

Basel Mission Archives

"Year's Report for the Anum District in 1896, written by Missionary Martin"

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Description: Part of this report is printed as an annex to the 1897 Annual Report p 62ff. Additional material: In the course of the year Adele (Mischlich) Borada (Jak. Agyei), Botoku (Corn. Otu), Evhudidi (Cat. Ohene-Asa) were newly settled by mission agents. Sam Adae the teacher in Ntwumuru had to be excluded. Among the missionaries, Rösler and family returned to Europe for reasons of health, and Lochmann was transferred to Anum from Nsaba to replace him. Martin writes of his increasing satisfaction in his work - of his increased understanding of the people, and conversely of the thankfulness of people in villages where missionaries had not before spoken. As evidence of this he offers a visit to the Voltaside village of Tsifatsi in April where, before his preaching foodstuffs were offered at 5 times the proper price, and after the people had acknowledged that he was not one of the evil white men, the chief pressed him very strongly to stay with them and preach, and he had large quantities of provisions given to him. He reports that in another Volta-side village, Tsheme, he usually lodges with a man who told him that the only thing wrong with his preaching was his opposition to polygamy - instancing himself, who loved his first and childless wife, and had married two more wives in order to have children. This man's welcome to the bulk of his preaching is echoed by the rest of the village. The Atavronus (Beme and Gyeme, the latter he describes as very beautiful) also receive him with welcome, and press continually for a teacher. There are already a few Christians in the area. On the west bank of the Volta at Nkami and Akramang the people are very attentive, and there is one Christian who attends services at Kpando each week. The area is characterised by the large number of lepers. They are not socially ostracised, and on his last visit Martin was entertained by a leper's pair - mother and daughter. Preaching has its easiest entry in the Kpando area, however, partly because people are tired of the exactions and deceits of the fetish priests (Martin offers in outline one case of a convert talking on these lines in Tesi). On the other hand in Anfoe and Vakpo mission work makes little progress. In Gblonko he feels the power of heathenism is still unchecked - the people there are as wild, as the leopards they hunt. Bume and Sohai provide exceptions to this general picture. So does Okyerefo. Conscientious preaching journeys are having their impact (he gives Mischlich's figure as 116 days, and his own and Lochmann's as 159 days) - they are no longer strangers, but are in many places greeted as acquaintances of long standing. Children no longer run out of the village. 2 Christians were excluded during the course of the year. A major problem is liquor - over the past few years many farmers have taken to farming on the banks of the Volta, partly because of the lack of rain and the visitations of the locusts, partly because the Ada traders provide them with a good market. But this is the entry for liquor and more and more he is troubled by the problem of what is to happen to excluded Christians. Some

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become more anti-Christian than the heathen - and he had recently treated the child of an ex-presbyter who came to him hung with amulets. He has tried to ensure that no schoolboys are baptised - it is far better that they should wait until after their marriage. Early baptism often leads to fall. In this particular year the first rainy season had almost failed, and the locusts were a serious problem. Since then, however, there have been excellent second rains, and the locusts came only when the corn was ripe, and thus could not affect the harvest. One event he reports concerning Anum is the long stay of the English D.C. Eyres. He stayed on the station, though it is evident Martin hoped to keep him at arm's length. He had a load of whisky and a load of wine with him. Anum experienced an increase of 36 during the year although there were 7 exclusions. Most of the increase was through the baptism of married couples and their children. The small community at Toseng is near the completion of their teacher's house - the sawing has been done, and 5000-6000 shingles prepared. In Boso the new and roomy chapel has been completed. The collection at the consecration not only covered the existing debts, but also went a long way to pay for a harmonium. Martin regards the congregation there as a problem, however, - the men do not stay at home with wife and children but chat under the shade trees till late at night. As a result they sleep in church- he has called out the sleepers' names in his sermon before now. Also the women are very unpunctual at services. They are self-righteous. Although Kpalime and To taken together are places where many people have been baptised, they are equally with large numbers of excluded Christians. Perhaps this is because quite a lot of them have chosen to live in To rather than in the community of Kpalime. Most of the active Christians are old and frail people. Recently a fetish priest of bad reputation has been baptised with his two sons. His baptism was twice put off, firstly because he seemed to feel it was an honour for the church to baptise such an important fetish priest, secondly because he told Martin he believed that the fetish lived, but that Christ was stronger. Eventually he accepted that the fetish was the work of the devil, and pled that as he was an old man, likely to die any day, and therefore doomed to be given to the devil, they should baptise him. Martin agreed - he writes that he knew little, but wanting to be delivered from his sins, death, and the devil was enough - and in any case he had resisted the reactions of the townspeople to his baptism. He has developed a new route towards the hinterland taking in Tsatei, where the congregation needs frequent visits, and then proceeding along the Abo through the Tsatei and Abofrom farms. This is a shadier way than the old way, and on it he has many opportunities to talk to both Christians and heathens alike.

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Contact details: Basel Mission Archives/ mission 21, Missionstrasse 21, 4003 Basel, tel. (+41 61 260 2232), fax: (+41 61 260 2268), info@bmarchives.org

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