

The Siassi Mission

Between Siassi and Tami there were regular trade connections. The main island was called Umboi by the Siassi often asked for missionary. After a small congregation was established on Tami, various Tami men served as evangelists for short periods on Siassi. (Probably from 1908 on.) (cf. p.41)

Bamler, who had started a helper's school at Logweng in 1907, was chosen to begin the work on Siassi in 1911. It was in 1911 that Tami was given up as a station site. Hoh took Bamler's place on Logaweng and also took care of Tami and Jabem. Jabem was formerly taken care of by Vetter.

For Bamler, the new assignment meant problems. After twenty years of hard pioneer work he was to begin a new station, the third for him, and learn a new language. On April 28, 1911 he landed at Aromot Island. This is the birthday of mission work on Siassi. Bamler selected a sit opposite Aromot on the mainland at Mangawa on the hill call Mokal. (Now Gelem??) (p. 161.GNM). He brought workers from Logaweng and Deinzerhill for help in building. These workers returned after one year. Then some men from Tuam Island helped for a few months.

After Bamler learned the language, he discovered he could only reach some coastal villages with it. The people didn't help much with the required work for transport and station building. Few came to services. All, however, wanted peace and an end to sorcery. They thought the word of God was like a magic formula. (Letter of October 7, 1911)

Five evangelists from Jabem helped. They were stationed on the large islands of Tuam and Malai. Bamler had no boat. A trip to the islands always took a week. In March, 1912 he had been without supplies for eight months. At the end of 1912 two Weber brothers had settled on the West Coast of Rooke Island. A couple of months later they were murdered by the mountain people. (p.162.GNM). Bamler left Gelem for the village Mangawa on the coast but after warnings by the people, he went to Tuam island for a time.

A punitive expedition by the government resulted in the mountain villagers fleeing into the bush. It took Bamler on whose year to establish connections again.

On March 8, 1914 ten Tuam people were baptized. In the same year G. Schneider came to help Bamler. In 1914 other baptisms took place on other small islands. But, the Christians were more influenced by old heathen customs than they were active as witness.

So in the beginning of 1917 the Sialum congregation held a sot of evangelization trip to the islands. This had a great result but only a very temporary one. Especially on Tuam, a hate filled the opponents of the Christians. They buried magic stones in the church and boasted (p.163.GNM) that these would destroy the Christians and their faith so that they would become heathen again. However, the man who made this boast, was taken away by a water-spout while on a canoe trip. The people saw this as God's judgment. But two years later, in 1921, the

struggle on Tuam was still going on.

Gelem was given up from 1919 till 1923 and was orphaned as one of the after-effects of the first World War. Afterwards the station was established at Jangla on the east coast. The helpers had started Barim station among the mountain people but had to give it up due to opposition.