanded a detachment of Vendas in France during the 1st Great War. George is much younger than Peter.

We asked the doctor in which book was the name written. He replied that we knew in which book was written who should be chief. We said we knew nothing about that. Thereafter he went to Biera's village. He asked Biera: "Don't you know that Sintemula chose George as chief?" Biera denied any such knowledge.

He returned to us asking why we do not agree that George is chief and Biera agreed that George was the chief. We replied that if Biera knew that we knew nothing about it. He said that although you refuse to recognise George as chief Maerula also knows he is chief. Then he went away. Afterwards when we saw Biera and asked him how he knew about George he said that when the Dr. had approached him he chased the Dr. away.

Even if what the Dr. had said was true that would not affect the position; because the Chief has not got the right to choose his successor. His brothers and sisters can only do that.

In or about November 1940 Chamano, Biera, Peter, Mutamuse (a prominent man in the village) and Mutebala were called to the Commissioner's office in Louis Trichardt. The Commissioner was not the same man as at the time of Peter's appointment. It was on a Saturday. When we went to the Commissioner's office we found George there too. Also the Chief Native Commissioner, Mr. Lower, and the German doctor were there.

The Commissioner said to us that it was agreed that Peter should be chief but that he had made a grave mistake. According to their information he had slept

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with one of his father's young wives and he (the Commissioner) understood that according to their custom Peter could therefore not succeed his father. He did not allow us to make answer to the accusation. He went on to say that from that day George was chief. He produced an exercise book and said that in it his father had written down that George was to be chief after his death.

We were told that we had to leave Sintemula's location. That we were to be given a piece of land in Chirolwe (where we are at present). That we were not to leave that area at all and that we were not allowed to go anywhere else in the reserves. We were to be given 30 days in which to take up our new abode and if we were found elsewhere after that we would be arrested.

The story about Peter and his father's wife is a lie. But even if it were true there is no such custom which would prevent Peter becoming Chief.

On the following Monday Mpefu, Kutama, Toni, Tshbidso and Msequa (an induna) were called to the Commissioner's office. They were told that George had succeeded Sintemula. They were told not to make any answer and to go.

The people themselves do not regard George as their chief. They still look upon Peter as the chief.

Collection Number: AD843

XUMA, A.B., Papers

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- **Historical Papers Research Archive**

Location:- **Johannesburg**

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