

HYMNAL RECORD OF A MISSIONARY STRUCTURE AT THABANTŠHO (GERLACHSHOOP) OF THE BAKOPA OF KGOŠHI BOLEU

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ABSTRACT

This research sets out to answer a problem involving whether or not the first church was established across the Vaal River in the 1860s at Gerlachshoop (Maleoskop). An incidental find of an unknown publication may corroborate an answer to the problem. Anecdotal notes in a hymnal songbook record the first inauguration of a bell of one of the earliest Berlin Missionaries north of the Vaal River. This may clarify the location within the landscape and whether the structure of a church at Gerlachshoop or Thabantšho was erected, as opposed to being a deception or a historical figment of imagination by a subsequent director of the Berlin Missionary Society. The national heritage value of such rare early documentation of European/African literature and the built environment is of great significance and serves as one of the earliest records of German translations into the Sekopa language almost 150 years ago, with several early hymns set to musical notation, that marked the occasion when the actual Sekopa hymns were sung at the event of the inauguration of an early church and its bell.

Key words: Thabantšho; Gerlachshoop; hymnal record; Berlin Missionary Society; Bakopa; Kgošhi Boleu; Herrmann Sachtleben.

Background

In order to ascertain that a church was established at Gerlachshoop Mission station in the 1860s, this research has brought to light a new source that may provide

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corroborative evidence that such a building was established and that an inauguration ceremony for a bell had indeed occurred.

Together with other similar diary notes from the Berlin Missionary Society, mention is made of an inauguration but confusion reigns as to whether the actual church building was established. One source, namely Wangemann (1992) in particular stresses that the church was established and even provides a sketch of the building.

Later archaeological research has however contested this view and lack of discovering the building can either imply that Wangemann was in a state of subterfuge of some sort, or that the later church building was rebuilt or extended over the previous church, or that the building has not yet been located, and finally, that it never existed in the first place.

There is sufficient evidence in the literature, including this new source, to suggest that a church was established and that its precise location has yet to be determined.

Gerlachshoop location

A certain Anina du Plessis drew attention to the site and ever since it would appear that the exact location of the settlement called Gerlachshoop seems to have been in dissension. Boshoff illuminates how Bergh (1990):

...refers to several factors concerning the Ba-Kopa, which are vague. One of these is the fact that the exact location of the Ba-Kopa settlement is not correctly described and indicated. He [Bergh] criticises previous historiographers (Van Rooyen and Van Jaarsveld) for their imprecise interpretation of sources...[and] has drawn a map, with the farms Weltevrede, Rietkloof and Blaauwbank indicated, and situated the Ba-Kopa settlement in the southeastern corner of the farm Rietkloof. This indication is in line with the hilltop indicated as Maleoskop on modern maps (and it is a prominent hill, towering over much of the surrounding landscape), but I believe it is a misidentification. (Boshoff 2007a)

Reasons for the adoption of the present site are vague and yet Wangemann (1992) is used to corroborate the location of the settlement of Gerlachshoop, even though at a later stage Wangemann is described by Boshoff as ‘delusionary’. Boshoff (2007a) however further elucidates:

...December 1861 saw the construction of the dower house as well as a water-furrow, which are still visible today. According to Wangemann, the house was 42 ft long and 18 ft wide and built with mud bricks. The foundation was laid out with the unusual black manganiferous boulders from Thabantsho. A church was constructed with the help of the local Christians and the first sermons were heard on the 20th of September 1863.

In May 1862, two new missionaries, Endeman and Albert Nachtigal, joined Grützner and Merensky. It was decided that Endeman and Grützner would continue working with the tribe while Merensky and Nachtigal explore greener pastures. The latter

two eventually established the mission station Botshabelo, which later would play an important role in the Ba-Kopa history. (Boshoff 2007a)

Church location

This recent research, together with archaeological excavations and survey, has therefore alluded to the possibility that no church was ever ‘completed’ at Gerlachshoop during the 1860s and that this remains a mystery. Archaeological work to locate any structures has shown extensive devastation but no concrete evidence has surfaced in this regard, However, Boshoff (2007a) rather confusingly concludes that by September 1862, Kgošhi Boleu ceded an area between Thabantšho and Gerlachshoop for the erection of a school that could also function as church and that even though a bell tower was erected, animosity broke out and war between the Bakopa and Boers saw a vacation and destruction later by a Swazi-Boer force by late 1863.

A short while after the destruction and death of Kgošhi Boleu, Wangemann made detailed sketches of the structures and their positions in the landscape during the periods 1866-1867 and 1884-1885 (Wangemann 1868; 1992). The naming of the king was also detailed and the specific location defined (Boshoff and Leonard 2004-2005), with certain discrepancies Bergh (1990, 5-9; Map 6.4) that located the settlement in the south-eastern corner of the farm Rietkloof 166JS (Van Jaarsveld 1986, 147-156).

Boshoff (2007a), however doubts Wangemann’s drawings (1868, 64) and criticises his observations and notes (dated 16 May 1867 – that were done three years after the battle at Thabantšho, and two and a half years after Gerlachshoop was vacated), specifically where Wangemann made the following observation about drawing No. 3. Gerlachshoop: ‘In der Mitte die Kirche...’ [In the centre, the church] (Boshoff, Krüger and Krüger 2007; Wangemann 1868).

Boshoff (2007a) sees that from plans drawn up by the middle of 1863, the following note accompanies the sketch: ‘Grundriß der so Gott will in Gerlachshoop zu erbauende Kirche’ [Plan of the church that will, God willing, be erected at Gerlachshoop – own translation] (Acta Gerlachshoop 1860–1866 Abt III Fach 4 No 1 Dok 138, 138a, 139: 4). He questions the validity that a bell tower was inaugurated on 20 September 1863, as the mission station was temporarily vacated shortly thereafter for a few months and the ensuing battle suspended almost all activities at Gerlachshoop after 10 May 1864. Boshoff states that the ‘missionaries hoped for an opportunity to build a school and a church (in that order) shortly before the battle’:

Noch ist freilich nicht abzusehen, wann wir unser Gerlachshoop als eine vollständige station uns werden vorstellen können: denn ganz fertig ist ein Missionsplatz doch nur dann erst, wenn eine Kirche da ist, und der Altar aufgerichtet werden kann, und vorher trägt alles doch nur den Stempel des Nothwerkes an sich [Still it is not clear when we will be able to imagine our Gerlachshoop as a complete station because a mission place is only truly complete when

it has a church and when an altar can be erected. Until then the whole endeavour carries a preparatory stamp – own translation] (BMB 1863d: 390–391). (Boshoff 2007a)

Boshoff further elucidates that Wangemann possibly wishfully depicted the establishment of the Mission either due to incorrect information from Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Adam Kobolt (1834-1874; cf. Zöllner and Heese 1984, 197-198) or that Wangemann had lied (Boshoff 2007a).

Archaeological problem

An archaeological mystery begins to unfold as Gerlachshoop appears to have been deserted without being destroyed and so may have less to show in the stratigraphical record. Johannes Sander returned to Gerlachshoop in 1904 after the mission was evacuated in 1865 (Boshoff et al. 2007).

