

## ZIBOKWANA ka NYAMAYENJA

4.1.1899

File 74, pp. 91-2.

Also present: Mkankuyana, Alpheus Nkosi

- 91 Contact with civilized races. Swaziland. Per Zibokwana, in the presence of Mkankuyana and Alpheus Nkosi who assisted me.<sup>1</sup> Zibokwana was one of the Deputation to England in 1894. [Zulu was not present.]<sup>2</sup>

Zibokwana attributes the unsatisfactory conduct of women to the fact that the Kings of Swaziland have been prohibited from killing off (after smelling out in usual way) by H.M. Govt. In this remark he is supported both by Alpheus and Mkankuyana. He says Lazide never permitted women to come into council meetings;<sup>3</sup> only one woman (*an old woman - isalukazi*) was allowed in but retired during the debate and returned at its conclusion when sent for. The origin of women coming to attend debates as they now do was at or on the death of Ludonga,<sup>4</sup> when the mourning ceremony was on and women had put the signs of mourning (strings) on their heads. That was the first clear indication of what was soon to develop into a regular habit. Mamgangani is responsible for this innovation.<sup>5</sup> The encroachment of women was not resisted because the order had already come from H.M. Govt. that people were not to be killed off.

The following incident will throw more light by showing that even though the advance could have been repelled by Mbandeni without infringing the order of H.M. Govt. yet he was in a weak position.<sup>6</sup> In this way: Ludonga had procured for himself as wife a daughter of Langelibalele of Natal,<sup>7</sup> but he died before he had married the girl (who was good-looking). Mbandeni, after being recognised as King, wished to take this girl to wife as his own wife, considering that his own position as King had been sufficiently consolidated to render it impossible for anyone to say that any child borne by this girl would be regarded as Ludonga's heir and therefore the proper heir to the throne on the principle of *ukungena*. Mamgangani distinctly warned Mbandeni that there was a danger of his son by such contemplated marriage being recognised and set up as the rightful heir to Ludonga. Mbandeni however took the girl to wife and she bore him a son. The woman and child lived with Mamgangani whilst Mbandeni lived at another kraal. After the birth of the child, Sandhlana's wife

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Memeza pointed out that there was a real danger of the child being set up as King.<sup>8</sup> Upon this, as it were, now realizing the importance of the position of which he had been warned by Mamgangeni, Mbandeni caused her, Mamgangeni, to be put to death  
92 with all the women who formed her retinue. The child was also put to death. It was in self-protection that Mbandeni put these women to death.

Zibokwana says the disrespect shown by women to their husbands and boys to their elders arises out of the order or 'wish' of H.M. Govt. that no killing-off shall take place. The effect of this order is also felt by *envoys (amanxusa)* who, having been sent with a message, on returning with the answer are not treated with the respect they formerly got. For if *amanxusa* chanced to arrive when the King was sitting with a lot of men, all these would forthwith get up and go off, leaving the *amanxusa* free to talk to the King alone. Now, and Zibokwana speaks from personal experience, no one, even the women and girls, will get up or move in any way until directed by the Paramount Chief, and then some will only get up to sit down several yards off within ear-shot, whilst those who leave will mutter something about the strangeness of the secrets which necessitate their having to go. Others again will get behind the *screen (iguma)* and listen. Thus it is that *amanxusa* themselves find they are placed in an awkward condition.

Another point: a man's children will sometimes partake of their father's food. This formerly was never permitted. It is the wives who teach the children to do this, Zibokwana says.

Some of the women who form the Queen's following, e.g. Tibati or Labutibeni,<sup>9</sup> are those who have no husband or who have deserted their husband, leaving him to cook for himself, fetch water etc., etc., saying they want to sit in the *umkandhlo*, i.e. in the Council.

Zibokwana wished to know what would be said supposing a man, exasperated or dissatisfied with the conduct of his wife, were to direct her to go away and leave his kraal. I replied that from the Govt. point of view this could be done, but the Paramount Chief would have something to say to it as it seemed to me such procedure was undesirable. This question shows the effect of European influence clearly.

