

SISEKELO

13.4.1902

File 40, item 19, pp. 1-13.

1 The togt question. Person examined: Sisekelo, age about 35. Position: constable in charge of togt barracks, Point.¹

It is nearly ten years since I was placed in charge of the togt barracks at the Point, but I have made several visits home, which reduces my actual residence to about 5 years. I am familiar with all sides of the togt question.

People who have permission to stay at the togt barracks pay 2s 6d a month. In addition to this, they have to pay 2s 6d for licence and badge. A man who wants to stay at the barracks applies for an order at the togt office and comes with it (red paper), hands it to me, and I find him sleeping accommodation. If a man comes with a sleeping ticket, but there is no room at the time, I put him into the kitchen where no one sleeps, until, somebody leaving, room is found. Every togt boy goes himself every month to the togt office and takes out a fresh sleeping ticket, giving 2s 6d for it.

If I find the togt sergeant is issuing too many sleeping tickets, I go and advise him not to give any more until there is room. During the last 9 months I have had to go to
2 the togt sergeant 3 times. The togt sergeant is Mr Forrester; we call him Potopoto.

Togt boys have a grievance about the barracks, and that is they are inadequate to their needs. Those who are actually in the barracks complain of overcrowding, whilst those who cannot get in complain of having to go and hunt about in the town for a place to live in. The present buildings had all been erected when I first went to take charge. At first, Dambuza's and Madevu's boys, who are monthly servants, used to occupy the togt barracks.² These boys had sleeping accommodation built by their masters (Renaud),³ and when this was ready - a year or more ago now - the great bulk of them left off living at the togt barracks. Some of Madevu's boys, about 20, are still sleeping at the barracks, and these are all 'monthly' servants.

There are nine compartments used by togt boys for sleeping purposes; there are three kitchens, one washing room, and one set of closets with urinals. There are two compartments used by Coolies for sleeping purposes at the same place.

Formerly, when I first came, coolies belonging to Hutchinson [?] used to occupy two of the compartments now reserved for natives.⁴

The nine native compartments referred to are all the same size. The maximum

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3 number that can be got into one of these sheds, and a number which does as a matter of fact sometimes sleep in one shed, is eighty. The usual numbers are sixty-five to seventy per shed, i.e. 30 to 35 on each side. There is a plank dais constructed on each side, about 6 or 7 inches above the cement floor, on which the boys sleep, and everybody's belongings are hung up in the room. There is no storeroom in which property can be temporarily placed.

Last night every shed was full, and I should think 75 a shed or more were sleeping there. About three weeks ago I counted how many did actually occupy the sheds, and found 701. That day was the occasion of the magistrate and Superintendent Alexander's visit.⁵ I counted because I was questioned as to the actual numbers. The times at which the barracks are most densely crowded are Saturday night and Sunday morning, for some (e.g. from the outer anchorage) do not get back from their work until very late at night.

A number of togt boys go off on ships to Delagoa Bay, East London and other ports close by, and are away a week or even more from the barracks. I have reason to think that a week ago some 8 or 10 togt boys went off to Australia. They are not back yet, so it must be a long way off. Australia is a place where meat comes from in large quantities. This fact may attract them, as well as the representations made by
4 Europeans that that place is a more pleasant one to live in than Natal. I hear that boys who do go to Australia do not leave their ships on getting to port there to go into the towns, for they are employed merely in off-loading and loading up cargo.

Those who go off to other ports do not come and report to me that they are leaving, seeing they are still engaged on their work.

There are a number of natives (togt) who have been on voyages to Australia and come back again. I have spoken to them, and they tell me that they are not allowed, on getting to port, to leave their ship. These men are paid at the rate of 4s a day for all the time they are away. I have heard no complaint about their not being fully paid up.

All natives working in the outer anchorage are paid properly; I hear no complaints. A man who passes through the 'gate', i.e. through the piers and out to sea, is paid 4s a day; those employed on the Bay or at the wharf are paid 3s a day. I hear of many complaints from those working on the wharf and Point generally about not being fairly paid.