The Maleoskop Archaeological Project researchers determined through a surface survey from the outset where houses and a church were located from the scatter of bricks and hewn stone foundations. However, oral testimony confirmed that the located church was the one built between 1904 and 1906 by Sander and which was demolished in 1963.

No mention is made of excavations to determine the possible continuity context of the church building, which is assumed to have no relationship with an earlier construction, nor is any relationship drawn in locating verifiable chronological exactitude for the statements made. The surface survey has no ecological indicator species markers to act as verification by any means, specifically aerial. Boshoff reveals that further excavations may shed light on the earlier period and admits that the information from the excavations are negative. The assumptions concerning Wangemann are therefore premature, specifically in light of excavations done (cf. Boshoff 2007a; Boshoff et al. 2007).

Notes in hymnal records

A relatively unknown missionary – Herrmann Sachtleben, born in 1829 in Quedlinburg, Germany – appears to bring light to this mystery in his records as revealed by notes written in his songbook/hymnal written at the time. Sachtleben also translates several of the earliest hymns into an African dialect from the German language. He is known to have entered the country in 1859 and to have died unmarried on the 6th of August 1913. The book is therefore part of the rarest literature in Africa and its heritage as well as providing an eyewitness account of the first church to be built north of the Vaal River. He worked at Gerlachshoop with Karl Heinrich Julius Endemann ‘K.E.’, Theodore Wangemann, Carl Heinrich Theodore Grützner ‘H.G.’ or H.Gr.’, Johannes Carl August Sander, Alexander Merensky, Albert Nachtigal ‘A.N.’, Heinrich Kobolt and died as a missionary at Botshabelo near Middleburg (Poewe and Van der Heyden 1999).

Description of hymnal

Dimension: 175mm x 110mm x 7mm. Ownership – author.

A hard cover with bluish-green cloth spine with black paper pasted on cardboard paper cover. Intact spine with exterior signs of deterioration. Internal good condition with slight yellowing from age. Front inscription in gold leaf print: ‘Herrmann Sachtleben’.

Book Title:

‘Klänge des Claubens und der Liebe’ Eine Sammlung geistlicher Lieder mit Melodien zur Erbauung in haus und Schule herausgegeben von W. Irmer. Zweite, vermehrte auflage. Berlin, 1854. Berlag von Bethge. Sparwaldsbrude Nr 16, 70 pages.

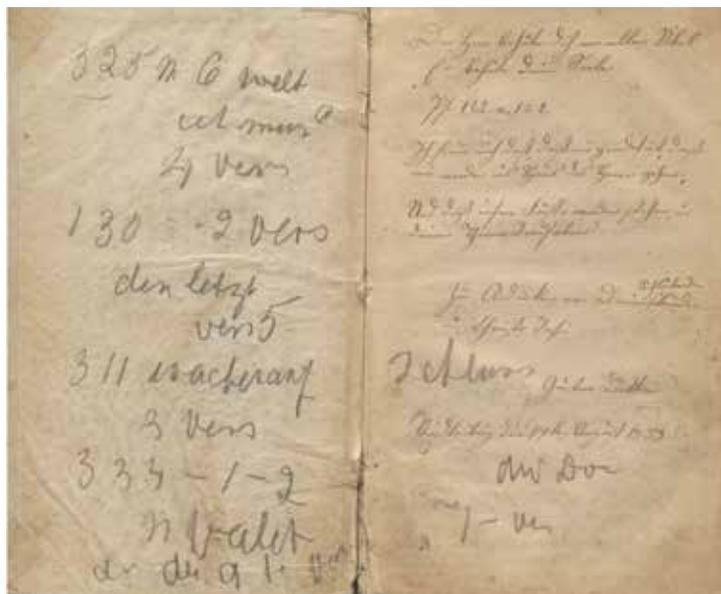


Figure 1: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben. Inside front cover: pencilled (lead/graphite/charcoal) verse and hymnal numbers jotted note. Overleaf: penned ink inscription: ‘Der Herr behute Dich vor allem übel, Er behüte Deine Secl, Psalm 77, 122 verse 1 – 2’; ‘Ich freue nich des(dass) mir Gesund und wir warden ins Haus des Herrn gehn. Und das...?...’; ‘Zum Andenken an Deinem Dichliebenden Bouder in Christu Jesu Günter Dittmer’; ‘Quedlinburg den 15 August 1859’. Photo by Richard Wade.

