

MSIMANGO, EZRA

20.12.1900

File 71, pp. 29-31.

Also present: Ndukwana

29 Conversation this afternoon 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. with Ezra Msimango in regard to affairs in connection with Driefontein. Ndukwana present.¹

E.M. says that the story of Johannes Kumalo's coming with others to buy land at Driefontein was after this manner.²

Rev. Mr Allison came to the Orange Free State and settled at Ficksburg in 1832, that country at that time belonging to the Basutos.³ There were in those days a few Boers about the country, but they would have been subjects of the Basuto king.⁴ At Ficksburg, Allison (Ummeli) lived for about 10 years (1842), when, at the express wish of a Wesleyan Conference that sat about that time, he went off with a number of natives to found a mission station among the Swazis, which he accordingly did at Mahamba.⁵ In order to do this, he took with him the following men: Job Kambule (*induna*), Johannes Kumalo, Jonase Mxaba, Barnabas Mtembu, Jacob Tshabalala, Adam Molife, Daniel Msimango, Abraham Twala, with boys, etc.

At Ficksburg, Allison found the people very ignorant, the Gospel not having up to that time been preached among them. The following incident will illustrate their ignorance. One day, Sunday, Mr Allison was preaching. It was just about the time the chief Sigonyela had seized a number of cattle.⁶ He took as the subject of his sermon the sin of theft. Hearing the missionary denounce theft in the strongest possible language, Sigonyela, who was present in church, turned to his *induna* and whispered that evidently the missionary had in view the cattle seized by him, about the theft of which he must have read in his book (the Bible). These cattle, Sigonyela said, must be restored.

30 At Mahamba Allison stopped about three years when, owing to hostilities occurring at his station resulting in the shedding of blood, he in 1845 left with his followers for Pietermaritzburg.⁷ They reached Pietermaritzburg in a destitute condition. The Governor of that time gave Allison land near Richmond, viz. Endaleni, which is a well-known mission station. After living here some years, Allison was, in accordance with a rule of the Wesleyan Communion, directed to go off to some other place; but he was unwilling to leave his old followers behind to be perhaps ill-treated by his successor, and (did not wish) to put them to the trouble of moving once again. This disobedience led to his leaving the Wesleyans and joining the Presbyterians.⁸ He looked about for land to purchase, and found it at Edendale in the shape of a farm left by one, a Boer, Pretorius (Potolosi or, as the natives also knew

MSIMANGO

him, Ngalolunye), who had gone to the Free State.⁹ The land was purchased by instalments from Pretorius's agent or agents. The land was then cut up into lots, on which the old followers were placed, including Johannes Kumalo.

Allison was married twice. By his first wife he had no children; by his second, two, viz. Allison, the lawyer, whom he named Memezi because he wanted him to proclaim God's Word throughout the country, and a daughter, Nobeswazi, so called because of the hard times undergone in Swaziland.¹⁰

Daniel Msimango is E.M.'s elder brother; E.'s father is Mark Msimango. Job Kambule, above mentioned, is dead; he was a good deal older than Johannes Kumalo.

After some time at Edendale, Johannes Kumalo and others applied to Dr Sutherland for land somewhere under the Berg as, being used to the Free State, they wanted a cooler climate.¹¹ The surveyor-general said there was no such land for sale, so Johannes came up to Ladysmith. At this time, 1875, the Boers living in Klip River Division were much put out by having to pay quit-rent, and some were desirous of leaving the colony. One of these was Isaac Niekerk, who owned a 7000-acre farm called Driefontein. Johannes Kumalo purchased this farm for £1000. To this day he lives on this farm. There shortly was offered for sale an adjoining farm for £900, its acreage being 7100, called Kleinfontein. It was purchased by Johannes and those with him. Afterwards, Doornhoek (6000 acres), Kirkentolloch (3500), Burford (3000), and Watersmit (7100) were bought by Johannes and members of his tribe. The last-named farm was bought for some £9000, including everything on it; the land itself was 19s 6d an acre. There are at present some 36000 acres of land belonging to the natives at Driefontein - this having become the general name.

31 Johannes is trustee for all the land. There is a committee of management of 12 besides the trustees.

The land in question is occupied in two ways: by those who have bought holdings of 80-150 acres, and by those who are allowed to squat both on the holdings or on the general land belonging to the company. E.M. has a plot of land of his own, measuring 132 acres 3 roods. He is aged 47, and is quite blind. He has two kraals squatting on his land. He does not charge rent, but requires service of his tenants, especially when ploughing or hoeing. One of these has two huts, the other three. Those who live on the unsurveyed land occupy holdings whose gardens are not surveyed off, but on land indicated to tenants as for cultivation. No one is allowed to plough up gardens just where he likes. Sometimes E.M.'s tenants complain of being too ill to work; E. then leaves them until they get well. He is afraid of taking more drastic measures, for fear lest his wife and mother should be inconvenienced. If he could see it would be different.

As far as can be seen, native tenants prefer native landlords to European, especially Boers, who compel man, woman and child to work, and freely use the sjambok.

There is a desire among the natives at Driefontein to acquire still more land. They want adjoining land. The reason is to provide for the future, so that the children now born shall be able to find room. Johannes would like to buy land in the Free State, as horses do not do

MSIMANGO

well at Driefontein.

Up to now no European has bought any land on the farms above mentioned. Permission might be obtained possibly in respect to all except Driefontein proper. Several Indian traders lease land.

Johannes is chief over other people than those living on the farms called Driefontein. His people may be found at Jonono, beyond Roosboom, etc. Hezekiah is Johannes's chief son. He is living on a farm of his own near the Buffalo river (Umzinyati). His eldest son, Joseph, is now living with Johannes, and is well liked by the people.

Notes

- ¹Ndukwana was another of Stuart's informants. His evidence appears elsewhere in this volume.
- ²Johannes Kumalo was another of Stuart's informants. His evidence appears in vol. 1 of the Stuart Archive.
- ³There is a brief, but useful account of the career of Rev. James Allison in the Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 1, pp. 11-12. In 1832, Allison began mission work amongst the Griqua at Boetsap in Transorangia. He and his fellow-missionaries, John Edwards and James Archbell, moved with a large following to the upper Caledon area (where the village of Ficksburg was later established) in 1833-4.
- ⁴I.e. Moshoeshoe.
- ⁵Mahamba is in the south-east of the present-day Swazi kingdom. Allison took up residence there in 1845.
- ⁶Sigonyela (Sekonyela) was chief of the Tlokwa. The incident here recounted may relate to the theft of Zulu cattle by the Tlokwa. The Voortrekker leader, Piet Retief, was asked by Dingane to recover the stolen animals, and it was at Allison's mission station that Retief met Sekonyela in November 1837, and forced him to hand over the cattle.
- ⁷As a consequence of civil war in the Swazi kingdom, Allison abandoned his Mahamba mission in May 1846. In his move south to Natal he was accompanied by about 1000 followers.
- ⁸Allison left Indaleni and established an independent mission on the farm, Welverdiend (renamed Edendale), west of Pietermaritzburg, in 1851. He joined the Free Church of Scotland in 1867.
- ⁹The farm had belonged to the Voortrekker leader, A.W.J. Pretorius.
- ¹⁰The name Memezi is derived from the Zulu verb *ukunemeza*, to call out, proclaim. Nobeswazi connotes 'born among the Swazi'.
- ¹¹Dr P.C. Sutherland was surveyor-general of Natal from 1855 to 1887.