

NGABIYANA ka BIJI and MASANA ka SIGQULELA

14.10.1899. Stanger.

File 73, pp. 41-4.

Also present: Masana kaSigqulela

- 41 Stanger, Mhlali, per Ngabiyana ka Biji (an *induna* of the chief Meseni, in charge of people near Mhlali, aged about 40 more or less), and Masana ka Sigqulela (chief: Meseni; a man about 43 more or less, also at Mhlali and under Ngabiyana).¹ Neither have headrings. The latter is referred to in my note of yesterday, above.²

Ngabiyana is one of the men who complained yesterday, as above stated.³ He, today, said that he was born and had lived all his life at Mhlali. There is a woman named Miss Martha Sanne, a Norwegian [probably - J.S.], who is engaged in mission work and living half a mile or more from the police station.⁴ She is in the habit of visiting native kraals in the neighbourhood to hold services. She makes frequent visits. Native women go from the kraals to *attend services* ('*sonta*') in obedience to her summons. They then leave their children at home in no one's charge, and whilst the mothers are away these children cry etc., and the husbands wonder what to do with them. Women go every day (Sunday) to service. Miss Sanne comes to hold service of a Friday as a rule, but sometimes will come on a Thursday. Women will pay no heed to their husbands' counsels in regard to this matter. The latter say, 'You are our cattle and ought to obey us.' The women reply that they have taken this path and will not leave it now. As the women pay no heed, great trouble is caused the men.

- The land does not belong to Miss S.'s mission, whatever that might be. It is Pepetwayo's land (Mr Essery, agent for the Natal Land and Colonisation Company, Ltd.), and belongs also to the government. Ngabiyana said he wished to talk over this affair with me as it is a genuine grievance. Women will not stay at their homes and
- 42 do domestic duties. Men feel that under these circumstances they must speak to their *chief* or magistrate. If, because of a woman disobeying her husband, a little scratching (*klwebana*) takes place, the woman goes to the *chief* who punishes the man, but does not know that the real person at fault (*o tshingayo*) is the woman.

Miss Sanne has never asked any kraal head's permission to visit any kraal or to educate women and children. Eliza, a native woman, usually accompanies her. Eliza comes from Zidumo's.⁵ She has separated from her husband. She comes from near

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Dumabemazi (kraal of Zidumo) across the Nonoti river near the Tugela. She came with Miss S. This was rather over two years ago. Miss S. lives in an old house which belongs to another person. There are no *kolwas* living immediately about the place. No boys or girls appear to work for Miss S., only Eliza, but on some days children from the neighbouring kraals come to be taught. When Miss S. came first to Ngabiyana's kraal, she asked those present why they did not go to church. 'The Master calls you,' she added. Many women and children are now following Miss S. The natives asked, 'Where is the king or master that comes today? The king or Master (*Inkosi*) we know of is an old one existing from time immemorial, the one who created people (*dabula'd uhlanga*). We know of him. But what king is that who comes today?'

Ngabiyana says: I said nothing at first to these visits, but now I feel I must speak, as women go from their homes and dress. Some of the women are already real *kolwas*. Women go off to service at about 9 a.m., some about 8 a.m., and do not return till about 5 p.m.

Ngabiyana and Masana belong to the Qwabe people. Perfect accord no longer exists between our wives and ourselves. They will not, some of them, allow us to speak of them as our wives; and some will no longer permit sexual intercourse.

Ngabiyana says: My chief wife (I have two wives living) will not allow me now to have sexual intercourse with her. She says she does not want me to come to her for she is too old. As a matter of fact she is still quite young. She has had nine children, two of whom died, but she is still young enough to have more children. She was a child at the time of the '*Mbidhli ka Somsewu*'.⁶ I cannot understand the attitude she has assumed.

Eliza is always preaching that women must not drink beer, nor eat the meat killed for the *amadhlozi*. Our regret in connection with this matter is beyond our power of expression. We men, of course, will not leave off eating cattle, and if we stint our wives, they will come and complain, and so cause us to be imprisoned.