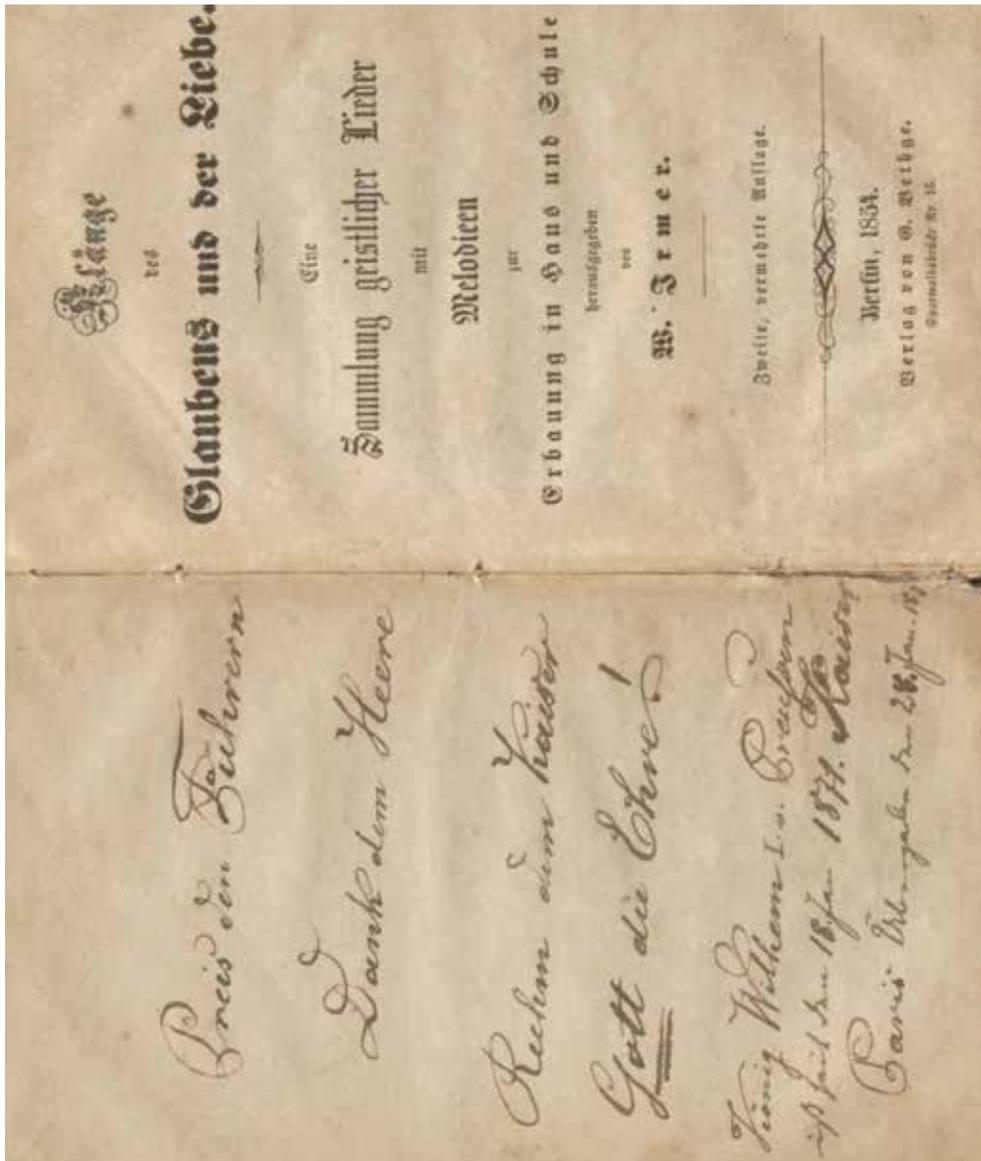


Figure 2: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben. Title page with notes. First blank page: penned ink inscription: 'Preis den Führern, Dank dem Heere, Ruhm dem Kaiser, Gott die Ehre! König Wilhelm I. v. Preussen (?) iss...18. Jan 1871 Kaiser Paris Urbangalen (?)...28 Jan. 1871'. Photo by Richard Wade.

Gott, mein Vater, segne dich, segne dich, segne dich, Alltags Segne dich,
 Heilige, segne dich, segne dich, segne dich, 1. Bei uns segne dich,
 2. Amen Alltags segne dich,
 halt den Morgen Segne dich, und alle meine Sündigen
 Gott verleihe dir nicht, größer als der Helfer
 folgt dem Heiligen Segne dich. In allen Stücken
 ist die Not für nicht. Es segne dich,
 in allen Not wird er dich befehlen, den
 Retter in Not, will auf unser Vater, du
 trage Gott.
 trage Gott!

Figure 4: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben, page 70 – Song with musical notation - detail. Photo by Richard Wade.



Figure 5: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song with musical notation and 6 verses. Photo by Richard Wade.



Figure 6: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song with musical notation - detail. Photo by Richard Wade.

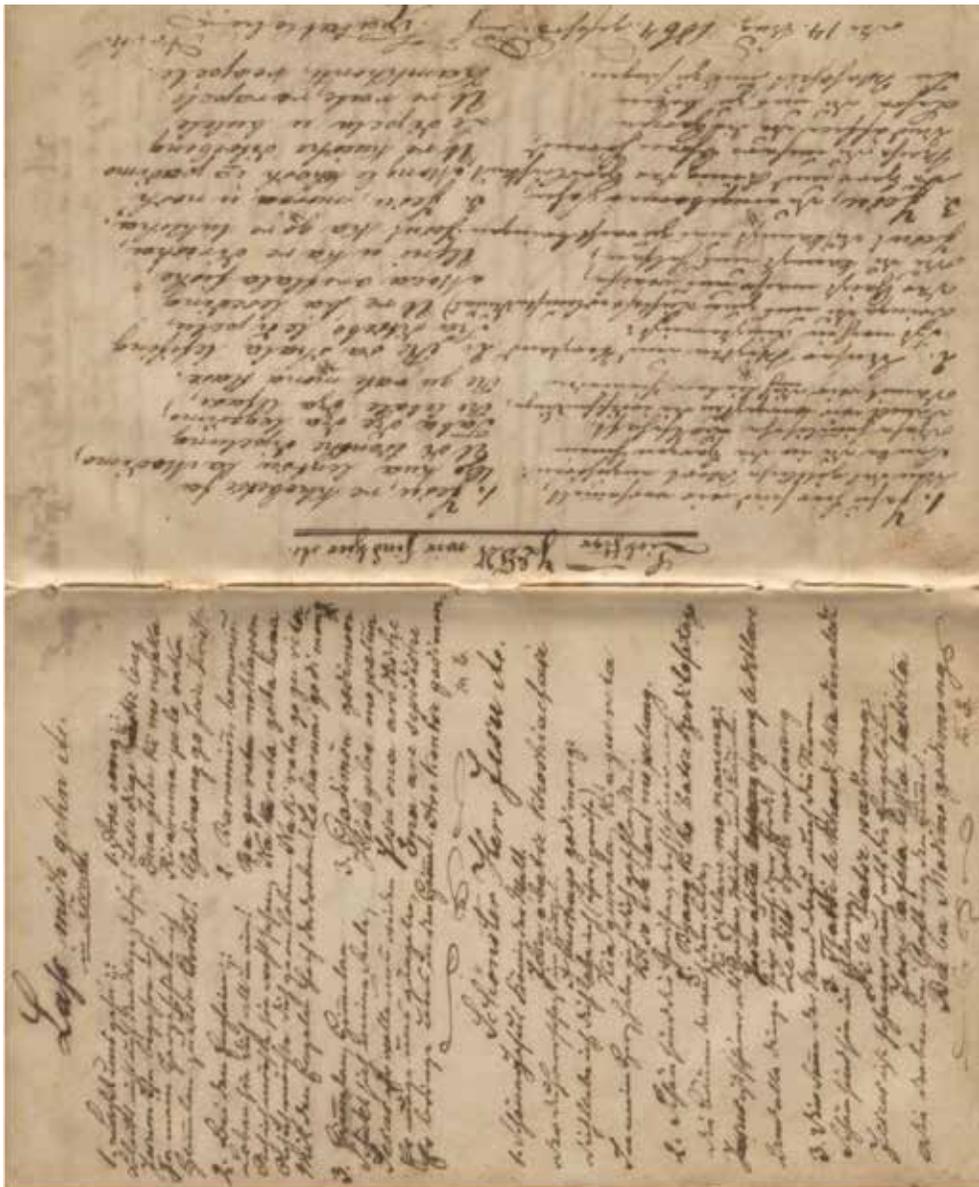


Figure 7: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Songs translated from German into Sekopo. Photo by Richard Wade.

