

Basel Mission Archives

"Martin's Report on the Situation vis-à-vis Schools in the Anum District"

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Description: At a preaching in Amfoi he had discovered considerable support for the restoration of the school, and a form of words which seems to have implied that the elders were quite aware of the special role of the teacher in relation to the children, and furthermore accepted this as the way Christianity would enter their town (i.e. they accepted the content of the Christian message, but could not understand why the teacher had been taken away since there were so many children in their town). Part of the support for the teacher had come from an elder who had in fact sent two sons with the previous teacher when he was posted back to Akwapim - they were now in Class V in Late. The report is partly about problems and policy. It is known informally in the Volta Region and formally in Akropong that the Colonial Government in Togo wants the Basel Mission schools in its territory to teach German. Also it asks for financial support for the senior Volta Region pupils in Anum and Akropong - there were several who had either begun or were within two years of beginning the Middle School course. The latter include four from Vakpo, the most gifted of whom were a son and a nephew of a convert, the nephew being the son of the chief, and four from Ntwumuru. As a background to its suggestions, however, it offers a picture of the position of schools especially in the stations around Anum and between the Abo and the Konsu. The children, Martin writes, like children in Europe do not like the loss of freedom involved in going to school. But providing there is a teacher who understands them and loves them they soon get keen on school (He gives the impression that the stick is used rarely). Their parents, however, and their maternal uncles, have aims in sending their children to school which differ from those of the missionaries. The main hope is that in 2 of 3 years they will have learned one or two of the high status languages their parents want them to learn - Twi and English. Martin offers several examples of the value placed on the former. There is a boy from Dsake at the Kpalime School who does not go to the Bremen Schools as he should because his parents want him to learn Twi - this is the root of the wish of the people at Abo from to be linked to the Basel Mission (via Tsate), and was behind the recent request from Sirikpo for a teacher (In this connection he complains that none of the mission agents have learned Ewe - even Hall, whom he regards as an excellent preacher and popular, uses an interpreter in the Ewe areas). One factor making for difficulty in the schools is that uncles are unwilling to see their nephews, who should make custom for them after their death and thus help to ensure them a proper status in the after-life, moving into the Christian community. Also he cites two cases of people who were rich enough not to worry whether their children went to school at all - one of them the richest man in Anum, who indulges in a lot of conspicuous hospitality to display his wealth. The Anum School has its own coffee plantations, and the boys have also cleared an area for a maize farm.

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