Large employers of labour - 'monthly' servants - at the Point are Dambuza, Madevu, and Ebbsworth (Mfukwana), Nkayitshana, Maretshe, Matandutshukela, Mr Galloway [?], McEwan, Mhlotshana, Makizane, Mlomowepipi etc.⁶ Of these, Ebbsworth, Galloway[?], Maretshe, Dambuza, Nkayitshana and Madevu seem to have the largest numbers.

5 Madevu and Mlomowepipi seem to me to be in charge of a number of men in Government employ as well. These men sleep in their own quarters. They are not togt boys and they are dressed in a uniform.

The name of the place where the togt barracks and Coolie barracks are is called Bamboo Square.

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Togt boys are employed in all sorts of work. Men have a very strong desire to do togt work, even young boys.

There is no doubt that the war has largely increased the demand for togt work.

The reason why people like togt work is because in the first place they are paid by the day a high rate of wages, and in the second because when they get news of anyone being ill at home they are free to leave at once without getting a master's permission who will often positively refuse to let them go. A master is too apt to look at things from his own point of view and be disinclined to entertain a reasonable request.

Another reason is they are not subjected to the inconvenience of being refused their pay by grasping, inconsiderate employers.

It has often been borne in upon me how remiss the Government is in regard to this togt question. The Government evidently looks favourably upon boys engaging their services in this way; it appreciates men coming forward to do various kinds of work, and yet, on the other hand, fails to see the necessity of setting apart a clearly defined area and premises for the occupation of togt boys alone to the exclusion of all those who work by the month, and in order to gather up all the togt boys scattered in various places throughout the town, imposing on and inconveniencing others, into one place. The desirability of constructing a set of barracks for the occupation of togt natives alone seems to me a natural inference from the facts.

The togt boys do go in all directions into the town to get sleeping accommodation. A number much larger than that which resides in the barracks is thrown on the town in this way.

I know of the togt barracks at the back of the general cemetery; some years ago I used to be in charge of them. There are three compartments there. I don't know exactly how many sleep in them. Formerly 40 and 50 used to sleep in one room, i.e. 140 or so in the three rooms.

I often check the natives sleeping at my barracks. I get the assistance of several police who stop at the doors to prevent exits. I call out to all to produce their licences and sleeping licences, the white paper being held in one hand and the red in the other as I go round checking. If anyone has not got a sleeping ticket I arrest him if he be a togt boy or even if he is a friend of some togt boy. But this rarely happens. The rule is for only those who have sleeping tickets to sleep there, and I am rarely troubled by outsiders. Old togt boys sometimes come and sleep 4 or 5 days before taking out badges or sleeping tickets, or those who have come on a visit to their friends, even though they have not come to engage in togt work.

Our barracks are sometimes searched by the sanitary inspectors. Our inspector is Mr Kendall. His duty is to see that the place is not overcrowded.

Togt boys sleep in every direction in town; they go beyond the boundaries of the borough, e.g. to Samuseni, i.e. beyond Ridge Road and other far-off parts, and often are very late in getting to their destination. They may or not be arrested for being out after 9 p.m.

All people who leave the barracks to go home report the fact to me.

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As regards food, some boys buy their food day by day and eat it in their shed (where they sleep), and others eat it at 'hotels'. Most of the togt boys, especially Zulus, are very fond of bread. They take tea with it. Natives are also very fond of dhall (they call it dali). Very little porridge is taken; the reason, I think, is this, that it requires time to cook. Much time is not allowed for meals by employers, so that food already cooked (ready for consumption) has to be partaken of. Meat is also partaken of, of course.

Togt boys do not keep little boys to work for them; they have to cook for themselves. Boys to cook are not required, as being too great an expense.

