

MABINDELA KA NTULINI

19.12.1910 - <evidence given 18.12.1900>

File 71, pp. 25-6.

Also present: Ndukwana

- 25 I yesterday morning early had a conversation with Mabindela, an official witness living in Klip River division in the vicinity of Spion Kop (Ntabamnyama).¹ Ndukwana was present.
- He belongs to the tribe of Sibamu, who lives with the greater portion of his, the Amangwe, tribe in Estcourt division. Mabindela is a very able and intelligent man aged about 40. He got Ndukwana to introduce him to me. His *isibongo* is Mazibuko. His father was Ntulini. Chief Sibamu's father was Manzezulu ka Putini ka Matshoba. [Vide p. 33.]² The Amangwe tribe came from near the Engcaka (a hill beyond Vryheid and near the Pongolo) with Putini (not Putili), for Matshoba was buried at or near the Engcaka. Putini left with the tribe many years ago, possibly in Tshaka's day,³ and when he died in Natal he was of a very advanced age. It is not known to what regiment, if any, he belonged. The tribe occupied at first land where Ladysmith now stands but, on the approach of Europeans, moved off to near the Drakensberg, Estcourt division.⁴ A large section of the people still lives in this division (Klip River). The tribe is quite apart from the Amangwane tribe. Gadeleni, a younger brother of Manzezulu, had a quarrel with Manzezulu, whereupon Manzezulu allowed him to go off to the Nqutu district, Zululand, where he was permitted to live under Chief Hlubi.⁵ The government allowed him a very large measure of autonomy; still he, though a member with his followers of Manzezulu's (Sibamu's) tribe, is subservient to Hlubi.
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Mabindela was, he informed me, dressed in a tailor-made suit. He has other clothes at home made by his tailor, Riddell of Ladysmith. He says his reason for having his clothes specially made was because 'reach-me-downs' fitted so badly; they burst if too small at the waist when sitting down to drink beer, and had to be cut if too long in the leg. The blue serge coat and waistcoat he had on cost him £3 10s. He is not a Christian. He has now five wives, the sixth having died. They are not dressed like Christian natives, but in their ordinary dress. M. himself, as soon as he gets home - not a kraal however but a properly built European house - throws his tailor-made clothes aside and dons the *loin-cover*, and will not allow any of his children to wear European clothing.

He lost a son (son and heir), who not many weeks ago was run over

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by a cart carrying *mabele*? seed to his gardens. He, seeing how bad a case it was, and knowing that on account of the profuse bleeding no natives could be got to bury the corpse, ordered a properly made coffin, lined inside with calico and covered outside with some speckled cloth. In this the boy was buried lying at full length instead of being drawn up after the native manner; a proper grave moreover was dug to receive the coffin. He paid something like £3, I think, for the coffin. Many natives, M. says, are taking to burying their dead away from the kraal and at a single spot which thereby becomes a cemetery. Ordinary native custom required burial at the kraal itself.

M. was born at Dewdrop in Klip River division. He proposes to educate his children as they get older. He was a scout in the late fighting about Ladysmith, and attached to Buller's forces.⁶ He, knowing the country well, was selected to lead the forces. Boers destroyed his house and would have killed him.

There was a large native dance at his place last year before the war came on. These are the circumstances, briefly.

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File 71, pp. 26-7.

Also present: Ndukwana

27 The military wanted to see a Zulu dance. Mr Rudolph⁷ proposed or agreed to its being held at Mabindela's. M. was told to arrange for one. He came to Mr Rudolph to say he thought his chief Sibamu and his representative in this division (Tomseni) should be informed and their permission got. Mr R. said that was a proper course to adopt, and that both Mabindela and Tomseni should go and seek the necessary permission from Sibamu. Permission was accordingly got in that way. The military subscribed £3 and £3 10s; with the former amount M. was told to buy goats, and with the latter *mabele*. He procured three goats and three and a half sacks of mealies. On the day appointed the dance was duly held at M.'s house. Sibamu attended it, though he arrived after it was nearly over, due to the river (Tugela) being impassable. The dance was a good one, natives being properly attired for it. M. received £3 for his trouble after it was all over.

Rather over a fortnight ago M. was suddenly sent for to meet Lord Roberts⁸ at Spion Kop. M. took another man with him; he could not understand what he was wanted for. It appeared he had been sent for by Major G.F. Tatham of Ladysmith who was in attendance on Roberts. He was wanted to show Lord R. where Potgieter's Drift was. Lord Roberts spoke to him, and had some words about his having tailor-made clothes and procuring coffins. He took Lord R. and part of his large escort on to said drift. Here horses of Lord R.'s trap got off and ran away as everyone had got out of the trap. After chasing the trap for some distance M. succeeded in securing the horses when many of the escort following came up and assisted. Lord R. thanked M. for what he had done. After inspecting the locality the party returned, and M. separated from them. 'But,' he says, 'after all this I got nothing but thanks. I may be given a medal but I am not certain

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of even that.' M. was favourably impressed with Lord R.

Notes

- ¹A prominent hill on the north bank of the Thukela between present-day Ladysmith and Bergville.
- ²Cf. the genealogy in Bryant, Olden Times, p. 182. Stuart's reference is to evidence given by Tomseni, another of his informants.
- ³Phuthini and his people fled from the Zulu country to Natal in 1848 during the reign of Mpande.
- ⁴The Ngwe were settled by the Natal colonial authorities on the middle and upper reaches of the Njesuthi river in 1849.
- ⁵As a reward for services rendered to the British in the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879, Hlubi, a Tlokwa chief whose original home was in the Orange Free State, was awarded land in the south-west of the former Zulu kingdom.
- ⁶General Sir Redvers Buller was commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa in the first stages of the Anglo-Afrikaner war of 1899-1902.
- ⁷G.M. Rudolph was resident magistrate at Klip River (Ladysmith) from 1881 to 1899.
- ⁸Lord Roberts was commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa from December 1899 to December 1900.