

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Report from Mohr to Basel on the Attitudes of the People of Begori and the Surrounding Villages"

**Title:** "Report from Mohr to Basel on the Attitudes of the People of Begori and the Surrounding Villages"

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**Description:** The impact of the struggle between Atta in Kibi and David Asante, and the latter's being posted away from Kibi, has been that people feel that Atta has won a victory, and that he has acted on the basis of recognised rights. In the typhus epidemic 170 people died. The pigs which were first driven out to appease the fetishes had been bought in Larteh and Kwahu. Mohr's angle on the situation in this report is to cite Amos c3v6 and argue that the deaths were God trying to lead the people to himself. Once the mission was accused of being the cause they were no longer allowed to preach and visit in the town. And a major outbreak occurred in March, when they set out to cut down another Odum. It was led by Abam the Asafohene, who gathered the people together and issued the order about not selling to the ehristiens, and also began to talk about driving Mohr out of Begoro just as Asante had been driven out of Kibi. Mohr communicated with Christiansborg, where Dieterle and Buhl discussed the matter orally with the governor. The latter sent a warning to the Begorohene, who had not been there when the trouble started, but in any case would do nothing since Abam was his rival, and had all the young hotheads with him. The Asafohene has just recently started a case against the fetish priest of Osino before Atta on the grounds that he was connected with the death roll in 1877. But the fetish priest of Osino is in Accra in order to get the case decided there. Although on the whole in the last year the people have been hostile to the Christian community there evidences of contrary opinions too. The heathen indeed are aware that an overthrow of fetishism and the power of the old customs in favour of Christianity is brewing. And the great mass of the people sympathise with the missionaries. They want enlightenment and full freedom, though by freedom they understand only freedom from subjection to the priests. On that account everyone would be pleased to see many white people in the country though a minority think that the whites are come in pursuit of money. (Mohr notes in parenthesis - how could they gain advantage for themselves out of what they are doing?) Only the catechists do not equate 'being white' with 'having money'. The Akims have many requirements which can only be obtained with money, and for that on the whole they have to work for the whites. It will be easier for the mission when the government starts to develop road and water transport in Akim. The Begoro people are dissatisfied that payment for building has stopped - they think employment of that kind should have gone on. The Christians are not interested in coffee planting - that would take too long before it brought in any returns. The Akim custom is to go off and trade as soon as one has a few thaler. Many of the Christians have said to Mohr that previously they had lost their money through drinking spirits and through fetish priests - and that they became

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Christians because they knew that the Christians would not be molested (presumably by the latter). With most of the people who become Christians it is not out of hunger and thirst for the word of god or the longing for inner peace, but because they need political peace and they want to participate in the benefits of Christianity. He asked one of the elders why he thought the missionaries were preaching, and his reply was that they intended to found a large new town, in order to get glory and honour therefrom. In fact they are all the while battling against the idea that the Christian community is politically separate from Begoro town. 'We tell our people all the time to recognise the fact that they are subjects of the political authority and only to withdraw themselves from heathen practices.' Not only in Begoro but also at the foot of the hills it is very rarely that one comes across a deep feeling of the guilt of sin, and a sense of a man's being worthy for damnation. Mostly people have to be taken by the hand and lead to the admission 'I am a sinner'. On the whole people admit readily to whatever one accuses them of in preaching, and, when one goes through the history of the Son of God who died for the sins of the world and has risen again in order to bring salvation to everyone you often hear them say 'Waye ade ama yen ampa' i.e. 'He has truly done a lot for us'. But does one hear someone say 'So what should I do to become holy?' (However the Holy Ghost is at work as well) They are preparing the first baptismal candidates in Fankyeneko, about 12 of them. Few were actually there at his last visit, some had gone to Accra, others to other places. One of the baptismal candidates is the head of a numerous band of relatives and has assured Mohr that should a catechist be stationed at Fankyeneko they will most of them become Christians. In the Begoro school the boys have taken four weeks out of the last two months as holidays, some to collect snails, and others to go fishing. On Mohr expostulating with them most of them said they would not attend school any more unless they were given clothes.

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