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"Mohr to Basel - Report of a Journey from Begoro to the Hinterland of the Anum Station"

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Description: The report begins with a five page introduction about preparations and travelling techniques. Leaving Begoro he remarks that there is a pond in the course of the river Osubeng near the town, which is accounted a fetish - women pray to it for children, and it is also the water in which the stools and fetishes are washed, and where the bereaved have to purify themselves. He comments on the Akura that they found by the way that they are light houses built of materials easy to find in the woods, and lived in by farmers or hunters or snail gathered for part of the year. The 'traditional hospital' is often a grouping of such houses - people often live through long illnesses in the forest. This is partly because of the fear that in the town ill-wishing neighbours would be able to interrupt one's recovery, or inflict a further illness. They passed on the first day an Akura called Oboro-Ahohoo (he cudgeled the strangers), where they met 4 men from Gyakiti. These people knew that there was a white man in Anum who planned to travel through Gyakiti to Begoro, and that there was a white man from Akropong with him. (These were the missionaries Munz and Eisenschmid). Aboroahohoo was 5 hours from Begoro: as in all such places they were able to find an old pot for cooking, and a mortar for making fufu. Next day after two or three hours they came to Kokone Mountain, which Mohr says was once inhabited by the Krobos, until troubles with the Akems persuaded them to move to Krobo Mountain. Two hours later they passed the groups of huts oalled Bogyabeyedom and Mua-wo-ano and came to the Akura Fefeso, which consists of three large huts. The day before the Begoro women had left this place after 10 days' collecting snails. The men had had to stay in Begoro on account of an investigation into a murder. Prom there after 1 ¾ hours they came to the lake Nanteta, which he describes as famous in Begoro as source of stories about gigantic snakes etc., and a great haunt of game and hunters. Unfortunately the whole lake is overcrowd with grass. At 4.30 they reached the akura Asesewa where one Krobo man introduced himself as the owner of the land. Next day it was 8 hours march to Gyakiti. Towards mid-morning they passed a great open space called Nwanwenenso 1000' long, on which were growing pineapples. There were a few water-holes to be seen. At the end of this place their way to Gyakiti crossed another going to Odumase. (He gives the dates for the next part of the journey, Gyakiti to Boso, as 8-11 May). In Gyakiti, the chief town of Asuagya or Kyamana (Akwamu on the west of the Volta) they met the chief (Kwame Owuwa), and on the day which Mohr spent resting there Munz and Eisenschmid arrived. There is a detailed description of street preaching that evening. They began by singing 'Asempa na yeka kyere me se Nyankopon do wiase'. Then since Mohr knew that every day the people has been enraged by the news of judgements given against 5 people by the Akwamuhene (Akoto), he