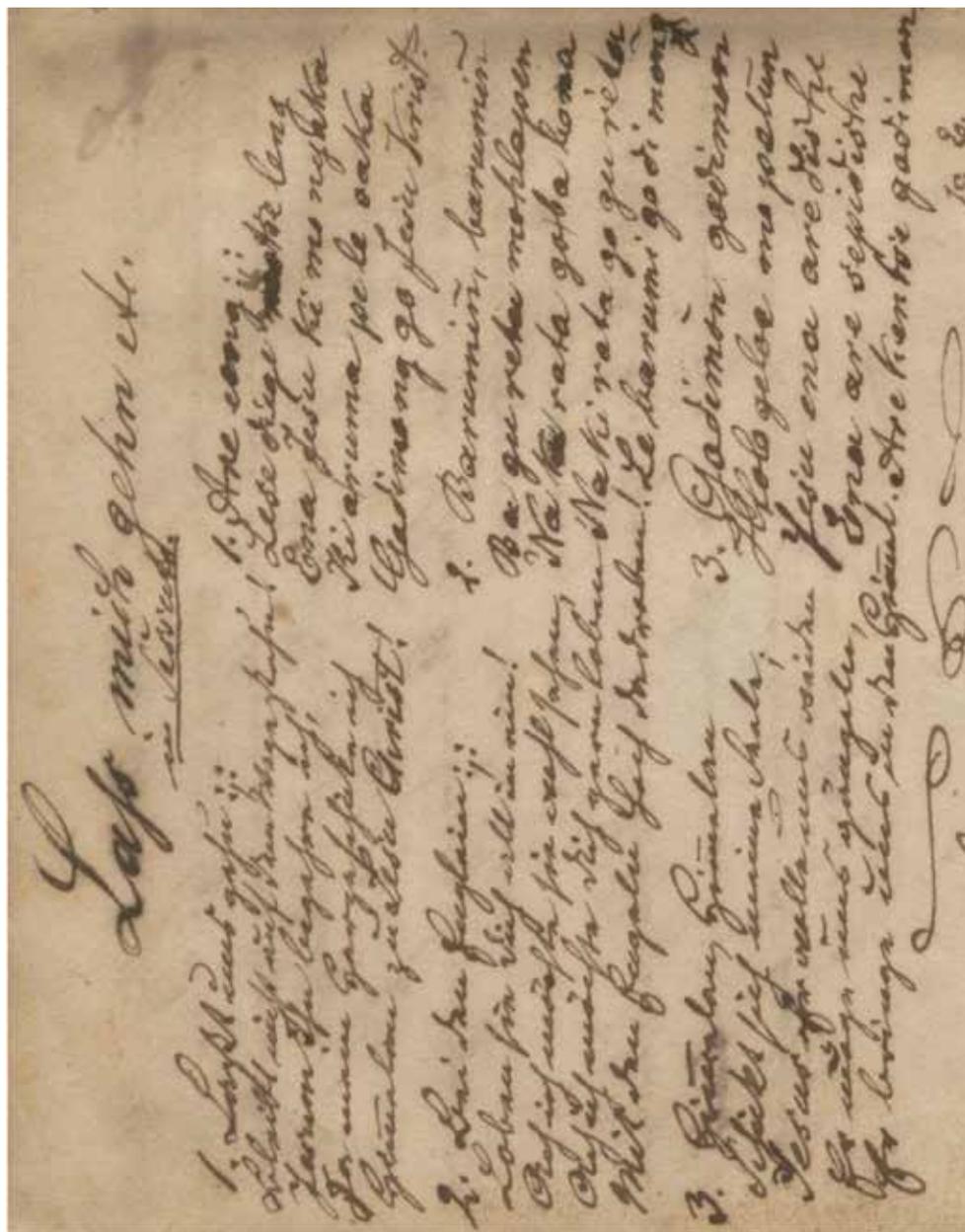


Figure 8: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song translated from German into Sekopo: ‘Lafs mich gehn etc.’ 3 verses – detail one. Initialed ‘K.E.’. Photo by Richard Wade.

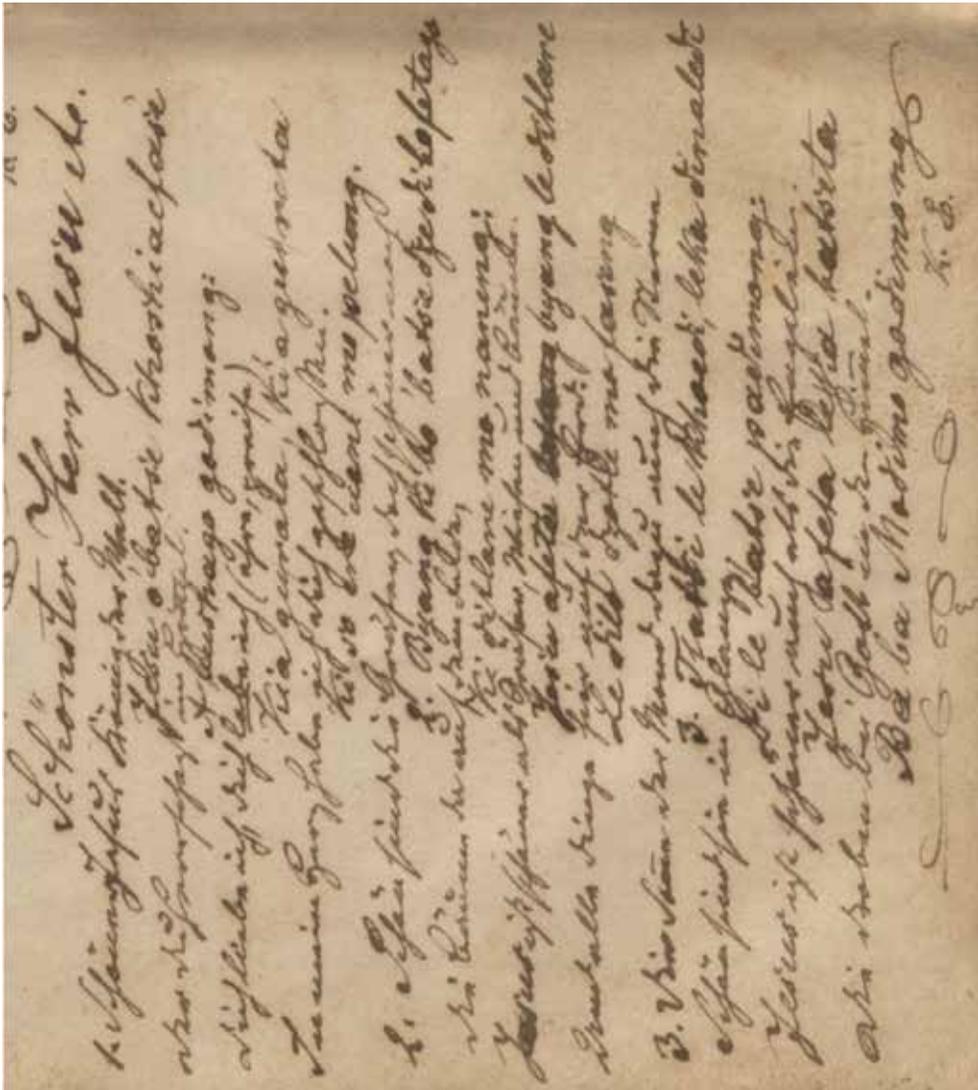


Figure 9: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song ‘Schönster Herr Jesu etc.’ translated from German into Sekopo – detail two. Initialed ‘K.E.’. Photo by Richard Wade.