The majority of the kraals in the neighbourhood are of Meseni's tribe. There are five kraals visited by Miss S. and Eliza so far, viz. mine (Ngabiyana's), Manxiweni's, Samu's, Mhukulu's, and Nkonyeni's. A *kolwa*, Mnu kwa, a relative of Manxiweni, lives at Manxiweni's with his *kolwa* wife. Such a marriage is all right. At Samu's, several of the girls have cut off their 'top-knots'. The same has happened at Mhukulu's, where all the girls have become *kolwas*, and have become so since Miss S.'s arrival. The service is no longer held at Ngabiyana's. People congregate at the other kraals on any fixed days. The men in the neighbourhood come to me (Ngabiyana) and complain about their children becoming *amakolwa* against their (the men's) inclination. I reply, 'That is the white people's affair. I suffer too.' I have not reported this affair to Meseni yet. Services are frequently held, and people are summoned to them by the blowing of a horn. Upon hearing the horn, all the children, boys and girls, also the women, leave their work, and go to service. I have a daughter called Memezile who gave me some trouble by putting on *kolwa* clothes. I directed her to leave these off and keep to the old customs. She complied with my wishes and returned to her leather skirt (*ukaka, isidwaba*), and has not given me any trouble since. I cannot tell why Miss S. no longer comes to my kraal. It is long since service

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was held there.

Masana says: At the very outset I warned the white woman, Miss S., not to come to my kraal. The occasion was this. One day my wife was away from home all day. When she came back in the evening, I took her straight to Miss S. and said to the latter I did not wish this sort of thing to continue. But Miss S. has paid no heed to my wish. My girl, Nomdeni (Nomteni) [vide p. 41],⁷ disappeared suddenly from my kraal one day. I had *refused to allow her to wear clothes (ngaba'd izingubo)*; she was away a month. I at last found her at a gathering at Sikota's kraal. I caught her and took her home. I tore her frocks etc. to pieces. She disappeared again, which I consider was due to Miss S.'s influence. I found her later on at Samu's. I brought her to Ngabiyana (*induna*), said I would take her before the magistrate, and did so. Ngabiyana said he could do nothing, and approved my taking her before the magistrate (Mr Shuter).⁸ Mr S. asked her where she had got the clothes from. She said the *missionaries* had given them to her. 'Where do those teachers come from?' He, Mr S., said I had done quite right in tearing up the clothes, and ordered her to return to my kraal at once and remain with me, which she has since done.

Per Ngabiyana: When we question our wives, they tell us that they are going where there is immortality. 'Here with you,' they say, 'is death and mortality, and you must not think you will keep us chained or bound to, or yoked with, destruction. If we do not go to the Lord, we will die and be burnt.'

We, says Ngabiyana, cannot tell how they know there is a *Lord (Inkosi)*. We (husbands) do ask how it is that they have a knowledge of the *Lord* whilst we are quite unable to acquire a similar knowledge. We ask them (our wives) to instruct us, as they, of all people, being our very wives, ought to be able to enlighten us. But we do not hear and understand. [See a note on this in notebook under date 14.10.1899 re Conversion.]⁹

Per Masana: They (wives) say they will not be buried where others are buried, but taken up to heaven. We, says Masana, say all people will be buried here; no one will be *taken up*; even the white people are committed to the earth.

- 44 Ngabiyana has two wives. One (third) died last year. The second wife has had six children. One of these children is dead. The second wife attends service like the chief one, but she does not have altercations with me about this matter. Nor does she refuse to allow me to have sexual intercourse with her like my other wife.

[For further information about Masana see pp. 40 and 41.]¹⁰

Notes

¹ Meseni kaMusii was chief of the Qwabe in the Mapumulo, Lower Tugela, Indwedwe and Inanda divisions. He was another of Stuart's informants: his evidence

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appears in volume 3 of the Stuart Archive.

² The reference is to File 73, pp. 40-1. Here Stuart has recorded notes on a case which had been brought before him, in his capacity as magistrate of the Lower Tugela division, at the Mhlali branch court on 13.10.1899. Hlupheka, one of Masana's wives, had charged him with having assaulted her after she had begun attending Sunday services at a nearby mission station.

³ After the case referred to in the previous note, several men had approached Stuart to complain about the way in which their wives had been induced to become Christians. He had told two of them, including, it seems, Ngabiyana, to come and discuss the matter further with him the next day. See his notes in File 73, p. 41

⁴ Martha Sanne was a member of the Free East Africa Mission. For more information on her, see Hale, ed., Norwegian Missionaries in Natal and Zululand.

⁵ Zidumo kaMamfongonyana belonged to a section of the Qwabe chiefly house.

⁶ *Umbhidli kaSomsewu*, literally 'the multitude of Somsewu', refers to the marriage law introduced by the Natal government in 1869. Somsewu was Theophilus Shepstone, successively Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1845 to 1876.

⁷ The reference is to File 73, p. 41.

⁸ F.P. Shuter was magistrate in the Lower Tugela division.

⁹ We have been unable to trace this reference.

¹⁰ The reference is to File 73, pp. 40-1. See note 2 above.