

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Clerk's Report to Basel on Customs in Buem"

**Title:** "Clerk's Report to Basel on Customs in Buem"

**Ref. number:** D-01.57.VII..134-135

**Date:** Proper date: 03.09.1892

**Description:** Part of this report is printed in Heidenbote 1892 pp20-21. Points not published: He repeats earlier material about the divisions among the Buems: 1. Worawora, Tapa, Apeso, and Asabo speak a corrupt Twi. Clerk thinks they have learned it from Kwahu Dukoman, but says the Worawoa people stem from Aburi, and thus from Akwamu, 2. The majority of the Buems speak Lepana (Aka Atonko, Guaman, Gyasekan (both parts), Borada. 3. The 3 Bowiri villages speak Liwri. 4. Apafo speaks Kepu Days of the week - Jorawora has a 6 day week, Apeso and the Lepadaphone a 5 day week, Kepuphone a 4 day week, and the Bowiris a 7 day week, the days having their Twi names. Naturally customs are different in the different parts of Buem. Clerk is describing mainly those that obtain in Worawora. Marriage Ceremonies: The husband sends repeated embassies to the parents of his intended, and when they respond positively gives -them a pot of palmwine and two mate. Especially if the girl is not yet adolescent, her attitude is not ascertained. From then on the young man must seek to please his parents-in-law by bringing them presents of palm nuts and firewood, and allowing himself to go for his father-in-law without payment when he has some duty to perform. The betrothal follows when the girl is fairly old. This happens when someone gives the parents in law on two separate occasions two sorts of rice dish, and two pots of palm wine. They are then divided among the girl's relations. The bride is then rubbed with red powder from a certain tree, and this more or less ensures the marriage. After the girl has come to maturity the wedding is celebrated. After the day has been agreed the bridegroom goes to every hut in the village with the information - while the evening before the bride goes to the house of the bridegroom and is given beads and her bridal dress. Next day she both wears her new dress and is covered with the red powder over her whole body, and her hair is special cut. The bridegroom is shaved bald except for a small tuft of hair, and is wrapped in a red cloth. The bride is led before an earth mound in the courtyard of her father's house which is the location of the ancestral spirits, two hens are put on her head which she has to press with her own hands until they die. While she does this her friends dance round the mound crying 'Bameye' (Clerk notes that he has no idea of the meaning or origin of this word). These hens are cooked-as a sauce for a rice dish which is being prepared. Some of it is sacrificed to the ancestors. Then the bride is led into the bridegroom's room. A piece of rice-confection is put into both hands of each, and they must put it them with their mouths into a dish set before them. This dish is then carried before them so that they both eat from it simultaneously. After that they drink palm wine. Shortly after the elders come, palm-wine is sacrificed to the ancestors and one of the elders calls on them to bless the marriage, and after drinking palm wine, and having a representative make a speech advising the bridal pair to live in peace they

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leave. For the next 3 or 4 months the woman is to do no work other than spinning - the man must bring her food 3 or 4 times a day. She anoints herself with the red powder every day. After this the wife goes and stays with her mother, and the mother cooks for the bride to take food to the bridegroom, and at the end of the week the bridegroom brings his mother in law a large pot of rice and meat. The bride now stays with her mother until her husband has built his own house, and then the bride goes to him and sets up her own cooking place. Clerk remarks that many girls do not go to their husband's house after marriage because he is too old or does not please them. This happens especially when the marriage has been arranged when a girl was very young. Many girls announce right before the marriage that they wish to marry someone else, but the parents do not allow this because they want their children to marry according to ancient custom, with the blessing of the elders. So there are always girls on the loose, not living, with their husbands, and "playing" with the youths. This is traditionally regarded as unchastity. The bridegroom ought not to go ahead under such circumstances, but he is charged by his friends with parsimony if he does not, also he can get 4-9 heads cowries adultery fees per case. Many girls love 'playing' too much to marry, but in Worawora it can happen that such a girl is simply carried off into the bush for a couple of days by a gang of youths (Clerk remarks that this has not happened since his arrival in Worawora not only he but the merchants have told the people what a scandal such a practice is). The better maidens search for a man with whom they are content and then take him a pot of waterman sign to start the marriage process on their behalf. Clerk remarks that people marry near relatives in Worawora. The whole town is composed of members of two great families (admittedly there are subdivisions) and it is seldom that a member's of one great family marries a member of the other, and then only under specific conditions. If anyone wants to separate from his wife, he takes her to a man who goes through a purifying rite on her behalf. This involves someone driving a long thick nail between her toes. This is calculated to force her to reveal a man who has committed adultery with her. If she has nothing to confess she is sprinkled with white earth. If the woman has no children she must pay her husband 12 heads of Cowries. Arrangements about children: When a child is born, it is the obligation of the man to provide his wife for the week after the birth with rice, meat and firewood, whether she is in her parent's house, or with a fetish priestess. As long as the child is weak and the wife cannot go to farm he must continue to bring her firewood. If the wife has borne many children he may give her now and again a piece of cloth for binding the children on her back - otherwise the wife has to provide this for herself. On the bringing up of children he remarks that the only usual punishment is swearing at the child, which of course the child soon learns and at the same time realises that the father is not in earnest in his discipline, because his brothers and sisters stand around enjoying the father's language. It is difficult to purge the language of their schoolchildren, and Clerk is worried that the children of the two Christian families should be exposed to this kind of language. He goes on to deal indirectly with the question of chastity, implying clearly that relations between adolescents only become a matter for concern if the rights of a

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husband or fiancé are trespassed on - in the latter case rather than an adultery fee the fiancé has the right to beat the offending man or boy with cudgels.

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