- 8 Fires are made with boxes and rubbish taken from the wharf. But the Corporation Police do not look approvingly on their taking broken boxes etc. to make fires with. The carrying them through the streets gives rise to suspicion. No one, however, is obliged to buy wood. They all, as a matter of fact, bring planking etc. from the wharf. Wood cannot, of course, be got from the bushes round about. People living on private premises in town, what togt boys call *amakobolo*, may have to pay.⁷ It is not right that natives should be arrested for taking wood (boxes), which happens sometimes, even though they got the owner's permission to take it.

If a man wants to go and buy fat on the ships he is obliged to get a pass at the Customs House, for which he pays a shilling.

At first togt boys had great difficulty in getting wood, but now it is easier, for the police are not so suspicious, so much so that natives may often be seen carrying small bundles of planks etc. to their quarters and not be questioned.

The following are the names of natives who are staying at the barracks and never go home: Ngunya, Ndhrazi, Falaza (proper name unknown). Ndhrazi says all his brothers at home died and the whole house vanished. He is afraid of going home lest he too should die. As he escaped by being here, so here, at the togt barracks, he intends for the present to remain, and so it goes on. Ndhrazi used to have a wife.

I don't know why Ngunya is staying so long. I have not questioned him. Ngunya is not married.

The majority of togt boys lead moral lives. There are, however, some who speak of visiting prostitutes living close to Bamboo Square. There are 8 of these prostitutes known to me.

- 9 The majority of togt boys are from Zululand. There are some from parts of Natal, but very few, for the tendency of Natal natives is to sleep *in the amakobolo*. There are a few togt boys at our barracks from Ngwanaza (Tongaland), none from Swaziland, no Nyambana boys or Amatshangana; there are a few Bacas and a few Pundos (4 or 5), no Basutos. But Basutos, Nyambanas, Swazis and others will be found *in the izikwata*.⁸ The *isikwata* means the body of men in the service of any particular European.

If sickness overtakes a man, I report to Assistant Sanitary Inspector Kendall, and the invalid is removed to his home or to the hospital (Addington), just as he likes. Togt boys sometimes die at the barracks. I have known of 2 deaths, and 3 on the way home, just after leaving the barracks. The 2 who died at the place were not attended by a European doctor. They died over a year and a half ago, and were buried at the

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general cemetery.

The boys all get up at 5 on working days; some however rise at 4. They go to work at 5 or 5.30, according to the strictness of the rules of the respective places to which they are attached. The general rule at the Point is that breakfast is at 8, and togt 10 boys act accordingly. The majority come back to the barracks, whilst some go to 'hotels' in Bamboo Square or to 'amaJuda' shops near the barracks.⁹ One hour is allowed for breakfast (*ibulakufesi*), and work is resumed at 9, but they proceed leisurely to work and, with some employers, nothing is said if a man does not resume till 9.15 or so. At 1 is lunch time (*idina* i.e. dinner); an hour is allowed, and people go back to work at 2. At 1 the boys will come and have their meal at the barracks etc. as at breakfast time. The day's work is over at 6 or 7, usually 6 p.m., when all return to their quarters to sleep.

The men who become togt boys are of the ages of the following regiments: Felapakati (Ngubokakundhlase), Mbokodwebomvu, Falaza, Uve, Ngobamakosi. The majority are aged from 24 to 35. There are none as old as the Dhlokwe regiment - 60. Among the *isikwata* people, however, there are the Dhlokwe regiment.

Women take out badges or licences to do washerwoman's work. I have noticed that some togt men induce their women (wives) to leave home and come to Durban, there to become washerwomen. The man works in one way, she in another, and the two hire quarters from some Indian and pass the nights together. At Samuseni many cases of this kind will be found. The women at this part do their washing in the small stream which flows into the Umgeni. I don't think badges ought to be issued to 11 married women. Women must do their work at home.

I know the names of a large number of the togt boys at the barracks, but cannot know all as they are always changing.

