

HOW THE MISSIONARIES CAME TO MAKKI

By Jerry Carlson

Members of a protestant missionary organization, Service in Mission (SIM), have been working on the Mago River at Makki (known as Mako in Mursi) since 1989. The first missionary couple to live at Makki were Jerry and Maija Carlson.

The Lord started preparing the way for the Gospel to come to Mursi country 23 years before the first missionaries arrived. In 1966, Maija and I were working in a mission program in Wollo Province of Ethiopia. I had a young man named Amare working with me in the Wuchalle Farm School. We worked together for four years until Amare went on for further education at the University in Addis Ababa.

We heard nothing more of Amare for many years, until an application was made for permission to start a clinic amongst the Mursi. At that time (1988) it was very difficult to get permission to start new programs in new areas. Every one in the mission was surprised that permission was granted within 3 months to start new work amongst the Mursi. As it turned out Amare, the young man who had been my co-worker 23 years earlier, had been appointed Governor of Gamo Gofa Province. When Amare learned that the application was from people he had formerly worked with in Wollo Province, he used his authority to get the permission granted in a very short time.

We returned to Ethiopia in 1987, knowing that we were to go and work amongst the Mursi. In November 1988, after nine months of Amharic language school in Addis Ababa, Gordon Creighton, Dale Harlen and I drove from Addis Ababa to Metzer, SIM's nearest mission station to the Mursi. We took mules from there to Balamer, and then walked down into the Mago valley. Fortunately, along the way, we met Genbaru, a young Ari man who could speak and understand Mursi. He came along as our interpreter. We had heard that, during the famine and drought, about 2000 Mursi had moved to the Makki area but when we got there we found that there were now only about 200. We spent four days with them and they showed a keen interest in having missionaries come and start a clinic to meet their medical needs.

Over the next few months preparations were made to get a bulldozer to cut a road to the area we had selected to be the Makki mission station. Meanwhile, Bruce Adams, Lee Gilliam and a government official (in one car) and Maija, Danyacho and I (in another) went to see the area administrator at Hana, to let him know what our plans were. From Hana we drove to the Omo, where we met Komorakora and Biyoton-giya. We again asked their permission to start a clinic and mission work amongst the Mursi. They said we could start a mission station where "David Turton had laid his head" – i.e., where the anthropologist David Turton had camped on the Mago (Makki) River in the early 1980s. This was the exact area we had picked out for the mission station.

After much difficulty lining up a bulldozer and getting it down to the Mago Park, the work of cutting a road began in March 1989. The container that was to be our house for the next year was set down first near the Mago bridge. There were three game scouts from the Park assigned to work with us. Their job was to go ahead of the bulldozer and find the best way for the road. We estimated that the new road would be about 12 kilometers long, from the point where it left the main road through the Mago Park.

It took about 3 weeks to cut the road, but it actually turned out to be 22 kms. long. On arrival at the Makki River we were in for a disappointing surprise: there were no Mursi living there. Since we had first walked into the area, there had been a raid by Banna. A number of Mursi had been killed and the rest had left. The question facing us was whether to stay at Makki or go and work in some other place. We felt that the Lord had called us to bring the Good News of God's Word to the Mursi and since He had brought us this far, we decided to stay.

After our house container, a second container to be used as a clinic, and a third storage container had been set down in the area that was to be the Makki mission station, all we could do was wait and pray that the people would come back to the area. A few days later several Mursi men did show up, to see what these white people were doing. They told us there were a few Mursi living on the way up to Balamer so, one day, Genbaru, Maija and I went to visit them. They told us that they would move back to the river when they had harvested their crops.

After we had been settled for a while, and Maija had opened her clinic, Ato. Buzzo and several other elders from the Balamer Kale Heywet Church (KHC) came down to visit us. They brought Ato. Beyenne with them. He was to be the Ari evangelist working with us to bring the Word of God to the Mursi. Before they returned to Balamer, we all had a little Sunday service, thanking the Lord for the opportunity to work amongst the Mursi. Shortly after the service started we noticed a long line of Mursi men, women and children walking up the road to where we were. They all sat down quietly and listened as one of the Ari elders gave a message from the Bible. I imagine there weren't many among the Mursi who could understand what the elder was talking about, but we took it as a sign that some day many Mursi would accept Christ into their hearts and a church would be established amongst the Mursi.



Jerry and Maija at Makki in 1989