



Fr Gaspar Moskopp, S.J.
(1869-1923. In Zambia 1910-1923)

20 November 1923

Gaspar Moskopp was born in Koblenz, Germany on 18 April 1869 and later he went to school there. It is not clear why he entered the Austrian-Hungarian Province. It may have been because of his desire to work on the Lower Zambesi Mission in Mozambique where some of its members labored along with the Portuguese Jesuits who were responsible for it.

He entered the novitiate in Trnava, Slovakia on 11 August 1887 and completed his classical studies in St Andrea. He taught in our college in Kalocsa (Hungary) and completed his philosophy (1895-1898) in Pressburg, near Bratislava (Slovakia). He did his theology in Innsbruck (Austria) from 1898-1902, where he was ordained in 1901. He studied in Kalocsa (1902-04) before heading to Portugal for his tertianship and to prepare for his departure to the Lower Zambesi Mission (1904-05).

By 1906 he was already in Mozambique. His first major assignment was at Maralla, not far from Boroma in Angonia, where he built a new church. In 1909 he replaced Fr Dialer at Boroma who went back to Europe.

The Edict of 1910 expelling all Jesuits from Portugal and its colonies came as a 'bolt from the blue' to use Fr Baecher's phrase. Moskopp began to seek other outlets for his missionary zeal and by the time the law was enforced in the colony, a small group of Jesuits planned to cross the Luangwa River and enter the British territory of Northern Rhodesia. With Br Rodenbucher he approached the magistrate at Feira and obtained permission for a mission site at Kapoche. With Fr Baecher, the superior of Miruru, he searched for another site on the banks of the river which was called Katondwe. There were five of them in all who permanently crossed the river (Bulwiewicz, Lazarewicz, Uhlik, Moskopp and Rodenbucher). Several of their fellow companions helped them to transport their goods and supplies across the river. Fr Baecher, as acting superior of the new enterprise, scouted the area and drew up quite a remarkable plan of missionary action which he sent to the appropriate authorities.

With his customary energy and drive, Moskopp petitioned Fr General that the Austrian Province would take responsibility for the new mission in the Luangwa Valley. Initially it was accepted but it was then turned down by the home province and almost immediately the Polish Province took full charge of the work. All the remaining missionaries returned to Europe where they were re-assigned, including Baecher, who remained acting superior until the arrival of the newly appointed Fr Kraupa from Poland.

Fr Moskopp bravely continued to soldier, on almost on his own, at Kapoche for the next ten years until his death. He supervised the building of a fine brick house by Brs Kodzynski and Stofner. He had, like the others, to abandon Mozambique when the mission was showing signs of growth and development after the initial hardships and many early deaths. Then the possibility of working with his fellow countrymen in the Luangwa faded rapidly. Within a couple of years, he was further devastated when his companion and confident, Br Rudenbucher, went back to Hungary in 1913 where he labored fruitfully for another 35 years. Finally it has to be said, that the work of evangelization at Kapoche was hard and often unrewarding. Despite having a good core of Catholics who came over the river with him and despite the dedication of a remarkable catechist Francis Xavier who remained at his post for 50 years, there was a certain resistance to the Word of God that did not appear in the rest of the valley.

In face of all these difficulties, Moskopp manfully struggled on and his memory has always been preserved in the Austrian Province which achieved its independence as a province in 1909. He often returned back over the river to Miruru to provide Mass and the sacraments for the Christians there, since the prospects of a replacement by the Divine Word Missionaries failed to materialize so far up into the Zambezi Valley. His recordings in his diary of the local uprising against the Portuguese are regarded as a valuable historical record.

Fr Czarlinski fell ill at Kusanje, three days out of Katondwe on his way to Kasisi and passed away the following day (1921). One of his dying acts was to appoint Moskopp the acting superior. Very quickly he in turn appointed Fr Spendel as he himself was not in great form.

In November 1923 he became ill and sent word to the mission center at Katondwe. Fr Wilhelm quickly cycled down and the following day Fr Moskopp was carried to Katondwe. He made an apparent recovery and a few days later he headed back to his beloved Kapoche, but on arrival he collapsed and died within a couple of days on 20 November 1923. He was only 55 years old but he had labored heroically against all odds in the Valley on both sides of the river, for 17 years.

20 November

18 April 1869 – 20 November 1923

Fr. Gaspar MOSKOPP

He was born in Koblenza, Germany on April 18, 1869 and entered the Society of Jesus on August 11, 1887 in the Austro-Hungarian Province. He professed his final vows on March 19, 1906 and went to the Zambezia Mission (Mozambique) on the same year. He worked in the missions of Boroma and Miruro. In 1911, and went to Katóndue. He died on November 20, 1923, in Kapoche, Rhodesia.

(Cf. Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970)