

## THE CALL OF THE DYACKS

The Wild Man of Borneo

By R. A. Jaffray, Wuchow, South China

Surely the Lord led me to "the uttermost parts of the earth," to places "where Christ is not named", where there is none who can name His Name. In these parts Buddha is named, Mohammed is named, but Christ is not named. He is almost unknown. Wherever I went, I asked in English and Chinese, "Is there anyone here who knows Jesus? Do you know anyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ?" Often they did not know what I meant; they did not know that there was a Lord Jesus Christ.

For some years I have felt a burning desire to visit the islands of the South Seas, to reconnoitre, as it were, for Him. I felt convinced that there was a great need, especially in the interior of these islands, where no Gospel witness has yet been given. The pressure of circumstances in the work in South China seemed to hold me, but at last the time seemed ripe for me to go.

I left South China late in January. The trip occupied all of February and most of March. I did not stop off anywhere on the trip for more than three days. I always took "the next boat", and it seemed as though the steamship schedules were all arranged of the Lord to suit.

From the accompanying Map of South China and the East Indies the reader will be able readily to follow the route of travel indicated by the red line,—from *Wu-chow* to *Hongkong*, from *Hongkong* to *Sandakan*, on the northeast coast of British North Borneo, to *Balik-papan*, on the east coast of Dutch Borneo, to *Samarinda*, a little north of *Balik-papan*; from *Samarinda* across the Straits of *Makassar* to *Donggala*; south again down the coast of the *Celebes* to *Parepare*; and then to *Makassar*, the capitol of the *Celebes*; from *Makassar* to *Siagaradia*, a port on the Island of *Bali*; to *Surabaya* on the northern coast of *Java*, the largest commercial centre of the Dutch Indies; to *Bangdang*, *Java*, by rail, and to *Batavia*, the capitol of the Dutch Indies; from *Batavia* to *Singapore* (British); to *Saigon* (French Indo-China); to *Tourane* (Annam), by rail to *Hanoi* and *Haiphong* (Tonkin), by steamer to *Pak-hoi* on the southern coast of China, and *Hoi-hau* on the Island of *Hainan*; to *Hongkong* and on up to *Wuchow*.

May I now briefly comment on the various places visited. In the present article we will deal with Borneo only.

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### BRITISH NORTH BORNEO—

The three main ports of British North Borneo are Sandakan, Kudat, and Jesselton. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S. P. G.) is labouring here. Also the Basil Mission has independent self-supporting Chinese churches. The Roman Catholics also have work in this part. I was three days at Sandakan and had enjoyable fellowship with Archdeacon and Mrs. Mercer, and also with Chinese workers of the Basil Mission. Time did not permit me to visit other parts of British North Borneo. Work is being done among the aboriginal tribes of the interior, called the Dyacks. The Chinese residents of this part of Borneo are largely of the *Hakka* race and many of them have found Christ. Three quarters of the Chinese inhabitants of Kudat are said to be church members.

I soon saw that there was no desperate need for another mission entering this part of the field. I wished to hasten on to my goal further south and reach the ports of Dutch Borneo. For a while it looked as though it was going to be difficult for me to find passage from British North Borneo to Dutch Borneo, as there is no regular line of steamers running between these ports. I faced a possibility of having to

travel by native Chinese junk from Tawao, the most southerly port of British Borneo, to Tarakan, the most northerly port of Dutch Borneo, which might be a journey of two days or two weeks according to the will of the winds. After three days, when the time came that the Lord would have me leave Sandakan, however, He had a steamer all ready. A Dutch oil-tanker came into port early Sunday morning, February 5th., bound for Balikpapan. I at once applied for a passage.

"She does not carry passengers, and there is no spare cabin," said the Agent.

"Can you give me standing room?" I asked.

"You will have to go aboard and ask the Captain," he said.

As soon as I had finished preaching at the Basil Mission, I went out to S. S. "Sanbodja" and met Captain Ouwerkerk. I found him a good natured Dutchman who spoke English.

"Sorry", he said, "but we are not allowed to take passengers, and we have no cabin anyway."

"But", I protested, "I must go to Balikpapan. Can you not give me *standing room* on your boat?"

He laughed at this and said, "Oh, we can do better than that. We can fix up a canvas cot on deck, but you will have to sign on as "Fourth Officer" of the ship

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to escape the technicality of the law."

You may be sure I was ready for this. I agreed to the proposition and was appointed as Fourth Officer of the S. S. "Sanbodja"! My wages were to be one shilling, but of course I had to pay the company my fare! Two days and a half brought us to Balikpapan.