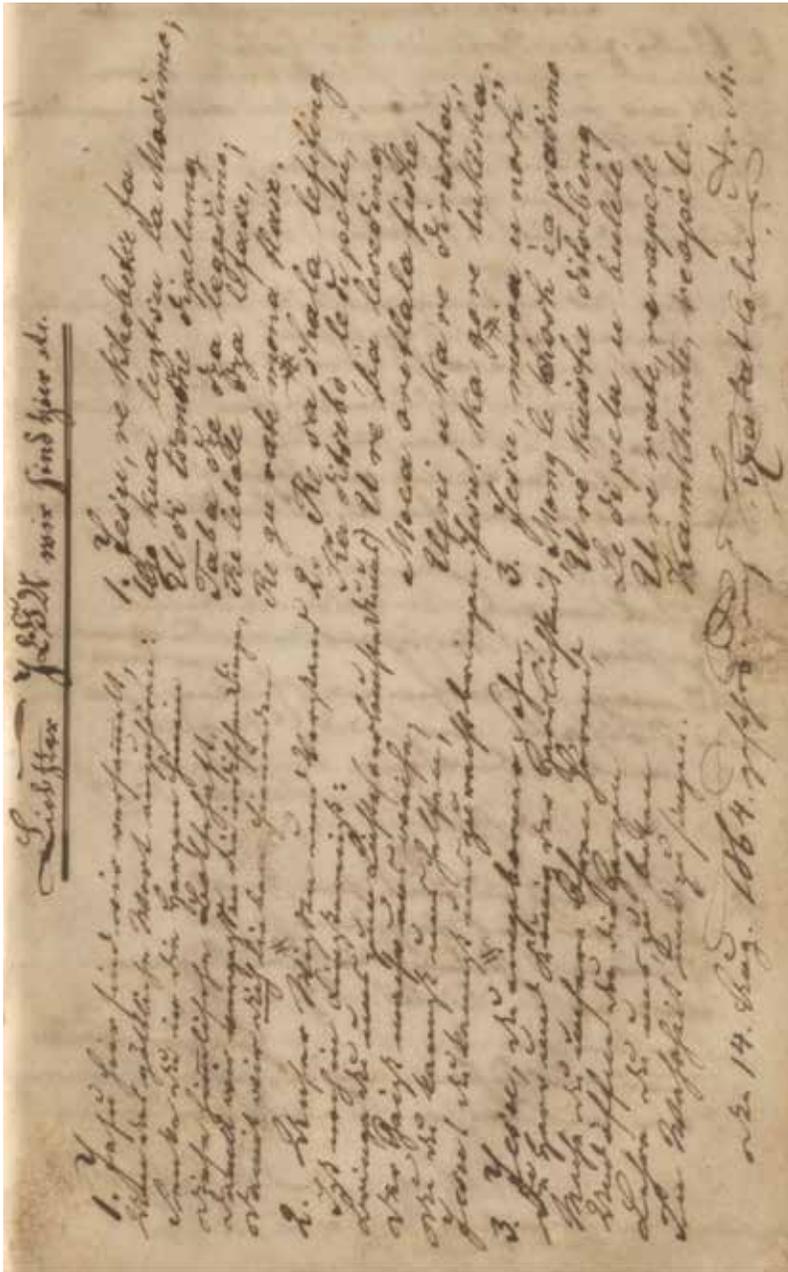


Figure 10: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song ‘Liefster Jesu mir kind zier etc.’ translated from German into Sekopo – detail three with inscription at bottom: ‘14 Aug. (?) 1864...auf...’ initialled ‘A.N.’ (Albert Nachtigal). Photo by Richard Wade.

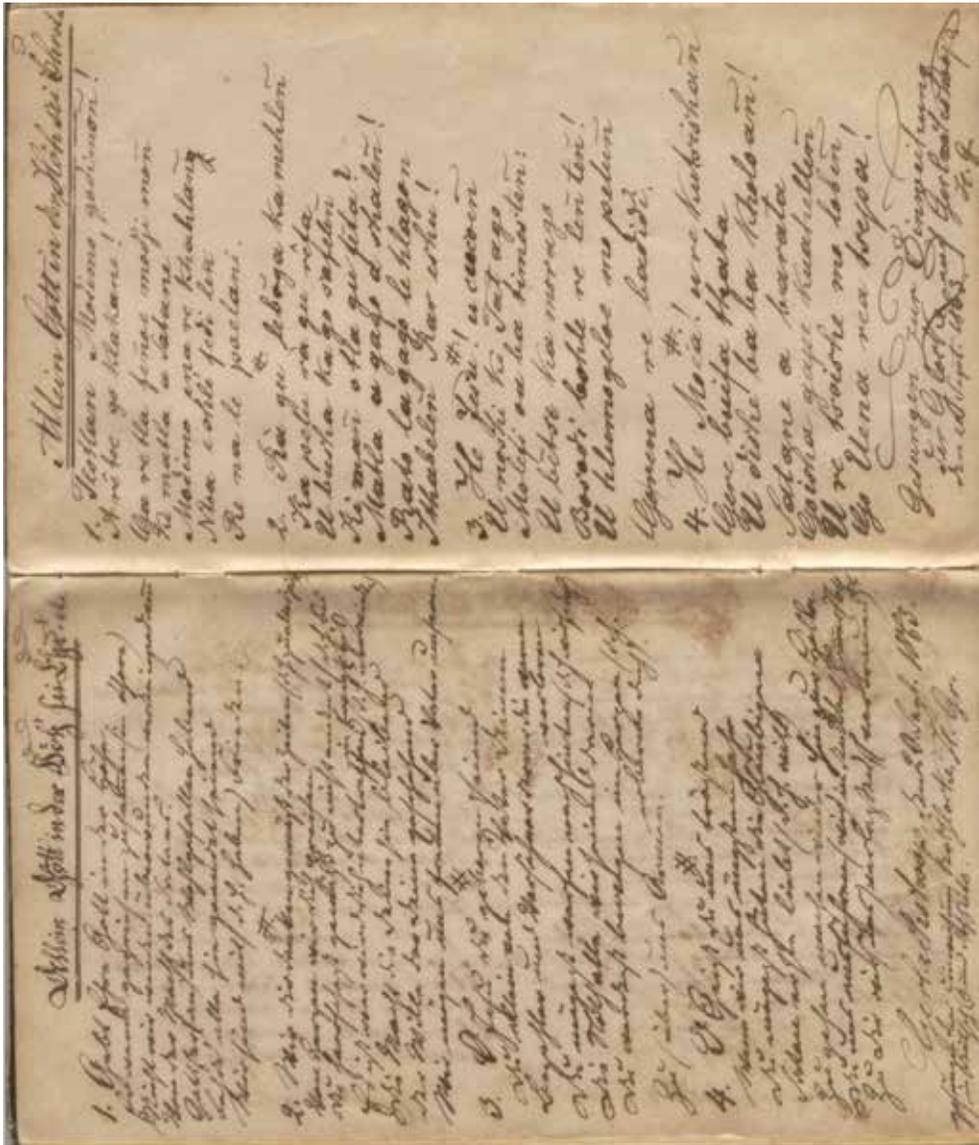


Figure 11: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – Song translated from German into Sekopo. Four penned verses with German on the left side and Sekopo on the right page, titled both pages in German: ‘Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Her etc.’. On bottom left page is an inscription: ‘Gerlachshoop...20 Sept. 1863...German script...’ (which reads in English) ‘Sung at the inauguration of the church bell’ initialled ‘H.Gr.’ and repeated overleaf beneath the Sekopo version: ‘Gesungen zur Binnweitung der Glocke auf Gerlachshoop den 20 Sept. 1863’ and initialled ‘H.G.’. Photo by Richard Wade.

