

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Schmid to Basel"

**Title:** "Schmid to Basel"

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**Date:** Proper date: 10.12.1886

**Description:** Part I of this report concerns events in Adesawaase during the smallpox epidemic. It includes the information that there was a priest of Dente in Koforidua called Kwadwo Boadu - the Dente is described as 'imported from Krakye' and is linked with the Bepong community. The old man driven to Bepong was in fact Owu, ex-chief of Adesawaase. He had found himself there after being 'discovered' by Kwadwo Boadua as the man who by magic had brought the small-pox to the village. He swore the king of Begoro's oath on the matter, but seems to have had little chance of turning the accusation aside. Kwadwo Boadu had said that a man and a woman had been guilty - as Schmid tells the story it sounds as if there was a time-lapse before the woman was discovered, and the discovery was taken (by the Begorohene presumably) as the condition of credence of the charge. A niece of Owu's, Awo, was eventually declared to be guilty, and Owu then had to acquiesce in the matter. He and his niece and his brother Kwame Akwatia were all three banned to Agogo - the idea there was to remove them from the English protectorate, since if the colonial government heard about the matter it would take steps to rectify things. They were only escorted to Mpreaso, however, whence they went to Bepong, and Kwame Akwatia has been taken into a Christian home (by Abraham Sontim) and has announced himself as a catechumen. His knowledge is slight, but he holds fast to the idea that he wants to serve Jesus and serve no fetish. Two further points in connection with this story are noteworthy. Kwame Akwatia had wives in several towns, but had never been regularly married. One of his places of residence had been the Akim Kotoku Boaru. Further in Adesawaase he had lodged with a fetish priestess called Kyerewa, who served a fetish called Kraba. The invitation which had brought Dente into the situation came from another fetish priestess Apea Korama who served Asare. It was she who had identified the culprit as someone in the town but had not been able to identify the individual. Kwadwo Boadu had charged Fr. 270 for his services, but had accepted Fr. 135 when the villagers claimed they could not raise the higher amount. Another section of the report is devoted to the case of Johannes Afram, an excluded Christian of Mpraeso. Schmid writes that this case shows the need for care in exploring the motivation of the indigenous Christians - as if investigation of their motivation is a normal part of his approach especially when they are in the catechumenate. The case seems to have been one where more careful investigation would have doubted his seriousness altogether, for he committed adultery with no less than three women, two of them comparatively young members of Ph. Kwabi's household, one already betrothed to a young Christian called Josef Apea. This all in spite of the fact that the husband of the first woman poisoned him and almost brought about his death. One point of possible anthropological interest is that after his serious illness Afram continued to have intimate

# Basel Mission Archives

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relations with the wife of his poisoner, in spite of the fact that he had been forbidden to do so by the chief end elders. Whereon the husband's mother swore an oath that Afram must have the woman (she hoped thereby to recover the money spent on the marriage), and when the husband tried to stop the loss of his wife by appealing to the elders to enforce their earlier decision, they said that the husband's mother's oath had overruled their intervention. The last section of the report concerns marriage problems. There is no marriagable Christian girl among the Kwahus; marriage with Christian Akwapim or Akim girls does not occur. In the past special permission has been given (according to Schmid Eisenschmid wrote that this came from the Basel Committee) for Christian boys to marry heathen girls. This is not a situation out of which one can hope for much. 'The girls have a ferocious self-will and a power of abuse like a two-edged sword,' and there is not much hope that the husbands would show self-denying love, patience, meekness, easy temper, and thus bring peace to the household. Boys who have been to the Boarding School have a low reputation among both heathens and Christians. A particular marriage history is given to illustrate some of the difficulties. Benjamin Gyesaw, an Asante, was baptised in 1880, having learned carpentry during the building of the station. In 1881 he set out to marry a very young girl, a daughter of the second chief in Mpraeso. Gyesaw alienated her from her earlier betrothed, repayed him what he had spent on plus 50% satisfaction fee, and dashed a sheep to the fetish Amoa in Nkwatia, which was necessary because the girl had been given Amoa. Problems began to arise when there was apparently no issue to the marriage. They plagued each other and began to live apart for periods - she with her parents in Mpraeso, he on trading expeditions. She began to suspect of relations with another woman in Agogo which he visited often. The conflict increased - to prove the unfoundedness of his wife's charges that it was because of him that there were no children he fathered a child on an Abetifi woman - or at least she claimed that it was his child, but a statement of hers to that effect was not to be trusted - she was known as 'Bird without a nest' to the people of Abetifi. Gyesaw was excluded - it then came to a battle between them in which both were wounded, and the wife returned to her parents in Mpraeso. The wife had for some time been a catechumen. When Schmid visited the family in Mpraeso he discovered to his consternation that Johnnes Afram was the proposed new husband, and he fears that all his urging of moral considerations may prove powerless before the argument of Afram's money

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