

Spear-Wielding Seimats Welcome Evangelists to Papua New Guinea

Traditionally, outsiders arriving on the shores of the Ninigo Islands were greeted by spear-wielding Seimat people with a question: "Why have you come?" If their intent was to fight, battle commenced, but if they came for peaceful purposes, the spears were planted in the sand and a warm welcome was given.

As people arrived on the shores of Patexux Island in late May, the response to the question was this: *Kako kau meng solian ti Jises, Kakai Haeu ti Kakai Seimat* ("We bring the Good News of Jesus, God's Word in the Seimat language"). Spears were planted in the sand and guests were welcomed from seven other countries representing all the people who had been praying for many years for this day to arrive.

Seimat people had gathered on Patexux from the eight main island communities, Lorengau on Manus Island (370 kilometers east) and other parts of the country to join in this historical event, the third New Testament translation completed in Manus Province.

At the beginning of the main Dedication program, a team of Seimat men carried in a traditional sailing canoe bearing Beata Wozna (Poland), Theresa Wilson (U.K.), and a box of Seimat New Testaments.

Wozna and Wilson have worked with the Seimat people since 2003 to develop mother tongue literacy in the schools and communities and to translate the New Testament with a team of men and women from the two denominations represented in the Islands, all with the support of churches in Poland, Scotland and England.

The arrival of the Seimat New Testament was celebrated with dancing, singing, drama and a huge feast including pork and seafood fresh from the Pacific. There were speeches of acknowledgment, gratitude and above all encouragement to the Seimat sailors to treasure this gift from God as the essential foundation for wise and godly living and the basic nourishment for the Christian's daily walk.