

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Haasis to Basel"

**Title:** "Haasis to Basel"

**Ref. number:** D-01.59.VI..133

**Date:** Proper date: 19.09.1893

**Description:** A report of a journey to Asante Akim during the Long Vacation 1893. In 1891/1892 Asante Akim was severely threatened by Yaw Sepong - at one time Bompata was full of armed Asantes. Catechist Boateng played a major role in maintaining the peace, and won a great deal of popularity in Asante Akim as a result - indeed he has told Haasis that the Asantehene himself has let him know that he would like to meet him. Catechist Boateng's house is much looked at by Bompata people and travellers from Asante alike. Boateng's house was soon filled with people come to welcome Haasis and he was told by people how happy they were to have someone in the town preaching the Word of God, they all want to learn it because it is 'sweet' and true. They all wanted to be Christians. One of them said it was much to be regretted that Africans knew nothing other than eating and doing wicked things. They thanked for coming to help them. Haasis' response was that they were right to regret that they were all slaves of sin; sin was the greatest power in the land, much more powerful than the Asantehene. On account of that, preaching in Asante is like pouring water on a stone - you are constantly doing it to no effect. Why do so few people become Christians when you all say you want to know better? Their reply was that they did not know better, they were children, and you must have patience with children. Haasis writes that he was at first distrustful of this kind of talk, but learned from Boateng that street preaching was well attended and carefully listened to, and that many had lost any sort of faith in the religion of the fetishes. He cites a recent case when a fetish priest was hooted off the streets when he tried to dance before the people at a festival. (Haasis went to meet the fetish priest involved, was previously acquainted with him, and judged that he was a fetish-priest to earn his living rather than out of conviction). But disbelief in fetishes does not mean acceptance of Christianity. Such people in Bompata are friendly disposed to the Christians, attend street preaching now and then, but are repelled by the sexual ethics of Christianity. Nevertheless there are 8 youths on the station as catechumens, and a family with three children including a grown-up daughter. (Haasis describes the long hours worked by the father of this family in setting his house up on the station). It has become the habit for people to settle on the station as soon as they announce themselves as catechumens. The youths live in one of the rooms of the catechists' house. 5 of them were presented by Boateng as ready for baptism, and Haasis baptised them after his further tour around Asante Akim. The father of the family declared that he had become a Christian to serve the living God, and to get peace for his soul. Haasis writes that he overheard a group of people saying in all innocence of his being within earshot (the group was in a separate building from him) that travelling through such weather showed that the Europeans really did love them. The next day almost the whole morning was spent in receiving visits -

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including one from Nsuta Asantes who were just then passing the town, who said there were many people in their homeland who wanted to hear the Word of God, but the problem was the Asantehene they said 'Who will help us if the Europeans do not?' and professed to be in fear of severe punishment if they spoke their request too loudly. (Haasis adds as a piece of information to the judgement of the current situation in Asante that many young men of military age are journeying into the English Protectorate in order to avoid going north in the war against Nkoranza. They say they are tired of the eternal wars, and want peace like their brothers have it). Visiting in the town in the afternoon Boateng introduced Haasis to a middle aged man who said he wanted to become a Christian but could not just now (Haasis judged that the trouble was the attitude of his relatives) (in a marginal note he writes that the man has since his visit registered as a catechumen and moved to live on the station). They were also called back by an old woman who said that Haasis had slept in her house on a previous visit. He reckoned she must be confusing him and Ramseyer. She invited them in and complained about her aches and pains, to which Haasis' response was to offer a cure for the ills of her soul. She complained that she was too old to learn anything new, and Haasis comments that the fact of salvation is not something people learn quickly. Haasis and Hanson visited Patriensa where the situation seems to be that as soon as there is mission land on which they can safely settle many people will become Christians. Assistant Catechist Boamma is having trouble with his wife who will not keep the peace and has a tongue like a sword. The chief of the town is not openly hostile. They also visited Yaw Spong who said that if they had come to preach to his people they could preach as much as they liked. He also preached in Obimma, Kekebiase, Domeabra, Dwiransa, Kurofa and Adomfe. And travelled back to Abetifi via Dampong and Ntawadua.

- 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-01.59 - Ghana 1893: D-01.59.VI. - Abetifi
- Type:** Text
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