

MSIMANGA, MICAH

<26.2.1922>

File 59, nbk. 28, p. 100.

100 Micah (Ndabazezwe?) Msimanga (Penpinnah's father) enters. *Inter alia*, he says that Sobuza, king of Swaziland, was once invited by Tshaka to come and see him. Sobuza did so, coming either to the Mbelebele or the Bulawayo kraal. After discussing their business, whatever it was, Sobuza returned to his country. This shows that Tshaka did not put chiefs to death as a matter of course, especially where they acknowledged his supremacy.

28.2.1922

File 59, nbk. 38, pp. 19-27.

19 Micah (alias Ndabazezwe) Msimanga of the Falaza regiment (but of the uMsizi, i.e. the eldest section), born about 1859, lived at Nkwenwe till about 22 years of age, i.e. to 1880, when he came into Natal.¹ He now lives at ekuPumuleni, near Ladysmith.

The bringing back of the idhlozi. [This to be inserted on p. 1 where shown.]²

This matter of bringing back the idhlozi takes place when the head of the kraal dies, and perhaps when the inkosikazi dies. Not all people are brought back; it is the heads of the kraal who are brought back. When the head of the kraal dies, a beast is slaughtered and amakubalo medicines are eaten.³ Then certain avoidances are observed, for a death has taken place. Amakosikazi - the widows - do not shave their heads; they do not put ochre on their heads. When the kraal has been put right, then they will shave their heads and put on ochre. They do this when they have been cleansed. Then a beast is slaughtered, praises are addressed to the amadhlozi, and much beer is made.

This is done to bring the person who has died back to his home, so that he will be an idhlozi that watches over the people in the home. Praises will be addressed to him, and he will be regarded as a bringer of good fortune.

When, say, I go to battle, I put my trust in the idhlozi, and give praises to him. I trust that my father will watch over me, and keep me from harm until my return. This, then, is the custom among us as regards the idhlozi.

20 *The beast will be slaughtered in the cattle enclosure after praises have been addressed to the amadhlozi of the place. The beast that is to be slaughtered is separated from the others in the enclo-*

sure; it stands at the upper end, while the others stand in the centre.

The addressing of the amadhlozi begins in the afternoon, so that by the time people retire the beast that is to be slaughtered is known to the amadhlozi. When the people rise the next morning they go to the enclosure. The head of the kraal and his sons go there; the womenfolk do not show themselves there. One of the men carries an assegai, and when the praising is finished they proceed to stab the beast. If it should bellow as it is being stabbed, they cry, 'Bellow, beast of our father!' The praise-singer begins again if he has not finished the praises. If the beast bellows it is a good one; it has been well received by the amadhlozi. A sheep that does not cry out is not used to praise the amadhlozi, because of the fact that it does not make a sound.

What belongs to the ancestors is not praised in the evening. The praising is done only on the day when the cattle are to be slaughtered. The chief begins; it is he who will speak with them first. The cattle are driven into the chief's upper enclosure. The chief enters with them. There are no other cattle there, only the ones that are to be slaughtered. The izinduna remain outside; they do not enter. The chief then speaks out; he gives praise. He is carrying all his assegais. He speaks to the cattle, and praises the amadhlozi of his people.

I saw this done in the time of Cetshwayo, the chief in whose time I grew up and saw all our Zulu customs.

This is the praising of the ancestors; it is not the bringing-back custom. This was a custom in the Zulu country, this slaughtering of the cattle of the ancestors (e ze mzimu), for which a song was chanted which went like this, 'Ha! Ho! (the cattle for which the Ha-ho chant was sung)'.

The bones of the cattle which were used for praising the amadhlozi were gathered up and burnt in the cattle enclosure. This was done so that no strangers should get hold of them, for these were the cattle with which the amadhlozi were praised. It was feared that abatakati would take the bones and 'spoil' the idhlozi, making it evilly inclined and liable perhaps to destroy its own people.

22 *Impepo.*⁴

Impepo was not used by all people. Some used it when the amadhlozi were being praised, when cattle were being slaughtered for them. People would take fat of the slaughtered beast to the place to which the meat was to be carried. The fat would be burnt at the back of the hut. It would be mixed with impepo, and burnt. A fire would be made on a clay potsherd, then a small piece of fat would be put on it, with the impepo on top of it. This would be done by an old woman who slept in that hut. She would do it when alone. It would not be done by a 'hard' person; it would be done by an old woman who was the mother of the people there, perhaps the grandmother. It would be regarded as an offering to the amadhlozi. The old woman does the burning when alone in the house. Younger people do not go in there.

The beer which has been placed in a gourd, or perhaps a pot, at the back of the hut, will not be drunk by the younger people; it will be drunk by the old women, the ones who do the burning of the impepo.

23 When the meat of the beast is carried into the hut, it is placed on the skin of the beast. A gourd of beer is also placed there. Then fire is brought on a potsherd or in a pot. A quantity of fat, about

the size of a person's ear, is taken from the caul and placed in the fire on the potsherd, and impepo is placed on top of it. Smoke is given off. The old woman there does not say a word; she does it when quite alone. If she speaks, it is only when all others have left the hut. After this she leaves the hut and it is closed up. This is done in order to allow the amadhlozi to go in and eat the meat of their beast and drink their beer. The people remain outside for a short time, while the amadhlozi are allowed in. After that they will go inside again, and then they will cook a mixture of blood and meat (ububende) and the innards, that is, the intestines, the paunch, the fourth stomach, and the intestines near it. The meat chopped up to make the ububende is taken from the chest, from round the lungs and the kidneys, and from the rump.