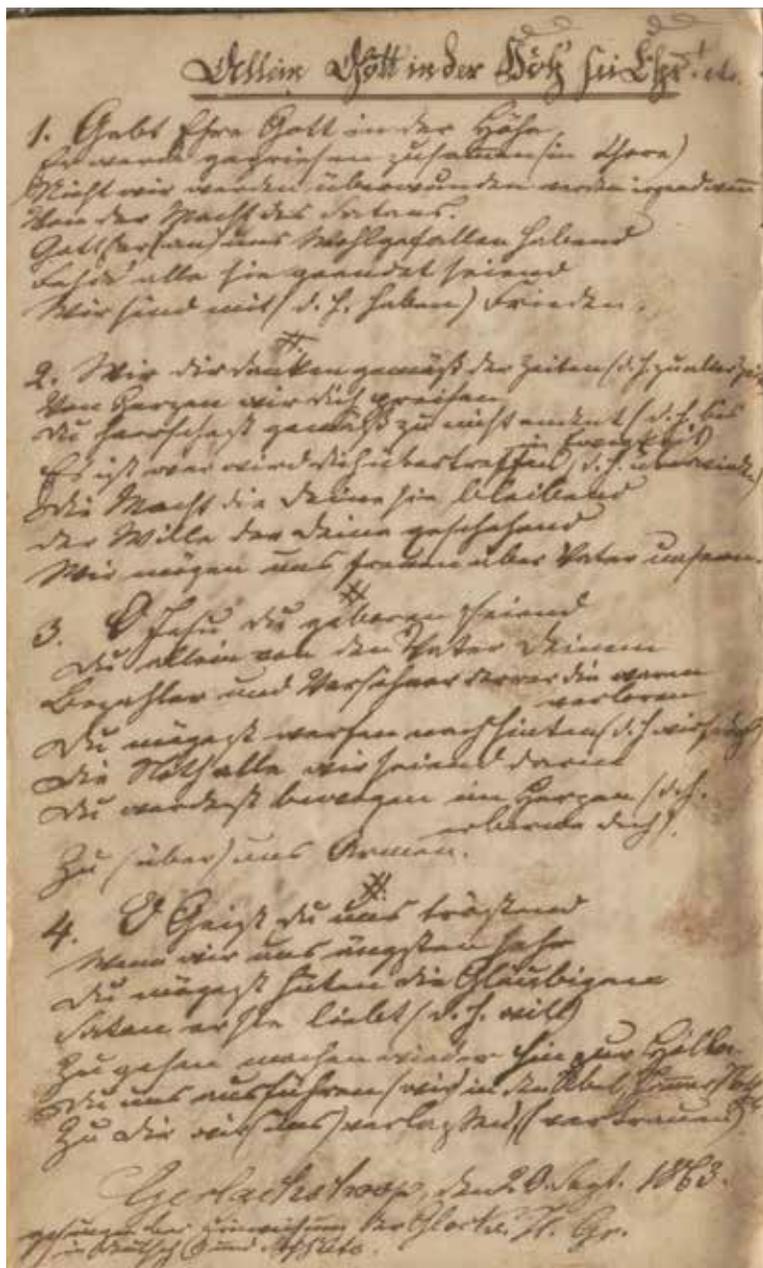


Figure 12: Personal Hymnal of Herrmann Sachtleben – German – detail. Initialed ‘H.Gr.’ with notes ‘Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Her etc.’. On bottom (left page) is an inscription: ‘Gerlachshoop...20 Sept. 1863...German script...’ (which reads in English): ‘Sung at the inauguration of the church bell’ initialed ‘H.Gr.’ Detail. Photo by Richard Wade.

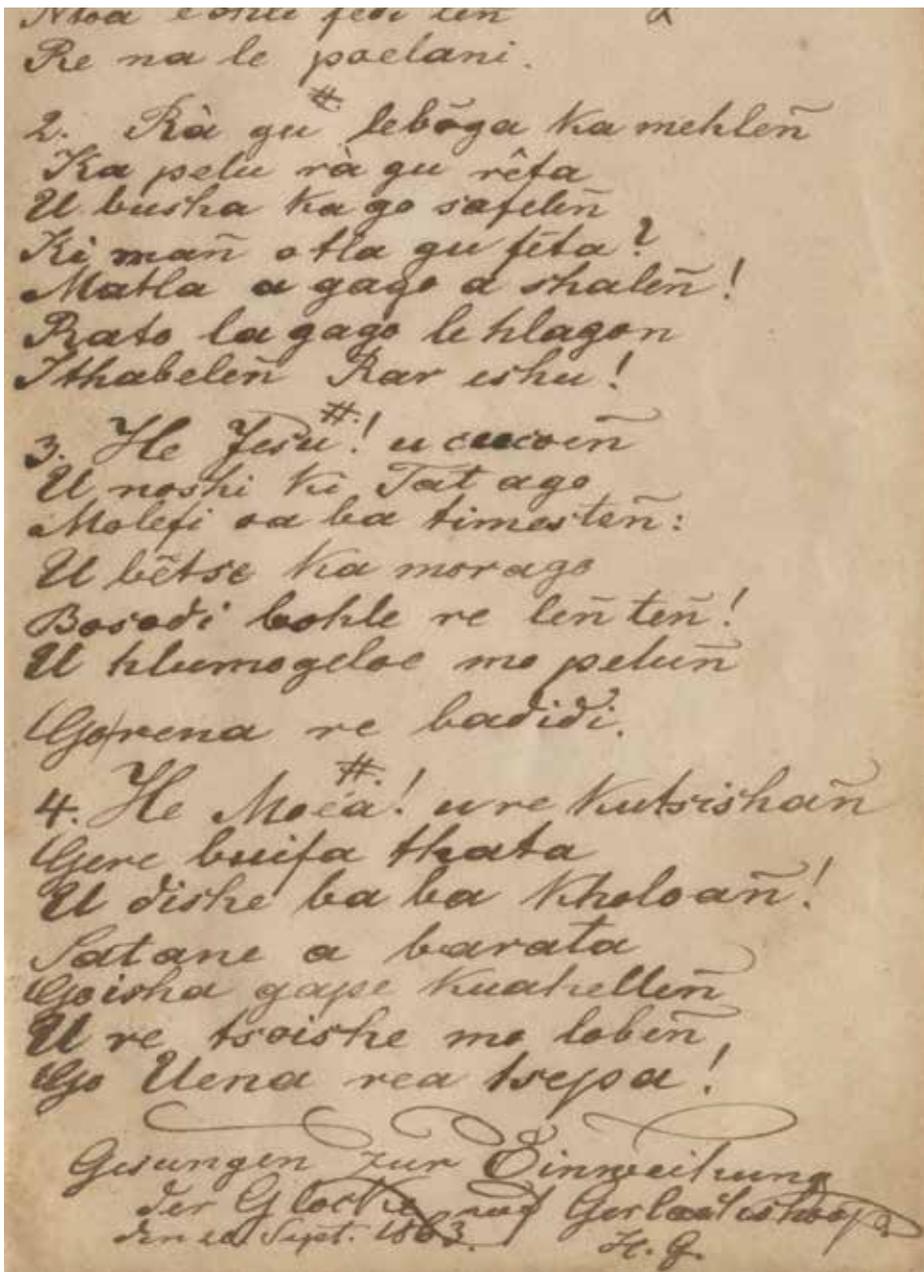


Figure 13: 'Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Her etc.' Sekopo version. On bottom (right page) is an inscription which reads in English - 'Sung at the inauguration of the church bell' initialled 'H.G.' and 'Gesungen zur Binnweitung der Glocke auf Gerlachshoop den 20 Sept. 1863' and initialled 'H.G.'. Detail. Photo by Richard Wade.

