

Basel Mission Archives

"Ramseyer's Report for the Year 1889"

Title: "Ramseyer's Report for the Year 1889"

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Description: A happy year - the total of the community in Kwahu stands at 219. Abetifi - Personnel - the Weber family arrived in the course of the year. The 22 Abetifi Christians baptised in July included several older people, and several wives of previously baptised husbands. With the additional chapel attendance of the past year they have decided to extend the chapel by 18 feet. There have been some exclusions of younger Christians who would not be corrected, but on the whole, while many of the community need guidance, they are very lovable, and obedient. Their frequent attendance at services indicates their love for God and their anxiety to belong to him. On the whole there is little anxiety for schooling in Kwahu still - after 15 years of Basel Mission presence, though in this year schools have been started in all the outstations, and there are individuals among the heathen who do understand the potential worth of education and bring their children insisting that no-one should be allowed to take them away. Ramseyer has been stressing the usefulness of having someone in a village who can read and write letters. Outstations: Asakraka - Teacher Asiedu has been stationed there runs a small school, Sunday services, and has a few baptismal candidates whom Ramseyer feels needs to be more decided in their attitudes before he is content with them. Pepease - Teacher Jonas Martinson (transferred from Afwerase) with a school, and 3 baptismal candidates. They also hear that there are several more people in the town who have waited until an actual mission settlement is near the town, fearing the chief who, though friendly often, has also shown himself hostile to people who have become catechumens (It seems as if the Pepease catechumens had been staying in Abetifi until Martinson took them back to Pepease). Mpraeso - a few people baptised, one excluded for not paying church tax and not attending services regularly. A school has been held fairly regularly, including children from Atibie. A small chapel built, over which the Christians spent not inconsiderable time. One big problem is that the Christians are away -for weeks at a time - either on hunting trips, or some other business. Bepong gives them least satisfaction - only two Christians have settled on mission land, and Ramseyer found even someone of whom they had had a good opinion (Abraham Sintim) felt that the missionaries should give them presents of money from time to time. They plan to withdraw the resident teacher to Mpraeso, making Kwabi travelling preacher in Asante Akim. Nkwatia gives them most joy - though one member has had to be excluded for unruliness. Obo - the first two Christians were baptised at the end of 1889 -their catechumenate had been long drawn out because of the almost nomadic life that the Obo people lead (Ramseyer cites particularly their visits to the farms at the foot of the Kwahu scarp). Asante Akim was twice visited, and the Asante area as far as Konongo where the Juaben king received them in a friendly way. They also visited Agogo where they had a

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very large congregation. Finally Ramseyer reports events surrounding the death of Ayiripe (the Nkwatiahene) and the despatch of Bowi the priest of Atei Yaw to the coast under suspicion of having poisoned him. The news of Ayiripe's death came on 21st December. It was sudden, and Ayiripe himself spoke the fear that he had been poisoned. Bowi fell under suspicion - one of his own people said he had been sent to Crepe to get poison for Ayiripe, and Bowi had promised to make a great man of him. Ramseyer expresses his scepticism since the methods cited were all the traditional ones - hanging it on the roof, or burying it under the floors in the doorway, or painting Ayiripe's hand with it. Ramseyer's interpretation of the causes of the enmity between Bowl and Ayiripe was in terms of Bowi's influence in Kwahu having declined only since the mission settled in Abetifi, and Ayiripe's selling of land to the mission being both a major blow to Bowi's prestige and at the same time an unusual gesture of independence by the Nkwatiahene. Nevertheless Ayiripe still feared Bowi - it is said that after Ayiripe had sold land to the Mission he gave him two sheep and falling at his feet begged him to take these as atonement. As the crisis developed all the Kwahu chiefs hurried to Nkwatia, suspicion was strengthened because it was said that Bowi was prepared to pay a large fine to save his head (Ramseyer mentions the figure of £180). Ayiripe's party, however, were enraged (Ramseyer names the chief leader as one Asante) the occasion was very tense and there were several messengers sent to the station in Abetifi to ask the missionaries to give advice about what was to be done. In reply Kwabi and Boateng were sent once each with the message that the people should remember that they were under English law and it would be best to send the case down to the Coast. In the end Bowi was brought to Abetifi under the protection of the chief. A few days later a party of armed men from Nkwatis burst into Abetifi to try to kidnap Bowl - they found his hut surrounded by Bowi's men, also armed. The noise was terrific and the women of Abetifi were running onto their farms or onto the station with their possessions to get out of the way. To help the Abetifihene out of a difficult situation Ramseyer sent for the leader of the Nkwatia people who came willingly and assured him in a friendly way that they had come not to fight but to take Bowi off to the coast. He took the mission's advice to withdraw his people, but not to the coast, only to the water just outside Abetifi, where during the night they were joined by supporters from other Kwahu states, while in Abetifi the whole night was spent in dancing and shouting. When it had been agreed between the Abetifihene and Asante of Nkwatia how the convoy to the coast should be arranged, Bowi declared that he would rather blow himself up than go to the coast and there was great panic in the houses around the hut where he was as people tried to save themselves and their possessions. Eventually Bowi agreed to go on condition that a number of Christians accompanied as far as the Akim frontier. The missionaries, says Ramseyer, did not want to be mixed up in the event but for the sake of peace in the land they agreed, and Christians went as far as Nsutam with him. A few days later an officer with 40 Hausa arrived to investigate - he had been sent in response to a letter from the 'King' to the Governor (it isn't indicated which king - previously in the report the Abetifihene had been described tout court as the king).

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