

The Congregations' Mission Among the Hube

But early coastal areas were easily reached and supplied but mountain mission work was another question. On the coast, direct mission work was possible; in the mountain indirect mission work was now necessary. What was needed were strong indigenous Christians who could be relied on (p.186.GNM). The missionaries looked at the weak human characteristics but failed to recognize the strengths available through God's Spirit. To be evangelists to known people and known areas along the coast was one thing. To be evangelists among un-known mountain tribes was quite another matter.

In his classes at Sattelberg Keysser always mentioned the necessity of mission work to the Catechumens. After the second large baptism in 1905, some Christians made an exploratory trip into the mountains. After a few days march they had to return because they failed to get guides and translators for the areas ahead. In 1906 another journey was made with Keysser but the group did not get much further. (p.187.GNM) But they met and learned to know the Hubes. In 1907 four young students came to Keysser with the request to be sent as evangelists to the heathen. When asked, "for how long?" They said, "We are not thinking of returning!" But they were to be sent by congregation. Three of the young were from the area of Chief Sane who was still a heathen, and one was Chief Sane's last living son.

On Sunday when the announcement was made, Sane was asked for his opinion. He asked for a moment to recover from the shock. Then he rose and said, "I am an old man, who will lose his right hand when his only son leaves. Yet since Anutu wants him to go, I will not hold him back." (Anutu in Papuland – Keysser, 1958) The congregation was thunderstruck to hear this word of the old heathen chief. (p.188.GNM) the four were prepared for four months. Notice was given to the Hube. They were asked to send a representative to escort the evangelists.

On the sixth of November, 1908, guided by twenty heathen Hubes, the four evangelists departed. Two of the evangelists were married and had to leave their families at home for the meanwhile. They established Kuluntufu with the help of the Hube people. They suffered much hunger. Six weeks later they were visited by people from the congregation and by Keysser. The Evangelists were often in danger. They were once attacked while on a path. A wild pig was stolen from a trap they had set. (p.189.GNM) Then they faced their accusers in a near by village. They found all of the men armed. The evangelist Minao said, "You are ready to kill us. Now, we are here, kill us." No one dared to shoot. (Gottes Weg ins Hubeland – Keysser, 1949, p.116)

In 1912, the Hube celebrated Balum festivals. They were afraid that the evangelists would betray their secret. They threatened them. The evangelists asked the missionary for a gun since they felt weaponless. A gun could not have helped. Only the ever-present Lord.

The evangelists were soon highly respected. Keysser kept them from starting Sunday services and public preaching. After mastering the language, the men made trips, and made peace between warring parties. In disputes their advice was sought. The home congregation helped

along with advice and admonishment. (p.190.GNM) The Hubes also accepted an invitation from the Sattelberg congregation. On their visit they saw a new way of life, especially the peaceful existence.

The Hube's lived for the most part in the mountain valley; the Mangi (head of the Bulesom river), the Kua and the Bulum. On May 21, 1910 Keysser received a letter from the evangelist Kupa who advised occupation of three new stations at once. Keysser visited the men immediately and saw how they had become mature in their work. Needed were eight young men. They were soon at hand. (Anutu in Papuland – Keysser, p.90)

The four older evangelist separated in order to start the new stations in 1911. Haringke went to the Kua people. The new station was called Tobou. Mainao went to the Bulum people and established the station Ogeranang. The third station had to wait so Kupa and Fungmo stayed at Kuluntufu. Ten thousand people were now under contact. Each station was surrounded by a large population.

But a storm came. A Hube village which had already had a few Christians in it was threatened by a heathen neighboring tribe. The village called for help from the Sattelberg congregation. Some Sattelberg Christians went to help. (p.191.GNM) the people were attacked but the Christians ran through the arrows to break both bows and arrows of the attackers. The situation had a peaceful ending.

Later, the Gaeng people of Kuluntufu made similar threats. The Sattelberg Christians expected a similar happy ending. Keysser cautioned them. Thirty Christians went. One was killed. The others fled. Then the heathen threatened the peaceful villages of Sattelberg. (Report of Flierl, November 2, 1912, Missionsblatt, 1913, NO. 1)

On Tuesday the 22 of October, 1912, at night, the alarm was given, "The Gaeng attacking Kudogo (the last of the Sattelberg villages, some of the people were already baptized) everyone should come to help." At midnight the conch shells were blown already in Heldsbach. As the missionaries got up on Wednesday morning the 23rd at Sattelberg, the last volunteer troops were passing through the station. Two to three hundred men gathered in Kudogo, including all bigger station boys from Sattelberg and Heldsbach.

