

Basel Mission Archives

"Clerk's Quarter's Report"

Title: "Clerk's Quarter's Report"

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Description: The report is concerned with the Yam Festival in Anum. 10 varieties of yams are known, that favoured most by the Anum people is called Akoako, and the people plant 500-2,500 according to their means. He describes the cultivation and that there is an insect which the people consciously keep off the yams, since it damages them. The people allowed to eat yams before everyone else in Anum are the smiths. Clerk judges that this is because the people need the tools for their farming. The smiths' fetish is called Tschawe - you can usually see it hanging up in the smithy, and it consists of palm twigs, the local tortoise, limbs from offered animals, and so on. Tschawe eats yams on a Thursday, after they have been cooked and beaten up not to fufu, but finely enough to be sieved. Then oil is poured on, and the yam is sprinkled around the smithy, while Tschawe is thanked for having given new yams and they call him to eat some. Then all the tools are put into water, into which some holy leaves have been put. Then a sheep destined for this festival is slaughtered, and the blood poured into this water. The sheep is then cooked in the chief smith's house, where all the smiths gather to eat the new yams as a body. When the food is ready, they smear themselves with white earth as a sign of joy. Eight days later the smiths meet again, and the tools are bathed in the blood of a white hen, while the smiths themselves eat the hen cooked with new yams. Clerk notes that there is a sort of religious brotherhood of smiths. If one of them dies, no more work is done until they perform a certain ceremony together. In a lonely place called Anyaso they take a sheep, sacrifice it, and eat it. The bones are put into a new pot and buried - in this way they call the fetish to spare them a further death. Concerning the festivals which follow those of the smiths, Dodi celebrates its yam festival 8 days after the smiths. The fetish Abuko - he is the one who hates Twi - plays the leading role in it. Clerk notes that at the beginning of 1890 Dodi was burned down, inter al the Abuko house was burned down also. He became angry and has fled to Anum until the Dodi people come to fetch him back. The Boso people celebrate their festival about two weeks later, and then the priests and priestesses of Anum begin to celebrate their festival. This is especially the fest of the fetish Kpedsche, whose priestess is .the old, rich, and friendly Asieya. He is carried through the town in a great procession and with much noise - in earlier years there was wild dancing as well, but they do that no more. The gospel is not unknown to her also, for many messengers of truth have visited her. Clerk's invitation to her to attend one of their services have not succeeded, but she is friendly and has visited him three times. Several days after that is the festival of the fetishes Buwule and Mfodwo, who both have a priestess. After that are the festivals of Afram, Mante, Okpei, Sakum, and others, all with their appropriate time. The elders of the town can eat (new yams presumably), at any time'when they have got their sheep. Clerk adds that by

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elder he means a man who sits on a family stool. There are ten such in Anum, to several of which in earlier years human sacrifices were made. The king's yam festival is the greatest, and lasts two days - a Thursday and a Friday. Altogether 9 sheep are sacrificed. The first day is devoted to the drummers and the king's wives - each group gets a sheep, and so do the elders and the foreigners. Afterwards there is dancing on the streets. On the Friday the king's two stools are bathed and sprinkled with blood, the king sprinkles mashed yams on them, and eats some himself. When he has slaughtered a sheep and presented it to his people, then he eats new yams. In the afternoon there is dancing, the king himself dances at about 5 p.m., and sits with his people to drink palm wine.

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