

Basel Mission Archives

"Lodholz to Basel - Report for the First Quarter of 1872"

Title: "Lodholz to Basel - Report for the First Quarter of 1872"

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Description: Taking up his own earlier news about the Mohammedans in Akim and Schrenk's mention of them (Annual Report 1871, p76), Lodholz reports their further history. They were based on Kibi, and travelled to the other towns. On their preparation to leave Kibi, however - indeed after the wife had left - the Kibi people took up the idea that they were Asante spies. Lodholz remarks that this is not surprising in view of the war which was going on on the Volta, and they were accused of collecting pebbles from all the Akim towns in order to make a medicine which would kill all their inhabitants, white men included. The husband therefore was made a prisoner, and his wife brought back to Kibi. When the missionaries first interested themselves in the case it seemed there was little danger, but some months later the case was discussed in a full assembly because an ambassador had come from 'Fante chiefs' whose message was that the man should be released since he was a fante. The man himself defended himself before a huge still crowd, speaking good Twi so that the missionaries understood every word. His statements were contradicted, however, but two other fantes who reckoned they had seen him in Kumasi, and could reveal the precise relation between him and the Asantehene in relation to Akim. At this he was sent into Apiedu's compound, and he and his body slaves and 2 of his 3 wives were put in the block. For a time after this secret messengers went to and from between Akim, Akwapim, Ga, Fante 'and so on' concerning the case - even a messenger from the Commandant in Accra who came officially to ask for the man's release, or at least his being handed over to the English Government, in fact also had secret relations with the Accra chief over the case. There must have been a secret agreement between these tribes as to what was to be done to the man. Eventually he and two of his wives were executed in Kibi, and later on two of his body slaves were executed in Bansa. Their children were taken away (the missionaries tried to intercede, especially for the suckling child of the third wife who was seized from her by the mob, but were unsuccessful). Lodholz writes concerning these Mohammedans that they went around like mountebanks in Europe by sleight of hand appearing to change sand or earth into gold dust. The Asafo played a major part in the downfall of the Mohammedans, and Lodholz asks therefore what is its attitude to themselves. The answer - there is a systematic attempt to prevent anyone, slave or free, becoming a Christian. For the free men, the technique is for the Asafo to fine him enough sheep to put him into serious debt. The kind of difficulties involved are illustrated by a man who came secretly to Lodholz to apply for baptism, and on being asked about the secrecy cited the problem which had faced Sakyi when it had been known he intended to be baptised. He explained he was tired of the exactions of the Asafo and the Safohene (he was an Asafo drummer) - he had recently had a debt imposed on him and wanted to finish with them.

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Only the missionaries would have to pay the debt, since one was not allowed to pay such a debt with one's own money, though he had enough to - he would repay them later. This would give him the right to leave the Asafo after sacrificing sheep. The missionaries decided first to have him examined by the catechist, who thought his character was blameless, but when they had decided to act as he suggested the man himself came to them and said that the sum was going to be paid out of the Asafo's money, and that the Safohene had given him no chance of making himself free of the Asafo - obviously his intention to be baptised had become known. Lodholz' sentence about the man offering himself for baptism is '(he wanted to) come to us, build his house on the station, and live there'. Lodholz cites this as clear evidence of the firm resolve of the leaders of the people against Christianity - fancy such grasping people as the Akims refusing outside payment for a debt. Lodholz' attitude is that such difficulties are not a bad thing, and that when God's time comes the many young men who say they would become Christians if it was not for the opposition of their masters will be given the strength to break through the barriers raised against them.

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