

Early Attempts in Evangelistic Work

Schools for the people were thought of already in the construction of the first crude house at Simbang. The Stone Age people thought that schools were the passion of missionaries. Concerning the skull of writing, Bamler reported that the Tami islanders asked him to write a letter to the earthquake spirit to ask him to be a little careful in his shaking so that the islands did not go under. Most of the New Guineans thought that writing was a form of ornamentation. (p.103GNM)

The first school boys recruited for training stayed away after a couple days of school because they didn't get any pay. In June, 1887 Tremel wrote of twenty lads he had recruited. Later the number dropped to only three or four because the students wanted pay. The R.M.G reported worse problems in the Astrolabe bay area. Missionary Eich took along three or four Jabem boys to start school with them there. (Vetter's letter July 12, 1890) Flierl reported that in the first two years at Simbang, no boy stayed overnight on the station. Then suddenly one day a young man came with fourteen comrades who all wanted to stay on the station. (p.104GNM)

The schools proved useful in spreading new field fruits such as corn, pineapple and papaya. But the students didn't really want to be instructed. Their motivation was desire for European goods, especially steel. It took many years before locals saw any value in schools. Also at the beginning the missionaries had little experience, knew little about the language, and had few school materials.

By mid 1890 twenty-four students were in attendance at school. Some stayed ten months. Later on the minimum stay at school was one year, some stayed two or three years. Boys from near-by Kate villages also joined the classes. (p.105 GNM). The school boys behaved well and become a tie between villagers and missionaries. (p.106 GNM). But often they had to suffer the scorn of the village elders. (p.107 GNM).

In the seventh year of mission work Vetter wrote that on Sundays few people came to church services except the school boys. (p. 107 GNM). The people said, "Why do you want to force on us your religion? We don't burden you with ours. You have your religious customs and practices received from your ancestors." We are tired of your talk. Our ears hurt. Your axes are good, but keep your talk to yourselves." For the most part people were afraid of their ancestors. When they went to church they expected a feast with meat or tobacco. (p108 GNM).

Bamler reported that the people did not want to sit behind one another as we do it in church. They did not want to stand while praying. They said, God's word is for you whites. We are Tamis, we have our customs." Bamler also confesses, "we went too far in our eagerness to follow the command 'Bring them in' We refused to trade for while with those who did not come." (p.110 GNM)

In general, the missionaries used the Sunday periscopes, translated the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed. Bamler says that these translations were poor and that the sermons were too legalistic.(p.111 GNM).

Vetter reports that the people saw no need f a Saviour. (p. 112 GNM). In a letter of January 4, 1893 he says, "Their overwhelming fear of being objects of sorcery from the bad secret powers, must serve us for the glorification of the Christian religion, in that we show them how God's children are free of this danger, that no sorcerer can hurt them since God protects them. ...That they understand well ... which is better than if I say, Christ died for you." (p.113 GNM).

For the most part of the Missionaries we are greeted well wherever they went. Bamler made a six-week visit with Tami people in their canoes to Rooke Island in 1892. (p.116 GNM). Yet, the people had to become used to the strange language forms the missionaries used and mastered these strange forms themselves in order to have themselves understood by the missionaries. (p.115 GNM).

Then came the small-pox epidemic of 1894-95 which decimated the population in many villages. (p.116 GNM).