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"Perregaux' Report for the First Quarter 1894"

Title: "Perregaux' Report for the First Quarter 1894"

Ref. number: D-01.61.VI..132

Date: Proper date: 10.05.1894

Description: Report of a journey to Nkoranza. It is printed almost completely in Heidenbote 1894, pp85ff. An expedition of Perregaux, Catechist Atiemo, 2 of Perregaux' servants, 4 hammock carriers, and 3 box carriers. On the journey to Atebubu they eat their own rice, and game which they shot themselves. In the Afram Plains they met inhabitants only at the hamlet of Asunyansu apparently, until they reached Nkaneku. The latter is a hunters' settlement - in the past they have had to suffer much from Dente, who has claimed one tenth of their kill and was especially interested in elephant tusks. They had put themselves under English protection, but Perregaux warned them to seek a better eternal protector. From Nkaneku they apparently saw no settlements until the second day, when they began to come across villages of flat-roofed houses. These last were poor villages, what with the war with Asante, the greed of the Dente priest, the English expedition and the small-pox. Their message was well received. In Kofidente he met a party of Mohammedans who spoke neither English nor Twi, but came to him to greet him and showed him a paper which gave them the right to trade in Kofidente. Atebubu - approximately 1000 inhabitants. He judges that the inhabitants spend most of their time in the plantation villages (he found the town empty on first arrival). The chief said he would be pleased to have a teacher but would have to ask the Governor first since Perregaux was not English (They were puzzled by the fact that he was neither English nor German.) There are comparatively few villages around Atebubu - Perregaux argues that less would be heard of the place were it not for the fact that the great market at Nsoriku, to which merchants come from all parts of the Gold Coast were not nearby. (He contrasts the business of Nsoriku with the idleness shown by the population of Atebubu). Nsoriku is three times the size of Atebubu, a real Mohammedan town. He lists as having seen on sale foodstuffs: yams, plantains, peppers, cassava - these all were in much demand since it was the hungry season, salt, fish, beads, wood, kola nuts, flesh, cloth from the interior, carpets, baskets, straw mats, sandals, straw hats, weapons, skins, live cattle (sheep, cows, oxen, horses mules and asses). He saw no slaves, writes that this is thanks to the English expedition during whose presence many slaves got their liberty, though he also writes that he heard that a slave-merchant had halted some distance outside Atebubu when he heard of Perregaux' presence, in order to come to the market only when the white man had gone away again. The chief sits the whole day in the market accepting the greetings of his subjects, praying over them and their trade, giving judgement over the different conflicts brought before him. He had a numerous bodyguards sitting cross-legged around him. Perregaux avoided being embraced on the grounds that the man was a slave trader; on one visit he found him in the evening, almost dead drunk. 'One really should not wonder that Mohammedanism is making

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such rapid progress in Africa. You cannot talk at all of a serious conversion to Mohammedanism among the Africans - when one of them puts on a Batakari and announces that he is a Mohammedan he often does this with no conviction or faith, only perhaps doing this out of fear of his master. At bottom, he has only added a new fetish to the old, and replaced one set of amulets by another. He learns a few formulae which he does not understand, and believes thus to be protected from injury. A true Mohammedan treats such people with suspicion, and will never treat them as his true co-religionists.' He advises that Ateobu would be no place for a European missionary settlement - it is 12-13 days' journey from the coast, which would make it over-expensive, and in addition the population there is too small. On the other hand two local agents would be able to do a useful job in at least reducing the slave trade. They could keep the government informed of what was afoot via the missionaries in Abetifi. A slave home could only be maintained with difficulty, and under the support of the English government. Leaving Ateobu he found the whole Nkoranza district in ruins, the minority of the old population remaining in deep need, some without even cloth for clothes. In Nkoranza town everything has been razed to the ground, even the Dente shrine. Perregaux' account of the issue leading to the war is that the Nkoranzas refused the yearly tribute of 30 girls and 30 young men. Perregaux' number for the prisoners taken to Kumasi is 600, though he is obviously guessing and reports that some people said 6000. The Nkoranzahene on the other hand claimed to have had 22,000 soldiers, and to have ruled over a wide area reaching even to the Volta, where he had villages (Perregaux remarks that he heard the latter point from several people). Perregaux recommends this as a mission centre, though advises caution until the political situation is clearer - he clearly feels the English policies in regard to Kumasi a display of weakness hard to justify. On advantage of Nkoranza he claims is that it is nearer the coast than Ateobu - only 9-10-days to Saltpond with no question of passing through uninhabited areas. The Nkoranzahene at first would not hear of them returning via Mampong, though was persuaded by Perregaux' arguments that they had no stores for the route through the Afram plains, furthermore in themselves they had nothing to fear from the Asantes. It was in the middle of the afternoon of the second day that they arrived in the first Asante village. The Nkoranzas they saw along the route were overjoyed at the idea of the route to the coast possibly getting re-opened - for four years, they had been able to get no salt. Travelling through Asante he was under considerable pressure in Asekyiedomase and Mampong to go to Kumasi, which Perregaux refused to do knowing that they had no means of forcing him to. In Mampong he later discovered that a carrier of his had sworn fetish that he was a missionary and no English officer. In Asekyisdomase there had been real danger of violence breaking out on account of Atiemo's denying that anyone had accompanied them on their journey to show them the way, his object being the protection of the three Nkoranzas who had shown them the way. The local people knew this was not the truth and feared that in some way his presence was connected with a coming Nkoranza attack. Right through the Mampong country Perregaux reports destruction following Mampong's bid for independence four years before (he reports some Mampongs in Ateobu,

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others with their former chief in Amanten) though numbers in their homeland increasing. In Kumawu there was great commotion because the chief was suspected of having sent messengers secretly to Kumasi restoring Kumawu's subjection to Kumasi - the elders and young men being against this development. In Odumase there was trouble because the local chief would not allow anyone to become a Christian, and even in Bompata the heathen are worried about the scale of the response to Christianity. Included in the report is the statement that he too offers a summary of the whole of salvation history in his preaching in villages where the gospel has not been heard before - and he claims that the sacrificial aspect of Christian doctrine is quickly understood.

- 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-01.61 - Ghana 1894: D-01.61.VI. - Abetifi
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