

## NGCAMU, JOHN

12.9.1902, 7.45 a.m. - <evidence given 11.9.1902>

File 71, pp.74-5.

Also present for part of the interview: Dlozi, Ndukwana.

- 74 Conversation with John Ngcamu on 11.9.1902. Dhlozi and Ndukwana were present during a good deal of our conversation, which lasted about three and a half hours.<sup>1</sup>

We spoke of orthography (Zulu). I said I had quarrelled with all modes of spelling and writing as they are none of them general. Colenso is best, but it is not by any means perfect.<sup>2</sup> We touched on the hard and soft 'b'. I suggested the Greek <sup>3c</sup> for 'soft' and 'hard'. J.N. liked this, and thought it quite true that the mode of writing was bad and, instead of preserving, tended to destroy, for there is little inclination to read what is written in some peculiar manner. J.N. agreed that the whole subject requires overhauling. He is, moreover, anxious that translation should be correctly done. He quarrelled with a Zulu Prayer Book Committee he was on about '*uNkulunkulu o zazisayo*', which should, he thinks, be '*uNkulunkulu o no mona*', i.e. a jealous God.<sup>3</sup>

He says he is teaching a few European boys Zulu at Eshowe. Among these boys are Faye and Hancock. The class is doing well, and is held of an afternoon at his place. He receives nothing for the instruction given. This work gives him pleasure. He considers Martin Oftebro has a very exact knowledge of Zulu, and (I suppose to flatter) includes me.<sup>4</sup> Samuelson, Saunders, A.Boast, Bishop Smyth, Rev. Roach are all good, especially Roach (who always writes correctly), but do not always speak pure Zulu, though they may make people understand, and interpret well. Bishop Smyth's knowledge is excellent.<sup>5</sup>

He has finished buying an erf at Eshowe (in the township).<sup>6</sup> He applied later on to buy a second one to plough on etc., but the Governor refused the application. It was Sir M. Clarke (uNgini, alias uKwezi) who enabled J.N. to possess the land he has.<sup>7</sup>

- J.N. has no difficulty in obtaining liquor - is authorised, though not exempted. At 75 the same time he got the vote in the Cape Colony, where he has resided a number of years. He is well known to Donald Strachan.<sup>8</sup> This man used to visit native schools and speak on current important topics.

I ought to say I met J.N. on the 9<sup>th</sup> instant. He then called at my office. He is of

course a deacon or priest at Eshowe, and is allowed various privileges denied to others. He travelled down in a post-cart from Eshowe with five Europeans. He is, I reckon, aged somewhere about 54. He considers he would have belonged to the Mbonambi regiment.<sup>9</sup>

6.45 p.m. I find his views on the Native Question much like mine. He considers people should be allowed to grow out of their old, bad customs, and that legislation should not be introduced to stop polygamy, etc. Natives are very taken up with polygamy, and will not give such a custom up. To tamper with it would cause universal complaint.

At the Cape, Sir J. Sivewright got the native vote on making a lot of promises.<sup>10</sup> He, however, failed to keep his promises.

He considers that the natives should be protected far more than is at present the case. The people have lost their nationality. The liquor restrictions are right and proper, and he greatly appreciates this.

I told him of my remarks in the Blue Book on the evil example of prostitution.<sup>11</sup> He was struck by my plain speaking. Such words were ones to be spoken by a Colenso or Bishop Callaway.<sup>12</sup> Such a person has *umuva*, i.e. background or basis for my assertions, something to answer people who have questions to put.

He has spoken to Sir T. Shepstone,<sup>13</sup> and often seen Bishop Colenso.

A man who becomes a Christian becomes a new man; especially is this the case with one who formerly appeared somewhat of a fool.

It is a matter for regret that we will not allow natives to 'come within'; we keep them outside. They may not join in our councils. Natives desire to live according to their own customs; by forcing them to live as Europeans do, we are pushing them on to a precipice. The native *people (uhlanga) becomes lost* by their adopting our ways of living.

Natives require some person to stand up and represent their case for them.

Even he finds difficulty about learning English, and is compelled to use his own language.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Dlozi kaLanga and Ndukwana kaMbengwana were others of Stuart's informants. Dlozi's evidence appears in volume 1 of the Stuart Archive, and Ndukwana's in volume 4.

<sup>2</sup>J.W. Colenso, Bishop of Natal from 1853 until his death in 1883, was a noted student of the Zulu language.

<sup>3</sup>*UNKulunkulu ozazisayo* would translate as 'a proud God'.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Oftebro was a son of the Norwegian missionary, O.C. Oftebro.

<sup>5</sup>S.O. Samuelson rose through the Natal civil service to become Under-Secretary for Native Affairs in 1893. His brother, R.C.A. Samuelson, an attorney, was also a fluent Zulu linguist. C.R. Saunders held office first as Chief Magistrate and Civil Commissioner and then as Commissioner for Native Affairs in Zululand from 1897 to 1909. A. Boast was magistrate at Eshowe in the early 1900s. W.E. Smyth was

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Anglican Bishop of Lebombo. Archdeacon Roach was an Anglican missionary.

<sup>6</sup>Erf is Afrikaans for a plot of land.

<sup>7</sup>Marshall Clarke was Resident Commissioner and Chief Magistrate of the Colony of Zululand from 1893-1897.

<sup>8</sup>Donald Strachan was a trader who played a prominent role in the affairs of East Griqualand.

<sup>9</sup>The uMbonambi was an *ibutho* formed by Mpande.

<sup>10</sup>James Sivewright was elected to the Cape parliament as the member for Griqualand East in 1890. He served in various Cape ministries before retiring from politics in 1898.

<sup>11</sup>The reference is to a report written by Stuart in his capacity as Acting Assistant Magistrate and Administrator of Law, Durban Division, and published in the Colony of Natal's Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1901, Pietermaritzburg, 1902, pp. B61-B63.

<sup>12</sup>Henry Callaway was consecrated first Bishop of Kaffraria in 1873. He retired to England in 1886.

<sup>13</sup>Theophilus Shepstone was successively Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal from 1845 to 1876. He died in 1893.