

The closure of Toornberg and Hephzibah

Although the missionaries at Toornberg and Hephzibah were starting to attract quite large numbers of San by 1817, their efforts were destined to be thwarted by the Governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, who was sympathetic to those Boers who wanted the missions to be closed down. While some farmers had given their full support to the missions at Toornberg and Hephzibah, and a number attended worship on the sabbath at Toornberg with their families, others complained to the Governor of the dangers of assembling San so near the frontier.

There were a variety of motives underlying the appeals by some of the Boers to Somerset to close the missions. Probably the most important was their fear that the way in which the San had been maltreated by them would be reported to the Colonial authorities. Smit had clashed with Boers in the area over the dubious manner in which San children were taken into service on the farms, as well as over their attempts to seize San children who had fled from the surrounding farms to the mission. San took refuge at the mission from Boers who were persecuting them and this upset the farmers, who, in some cases, resorted to kidnapping the refugees. Thus Maria Maritz, Smit's sister-in-law, testified:

“The Bushmen when they found they had the means of subsistence wished to recover their children, some of whom they had made over to the farmers when in a famished state, and some of the children themselves, hearing that the establishment was formed, wished to join it. This drew on the Institution the hostility of the Boers, who used to come with their wagons and carry off all the Bushmen with their women and children, and their representatives at length induced the Landdrost to break up the establishment”.

Somerset ordered the closure of the mission at Hephzibah in March 1817 and a year later Smit, too, was ordered to leave Toornberg. According to Philip, the closure of the missions now resulted in the country being cleared of San “as if they had been wild beasts”. The San chief, Uithalder, for example, told Philip: “Some moons after Mr Smit's removal, the boors came and took possession of our springs, chased us from the lands of Toornberg, and made us go and keep their sheep. Whitboy, one of my Bushmen, and his wife, were both shot by the boors while taking shelter among the rocks, and their children carried into perpetual servitude”. The spring at Toornberg was taken over by one of these Boers, van der Walt, who declared that “the Bushmen should have no springs in this country, and they should have no pools but the rainwater pools out of which to drink”. After being flogged by van der Walt with a sjambok when three of his sheep went missing, Uithalder was driven away from the area. He was forced to move from farm to farm, until he went “to live among the mountains, and to subsist upon roots and locusts”.

The sad state of the missions after their abandonment was described by Anne Hamilton, wife of one of the missionaries' assistants at Lattakoo, a Tlhaping settlement north-east of Kuruman:

“We rode by the places that had once been stations, but now left desolate. At (one) a Boor had passed on his way to the salt pan and driven away most of the Bushermens (sic); at poor Hephzibah we found a few who sang and prayed notwithstanding they have no missionary. (They) say they are determined to pray till the Lord again send his Word among them. It made my heart bleed to see this place: two years ago as I passed them there were about 300 Bushermens living there ... the land was covered with flocks and gardens, now not the smallest vestage(sic) of house or garden remaining; all is destroyed by a Boor.”

By 1823 most of the San who had been attached to Hephzibah were reported to be working for farmers in the area.

The missions Ramah and Konnah, 1816 - 1823

About two years prior to the closure of Toornberg and Hephzibah, another two San missions had been established by the LMS. In 1816, Andries Pretorius and Piet Sabba, a Nama convert, had begun teaching at Ramah, three kilometres north of the Gariiep, in the vicinity of present-day Hopetown. At about the same time, the Khoe converts, Kruisman and David, were placed at Konnah, just south of the Gariiep.

Campbell visited both stations in August 1820. He found Kruisman and about 30 San still at Konnah, which was situated a few miles from a Korana (Khoe) kraal situated on the banks of the Gariiep. From Campbell's description, it seems that Kruisman and David had achieved considerable success at the station. "(W)e went to Konnah, which lies about two and a half miles to the westward of the river, and is now entirely occupied by Bushmen", he wrote. "We saw a considerable piece of ground, which their Hottentot teachers had taught them to cultivate and to irrigate from a neighbouring spring. The ground had been so productive, particularly of tobacco, water-melons, onions etc. as sufficiently to reward them for all their labours." Europeans could not have been a common sight, for Campbell remarked that "all the Bushmen children in the place fled at our approach to the leader's hut, and as many as could concealed themselves behind two women; the others crouched in silence at the back of the hut".