Senior Flierl talked with the teacher Krodel about what was happening. He hoped that the people would not do something that might create an awkward situation. He allowed Krodel to go to Kudogo on Thursday morning. On Friday noon, Pilhofer also left Sattelberg. On the way to Kudogo they already met the first fleeing people. They learned that three men had lost their lives, one was a station helper from Sattelberg. Krodel just barely escaped himself. Forty men (p.192.GNM) were wounded.

When Flierl heard the news he was worried about Keysser so he started an action. He went to Heldsbach. From there he sent his nephew and Schulz with bandages, provisions, and trusted guides with sufficient weapons to Kudogo. When the party arrived in Kudogo they saw that Kudogo was in no grave danger so they went on directly through the lower Gaeng to Kuluntufu to learn about the situation and about Keysser.

Keysser was in action in Kuluntufu trying to make peace with the Gaeng leader but failed. A second attempt, however, proved successful. He received a gift as compensation for the Sattelberg station worker who was killed. Probably the decision to seek peace was motivated by news of the armed expedition. The helpers who had gathered at Kuluntufu returned to their stations and the missionaries returned to Sattelberg.

Two days later (Anutu in Hubeland, Keysser, p.108) news came that the helpers had left their stations with belongings and children. The heathen were excited. The helpers were warned by their friends. Hate speeches were made everywhere.

The news of the return of the evangelists made the Sattelberg congregation very sad and pained them deeply. The congregation decided to repent and the missionary joined the congregation in repentance. (p.193.GNM)

Then came a wait of some weeks before Keysser called the evangelists together. During the gathering a messenger arrived with the news that a Hube emissary had arrived from Kuluntufu. The news was that indeed some Hubes wanted to make war and plunder but the majority did not allow it. On the 27th of December Keysser went with the evangelists back to their stations.

Both Keysser and the Sattelberg people had made mistakes. A dangerous situation had arisen. Keysser had been at Kuluntufu. Had he been at Sattelberg the situation may have turned out differently. Later a station was established on the Sattelberg side of the Manggi river among the Gaeng. This station should possibly have been started earlier.

In 1913 a new blow was given to the work. (.194.GNM) Fungmo, only of the first four helpers, became mentally deranged due to pneumonia. He almost killed a fellow worker and had to be bound. He cursed and spoke evil. But a few days before his death he became clear mentally and died in peace.

After nine years of work the Gospel began to take hold among the Hube, especially in Kuluntufu and Tobou. The people were also willing to give up their Ngosa (Balum). Three years previously, the first two Hube boys at school at Sattelberg had asked for baptism. But Keysser wanted agreement from all the people. The people were told that the heathen way. The people agreed. So the baptism took place on July 22, 1917. Then many people asked for baptismal instruction. (p.125.GNM)

In 1918, Keysser reported that all the people had decided for Christianity on all four stations. On the 8th of June, 1921, the first baptism of thirty-six men and forty three women from Kua took place on Tobou station. On June 11th, 1921 the first baptism was held among the people. They had disclosed the Ngosa or Balum some years previously. Keysser thought the baptism was a little premature because the work had started later and the people also spoke a different language which had to be learned. Then everyone decided to learn Kate so that in the Christian movement they would be united. The children learned Kate quickly in the schools.

There were some problems in the work. Mainao had removed from the Bulung work because his wife had committed adultery with a local man. Other single evangelists had to be likewise

removed on occasion. But Kupa, the highly respected leader at Kuluntufu had to be removed because he fell into adultery with several women. (p.196.GNM). He tried to hide in the bush. But eventually he was brought to discipline by the congregation. When C. Keysser left, L Flierl took over supervision of the work. He reported in 1920 that 136 adults had been baptized on four stations and 800 catechumens enrolled.

The movement among the Hube also influenced neighboring tribes. The tribes along the Masaweng, Tewae and Ebabang gave up the Ngosa or Balum cult. Wacke reported from Sialum that the mountain of heathendom in Hube had collapsed. The influence of this collapse went in all directions. (p.197.GNM)