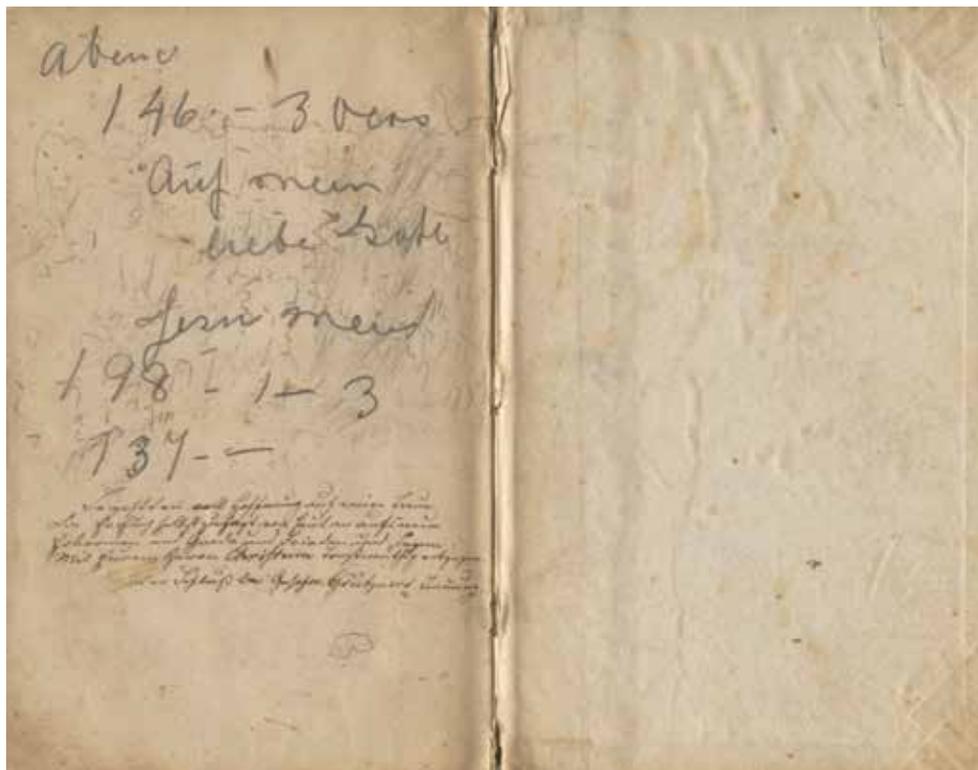


Figure 14: The end page has various pencil tapping marks and verse numbers written over faint small pencilled doodles of what appears to be mountains, trees and a river. Beneath this are five lines of finely pennaed inscriptions that seem to be a verse which is difficult to read except for the last two words: '...Grutzners' Traung.' (meaning that this inscription may have been written at 'Grutzner's' wedding). Photo by Richard Wade.

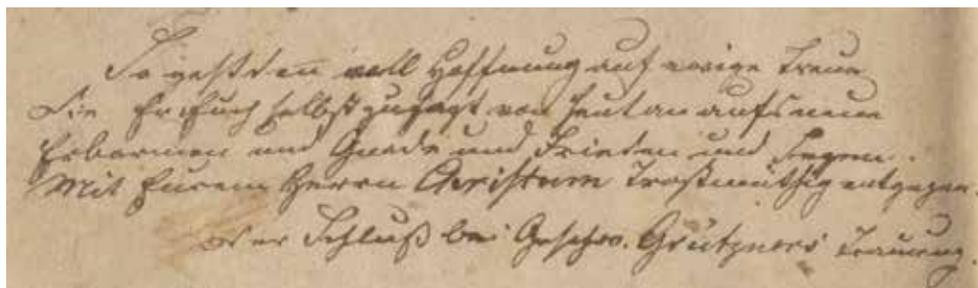


Figure 15: The end page with five lines of finely pennaed inscriptions that seem to be a verse which is difficult to read except for the last two words: '...Grutzners' Traung.' (meaning that this inscription may have been written at 'Grutzner's' wedding – detail). Photo by Richard Wade.

Andries Sekoto

It would appear that the language of Sekopa was introduced to the mission station of Gerlachshoop by Andries Sekoto and it is interesting to note that in the Mission 21 files (Switzerland) an unknown photograph exists which portrays Andries Sekoto. (See Figure 16 Andries Sekoto.) This could therefore be evidence of the progenitor of the earliest documented linguistic or literal innovation in Southern Africa? An aspect which propounds volumes in the vicissitudes of an unknown shared heritage of the Bakopa; a bell, a few songs, cataclysm and the scribbles of a missionary in reverence to God:

From the outset they acquired the services of an interpreter, Andries Sekoto, who was able to speak Dutch. He taught the missionaries Sekopa, the variant of Northern Sotho spoken by the Bakopa. Grützner proved to be a fine language student and, on 22 November 1862, he was able to conduct a full service in Sekopa. However, his younger contemporary Karl Endemann, who joined Grützner at Gerlachshoop, turned out to be a most remarkable student of the Sotho languages. Endemann's most enduring contributions to the study of the Sotho languages were his books *Versuch einer Grammatik des Sotho* (Berlin, 1876) and *Wörterbuch der Sotho-Sprache* (Hamburg, 1911). The latter is still in use...

Sekoto was also the first student to attend catechism classes to be baptised. He and two of his children were the first of the Bakopa to be baptised on Christmas day 1861, and two years later he knew enough German to commence with his own translation of the Small Catechism into Sekopa (BMB 1864c: 116). The reading and writing classes, held at the mission station, gradually attracted more people. (Boshoff 2007b, Zöllner and Heese 1984)