At Ramah, about 30 Griquas/Basters and 40 to 50 San, with many occasional visitors, had placed themselves under Piet Sabba. By the time of Campbell's visit, five houses had been built there as well as an unusually decorated church capable of accommodating 100 people. Campbell described it as very neat with whitewashed walls and "red and black large round spots regularly daubed over it, which gives it the appearance of stained paper". A number of San and Griqua huts had been erected behind the houses.

However, the attempts of the missionaries to convert the Ramah San and their leader, Kiewiet, met with little success, and Campbell's scolding the old San leader for not attending church meetings had no effect. He advised the San to build more substantial houses, but this suggestion was also disregarded, Campbell remarking that "they appeared as perfectly indifferent to such counsel as if a native from China were advising a healthy inhabitant of London to clothe himself with the thickest fur during the months of summer".

Kiewiet and his followers left Ramah in 1822 when it was taken over by Basters, whom Sabba had permitted to stay in the area, and Sabba himself soon left the station. When the traveller George Thompson passed through the area in 1823 he found the station completely deserted and all the buildings in ruins. By this time Konnah, too, had been abandoned.

The mission at Philippolis, 1822 - 1828

A new mission was established north of the Gariiep at Philippolis under Jan Goeyman, later succeeded, in August 1825, by James Clark. (Goeyman had spent a night in the church with another man's wife, and the Church deacons were unwilling to accept his explanation that the night had been spent solely in prayer). The mission attracted about 60 San, but they were troubled by the Bergenaars, who raided the mission for cattle, as well as the Griquas who occupied the springs in the area. Further problems arose when Boers began to move into the region, harassing the San at the station. By 1825 there were between 700 and 800 Boers in the Philippolis area, and in the same year Philip reported:

“On my arrival at the Bushman station at Philippolis I found that the Boers who had recently settled in the new district so lately added to the Colony had found their way across the river, and were beginning to annoy those who had the conducting of the mission and to oppress the Bushmen, under the pretext of searching for stolen cattle and runaway Bushmen and children, who, they alleged, had been contracted to them and promised them by their parents. The missionaries were set at defiance, the statements of the Bushmen were disregarded by the Boers; there was no authority in the country to decide such questions, and the Bushmen were unable to defend themselves.”

Attacks also came from Sotho-Tswana, who attacked Boesmanfontein, an outstation of the mission, in May 1826. They drove off sheep and cattle donated to the San living there, believing that these animals had been stolen from them by the Bergenaars, a rebel offshoot of the Griquas, and razed the mission buildings to the ground. About 30 people were burnt to death or assegaaiied as they fled from their dwellings.

Prior to this event, Philip had decided to allow Adam Kok II and his Griquas, rather than the San, to occupy the land on which the main mission at Philippolis stood - in return for an undertaking that Kok and his followers would protect the San in the Transgariiep area. At this time Kok and his followers, alienated from the main Griqua settlement at Griquatown under Andries Waterboer, were wandering from place to place within the Modder River valley. After the attack on Boesmanfontein an alarmed James Clark sent an urgent message to Kok to settle at Philippolis and prevent further depredations. This he and his followers did, and Philippolis was eventually to become the capital of a wide area under the control or influence of the Griqua people - although some San lingered on at the mission for some time after this, and the settlement also attracted a considerable number of desperado Bergenaar and Korana groups. Philip hoped that the Griquas at Philippolis, under the guidance of the missionary Peter Wright, would prevent further Boer incursions from south of the Gariiep, and, at the same time, act as a barrier against Mzilikazi's Ndebele in the north. Unlike the San, the Griquas were seen as a force capable of resisting the incursions of the Boers into the area as well as the threat of incursions by Mzilikazi's Ndebele, who had moved from KwaZulu-Natal and were wreaking havoc over a wide area.



Adam Kok II. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Cape Archives



Philippolis in 1834. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Museum Africa.



Mzilikazi.

Source (original): Cornwallis Harris (1852). *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa*. London: H.G. Bohn.



An Ndebele warrior.

Source (original): Cornwallis Harris (1852). *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa*. London: H.G. Bohn.



An Ndebele warrior.

Source (original): Arbousset, T. and Daumas, F. (1842). *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration au Nord-Est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance*. Paris: Bertrand.