**DUTCH BORNEO**—There is no missionary work being carried on on the east coast of Dutch Borneo. According to my maps, there are a score of ports on the east coast of Borneo, but as far as we are able to learn there is no witness for Christ at any of these places. From many of these ports, the interior of Borneo may be reached by river. On perhaps only one river is there a regular steamship line, namely at Samarinda, but by native craft the missionary can penetrate the interior and reach the "wild man of Borneo," the Dyacks.

The Dyacks, no doubt, originally occupied the entire island of Borneo, but the coming of various races, the Malays, the Javanese, the Chinese, Indians from Madras, and Arabs, has gradually crowded the wild man away to the interior. The Malays have inter-married somewhat with the Dyacks, with the result that the Dyacks to this extent

have been absorbed. It is said also that the original pure Dyack of the interior of Borneo is decreasing in population.

The Dyack was originally a "head-hunter" and a cannibal, and in some cases may still be such, but the influence of other races has had the effect of subduing and semi-civilizing the wild man of Borneo. One of the original customs of the Dyacks was that a young man proposing to his bride, must have the skull of one whom he himself had slain ere he could hope to be accepted by his bride. This custom, however, I am told, has now all but died out.

There are many different language groups among the Dyacks, most of whom have never been reached with the Gospel Message. From the south coast of Borneo, some effort is being made to reach them up the Barito River, with Banjarmasin as a base. Some effort was also commenced on the west coast of Borneo entering by the Kapoas River, but the Methodist Episcopal Mission has now entirely withdrawn from Borneo.

According to our maps there seem to be a dozen or more ports on the west coast of Borneo. On the south coast of Borneo there are, beside the River Barito which empties into the sea at Banjarmasin, five or six other

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rivers, which are gateways to the interior. At none of these points has missionary work been attempted.

*Balik-papan*—I stayed at this port two days. It is a city of about 21,500 people. The district, of which it is one of the centres, has a population of about 200,000. *Balik-papan* is the great oil field of the Dutch Indies. The installation of the B. P. M. (Batavia Petroleum Company), or the Royal Dutch Shell Petroleum Co., a branch of the Asiatic Petroleum Company, is the largest oil installation in the Far East. All the A. P. C. oil consumed throughout the Far East comes from the *Balik-papan* wells.

The population of the city includes a great mixture of races: Malay, Javanese, Boeginese, Chinese from Fukien, Canton and other parts, Indians from Madras, Arabs, and also a sprinkling of Dyacks from the interior. As I walked the streets of this city trying to get in touch through the English or Chinese languages, with as many people as possible, I asked my one question, "Is there anyone here who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ?" After many replies in the negative, I was directed to a Chinese carpenter's store and found a Chinese brother who acknowledged

the name of Christ. His face, I am sorry to say, did not look like that of a Christian, and as Mr. Moody used to say "He may have been a Christian, but he did not smell like one!" His face was flushed with wine. It was hard to blame him, however. There he was—a lone Christian—in the midst of the darkness of heathendom. He had a Bible and prayed sometimes, but I fear he could not be considered a witness for the Lord Jesus. Later I met another Chinese friend, who seemed to love the Lord, but who said that he dared not be baptized and confess Christ for fear of offending his parents. This friend was very kind to me while in *Balik-papan*, and finally came to the steamer to see me off.

While in *Balik-papan*, deep depression of spirit and a feeling of discouragement, doubt and fear, seemed to settle upon my soul. It came upon me like a dark, thick cloud of gloom, and I could not shake it off. Only His light and joy finally dispelled the darkness. It did not last long, but long enough to make me realise that I surely was on the enemy's territory. Yes, here is a place where the supreme rule of Satan has never been disputed. The Prince of Darkness has never been challenged here. No messenger of Christ has ever lifted up his

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voice to preach the Gospel in this place. It is a place where Christ has not been named. What utter darkness! There is no Gospel here. Can we open a work for Christ in this place? When? Who will go? Whom shall we send?

*Samarinda*—I was anxious to visit Samarinda because it is at the mouth of the Kutai or Samarinda River and the main entrance to the interior of Borneo from the east coast. There are at least four other rivers farther north, which are also gateways from this coast to the interior. The River Kutai is navigable by small steamer for ten days as far as Long-Iram, and by native craft for many days farther up. The Roman Catholic Church has a mission three days inland from Long-Iram at Laban, where six priests and six nuns are teaching the people farming, trades, etc. I felt ashamed that the Roman Catholics, with so little Gospel, should have gone to the interior of Borneo before us.

All the other rivers from the east coast, save the Kutai, are I fear only navigable, by native craft. A Dutch official told me he had travelled up one of these rivers ascending terrible and dangerous rapids for seventy-five days, and had come down the river, covering the same

distance, in ten days.