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preached on the 10 commandments and forgiveness, ending up with John 3.16. Peter Hall gave an allegorical description of the substitutionary atonement in terms of a slave who was spared from death by the death of the king's son. One hour out of Gyakiti they came to Anyina-ase, where their preaching before the chief was interrupted by the arrival of the fetish priestess from Apirade in Akwapim to re-awaken the local fetish. 40 minutes further on they reached the big farming village Adsawa-Ase, where the whole population was absent, performing a custom at Apatifi (or Astattifi?), from which they passed through the akura Titokuru and in one hour (from Adasawa-Ase) reached the Volta bank at Sawa, where the 'old and worthy chief' was a worried man until Mohr explained to him that he was a missionary, and no English officer. From there it was a short journey to Pese where they preached again, before the chief whom Mohr described as the next highest after the Akwamu king. They stayed the night at Apatifi. The next day they made their way to nearby Apaso, and came to the last right-bank village- Awurahae. Of this he says that earlier this must have been an important town. On crossing from there to Dodi he understood why it was that people have sailed up the Volta without seeing the mouth of the Afram - it is concealed by two islands unless you are near the Awurahae bank. It was in Dodi that he heard talk of Panto as an important trading centre, and formed the resolution to go there. Since however, no-one in Dodi knew the way he decided to make for Boso and make further enquiries there. Dodi they found re-built, and with wide streets. He felt in a strange land since only those men, and people who were born in Akwapim understood twi. The rest spoke exclusively guan, and street preaching would have to be carried on in that language. They left Dodi and went through Tosen to Boso, where they found 8 Christians. The people had just rebuilt, the town in a month after- it had been almost completely burnt down, after having been rebuilt from the Asante war only two years before. He judges it to be no bigger than Begoro - the main street is 300 paces long. (Boso to Panto and back to Peki, 12-18 May). His route was Boso-Parema-To-Tenko - the latter three were big places. Mohr's interpreter Johannes found himself in Parema during the Asante War. This is a great area for oil palms, and when the time is almost come for the harvest the Ada merchants send agents to the villages, who say that in so many weeks the merchant will come with a boat to purchase oil, and indeed from Pese upstream you find many agents, who exchange salt for oil. The well-known Ada Christian Osabute, for example, has a 'shop' opposite from Pese on the Anum side, and takes all the oil from Anum. In To he decided to fork left on the direct route to Panto rather than -going right up the main route through Peki to Panto. That night they slept in Sohae, having passed through no settlements apparently since Tonko. The Sohae chief was Kofi Abro. Next day they passed through a second and larger Sohae, and reached Botoku. Shortly after passing Botoku they passed through Owusuta, the general name for the 8 villages of Oboni, Nyina-ase, Atikwee, Bogyese, Anyaho (a little town), Owa (a big town) Tabota, Ohoto (very big), Gadse. In Obom he had his work cut out to persuade an enraged people that he was not an English officer. The cause of this was that 4 days before the Pefe chief had been found beheaded in Obom, and although the Obom people tried to claim it was suicide there

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seemed every indication that he had been murdered. The Pefe people had sent a present of spirits to the King in Peki to ask for an investigation, and the Obom people thought that Mohr was the appointed investigator, until he persuaded them otherwise. They spent that night at Ahate, where the view was the farthest reaching and grandest of any he had seen, except for that from Gyampomani. The third day out from Boso they passed by the three Abate villages Agrambu (a hamlet), Beme, and the large village Torome. After 2-3 hours they reached Dsheome (Tweme) which he then discovered was four towns - Kumfa the capital, Gynema between the Volta and - Kumfa, and on the bank of the Volta the two-towns Atekweta and Anwome. In Komfe he was taken to meet the king, who was in the company of a much decorated fetish priest (of Dente) who claimed to be the influence which kept ill-luck out of the town. The latter brought palm-wine in order that Mohr might pour, a libation to his God. From Dsheome-Kumfa he travelled through the other Dsheome towns, and after them travelling north up the Volta came to Nkami. This is the Ada marketplace Nkami, and must be differentiated from the town of Nkami on the opposite shore. The latter is apparently quite isolated on that shore - there are reputed to be no village inland from it. The Ada merchants' settlement belongs to a Bannerman and in addition to articles of trade deals in slaves. These are brought down from Salaga to this last safe station before entering the colony, and there handed over to particular buyers especially from Krobo. The market occurs every fifth day, falling on the same day as that in Panto. He stayed in Panto only two nights and one day; the day unfortunately not being a market day. Describing the town he says that the main street, although narrows, was 800' long. Also he speaks of little alleyways - so presumably the town had breadth as well as length. On the day he was there most of the people were involved in their farming till late in the day. However, there was a population of Mohammedans (he saw one priest), living in their own quarter round huts with thatched roofs. He also met a Sierra Leone trader who greeted him in broken English, and people from the colony who were in this region because of debts or their past history. He was also struck by the number of slaves and their heavy burdens, and contemplates the possibility if they had money of buying them up and taking them to form a mission colony. The chief was called Sagadu, he came to a street preaching along with a whole crowd of his townspeople, and Mohr thinks they were much struck by the singing. He saw many oxen in Panto, and many excellent sheep and goats, though horses and donkeys were to be found only in small numbers. He reports that on market day major commodities were salt, European and local cloths, basketware, leatherware (including red-dyed leather) pottery, and especially shea butter. Cowries are the main currency, the silver is also accepted. There is plenty of meat to be bought, also many yams. The route back from Panto lay through Asefe, Okyirife, Sofe to Amfoi. The latter is the biggest African town he has seen in this district. The people make very fine earthenware, part of their secret being that they mix shards ground to dust into the clay they use. From there the road travels through the Tutunya or Tapo villages of Branko, Gyabagte, Pemme, Adomme, and Bako. They spent the night at a lonely farming village, Damme. The next day they travelled through Akyamme, and then through the Axate and NnyeduaSe villages of