Bushman Station/ Bethulie, 1828 - 1833

Work amongst the San soon became unviable at Philippolis, however, largely as a result of tensions between the San and the Griquas, and James Clark left in 1828 to establish a new mission at Bushman Station, near the confluence of the Gariep and the Caledon. Most of the San at Philippolis had left by this time. In the same year, about 150 San attended a service at the new mission station. By 1830, about 50 San with livestock had settled more or less permanently there, and by 1833 it had about 100 permanent inhabitants, with others living a more independent existence nearby.

There were many difficulties involved in the establishment of the Institution and Clark's task was not an easy one. Theft was rife and the San at the mission were reluctant to attend his sermons, demanding to be paid for listening to the preaching of the missionaries. To make matters worse, San at the station, as well as other San groups in Transgariep, once again came under pressure from Boers who had started to cross the Gariep from the south in large numbers in 1827.

As at the Sak River mission, some of the immigrant farmers were sympathetic to the aims of the missionaries and donated livestock to San living at the mission, but, in general, they had a massive and

negative impact on the area. Much of Transgariep was occupied by San communities, and the raiding and hunting expeditions of these new arrivals had a profound effect on the people living there. In the face of these incursions and their effects, starving San sought refuge from the Boers at the mission, and some of them used it as a base from which to raid the livestock of the farmers. Clark reported, however, that some of the farmers in the neighbourhood had greatly provoked the San, causing them to plunder their livestock, and the traveller George Thompson reported the San's view of these thefts: "The Bushmen say in reply to the question why they steal the Boers' cattle: The Boers come and destroy and carry away our game. We merely do the same; we rob them of their game - cattle".

By June 1833, Philip had decided, for strategic reasons, that the LMS should concentrate its attentions on its Griqua missions. At this time, the Paris Evangelical Mission Society was looking to establish a mission to the Sotho-Tswana, and Philip offered Bushman Station to the French missionaries. When Clark protested this decision he was ordered to leave the mission, which was soon deserted by most of the San. The French missionary, Jean Pierre Pellissier, took over the mission and it was subsequently settled by Tlhaping (Sotho-Tswana mixed with other groups) refugees and renamed Verhuil. Later it became known as Bethulie. Although a few San lingered on at the station, this marked the end of the LMS's efforts to evangelise the Gariiep San.



Verhuil/Bethulie in 1834. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Museum Africa.



Pellissier preaching to the Tlhaping at Verhuil/Bethulie in 1834. By Charles Davidson Bell.

Source: Museum Africa.

Bushman School, Glen Grey, 1839 - c.1850.

The last LMS mission to the San was that which was formed for the benefit of San and other groups under the San leader, Madolo, also known as Madoor or Madura. It was established by James Read, who was based at Philipton Mission in the Kat River Settlement, Eastern Cape. In 1838 Read had been told by one of the members of his congregation, who was of San descent, that he had relatives to the north who were still living a wild existence. The missionary saw this as a divine call to minister to the San and an exploratory party was sent out from Philipton to locate these people. They found them under the leadership of Madolo at Glen Grey, north of the Black Kei River - in the vicinity of the present-day town of Lady Frere. Madolo had previously been chief of the San who occupied the country around the Klipplaats and Upper Black Kei Rivers, but had retired with his people to the Glen Grey area in about 1835.



A Kat River Bastard and his after-rider - quite possibly a San man.

Source: Butler, H. (1841). *South African Sketches*. London: Ackermann.

The San chief returned the missionaries' visit in May 1839 and it was agreed that a LMS outstation would be instituted amongst his people with the help of two members of the Philipton congregation. Read travelled north to supervise the establishment of the station in September 1839 and a large piece of land was soon under cultivation. The new mission, which was situated on the White Kei/Cacadu River and was named Bushman School, soon attracted San as well as people from other groups, and by early 1842 there were 15 San families staying there. A few years later, the number of people who based themselves at the mission, now re-named New Bethelsdorp, had increased to about 300 families, many of whom were Khoe, Nguni and Sotho farmers, or people of mixed descent. Some San at Bushman School were baptised, and although Madolo himself was never converted he often attended services at the small chapel which had been erected there.

In April 1846 the War of the Axe broke out between the British and the Xhosa, and Madolo and 200 of his San, Khoe, Mfengu and Thembu followers were recruited as levies by the British, whom they assisted in defeating the Xhosa. The mission never really recovered from the prolonged absence of so

many of its inhabitants during the war. When Madolo, described by Thomas Baines, the artist and explorer, as a “diminutive old man, with meagre visage, prominent cheek bones and bare head by no means covered with little peppercorns”, was visited and sketched by the famous traveller and artist at the School in 1848 the station consisted of only 12 inferior reed houses, one of which served as both chapel and school.



