

Basel Mission Archives

"Clerk to Basel"

Title: "Clerk to Basel"

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Description: A report on a journey into Oboso and Krakye undertaken from 5th Feb to 6th March 1895. First night Kagyebi. Second, at Ahamasu, having passed through the ruins of Kwahu Dukoman villages. The Ahamasu chief was called Okra Kwame. He was greatly anxious at Clerk's appearance, having on his conscience an ordeal which had lately been inflicted on someone in Buem through his instrumentality. Clerk describes the village as having 15 huts, being ugly, but peopled by farmers and hunters who have enough to sell to travellers. The chief does nothing but sit in the village taking a toll from the strangers who pass through on the rubber trade. In response to Clerk's presence he promised no more to practice the Odum Ordeal, and offered him a son for schooling whom Clerk refused on the grounds that he was too old - he would wait two years for the next son, Third night after a five hour march through forest with plenty of game, Mpampawe, 15 round huts. His preaching and protest against the Ordeal was well received - indeed part of the people were willing to allow him to burn the bag containing the poison straight away. They promised him a schoolboy on his return journey. Fourth night after a seven hour march through Savanna spent in Brewaniase. This village has grown to approximately 80 huts following on several villages migrating here, plus people from Tagyang. The people were called out onto the streets preaching after the chief himself had gone round telling them that he would punish those who did not attend. The sermon was translated word for word into the Adele language. The chief afterwards said that he had no objection but that he was not independent, being under Kpelen and Tutukple, also since he had accepted the German flag he wished to do what the Europeans approved. Fifth day, after two hours march onto the Akebu hills, grass covered though with small woods in the valleys in which the rubber trees can be found. After 6 hours he reached Yanya which consisted of 3 poor huts, the only inhabitants that day being a sick man with two wives. One hour further away was Twifomari, a new village of 15 huts, friendly inhabitants but hardly anyone who spoke Twi. Sixth day after two hours they reached Yege and Bismarckburg. In the latter they received a friendly welcome from S. Amason. Seventh day, visited Kasenkye in the vicinity of Bismarckburg. The chief and elders were dead drunk. The town is one of the largest in Adele - when Clerk rang his bell for preaching he assembled 150 people, and afterwards the chief remarked that it was a good word but that he could not give an answer without consulting the fetish-wife in Kpelen. In this whole period Clerk had much difficulty finding anything out about the Adele language. He had apparently been asked to do some work in this field by Christaller, and remarks that no German official knows the language and that he could not find anyone who spoke both it and Twi. Clerk seems to have spent several days in Bismarckburg and the surrounding area. He paid visits to Timurumu (30 huts), Odome (25 huts) Nkwankura (35

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huts). He enjoyed a warm welcome from the German official von Doering. He also entered into discussions as to the possibility of setting up a mission agent in the area with the local people. In Kpelen (60 huts) he was recognised from his previous visit, and received in a friendly way by the fetish-wife. She and her elders requested time to ask advice of the fetish priest of Dadease (the successor of the deceased Yapora). The reply was that they had been visited by the German officials and asked to give up their children (Clerk interpolates, presumably as servants), and they had given up the Ordeal. They did not want the mission on account of their worship of the fetishes. Clerk continued to press for children for the school, and eventually (dealing it seems mostly with chief Agba of Yege) was given two such. Towards the end of his stay Clerk was treated with considerable enmity at least by an individual during his public preaching. One problem was that Clerk was advised on all sides to give up his plan to leave the Bismarckburg vicinity in the direction of Anyanga and Foso. He could get no guide and interpreter, people said there were not Twi-speaking villages in that direction furthermore the king of Tagyang was an enemy of the white man and would probably treat Clerk as a spy. Actually at the time there was upheaval in the Tagyang area, and the roads through Atwati were closed. The king of Tagyang had sent 60 riders to the battlefield. He left Bismarckburg on February 19th, travelling via Kasenkyi and Koi to the first Atwati village Tsirana, a place of 110 huts. The chief there would allow them no peace until Clerk had preached. Next day they arrived in the capital of Atwati, Slate, composed of 90 huts, lying on a steep hill slope. The priest-chief was called Koranteng. After his preaching Koranteng told him that they served the fetish .Buruku, their town was surrounded on all sides by hills, like strong walls. They did not want to serve any God. Clerk replied that no-one would force him or his people to worship God, but would they like to have a mission agent resident in the area? Koranteng replied that once the Asantes sent ambassadors saying that they wanted to and two men here to live, one in Siare and the other in Adele. The Adele people allowed this to happen, but our ancestors gave the answer that they were not corn to need someone to look after them. What their ancestors had not allowed, they would not allow. Clerk then spent several days in Adome, an Atwati village of 60-70 huts. From there he visited the other Atwati villages (in spite of the reluctance of Koranteng and his elders that he should do so) namely Okwawu with 40 huts, Keri with 120 huts, Goklong with 130 huts, Aberewanko with 140 huts, Nyamo with 180 huts. During this period a message came from Agba of Yege asking that the two boys should be sent back temporarily since a fetish priest had declared that a recent heavy rain was the result of the spirit of the dead of Kontong who wanted them to perform a final custom for him before leaving. (Kontong was Agbe's predecessor). 25th February-2nd March - travelled through Korantae (Adele) (30 huts), Odumase (30-40 huts) Ketsiebi (60-70 huts), Tutukple (130 huts) to Krakye. His general impressions of Adele and Atwati: He is surprised at the meagre population - Adele and Tribu (2 Areas) together must number at most 3000. Atwati would number approximately the same. The responsibility for this lies with the ordeal - while he was in Atwati a woman died of it, and you frequently meet people travelling from village to village with the bag of poison, which they

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reverence as a god. The Asantes are not responsible for the depopulation, since out of fear of the local fetishes they did not wage war in this region. The people are heavily tattooed. From Dadease to Tutukple-they speak Twi but around Bismarckburg and Kpelen, and in Atwati, they speak very little Twi. He was not invited to introduce a mission agent, but since the chiefs are also the fetish priests this is not surprising - his interpreters always stumbled over the phrase in his preaching 'There is no fetish'. It is a healthy area, lying high up, and therefore it is neither necessary to find a hill for a mission-station, nor to build two storey mission houses. The goitre swellings which you see on the necks of local people are an indication of the height of the country. There-fore there is much to be said for the founding of a station - Clerk advises Adele (from which you can visit Anyanga and Foso, where the language - in the former at least - is Guang related to the language of Atwate).

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