Here again is another city of darkness and the same mixture of races. I entered a Mohammedan mosque. There are Chinese temples here: they looked to me ugly enough from the outside. I had no desire to enter and look upon the hideous idols, already so familiar to me. There are houses of wickedness, and gambling hells on all sides, in full swing; *but no Gospel Chapel*. I walked the streets of Samarinda by day and by night until its terrible darkness seemed almost to penetrate my soul. Our home cities may be dark enough, but there is at least some light of the Gospel there. These people verily "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death".

"Without a ray of hope or light,

"With future dark as endless night."

I met some Chinese Christians here who had been baptised as infants in China, but who seemed to have forgotten all about it since then. In one store where I was telling the people about the Lord Jesus, some of the Chinese opposed and ridiculed. One said in a loud voice, "God is no good. He only blows the wind on us to make us catch a cold." While I was trying to tell them of His love and of the sacrifice for our sins on the cross, and feeling the opposition

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very strong, an elderly Chinese lady came to my help from the rear of the store. Hearing the loud talking she came out and said, "I once heard of Jesus when I was in China. I don't know much about it, but I know this— *Jesus is good! Jesus is good!*" She repeated this last clause several times. God bless her and save her! I left Gospel tracts at that and many other stores in Samarinda, and have sent more by mail from Wuchow. May they bring some light to these souls in awful darkness.

Before we crossed to the Celebes, about which we will write in a later article, may we make a few general remarks about Borneo. The population of Dutch Borneo is about 1,800,000. Perhaps one half or more of this population is located in the ports of the east, west, and south coasts, the remainder of the population is in the interior, wild tribes, mostly Dyacks. As we have said, the entire east coast is without missionary work, neither is there any missionary work on the west coast since the Methodist Episcopal Mission has evacuated. The entire south coast is also unoccupied with the exception of Banjermasin and the work which is done by the Basil Mission, and the Dutch State Church up the Barito River.

A little later on my trip, on reaching Batavia, I had the privilege of interviewing leaders of the Dutch Missions, the Methodist Episcopal Mission, and particularly Dr. Slotemaker de Bruine, the Missionary Consul. The latter was very courteous and helpful, and heartily approved of our opening work among the Chinese, and encouraged us also to occupy some of the unoccupied areas of the Dutch East Indies. He recommended the following fields, where no work is being done:—

1. The entire east coast of Borneo, with Samarinda and other places as centres.
  2. The west coast of Borneo, with Pontianak and other places as centres. The object would be to reach "the wild man of Borneo", the Dyacks of the interior.
  3. The Boeginese people on the coast of the Celebes, and the wild races of the interior of the Celebes, with Makassar as a centre.
  4. The whole south-western coast of Sumatra.
  5. A large number of smaller islands in the East Indies where no Gospel witness has yet been given.
- Dr. Zwemer, in his survey of the Malay Archipelago, calls attention to whole islands and parts of islands
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which are without any missionary work, and includes Banka, Madura, the Flores, Bali (misspelled Deli on our map), Lombok, the great island of New Guinea, and others. He estimates the unevangelised population of these islands at between six and seven million. If the Gospel of Christ does not soon enter these fields, the influence of Mohammedanism, which is spreading rapidly, will soon be such as to form a most effective barrier to its progress. Mohammedanism is rapidly displacing paganism. This fact surely makes the

evangelisation of these fields all the more urgent.

As Paul heard the pitiful cry of the man of Macedonia, "Come over and help us," so may we today hear the cry of the perishing in Borneo and these Islands. It is the Call of the Dyack, "Come over and help us!" He seems to reproach and shame me as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ saying, "You are saying much about His Second Coming, and hoping soon for His return; we have not yet heard the message of His First Coming to give His life on the Cross for all sinful men including us. Come over quickly and help us!"

"O, hear the pleading message  
From every land and nation;  
O haste, and send the answer,  
Ye heralds of salvation.  
'Come over, come over,'  
I can hear it ever thus,  
'Come over, come over,  
Come over and help us.'

"Oh how the Master's bosom  
Must swell with love and pain,  
As evertime they meet Him  
That sad and ceaseless train!  
And if He holds us guilty  
For all our brother's blood,  
What answer can we offer  
Before the throne of God?"

"A cry is ever sounding,  
Upon my burdened ear  
A cry of pain and anguish,  
A cry of woe and fear:  
It is the voice of myriads  
Who grope in heathen night,  
It is the cry of Jesus  
To rise and send them light.

"With every pulse's beating  
Another soul is gone,  
With all its guilt and sorrow,  
To stand before the throne,  
And learn with awe and wonder  
The story of the grace,  
Which God to us entrusted  
For all our fallen race."

—A. B. Simpson

# - THE CALL OF THE ISLES -

Map of the East Indies



The white spots represent the entrance of the Light of the Gospel.  
The black represents the darkness of heathenism and paganism.  
Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World."

"Ye are the Light of the World."

WHO WILL HELP LIGHTEN THE DARKNESS ?