[I go now into the matter the *amanxusa* came to me about. They came to report the death of Ngwane's baby (female), which occurred some weeks ago.<sup>10</sup> According to native custom there would be *pengula* as the child was born strong and healthy.<sup>11</sup> Ngwane then wished officially to announce this fact and to ask advice as to what should be done under the circumstances. I pointed to Mr Krogh as the proper adviser.<sup>12</sup> European influence is very distinctly shown here. In regard to occurrences of this kind Europeans pursue one line whilst Swazis another. It is a difference, a radical difference in civilization; it is more, for it shows the character of the native by revealing what he regards as infallible. Europeans will not convict except on sufficient evidence of eye-witnesses; natives convict on the evidence of *izangoma* when not conflicting, as they are regarded as equivalent to eye-witnesses by reason of their intimate connexion with the *amadhlozi*. The crux of the whole situation is a difference in a capacity to believe, with which must be coupled the idea that the native mind has not been sufficiently evolved to comprehend our point of view and see its

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rationality. The Swazis, as a people, are an organism; destroy the vitality of that organism and the whole community must fall to pieces.]

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stuart was Acting British Consul in Bremersdorp, Swaziland, from October 1898 to March 1899. He had been official interpreter for the British representative on the Government Committee in Swaziland from March 1894 to March 1895, and Acting British Consul in Swaziland from March to August 1895. Zibokwana played a prominent role in the politics of the Swazi kingdom in the 1890s (Jones, Biographical Register of Swaziland, pp. 187-8). Alpheus Nkosi was a teacher who, in the late 1890s, became what Jones describes as ‘de facto secretary of the Swazi nation’ (Biographical Register of Swaziland to 1902, p. 459).

<sup>2</sup> A deputation of Swazi notables travelled to London in October 1894 to protest against the impending take-over of the Swazi country by the South African Republic. Stuart accompanied the deputation as interpreter. The note in parentheses appears in the original as an interlinear insertion. Zulu was another of Stuart’s interlocutors: his evidence appears elsewhere in the present volume.

<sup>3</sup> Lazide (laZidze, Tsandzile, Thandile), daughter of the Ndwandwe king, Zwide, was mother of Mswati, who ruled the Swazi kingdom from the mid-1840s. After Mswati’s death in 1865, laZidze remained a leading figure in Swazi politics until her death in 1874.

<sup>4</sup> Ludonga (Ludvonga) was a son of Mswati. After the latter’s death, Ludvonga was designated as his heir, but died in 1874 while still a minor.

<sup>5</sup> Mamgangani (laMgangani, Sisile) was the mother of Ludvonga. She exercised considerable influence in Swazi politics from the time of Ludvonga’s death in 1874 until her own death in 1881.

<sup>6</sup> Mbandeni (Mbandzeni), a son of Mswati, ruled the Swazi kingdom from 1874 until his death in 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu was chief of the Hlubi in the colony of Natal.

<sup>8</sup> Sandlane Zwane was a leading figure in Swazi politics from the 1860s until his death in 1888.

<sup>9</sup> Tibati was a daughter of Matikweni Nkambule, and a wife of Mswati. She was an influential figure in Swazi politics from the early 1880s until her death in 1895. Labutibeni (laboTsibeni, Gwamile) was a daughter of Matsanjana Mdluli, a wife of Mbandzeni, and the mother of Bhunu, who was king of the Swazi from 1895 until his death in 1899. She played a leading role in Swazi politics from the early 1890s until her death in 1925.

<sup>10</sup> Ngwane was another name for Bhunu.

<sup>11</sup> Bryant, Dictionary, p. 494, gives *pengula (ukuphengula)* as ‘... withdraw from evil consequences by treatment with medicines or charms ...’. In the present context it may connote examination of a person accused of witchcraft.

<sup>12</sup> Johannes Krogh was appointed as the South African Republic’s representative on the Government Committee in Swaziland in 1894. In 1895 he became the Republic’s special commissioner in Swaziland.