I am the only person in charge of the togt boys at the Point barracks, but police patrol round about outside.

Of a Sunday the boys sit down, or lie down and do nothing, or they go out into the yard and dance, but I do not allow them to hold or have sticks when dancing. There are some *kolwas* among the togt boys; these play concertinas and dance sometimes after their own fashion.

Six or seven togt boys go to a night school, and return at 9 pm. I don't know where this school is.

The water-closet and urinal is altogether too small; people are kept waiting much too long for others inside to finish. The washing-room is too small; it would be an improvement if, instead of the tank having to fill whilst people are waiting, for there to be a steady flow of water carrying the filth away. A coolie washes out the urinal etc. once a day at 9 am, although Mr Kendall directed him to clean twice a day. I have never complained because I have never been asked. I think the coolie is somewhat careless.

I find togt boys very law-abiding on the whole, and they are afraid of the police. I 12 think, therefore, there would be nothing to fear in having large barracks put up all in one place to accommodate all the 5000 boys in Durban. I think 4 police to every 800

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or so persons would be sufficient to maintain order. I have never known of any fighting or disturbance of any consequence during the whole time I have been in charge. Two or three do sometimes have a fight but this is usually easily put a stop to.

I would suggest that the police who sleep at the barracks, viz. myself and 3 others, should be given quarters outside the sheds themselves, but close to them. I have spoken to Mr Kendall about the matter but he said he could do nothing as that was no concern of his.

People do sometimes come and call boys who have stayed too long to return home and assist them in their troubles. There is no doubt that tog work causes a tendency to forget domestic affairs at the kraal, but this tendency is apparent also amongst ordinary 'monthly' servants at the Point and elsewhere.

The average length of a tog boy's service goes from 8, 9, 10 and 12 months to 15 and 20, and after staying 2, 3 and 4 months at home, to return again. I think there is a tendency to shorten visits to their homes.

[The above statement made in my presence and taken down from Sisekelo's lips this 13th April 1902. J.S.]

- 13 To ask Sisekelo.
Petty thefts, assaults and offences at barracks, how settled.
Get me tog boys who go to Australia to give evidence.
What is the rule about holidays and half-holidays? What time is work over of a Saturday?
Do these boys obtain liquor? Where from?

Notes

¹Togt (tog) is a Dutch-Afrikaans word for casual labour. The Point is the spit of land, long since heavily built up, which separates the bay at Durban from the open sea.

²In 1900-1901 Stuart made a list (recorded in the Stuart Collection, File 73, pp. 130, 154-6) of the Zulu names for over 200 white people, most of them either his contemporaries in Natal or personages who had figured in the history of the colony. This list gives Dambuza as the name for A.J.S. Maritz and for T.M. Robinson, and Madevu as the name for Darke and for Bruheim.

³The Natal Who's Who of 1906 lists Raoul Renaud as a Durban businessman.

⁴The Natal Who's Who of 1906 identifies A.L. Hutchinson as manager of the Standard Bank in Greytown, and W.A. Hutchinson as a leading farmer and a member of the Natal Legislative Council for Alfred County.

⁵Either R.C. Alexander, Chief Constable in Durban, or his son, W.A. Alexander, Inspector of Borough Police in Durban.

⁶For Dambuza and Madevu see note 2 above. Stuart's list referred to in note 2 gives Nkayitshana as the Zulu name for Tom Beningfield and for A.S. Windham. The Natal Who's Who of 1906 gives Thomas Beningfield as a Durban businessman and

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stockbroker. We have been unable to identify the other personages named.

⁷Bryant, Dictionary, pp. 115, 308, gives *ikhobolo* (pl. *amakhobolo*) as meaning the same as *idokodo*, which he glosses as 'Roughly made, temporary hut...'.⁷

⁸*Isikwata* (pl. *izikwata*) derives from the English word 'squad'.⁸

⁹*IJuda* (pl. *amaJuda*) means Jew.⁹