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Toi, Agatee, Woagyi, Pefe and Abrofom. Of these Agatee is the biggest, and several, e.g. Toi and Pefe are in fact two villages only a few hundred yards apart both with the same name. After this group of villages they passed through 2 villages called Atwakae, and then to the Kyibo village of Dafelegame, and Kyibo itself where they spent the night. He remarks how impressive it was to see that these Krepe villages were completely rebuilt and all traces of the Asante war expunged. The only place which was not fully rebuilt was Peki, and the reason for that was among other grudges against the present King. The next day they came to Peki, and met the king whose real name was Nyankamago, although the people know him by the name of his predecessor Kwadwo Odee. While he was away from Mohr at a palaver, he gave him a large stereoscope-box to look into. Mohr was able to address a large gathering including more chiefs than he had ever seen before in one place. The Christians there were in the process of setting up a Christian village for themselves. In Anum the same day he found the Christians there building a Christian village as well, 6 minutes from the heathen town, and 9 minutes from the ruins of the old mission house. (19-27 May - Anum to Begoro) Leaving Anum, they could find neither boat nor boatman at the landing place 'opposite Pese, and were forced to travel through Osei Dako's Akura to Mmem. Here the chief was not welcoming them although the whole population of the town gathered in the evening to ask questions about his religion. From Mmem he went by canoe to Akwamu. On the journey back through the unfrequented forest country to Begoro, 1/2 hour before reaching Begoro they passed the Akura of the rich man Ntim. He also met, in Akatawia, the deposed Begorohene Fenin. He had been deposed because of his mania for drink and trade. Since living in Akatawia he had been making money by selling land to the Krobos - earlier the river Peompong was the boundary, but the Krobos had made farms on the other side of the river and then had -bought land on the Begoro side from Tenin. Akatawia consisted of 3-4 houses. After Akatawia they came to Bamana-ase, a large snail collecting Akura, which (this year) since the Begoro people were not able to leave the town on account of the murder had been populated for 4 weeks by people from Kukurantumi and Osiem. After passing Asikesun they came to Nsonso where they spent a night. Topics of anthropological and general interest: Joshua the linguist he explains had been baptised by Süß, later fought under Dompere against the Asantes, and thus knew the area into which Mohr was travelling, and had some acquaintance with the Ewe language. He was in hopes of becoming evangelist. Mohr appears to have had 4 carriers at the beginning of his journey, one with his fieldbed, one with a box of clothes, one with a box of drink, and one with a box of provisions. The latter contained tins of ground coffee, tea, sugar, milk, meat extract, a few tins of preserved soup for emergencies, quinine, rhubarb, epsom salts, cherry brandy as embrocation in case he was frequently wet, sewing things, plates, cutlery, glasses and books for reading. The drink case contained beer and some wine. His rapport with his carriers appears to have been good according to him they were as excited as he was at the prospect of getting to Panto; and there is no talk of difficulties with them. There is an account of the mending of a pot in order to make it waterproof for boiling plantains. This was done by heating the pot, and the covering the faulty area

