

Basel Mission Archives

"Rösler's Report for the Year 1892"

Title: "Rösler's Report for the Year 1892"

Ref. number: D-01.57.VII..137

Date: Proper date: 14.02.1892

Description: There had been several dangerous illnesses among the European staff - Martin having repeated attacks of yellow fever and Mrs Rösler being dangerously ill after the birth of her first child. A new European missionary joined the station - Obrecht. Their work among the Kyerepongs and the Ewes is at a standstill. The latter he considers much more backward than the Twi people - the villages are dirtier, clothes are rarer, martial ethics less satisfactory. The adultery fee in Akwapim and Akim is £1 - among the Ewes 1s.3d. The women prefer not to have head-money paid in respect of them at marriage, so that they are free to leave their husbands if they wish. They have had a case in the Kpalime community in which a father wanted his son-in-law to help him over his debts - which the son-in-law was willing to do, but the daughter objected, making it quite clear that she did not wish to be tied, to her husband in this way since she intended to go and live with someone else, and indeed has done this in spite of all warnings and advice on the part of the catechist. The Ewes are more bigotted fetish servers, and still keep up the custom that even if a man is killed accidentally, the killer's house and farm are destroyed by the injured family and the man and his family is forced to flee the town for some time. Rösler offers a case of the latter at Vakpo, where the chief himself had been turned out of the best house in the town, because a son of the owner had accidentally shot someone during a funeral custom. The chiefs' in the Ewe areas are usually poor, having to work for themselves, and in fact chiefs are in name only - their subjects do what they like. They frequently pester the catechists etc. with their begging. In Nwumuru two of the people baptised in the preceding year have had to be excluded. The characteristic answer to pressing questions is - when a teacher is living in the town then people will respond to the Christian message. And if a teacher is sent, it is then found that the response is indeed small - with efforts he can perhaps gather 6 scholars. People want to hold out for the gift of school material and clothes, and even money from the mission for food for scholars. The political situation has been somewhat better in the course of the year. For several months there has been a joint English-German boundary commission at work. Rösler says neither side are satisfied, especially the Germans. He heard from Graf von Pfeil that he wanted to make the boundary the Volta right down to the coast. The German complaint is that the English have got hold of the two major trading ports, Ada and Keta, without which the possession of the interior is not of much value. They are trying to divert trade to Lome, but with little success since it involves such a lot more travelling. The Peki king meanwhile continues to involve himself in the affairs of his old territories in the German Protectorate. Rösler also heard on a recent journey that the Germans have taken more active measures against the slave trade, and deported a leading slaver to Lome. The Bremen missionaries have been sent a form taking them

Basel Mission Archives

to state what they know of the slave trade. Measures have also been taken against murders in Nkonya - several of the murderers have been transported to Lome. The total income from all types of offerings in the district was £56=6=5. Nevertheless it was a hard year for the community, who have suffered the twin catastrophes of drought and swarms of locusts. The former was so bad (it was the second drought year running) that the yams and plantains failed and people were driven to eating wild stock yams, or else buying food brought in from other areas. The locusts in the few days before writing the report had been passing Anum in swarms almost every day - he describes them as 6cm long, copper-red in colour, with grey wings. In Anum two adult men were baptised - one of them a fetish priest who had been a catechumen for two years, but had been held back because of his instability. 6 were excluded one on account of his cruel treatment of his heathen wife. There has been a deadlock over the choice of a new presbyter - the missionaries' candidate was refused, primarily by the younger members, and their candidate was unacceptable to the missionaries on account of his illiteracy, his rare attendance at services, his heathen wife and children and his leadership of the younger people whenever there were protests afoot. Sunday morning services are well attended, but not morning and evening prayers. Marriage palavers in the community had been fewer. At the beginning of the year in Anum a combination of circumstances had led to threats of physical violence being levelled against the community by the people of Anum. The latter were partly inspired by the drought and partly by the influenza epidemic to look for the cause of the displeasure of the fetishes - and there was a new king who wanted to exert his authority over the Christians. The thing complained about was the Christians' possession of dogs and cotton clothes. Martin who was alone at the station at the time complained to the D.C. who arrived some days later, ruled that the Christians might keep their dogs and took away the ringleader of the riot. In Boso, the only increase came from the birth of children to Christians. Rösler is clearly puzzled by this, since street preaching is attended attentively by so many people. He thinks many heathen may be waiting until the effort of building a chapel is over before joining the community. He is also not happy about the community - they are building a chapel to get themselves a good reputation among the other communities, and there is far too much friendship between Christian and heathen and indeed between Christians and the chief who is a cunning, man and knows that while this continues he has little to worry about. Kpalime has seen the exclusion of 4 adults and now stands at 5 adults and 44 children. They are troubled by uncompleted buildings -- both houses and a chapel. The presbyter needs more decisiveness and energy. Tsate makes a good impression and the community numbers 54 against a population in the decrepit heathen village of c100. Vakpo, very little progress - the few adults baptised during the year in fact are from Amfoe. There is a small school. For two years they have been trying to buy the land on which the catechist's house stands - and they still have not succeeded, the excuse given for the delay by the townspeople being that the land belongs to three different people who cannot agree on the price. The only Christian of Amfoe has gone to Boso to learn carpentry. In Kpando they have had much trouble through a disconsolate catechist,

Basel Mission Archives

workers on his house who want to get as much money for wages as they can, and the townspeople who have not only not given the help they promised in the building of the house, but also insist on renting the land and not selling it. There are boys in the school, but these are mostly trader's sons, sent to learn English. 3 Kpando people have been baptised - one is one of the richest and most important people in the town, another is his wife. He is a trader too. Rösler fears he may have slaves. He thinks that Osman Kadi, the chief of the Kpando Mohammedans, exerts a cruel authority not only over his family and slaves, but also over the whole Mohammedan community, and is one of the central figures the slave trade in the district.

- Subject:** [Archives catalogue]: Guides / Finding aids: Archives: D - Ghana: D-01 - Incoming correspondence from Ghana up to the outbreak of the First World War: D-01.57 - Ghana 1892: D-01.57.VII. - Anum
- Type:** Text
- Ordering:** Please contact us by email info@bmarchives.org
- Contact details:** Basel Mission Archives/ mission 21, Missionstrasse 21, 4003 Basel, tel. (+41 61 260 2232), fax: (+41 61 260 2268), info@bmarchives.org
- Rights:** All the images (photographic and non- photographic) made available in this collection are the property of the Basel Mission / mission 21. The Basel Mission claims copyright on the images in their possession and requires those - both individuals and organisations - publishing any of the images, to pay a users fee.