

## The Congregation's Mission Work Spreads to the Northwest Mountain Areas

In the letter of December 1, 1918, Missionary Zahn said, "The Kate congregations are way ahead of us in respect to indigenous missionary responsibility." (p.197.GNM) In a report of 1913 it can be seen that Flierl encouraged mission work in the mountains by indigenous evangelists. Kuluntufu, the first station inland from Sattelberg was comparatively close, but the other stations were further away.

The Wareo congregation waited till teachers could be sent together with ordinary village evangelists. In 1913, ten hours' walk away, a station called Hompoa was started by the Wareo congregation in the midst of the Dedua tribe. The teacher Baafeke and his assistant Natang were well received. The people had already been prepared by visits from the Wareo people. In 1914, a pre-baptismal course was begun with thirty-two people. The people did not steal or beg from the evangelists but always shared also their game with them.

Previously, the Dedua people had hidden for fear in the woods and mountains. Now a great light had come to the darkness (p.198.GNM) (Also L. Wagner Report-August 2, 1915) but suddenly the evangelist's lives were in great danger. Why? When Missionary Decker's wife and two children were drowned, two Hompua area boys were also lost in the boat accident. The relatives demanded the lives of the evangelists. One night the evangelists had to leave the station. But L. Wagner was able to calm the people.

After one and three-quarters' years' work the teacher Baafeke died. That was a great loss. But Eliesa filled the gap. He stayed at this position until the whole area was Christianized. The first baptism was held on August 10, 1919 after five years of work. In 1918, five years after the establishment of Hompua, the Wareo congregation possessed the hinterland of Dedua. Repeated requested for evangelists came from the area, especially from Chief Silo who attended the 1914 Christmas service on Wareo. (p.199.GNM)

Three weeks later an expedition from Wareo visited Silo and his area returning enthusiastic. Silo offered a house and a plated taro garden. On October 25, 1915 the congregation sent two evangelists, Babakigao and Goreepa one day's journey beyond Hompua to establish the station Zageheme. The people were still very much heathen, always heavily armed. The greatest hindrance to the Gospel was the constant warfare, the unending enmity of one clan for another.

In March, 1917, L. Wagner tried to bring the warring clans together. All the invited came together. An excited heated discussion followed throughout the night. Men shook fists at one another, screamed and shouted at one another. (p.22.GNM) The missionary and evangelists got a view of the terribleness of the peoples' clan life. But finally peace was made and peace offerings and guarantees sealed the pact.

One year later on September 19, 1918, at an open meeting of all clans, it was agreed to do away with heathendom and to receive the Gospel despite the determined opposition of the old

leader Suse who told of the revenge of the ancestors. On February 28, 1919 the sect cult Balum was revealed. Then large numbers of people came for baptismal instruction.

The first baptism took place on June 18, 1922. The instruction lasted for two years since it was given in the Kate language. The faithful teacher who gave his life for the people was Bamiringnu.

Now Wareo looked for a new mission field which it could occupy together with the Dedua congregation. They chose the Komba area discovered by L. Flierl and Pilhofer in 1911. On the 24th of August, the first five evangelists were commissioned for the Komba area, five days' journey from Wareo. They had to cross the 3000 meter high Cromwell range. Three stations were started and each was supplied with four workers.

As among other tribes in the beginning, there was constant warfar in the Komba area. The evangelists were often in danger, totally dependent on God's protection. (p.201 GNM) The teacher Filiipa wrote about this protection. "As the people planned evil against us and evidently entertained murder, God opened their eyes and they saw his angels who stood watch at our sides. Then they asked us, "From where do those glorious men come from whom we daily see at your side?" We, however, saw nothing and could give no explanation. "We did not come to you because of our own desire, but God sent us here. He is the one who protects us through his angels." (Filiipa, In der Macht Seine Staerke, 1959, p.8) Filiipa worked for twenty-seven years in Komba. The Missionary Hans Wagner called him the first Papuan Theologian. He was a quiet inner man. His co-worker was Pastor Akikepe of Dedua.

In the middle of 1920 the villages began to leave heathen ways. On a visit by Saueracker to Sombut, some villages gave up their magical articles (Saueracker Report – 1920, p.21). The deciding moment came in 1924 when the whole tribe made a decision for the Gospel. Now came schools for the youth, and baptismal instructions for the old. Every morning a language lesson of the Kate language was given. Large meeting houses were built. In May, 1926 the first baptisms were held. (p.202.GNM).

It was then that the small congregation of Dedua decided to do mission work. A mission festival was held on July 16, 1924 and several hundred shilling's worth of goods were brought as gifts to start the work. Four young men also volunteered to become evangelists. (L.Wagner, Zageheme, 1925, p.21 f). Included in the four was the son of the still unbaptized leader, Suse. These four men took a seven day's journey over the mountains to the Jalumet river. The area was discovered by L. Flierl and Saueracker in 1918.

The small Heldsbach congregation sent evangelists up the coast and also started two evangelist stations in the valley of the Tewae river. (p.203 GNM) Together with the congregation up the coast, they chose the Selepet area as their mission field. They established Duwi station. At first the workers were well received. But after a year there was unrest. The local magic evidently was losing its owner and so the evangelists were blamed. Then news arrived of the disclosure of the Balum cult by the Sialum people. The workers abandoned the station but were brought back by L. Flierl. When the evangelists arrived back they discovered that the people had not touched the gardens or houses. This was a good sign.

So by 1922 with four stations, the Selepet area was occupied. The people trusted the evangelists. Once they were invited to a coastal baptism. They arrived early and thus were sent to various villages to await the day of baptism. One man saw many bamboos for water and food being carried into the village by men. He thought of a cannibal feast. He fled by night. At home he spread the alarm that everyone was killed. People sang funeral dirges, destroyed the homes and gardens of those they thought were dead. (p.204.GNM) (L. Wagner – December, 1922).

Finally, also the Ono people began to be enthused about mission work. They went to the Pulung river, a lower tributary of the Quama river. For the population of 1200, two stations were sufficient. In 1922, one hundred and seventy were baptized among the Ono with six hundred still under instruction. In the same year the Christian elders made a mission trip together with the Wareo people and became enthused about the Timbe area.

After the 1920 departure of Keysser, Heldsbach was joined to Sattelberg and the north coast work was joined to Wareo. (p.205.GNM) Saueracker was assigned to the Komba, Selepet and Timbe areas. But Kalasa yearned for its own area of mission work.

They found the Orowa valley. Saueracker went there in 1925. To get there it was necessary to climb over an extremely difficult and dangerous cliff face of the Saruwaged. The Orowa was not heavily populated (p.206.GNM) Wacke reported that for every journey to the Orowa valley, one grave had to be dug at Kalasa. One worker slipped off a cane bridge into the Orowa river and was lost. The next river, the Som, was also thinly populated. But the next river valley, the valley of the Jopna discovered by the elders Saueracker, was heavily populated and later occupied by Ono evangelists.

Senior Flierl said that Wacke was the congregational missionary and Saueracker, “the light-footed one” became the great missionary of many journeys for the mighty Finisterre mountains. Valley after valley was discovered by Saueracker on foot and evangelists occupied the newly discovered areas.

Evangelists suffered much in the beginning in the Jopna area. The people demand axes and knives. They had fantasies of the riches of Saueracker. They said that he was the son of the Sun with new wonderful goods. (p.207.GNM).