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with alternate layers of grated flesh of a green plantains, and ashes. He also notes that taboos applying to a family apply equally to their pots in an Akura belonging to the family of one of his carriers the carrier stopped some other people borrowing a pot in order to cook antelope since antelope was "akyide" (atrocious) to the pot. The disregarding of such fetish taboo is one of the freedoms much prized by the Christians. Dente, and fetish lore. Apart from the reference to Dente in Komfe, Mohr remarks that in all the Krepe villages, about 100 yards from the first house, stands the house of Dente. In Peki the house of the local fetish was severely damaged by white ants, and the 4-6' high earth mound in which the' fetish was placed, had fallen in. Mohr discusses the phenomenon of the mouth of the fetishes dying ('obosom ano kum'), this happens often to the fetishes. Especially when a young fetish priest takes over from an old one, and does not know the dodges and strategies, then he tends to say either that the -questioner has brought something which is unclean to the fetish and thus the fetish does not answer - or alternatively that, simply, he cannot hear the voice of the fetish. The same thing happens if there is too small a gathering of petitioners, or if the priest is not given enough to bite on. Apart from the normal purification processes, the priests if the silence of the fetish continues may seek to 'sharpen' it. This is done by either seeking the advice of a shrine in a different district, or going to a senior and respected priest in one's own district. The process involves the priest of the silent fetish repeating all that has gone on in his own family and in the town, after which advice can be given as to what is needed to revive the voice of the fetish. On the material culture of the districts through which he passed, Mohr comments that he was impressed by the Adum (granaries) of the Akwamu villages - he feels they are very practical, and could be adapted to the storing of the groundnuts. They display an unusual care over the question of future food supplies. He further remarks that, after leaving his field bed at Gyakiti and collecting it again at Odumase Krobo on the way home, he was usually able to borrow a cotton or grass-stuffed mattress in the Akwamu villages, but on the left bank of the Volta he had to sleep on the ground. In Krepe country he was impressed by the number of weavers to be seen. He implies that a weaver was to be found under every village shade tree. The cloth was dyed both blue and red. In Agatee he visited a smithery, and although he does not say this, it seems probably that he had never seen a traditional smithery before. He gives a drawing of the bellows system. He also offers information on roads. Between Peki and Panto he had to climb over lot one single tree-trunk - this was a major contrast for him with the situation in Akem. And over the Pompong there was a real bridge, made of two long tree stems elevated over the level of the bank by a wooden framework; onto the two main stems were tied stout sticks to make a pathway (there is no mention of hand-rails). This is the first bridge Mohr has seen made by Africans. On family organisation Mohr noted that while in Akim the married daughters continue to live with their mothers in mmafi, while their husbands live elsewhere in the town, often in groups together with old friends and comrades, in Krepe the husband and wife have their own house and live together. On the content of his preaching information is offered as to the main lines of his message in several places (in addition to note on

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what was said in Gyakiti). In Anyina-ase he added to his first words some anti-fetish settlement inspired by the presence of the fetish priestess of Apirade. This was mainly along the lines that the fetishes were dumb gods, and that the priestess was both betrayer and betrayed, considering that she lived in a place where it was to hear the message of the true God. In Pese he preached on Acts 17.30 - the general need for penitence, and salvation in Christ. In Apatifi in the presence of a custom for the dead he preached on John 2.25 - the idea that God had not meant men to die, but that sin had caused death, and now in the redemption death had been destroyed for people who believe in Christ. In Boso he preached on Ephesians 6 14-16. In Kumfa he told them that he had a great secret to tell them - the destruction of the effects of sin. In Panto he emphasised that redemption was intended for everyone, slave and master alike especially dwelling on the idea of God's love for the slave. In Peki he preached that he hoped that with the rebuilding of the town they would take on a new religious allegiance. There is little information on people's reactions to his preaching. There seems to have been no opposition on any scale, apart from the unwillingness of the chief at Mmem to accommodate them, or provide them with a boat for the journey to Akwamu. The only places where an extended account is given of reactions are Botoku and Peki. In the former the chief said that everything Mohr said about God's Word was good and true. But why was he not prepared to live with him and his people? Why were there no missionaries in Peki? If someone wanted to become a Christian in Botoku, who was to teach him? Must they go 3 days' journey away to Ho? In the latter, after listening to Mohr speak the king said that there was no wicked thought in his heart. Two footnotes: - The party enlivened the way by singing hymns. - Mohr staved off an attack of diarrhoea by taking doses of red wine.

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