

Basel Mission Archives

"Clerks Report for the Second Quarter 1886"

Title: "Clerks Report for the Second Quarter 1886"

Ref. number: D-01.65.VIII..189

Date: Proper date: 31.07.1896

Description: Reports being asked to be present and give advice at a meeting of the Worawora chief and elders. He saw them choose two (out of four candidates) as heads of the young men. They then discussed a series of reforms in custom in line with what the missionaries had told them. Only a biennial shooting for the dead, and a reduction in the amount of food prepared for funeral festivities: reuduction of the seclusion of widow from a month and a week to a few days; marriage celebrations to be reduced from 3-4 months to 2: one week's marriage for an already pregnant girl, the presents regulated. Clerk obviously thinks these regulations were serious, and indeed he writes that two important men have since died and have had no shooting at their funerals (He adds in a footnote, however, that regulation about pregnant brides are apparently not seriously intended). Clerk himself proposed that burials should no longer be made in the houses but in a village cemetery - this in order to cut down the death rate, which Clerk ascribes to this unhygienic practice. The council refused this, saying the dead would not like to be buried in the open air. Clerk remarks that he hopes the German regime will make rules on this subject as the English regime has done, and that it would be very good for the country if the colonial government and the missionaries could go hand in hand. Many slaves have fled in the course of the year, and a few been recaptured. No German official has raised the subject of slavery in Buem, and buying and selling continues unabated. The polygamist mentioned by Clerk in an earlier report (No 186) has made his choice. Clerk must now help him over the question of his slaves. There had been a case of violence done by a man to two female catechumens - the Worawora chief had taken the Christian's side.

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