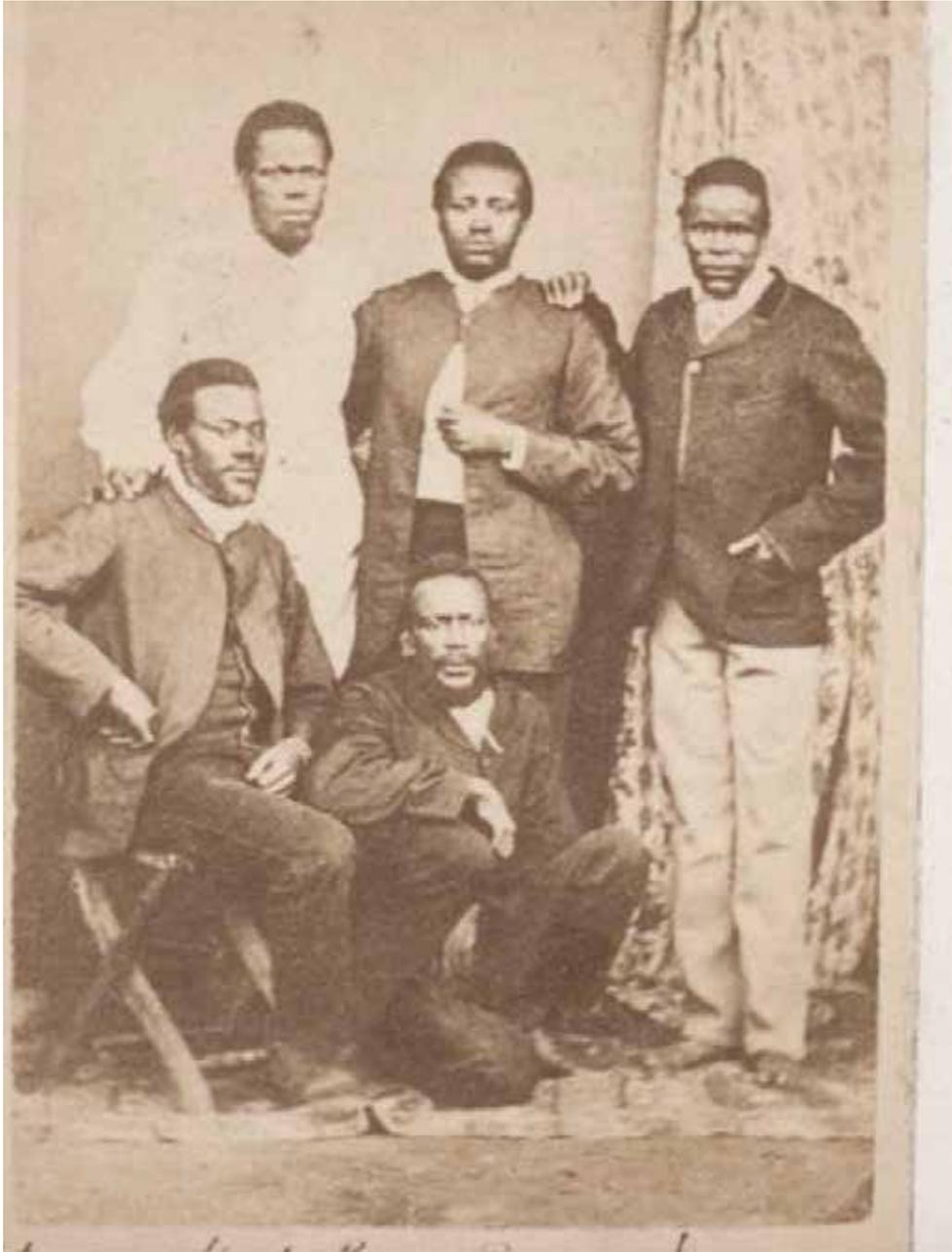


Figure 16: Johannes Maeti; Josua Ramopuda, Sefako, Bratiobane, Andries Sekoto. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/assetserver/controller/view/impa/impa-m47364/impa-abmpix-28074> mission21, mission21, Missionsstrasse 21, CH-4003 Basel, Switzerland, tel. (+4161 260 23 09), fax (+4161 260 22 68) info@mission-21.org

Conclusion

In light of the songbook diary it can be ascertained the inauguration of the church bell did occur with specific hymns that were sung and that a structure was erected which did not require the congregation to occupy the house as is suggested.

This publication specifically provides a record of the earliest translations into Sekopa and shows the kind of grammar utilised in Africa's foremost church establishment north of the Vaal River.

Andries Sekoto is seemingly the key progenitor of the means the missionaries had to formally document and characterise the formation of mission stations and churches in the region. Remarkably a photograph was found to further extend detail to the songbook diary of Herrmann Sachtleben.

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APPENDIX

This section includes all articles and reports from the *Berliner Missionsberichte* (BMB) with references to Gerlachshoop and the founding of the mission in Transvaal for the period of 1860 to 1911. Those articles referred to in the current article are marked with an asterisk. Note that the author is often not mentioned.

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- BMB*. 1860b. Die Evangelische Bund und die Bauern der Südafrikanischen Republik (Schluss), 19: 333–335.
- BMB*. 1860c. Die Eingeborenen in der Südafrikanischen Republik, 19: 335–342.
- BMB*. 1860d. Nachrichten, 22: 393–395.
- BMB*. 1861a. Die Mission in der Südafrikanischen Republik, 2: 26–31
- BMB*. 1861b. Die neue Station Rietkloof, 7: 98–106.
- BMB*. 1861c. Die neue Station Rietkloof (Schluss), 8: 113–120.
- BMB*. 1861d. Tagebuch der Reise Merensky's und Grützner's von Leidenburg zu den Swazi, 9: 129–152.
- BMB*. 1861e. Tagebuch der Reise Merensky's und Grützner's von Leidenburg zu den Swazi (Schluß), 10: 153–172.
- BMB*. 1861f. Siebenunddreissigster Jahresbericht unserer Gesellschaft, 11: 173–232.
- BMB*. 1861g. Gründung von Gerlachshoop, 13: 253–263.
- BMB*. 1861h. Gerlachshoop, 18: 334–341.
- BMB*. 1861i. Wie ein Missionar seine erste Predigt hält, 20: 369–372.
- BMB*. 1861j. Der Stand unserer Mission gegen Ende des Jahres 1861, 24: 451–455.
- BMB*. 1862a. Wie geht's in Magdeburg? 1: 11–16. Space and spatiality at Gerlachshoop and Thabantšho (1860–1864): 119.
- BMB*. 1862b. Bericht über Gerlachshoop aus dem zweiten Halbjahr 1861, 7: 107–112.
- BMB*. 1862c. Unsere Bassuto–Mission, 9: 133–143.
- BMB*. 1862d. Achtunddreissigster Jahresbericht unserer Gesellschaft: Gerlachshoop, 10/11: 172–4.
- BMB*. 1862e. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bapeli, 21: 353–358.
- BMB*. 1862f. Der Häuptling Maleo und die Mission auf Gerlachshoop, 23: 377–387.
- BMB*. 1862g. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bapeli (Schluß), 21: 358.
- BMB*. 1863a. Tagebuch der Station Gerlachshoop, 2: 19–32.
- BMB*. 1863b. Gerlachshoop (Schluss), 3: 36–43.
- BMB*. 1863c. Neununddreissigster Jahresbericht unserer Gesellschaft: Gerlachshoop, 9/10: 160–161.
- *BMB*. 1863d. Gerlachshoop, 23: 383–391.
- BMB*. 1864a. Allerlei Leid und Freud aus Gerlachshoop, 2: 19–31.

- BMB.* 1864b. Schmerzliche Botschaft über Gerlachshoop, 7: 99–104.
- *BMB.* 1864c. Die schmerzliche Botschaft über Gerlachshoop, 8: 114–127.
- BMB.* 1864d. Vierzigster Jahresbericht unserer Gesellschaft: Gerlachshoop, 9/10: 151–153.
- BMB.* 1864e. Die neueste über Gerlachshoop, 11: 196–198.
- BMB.* 1864f. Der neue Anfang auf Gerlachshoop, 15: 256–264.
- BMB.* 1864g. Der neue Anfang auf Gerlachshoop (Schluss), 16: 267–269.
- BMB.* 1864h. Neue schmerzliche Botschaft über Gerlachshoop, 17: 282–3.
- BMB.* 1864i. Der Zerstörung der Stadt Maleos, 20: 332–42.
- BMB.* 1864j. Der Zerstörung der Stadt Maleos (Schluss), 21: 348–53.
- BMB.* 1864k. Die Lage der Dinge auf Gerlachshoop, 23: 381–387.
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- BMB.* 1865c. Die Sammlung zum Loskauf der gefangenen Christenkinder von Gerlachshoop, 5: 76–80.
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