

## MHLANIMPOFU, PHILIP

15.12.1899

File 73, pp. 50-1.

Also present: Mcijo, Zulu, another

50 Talk with Mhlanimpofu, chief at Mvoti mission station.<sup>1</sup> He was accompanied by an older man than himself. Mcijo (court *induna*) and Zulu also present.<sup>2</sup> At Mrs Thring's.

He complains of the action of a young man, named Mqwebu, married and a father, who lives on the mission station, and has been appointed there by the Government as postmaster. Mqwebu has been in the habit of calling together *kwaya* (choir) meetings, to which girls of loose morals come. He (Mqwebu) is exempted from the operation of native law.<sup>3</sup>

Mhlanimpofu, acting in concert with the wishes of the headmen on the station, has directed Mqwebu to desist from holding these meetings; but so far he has paid no heed to the orders, saying Mhlanimpofu has no authority over him, as he is 'exempted'. At these *kwaya* meetings  
51 things are said which ought not to be said in public or anywhere. After each meeting disperses, boys go off to the surrounding bushes and have *illicit intercourse* (*pinga*) with the girls - and this includes Mqwebu himself, although he is a married man. Mqwebu's wife was once told by his new sweetheart that she controlled her husband's purse, on which she (the wife) depended for her dress, and that her dress was better than that of the wife.

There are about a dozen heads of families living on the station who have been exempted from native law, and a few more now absent. These men are not ambitious, and generally conform to the laws and acknowledge Mhlanimpofu's standing as a chief. Some heads of kraals find it impossible to prevent their daughters from wandering, and a number of them have ceased to make any further efforts in the matter.

Some time ago there arose a desire at the station to appoint a native clergyman, teacher or pastor. There were four candidates. The one elected (37 votes) belonged to the 'forward' or educated party, a man who had been educated at Lovedale and been trained in the medical profession by apprenticing himself to a doctor [native?]. Mqwebu, who was one of the defeated candidates, getting only three votes, seems to be supported by the fact of the former movement in which he took the chief part, and is now wishing to be the leader or head.

Mr Bennett, the magistrate, said to Mhlanimpofu that he had no right to attempt to control the exempted natives in any way and they could do as they liked, like Europeans.<sup>4</sup> By such a ruling the chief has hitherto been guided. Had Mqwebu not been an exempted native, Mhlanimpofu would not have come now to complain.

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There was once discovered a conspiracy being got up to try and remove Mhlanimpofu; a letter was found which revealed the author of it. Mhlanimpofu took this to Mr Cross, the magistrate, and it was sent to headquarters.<sup>5</sup> No action was taken as Mhlanimpofu did not wish to prosecute.

Mhlanimpofu was at Groutville before the first house was built and when the first wagon was still there, so is well acquainted with all that has taken place in connection with the station.

The *kwaya* is made to sing, or practise singing. Girls, of whom there are about 10 in the *kwaya*, do not fear their fathers, both exempted and non-exempted. In the old Zulu kings' times this kind of thing could not have occurred, for the wrongdoers would have been beaten.

Mqwebu is disrespectful and overbearing when he comes into the church and pays no heed to the chief's rebukes.

Mhlanimpofu has laid these matters before the superintendent, who advised him to do as all missionaries have to do, i.e. refer to the temporal authority for assistance, the authority responsible for law and order: the magistrate must be gone to. (He) will accordingly send Mhlanimpofu a letter, which he is to give to the magistrate.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Philip Mhlanimpofu was chief of the *kholwa* at Groutville, some five kilometres south of the lower Mvoti river.

<sup>2</sup>The Zulu here referred to was possibly Stuart's informant of that name. The latter's evidence will appear in a subsequent volume of the Stuart Archive.

<sup>3</sup>For discussion of the system under which Natal Africans could secure exemption from native law see Brookes, White Rule in South Africa, pp. 55-6; Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, pp. 76-7; Welsh, The Roots of Segregation, chs. 4, 13.

<sup>4</sup>T.R. Bennett was magistrate in the Lower Tugela division from 1891 to 1894.

<sup>5</sup>J.W. Cross was magistrate in the Lower Tugela division from 1894 to 1896.