Basel Mission Archives

"Rösler's Comment"

Title: "Rösler's Comment"

Ref. number: D-01.58.I..70

Date: Proper date: 28.05.1893

Description: The slave trade south from Salaga is almost exclusively in children of the ages 7-12 years, and while there appears to be slave holding in Buem according to Clerk, in Nkonya and the strech of land southwards to Anum there are few because people are too poor to buy them (he excludes from this judgement the population in Kpandu). Therefore there are more slaves in the British protectorate than in the area immediately to the north, brought especially by the Ada traders. The evil lies in the transport (he includes Accra and Ada people among those actually moving the slaves around) once with a master they are taken into the family, often marry a daughter or relative of the masters, and the children are regarded as free. Many of the children at the schools in Vakpo, Kpando and Worawora are in fact children one of whose parents was a slave - there has recently been a case of a father withdrawing the child he had by a free woman because of the mother's protests and sending instead a child he had by a slave woman. He has been enquiring into cases where slaves have indeed fled from their masters and taken refuge with the Christians. He has known none come to Anum since he first went there, and the mission agents know of only single cases where slaves have come to them for protection. Usually these prove on examination to be connected with some misdeed of the slave. Since the mission agents have over and over again given such slaves back to their masters is perhaps one reason why more cases of this kind do not occur. Catechist Okanta in Kpando has recently had a case of a woman slave coming to him and begging for help because her daughter was about to be sold to Keta. As for cases of slaves coming south in flight to British or German Protected territories - Rösler has heard of none in his enquiries. They mostly try to return to their homeland, and he suspects try to avoid going into another area with foreign people and a strange language. He believes that many are caught in the neighbourhood of Krakye and returned to their masters for a fee. Another common mode of escape is to take the opportunity offered by a journey to the coast with a load; at the coast such people often meet their own countrymen and join them. Some return with so-called certificates of freedom, and settle where they want. Over the utility of a free-slave colony in Buem, Rösler writes that according to exact information the situation of slaves among the Twi peoples is more rigorously hemmed in than among the Ewes. And would not slaves feel the rules of a mission run colony a new sort of slavery? Their idea of freedom is quite different from ours. Furthermore an industrious slave, according to the mission employees Rösler consulted, is unlikely to run away from his master, because he will be well treated and allowed a lot of freedom - indeed some slaves themselves own slaves. The idle ones would still be idle in the Colony (Rösler offers as an example of the problems this entails a youth who had been bought free by a teacher at the age of 7, and even though he lived in

Basel Mission Archives

the Anum mission house had such a strong streak of refractoriness in him that now he is no longer a scholar he has had to be sent away). Another problem with the whole scheme is that the people who would be most hurt by the scheme - the chiefs and rich men - are the very people who have to be approached when the mission wishes to settle in a new place. There might be something to be said for taking this step when the Emancipation has been proclaimed, and many foreigners are looking around for some new home. In discussing the impracticability of getting co-operation from indigenous rulers for the project, Rösler puts first the weakness of the rulers in the Volta region. (In his first paragraph Rösler says he did a special tour of his outstations in order to be advised on this question, though there is no evidence he got further north than Kpandu.)

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-01.58 - Ghana 1893: D-01.58.I. - General District Conference for the Gold Coast

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.