

Basel Mission Archives

"Müller to Basel"

Title: "Müller to Basel"

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Description: A detailed account of the troubles of the previous quarter. The call to arms had occurred at the height of Krauss' illness, when he needed two people by his bed day and night. Officially there was a fine of 110 heads of cowries (Müller gives as the equivalent 2 franks, 25 cents) on people who did not respond. The Anum 'King', however, allowed the Missionaries to retain as many men as they liked, when this was requested. Müller writes what a comfort it was to himself and to Krauss that the Christians helped look after the latter so carefully and so reliably. The plan to send Krauss by river to Odumase came from the chief and elders of Anum, when they heard that the plan was to take him via Ho to the coast. The missionaries' objected that the Akwamu people working the canoe might be taken captive by the Anums, but the Anums reassured them on this point. The downstream journey did, in fact, go on unmolested; the deceitful exploitation of the scheme on the Anum side only came to light later, and they didn't not know if it was intended from the beginning. During the period of Schönhuth's absence (16th-30th April) a number of skirmishes took place between the Anums and the Akwamus. Müller remarks that when the men of Anum were called to arms, the white men were regarded as having duties too. The 'King' sent an embassy demanding 50 heads of cowries as war-tax; and this was not the first time this had happened, they have had such requests at least 10 times since the war began. They very rarely go away empty handed. Usually the request is for 100 heads (equivalent given: 105 fl.), and if nothing is given, violence is threatened. Since they looked very determined on this occasion, Müller gave them an ordinary present. 'I think it is well known that the fighting has been much increased by the involvement in it of an Akem chief who has sent his leader Dompere with 140 men.' Dompere was at Asutsuare for almost a year. The Akwamus took the field, but waited for reinforcement. The Anums, who also wanted reinforcements in order to attack Akwamu sent embassies to Dompere to get him to join them. When Dompere saw that his existing allies had left him in the lurch, he left Asutsuare, arriving in Anum in early March. Scarcely had he arrived when he sent embassies to the missionaries asking for help with his war-costs. 'We told him that we did not know him. We also had requests from the groups who were watching Anum's Akwamu frontier. But we felt we had done enough when we paid taxes to the chief of Anum. Once Krauss and Schönhuth had set out, we also faced threats from the river-watchers, who wanted money.' At that point Dompere and the greater part of the Anum army moved out against Akwamu. The Akwamus had camped at Ananse three hours east of Akwamu, and a number of battles were fought. The Anums gained the advantage, and destroyed the villages of that district. After that, both sides retired to their headquarters, but only to re-equip with munitions, so as to be able to finish what is, in fact, a war to the death. On Schönhuth's return the boat which took him from Pese

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to the Anum shore was destroyed by hostile Anums, and an Asante paddler was only freed from the threat of death when Schönhut paid a ransom of 80 heads of cowries (equivalent given - 200 franks). At Müller's warning the Anum elders that God would punish them for not keeping their promises, they only laughed, saying the Asantes and Akwamus were their enemies and asking for more money. After a few days Dompere sent to have the Asante brought to his camp. The missionaries refused, and that very night organised his escape. One of the Christians from the station took the Asante man to an Asante village by a little used way. On his return the Christian reported that he had been received with great hospitality, and that the chief of the village suggested that the missionaries should move to his town since they were being so badly treated in Anum. One of the Christians, called Henry, had been having difficulties. It all stemmed from the fact that the Gas (or a group of Gas) in the town were bent on revenge, since he had helped to uncover thefts committed by one of them when he worked as a clerk for Br. Krauss. The first occasion on which this enmity came to light occurred after the escape of the Asante man. Henry was called before the 'King', charged with having not stood to arms as he should, and fined 110 heads of cowries. Henry defended himself on the grounds of having been one of the four people who stayed on the station to help with Krauss, but he was judged guilty - Müller reckons the Gas had bribed the Anum 'King' to judge the case in this way. Henry, however, appealed to Dompere, who reckoned that he was innocent, and thus he did not have to pay the fine. (Müller says: 'But since at that time, and still now, Dompere was the leader'). Next, Henry's wife was seized and bound by the Gas, but on this occasion Müller appealed to the senior elder of the town, who convened his fellow elders, and handed down the judgement that the Gas had no right to bind the woman, and she was set free. A few weeks before the letter was written there was another incident when money was extorted from the missionaries - they were straightforwardly threatened with violence if they did not pay willingly. Dompere asked for 300 heads, the Anum 'King' 50 heads, the river-watchers 100 heads, another group 60; after them some chiefs of lowlier rank with smaller demands. Anum badly needs an experienced man to run the station. A few days before the letter was written, the Anums had gone off again to a war-camp 5-6 hours away, their plans this time to attack the Akwamu capital. They are hoping for help from Akwapim and Akim, and Peki has now joined the alliance. Müller stresses that on the Anum side the plan is to drive the Akwamus away completely.

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