

Basel Mission Archives

"Christaller's Report for the Third Quarter 1866"

Title: "Christaller's Report for the Third Quarter 1866"

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Description: Continues with his review of the legal situation in Akim, and legal proceedings. His hope of a British Resident cannot be realised - the British have neither the interest nor the capacity time nor means to act in such a way. This, however, creates a serious situation for the traditional states - the Colonial law has taken the power of life and death out of the hands of the chiefs, but there is no harmonising of the two legal systems and the problems which result from this measure. This can only bring the traditional law into disrepute and damage the actual conduct of private and public affairs. One case in Kibi in which this problem arose concerned a slave Ofori, whom Ata had sent to claim for him the hand of a certain beautiful girl in marriage. Ofori had done this - but then had intimate relations with the girl himself. The missionaries were called to the Ahenfie when this case was being tried, and heard Ofori's open admission of guilt. Ata then asked their opinion (it turned out that certain elders had asked him to do this) on his sentence which was that since he could no longer behead Ofori he must go away and shoot himself. The missionaries advised that this would be contrary to the English law, and after stormy scene in which Ata shouted that he would never have them advise him in legal proceedings again, they made their point on the grounds that Asase (at that time in Cape Coast) could only be strengthened by Ata falling into disgrace by carrying out this sentence. The other case he discusses is that of Asase and his brother Ado. Over a period of 20 years Asase had been recognised as the heir to Ata I by the Okyenhene and his elders. When however Ata I died, poisoned by crocodile gall taken because he had leprosy, Asase was passed over due, to his too great youth, and his bad character, and his twin brother Ata II made chief. He had already once tried to establish himself as the Okyenhene in 1843, having himself declared in Apedwa while Ata I was at the coast. After that he went to the coast, and was a soldier first with the Danes, and then with the English (Crossed out is the sentence that he had been for a short time a worker under Mohr in the building at Akropong). He would have travelled to Europe itself from Cape Coast if he had not lacked the money. After the death of Ata I he returned to Akim, and the present king received him with honour as his closest male relative, and sent an ambassador from himself with him as he toured Akira making presents to the chiefs. His wicked character showed itself even at this time, for an under-chief of good reputation, whose present to him was not of satisfactory quality. He drove out of his village into the bush, whereby the underchief almost lost an eye. Over the last couple of years he has been extorting money from peoples, not paying the slightest heed to accusations and summonses, went to Nsaba, the chief town of Fante Agana and fell out with the chief there on account of Asase's lack of gratitude and shamelessness, after which he moved to the Akim town of Asiaman. There he extorted 300 dollars from some Kotoku

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people on the grounds that the Governor had authorised him to fine them because they were carrying on trade with Asante at Awurahae on the Volta, captured and sold Akim people, gave out that he was the king of Akim, mishandled Ata's messenger, taking from him his sword of office with its golden shaft, saying he would be depositing it in the English fort. His brother Ado meantime had settled in another town on the routes between Akim and the coast, seizing Akim people and selling them. At the illtreatment of his messenger Ata collected his army, surprised 'Asase and Ado, captured, them, and brought them back to Kibi. In Asiaman they found letters from the Governor to Ata which Asase had seized, and letters written to the Governor by Asase which claimed that Ata had joined the Asantes. On June 21st Ata listed the charges against Asase and Ado a two hour speech. (The missionaries were invited to this and subsequent sessions, and in part attended them). There were 46 charges against Asase, including two cold-blooded murders in 1865, one of a slave of Ata's, another of his own wife. (Christaller notes in parenthesis that he was mainly responsible for the slaughter of the Asante hostages in 1863). Against Ado were the charges inter al that he had had a man held over a fire so long that he had died, and that he had held his wife over a fire so long that she had fled and put herself under the fetish of Obosomase (Akwapim) - both events took place in Obosomase. They were both declared completely guilty by the 'Akim people' and were fined 42 thalers of gold dust, a large sheep, and rum. But then they had the problem of what to do with them. They could not execute them as the elders wanted, but neither was it much use sending them to the Governor, because with frequent changes of personnel they would almost certainly be freed before long, and the problem would start up again. Then followed Ata's illness and the freeing of the two men (see Eisenschmid's report No 21 above). What was to follow time would show.

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