Madolo (in peaked cap) and followers sketched by Thomas Baines.

Source: Museum Africa.



Madolo's San, under James Read, engage with Xhosa warriors.

Source: Bell Heritage Trust, UCT.

After the war, Madolo, Read and his son petitioned the Colonial government for their territory to be made over formally to the San. An area was marked out for occupation by Madolo and Flux, another San chief, but other groups began to move into the area, causing Flux to attack an immigrant Thembu chief, Ndhela. As the most important San leader in the area, Madolo was held responsible with Flux for this attack and he was attacked by Ndhela. He and Flux were forced to flee to caves along the banks of the White Kei in about 1850 when the Colonial government sent a force to the area to arrest the perpetrators of the violence. Most of Madolo's followers went with him, and, deprived of his leadership, the remainder of the community at Bushman School appear to have dispersed - although a few San, as well as other groups, were still living at the mission in 1850.

George William Stow, the pioneering nineteenth century geologist, historian and rock art copyist, later visited the cave inhabited by Madolo on the White Kei, in the course of his researches into San history and rock paintings, and found its walls covered with a beautiful painted panel of about 100 springboks. When he asked what had happened to the old San chief, he was told that Madolo had fallen back on the fastnesses of the Maloti-Drakensberg in 1856 when he was about 80 years of age, "since which time he has been lost sight of, and his ultimate fate is buried in oblivion".



George William Stow.

Source: Young, R.B. (1908). *The Life and Work of George William Stow*. Cape Town: Darter Bros.



Rock paintings of springboks in Madolo's cave on the White Kei. Copied by Stow.

Source: Stow, G.W. and Bleek, D.F. (1930). *Rock Paintings in South Africa*. London: Methuen.



Rock paintings in Madolo's cave on the Black Kei. Copied by Stow.

Source: Stow, G.W. and Bleek, D.F. (1930). *Rock Paintings in South Africa*. London: Methuen.

TIMELINE

1798

Floris Visser suggests measures to bring about peace between the San and the farmers on the north-western frontier

Governor Macartney issues a proclamation setting out government policy concerning the ways in which the San are to be treated and in which the problems with the frontier farmers are to be addressed

1799

Arrival of LMS missionaries in the Cape

Blyde Vooruizicht mission established by Kicherer and Edwards north of the Sak River

1800

Kicherer and a group of San from the mission visit Cape Town

Kicherer moves the mission south to the Sak River itself

1801

Kicherer abandons the Sak River mission and establishes a mission at Rietfontein to the Khoe and mixed communities on the Gariiep, north of the Sak River

1802

Kicherer leaves the mission at Rietfontein and re-establishes the San mission at the Sak River

1803

Kicherer, Scholtz and several "Hottentots" visit London and are received by the king

1805

Kicherer returns to the Sak River mission

1806

The Sak river mission is abandoned and Kicherer goes to minister at Graaff-Reinet

1814

Toornberg mission established by Smit and Goeyman on the site of Colesberg

1815

Toornberg temporarily abandoned by Smit and Goeyman

They return to the mission with Corner, recruited in Graaff-Reinet

1816

Corner and Goeyman leave the mission after conflict with Smit.

Hephzibah (Renosterfontein/Tkaneë) mission established under Corner and Goeyman, near present-day Petrusville

Ramah mission established under Sabba and Pretorius, near present-day Hopetown

Konnah mission established under Kruisman and David, just south of the Gariep

1817

Somerset orders the closure of Hephzibah

1818

Smit ordered to leave Toornberg

1822

Ramah taken over by Bastards/Basters

Philippolis mission established under Goeyman

1823

Konnah abandoned

1826

Philippolis handed over to the Griquas by Philip

1828

Bushman Station established by James Clark on the site of modern Bethulie

1833

Bushman Station handed over to the French missionary Jean Pierre Pellissier, who ministered to the Tlhaping

1839

Bushman School mission established on the White Kei by James Read. ministering to Madolo's people

1846

Madolo and his followers fight in the War of the Axe with the British against the Xhosa

1850

Madolo leaves Bushman School, taking most of his followers with him