

Basel Mission Archives

"Mohr's Report for the First Quarter of 1880"

Title: "Mohr's Report for the First Quarter of 1880"

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Description: The closure of the school followed three weeks after its re-opening with teacher Okanta, when after a large meeting in the street with the chief and people of Begoro it had been agreed that children would be sent to it (they were to be given a country cloth by the school each year). But then the rains came early, and the whole of Begoro, including the Christians went out collecting snails, Twice there were so few people that no services could be held (the implication of the language is that it is Sunday services which are referred to, since they were not able to hold a service in the town of Begoro). Now they have decided to ask for a cash guarantee of one dollar for regular attendance. The Christians in Anyinam had set on one side the building materials for the missionary rest house even before permission came from Basel to purchase the land. In Anyinam-Adasawaase there are currently 9 baptismal candidates. In Fankyeneko the building of the catechist's house has been delayed by snail collecting. During the building the boys in the school have received only irregular tuition. There are six of them; they have a zeal to learn which pleases the missionaries and Obeng has them working for him as monitors in the Sunday school. There are no baptismal candidates now in Fankyeneko but Mohr hopes that when the numbers of Fankyeneko people currently pawned away return - some of them are already related to Christian families - will come forward for baptism. In Begoro on Good Friday two adult men, fathers of families were baptised. Discussing the 'emancipation' of the pawns Mohr says that it is an even deeper change in the social situation than the emancipation of the slaves. On that occasion most of the people emancipated were foreigners - Kwahus, Asantes, and 'nnonkofo' or people from the interior. After the emancipation of pawns, however 1000-2000 Akims will return to their tribe, and many families which were forced to separate are joining together again and enjoying their unity once more. The Akwapims worked their profitable oil businesses mainly with Akims and Kwahus. Indeed many catechists are culpable from this angle. Now in Begoro there is probably no pawn left, although the proclamation was not actually read out here. There has been such fear that pawn-owners have set them all free. Of course, many of them have a real lust for money like the Croesus of Begoro, Ntim, with his 60 pawns of both sexes. But one day a crafty comrade went along to him (the so-called catechist-beater and poisoner of Begoro) and threat one to reveal his holding of pawns in Accra. He was quietened with 50 Marks. But talking things over with his nephew and son, Ntim decided that there was no other course but to dash the pawns their debts and set them free. The debts were approve £450. Mohr feels that God must be thanked for the step the governor took in this matter - no credit was to be had without a reciprocal pawn he goes into an outline explanation of the system which says nothing exceptional except that interest rates were

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40-50% in Akwapim, 30% in Akim, the period of incidence not clear - and that when they were paying large numbers of people in Begoro, the money was in fact going into the pockets of a few pawn-holders in the long run. As a result of the freeing of the pawns and the victory of the Lord over the Okyenhene as symbolised by his imprisonment hearts are beating high in Akim over the prospect of a long-desired freedom. There is a subscript by Eisenschmid to the effect that what seen of great significance (the declaration that pawning is abolished in Akim) has made little impression on the coast. And he agrees that probably in order to secure servants catechists may well have advanced cash sums to their families.

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