The burning of the impepo is a custom by which the amadhlozi are praised. At the bringing back of the idhlozi, too, it is burnt. But not all people do it; some do, some do not, even when they have come together to praise the ancestors.

24 The Nomkubulwana or Pukula ceremony.⁵ I cannot explain this custom properly.

The umtshopi custom.⁶

I saw this custom performed in the Zulu country, at Nkwenkwe, when I was still very small, in Mpande's time. I saw girls rise early in the morning and go out with all the others from that district, into the uninhabited country. They knew where they were to meet. At midday they were heard singing as they returned to their homes. On the occasion when I saw them they went in at the side of the kraals, as when kraals are being built. They went to each in turn. At the first one, they stood and sang a chant. Those whom I saw were wearing plaited creepers. They had broken off all types of creepers in the forests and had plaited them. They wore them as coverings hanging from the neck in front and behind, so that they dragged on the ground. They had plaited others to put on their heads so that they were completely covered, with only the eyes showing. The plaiting was done very loosely; only round the face was it carefully done, so that they could see.

At the kraal the children would be sent out by their mothers to go to the girls where they were standing outside. The children were then made to lie down in front of them, to about the width of a street.

25 Then those who were singing made a running jump over the children. After this they passed on to another kraal, and there did the same thing. They would do the same at all the kraals. When they had finished, they would return to the uninhabited parts, throw away their coverings, and go and wash.

This practice was no longer carried out in Cetshwayo's reign. Perhaps, though, people continued to observe it in distant parts, for the land was big. Also, it was not a custom that Cetshwayo would have put an end to.

I have not heard that these girls used to put up in the houses of old women.

This umtshopi custom was observed in order to remove a misfortune from the land, that is, a sickness like a hot fever. It was not carried out to remove sickness caused by umtakati.

Crying for the amabele.⁷

This was done in a bad season, when there was a plague of stalk-grub (stalk-borer). All the girls of the district would leave their homes and assemble. Then they would go off to the fields, ending with the ones nearest the place where they were going to throw away the plants affected by borer. They would run into each field, and spread out all over it, crying, 'Maye, mabele! Maye, mabele! Maye, mabele!' That is all that they cried out. As they went about the field, they would pull out amabele plants here and there, those affected by borer. They would do this in all the fields. They would carry with them the plants which they had pulled up. When they had finished all the fields, they would take these plants and go into the uninhabited country, where there were no fields, and throw them away. Then they would go off to the river and wash. Then they would return; they did not sleep out in the open.

The girls who cried for the amabele wore their everyday clothes.

The dispute in the house of Masipula ka Mamba.⁸

Masipula married the mother of Majumba, who was of the Mxapo (Mpunga) regiment. He took her to the home of his people. The woman refused, saying that she did not want to go and be a menial (*isigqila*) in the service of Masipula's mother. Masipula left her alone. He then married the mother of Zikode, who was of the Mtuyisazwe regiment.

27 Masipula told her to go to the place of his people. She agreed to do so.

After a time Masipula died, without having said who was to succeed him.⁹ After his death a dispute arose. Majumba claimed that he was the chief son as his mother had married first. Zikode said, 'I am the chief, for I am in the hut of my father's mother.' The case was taken to Cetswayo at oNdini.¹⁰ Cetswayo decided it thus. 'You, Majumba, are right in claiming to be the chief son of Masipula. But your case has been harmed by your mother, who refused the house which she was given by your father, Masipula. Zikode was made chief son through his mother, who obeyed Masipula's word. Masipula's inheritance is in the house of his people. Your mother, Majumba, refused it; Zikode's mother assented to it. Your case is lost, Majumba. It is lost through your mother's actions; it is not lost through me.'

Notes

¹The uFalaza ibutho was formed in the late 1870s of youths born in the late 1850s. Nkwenkwe may be the name of an *ikhanda* where the amaNkwenkwe ibutho was stationed.

²The reference is to File 59, nbk. 38, p. 1, where Stuart begins the notes of an interview which he held with Ntshelele kaGodide on 26.2.1922. The words 'This to be inserted on p. 1 where shown' were presumably inserted by Stuart when he was preparing an account of the 'bringing back' of the *amadlozi* for publication in his Zulu reader *uBaxoxele* (London, 1924). This account, which appears on pp. 170-5 of *uBaxoxele*, was based on his interviews with Ntshelele and Msimanga.

³Bryant, *Dictionary*, p. 324, writes that 'Amakubalo are eaten always upon the death of one of the family, in order to strengthen against

MSIMANGA

ill-effects that might otherwise follow'. See also Bryant, Zulu People, p. 705.

⁴Bryant, Dictionary, p. 496, gives *impepho* as a species of small plant that gives off a fragrant smell when burnt.

⁵Bryant, Dictionary, p. 439, gives Nomkhulwana as 'Fabulous female, supposed to be the...young lady of heaven and virtually the Native Ceres, presiding over the growth of grains...'. On the Nomkhulwana or *ukuphukula* ceremonies see also his Zulu People, pp. 664-8.

⁶On the *umshophi* custom see also Bryant, Zulu People, pp. 662-4; Stuart Archive, vol. 3, pp. 175, 180, 184, 228.

⁷On this custom see also Bryant, Zulu People, p. 667. A Zulu version of the account that follows was published by Stuart in his reader uTulasizwe, ch. 28.

⁸Masiphula kaMamba of the emGazini people was one of Mpande's principal *izinduna*.

⁹Masiphula died in 1872.

¹⁰UluNdi (loc. oNdini) was Cetshwayo's principal *umuzi*.