

Basel Mission Archives

"Clerk's Report on a Journey in Buem"

Title: "Clerk's Report on a Journey in Buem"

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Description: The paths towards Buem had been cleaned following a visit by the English officer, Mr Williams. On that account in the Sohae villages no men were to be met. By juxtaposition Clerk implies that the problem with getting the teacher's house in Vakpo built was that a fetish priestess in the town had great influence which he exerted against the chief. Teacher Tenkorang was in open conflict with her. He bought the salt for his expedition in Anvoi. In one of the Bume villages their preaching was translated into Ewe by a Sierra Leonian who had lived there for 13 years. In that village they answered Clerks question as to whether they wanted to be Christians by saying that they would if the king recommended them to - to which the missionary party replied that they were calling them to serve a greater king; also that they knew very well that their king wanted them to stay heathen, and the mission party argued that that was so that he could extort money from them when he wanted to. In Wurupon the theme of their preaching was their disappointment that no-one had come forward onto the catechumenate. In many Nkonya villages there were few people because the village was busily collecting rubber. In the first Buem village (on the Konsu, not named), he was taken for an official of the colonial government, to the extent that he had difficulty not being made to pass judgement in a case. Clerk remarks that quite often educated Africans, who are fugitives from justice on the coast perhaps, masquerade as law officers. Recently in Akabu several Sierra Leonians stopped a man being put to the Ordeal, and fined the people £4 for making the attempt. Over Buem Clerk repeats the remark that the people are industrious farmers, just like farmers in Europe. In the Bowiri district (Amanfro with 200 inhabitants, Anyinase with 100 inhabitants, and Kyiriahi 80 inhabitants), Clerk was welcomed and the people not only asked for a teacher, but promised to supply him with a house, and after careful deliberations promised to send 10 boys to school. Clerk remarks that this is probably because of the influence of two Christians from this town, one Immanuel Akwa was now really based on Mamfe (where he had been baptised) but visited Bowiri frequently - the other was a Methodist baptised in Accra, but a 'quiet and earnest man'. From Bowiri he visited Odome (300 inhabitants) and Apafo (500 inhabitants). In the latter he seems to have taken the initiative in asking if they wanted a teacher (indeed he remarks in his account of his visit to Borada that this was his usual question on this journey) - the answer was fully in the affirmative (He says nothing about the iron working). The people's first reaction in Apafo was to ask for liquor and Clerk reports that liquor and gunpowder are very easy to obtain in the inland parts - they are brought in from Bagida, and cost less than they do in Accra. Also it seems that a messenger had come to Anum from Gyasekan-Kuma asking for a teacher, and there may have been separate messengers from Borada and Bowiri also. He visited the nearby villages of Atonko and Aka. In

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the latter was, a Christian who had been baptised in Akwapim and was remaining true to his belief, only waiting for the day when mission staff would settle among his own people. His wife, unfortunately, had relapsed into heathenism. The reception in Gyasekan-Kuma was less friendly, part of the trouble being a man who had been baptised in Akim, and, who was now lapsed, and talked about the financial exactions of the minion (Clerk was also making a point of Teaching people Christian hymns, which they seemed to appreciate). Clerk remarks that the slave trade is still carried on in Buem, describing a harrowing case involving the selling of a middle-aged woman from one 'husband' to another. Visiting Kugye Clerk discovered that the people remembered the names Adam and Jesu from an earlier preaching visit. In Worawora Clerk sensed that the invitation to the Mission to come to that town was not wholehearted, and that the people there are more given to fetish worship than in the other towns. Nevertheless many people are enthusiastic for their coming. There was a young man, who had attended a Methodist School in Cape Coast for a time and had since never worshipped a fetish. In Tribu-Boso food is dear to buy - partly on account of the relative unfruitfulness of the soil, partly because of the demands of the rubber carriers. Clerk gives the village the fetish priest who ruled over Pusupu and Bontebo as Obosomfookurom. He remarks that in many places in Obooso the chief and the fetish priest are one and the same person, and 'you can easily see in what lamentable circumstances the people must live'. The population in the Tribu country he estimates at 400. He puts the political geography of the area definitely and concisely - the capital of Tribu-Boso is Tetekple, and itself is under the priest-chief of Dadease 'in Adele'. However, he names another Obosomfookuram --in Adele, and with the alternative name Kpanko. In Kpelewu the chief is a female fetish priest. Konton he describes as an ex-robber and now a man of great girth, living at the foot of the hills beneath the German settlement at Adele. In Kpelewe they preached on the Fall, the preparation for salvation in the Old Testament, and completion of salvation in the New. Clerk's version of the priestesses reaction to their message was that she wanted them to stay for three days so that she could call together her elders and they could decide whether to accept this teaching or not (the paragraph is constructed in such a way that it is implied that the 'teaching' included doubts about the sanctity of the priestess and her fetish, as well as ethical questions concerned with the Odum ordeal, slavery, and the carrying of corpses). Clerk gives one town on the route from Dadease to Salaga - Korantae (2 hours from Dadease). In Nyamo they met two youths from Kakyenkye in Adele who were en route for Salaga - the two parties joined forces. On Salaga market Clark remarks that the wares produced in the interior are costly, while those brought in from the coast are cheap. In Pami the king and elders had not the slightest interest in their preaching. From Salaga they spent the night in Krupi. Kete he describes as a Mohammedan town. They met some Akropong people there, and lodged with them. In Tutunya he and the teacher interfered in a case following a death in which it was being said that the fetish had killed a man. They argued that if this were the case it should be taken before the English court, but Clerk in Buem took no steps to intervene in a situation where someone was going to be submitted to the poison ordeal. As an appendix is a list of the numbers one

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to ten in the three Buem languages spoken in Borada, Bowiri and Apafo. He also gives the name for 'God' in the three as respectively Atubruku, Odeto, Ba. The Kwahu-Dukomane he found spoke Twi. Tribu-Boso and Adele spoke the same language, which he thought was a separate language not akin to Guan.

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