

Basel Mission Archives

"Eisenschmid's Report for the Third Quarter of 1868"

Title: "Eisenschmid's Report for the Third Quarter of 1868"

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Description: The report is mostly concerned with the Akim judicial system. In an introduction Eisenschmid justifies his saying that the Akim 'civilisation' is at a low level by citing two points - firstly that small misdeeds are visited by heavy and often cruel punishment, while the judges bend the law to suit their own needs. Eisenschmid instances these points by citing two cases. The first case arose from a blow struck - believed accidentally - against the Okyenhene. A fight had broken out between the king's people and those of the elder Kwasi Ammoako. The event was at night, and when the Okyenhene went to make peace he was hit by a follower of Ammoako's called Doko. The latter then fled to the missionaries (he had already had substantial contact with them and Eisenschmid considered him not far from becoming a catechumen). The Okyenhene believed that Ammoako had abetted his flight. The case was heard the next day in the context of the Okyenhene's drummers, drumming out the message that he had been as deeply insulted. Eisenschmid felt the elders should have hastened to arbitrate and keep the case to its real small dimension, but instead they had sent messengers in the night to Tette, Apapam and Apedwa to call the members of the court together to hear the case. The king appeared with a smeared face, and Kwasi Ammoako was called. The Okyenhene accused him of having hated him for a long time, and had only been waiting for an opportunity to get revenge. As a result he had not protected the king as was his duty, but had allowed Doko to strike him, and then let him get away instead of being put in the block. Ammoako pleaded that he was a loyal subject, that he had not known that Donko had struck the Okyenhene, and that Donko had fled without him knowing. The elders pronounced Ammoako guilty - at which the Okyenhene sprang up and danced while all the drums were beaten, guns fired etc. The fine was set after much bargaining at 22 dollars, after 64 dollars had been originally asked. Some time after Eisenschmid intervened, for he heard that Ammoako had been put in the block and the Okyenhene had sworn he would have Doko killed. He found the elders grouped around Ammoako, and put it to them: 1. that they had not heard Doko 2. that they did not know whether the blow was accidental or intentional 3. that accuser, witness, and executor of punishment had all been the Okyenhene. Eisenschmid then told them they had given judgement as a child would, and that they ought to be ashamed of themselves. They took this with humour, and Ammoako was taken out of the block. Eisenschmid added that if any harm should come to Doko, he would have no alternative but to write to Accra (the Governor had just sent a stern warning following the human sacrifices after Ata's death). Eisenschmid then interviewed the king, who claimed Doko as his witness, and warned him that had Doko hit him intentionally, he (Eisenschmid) would have urged a proper punishment, since Doko's duty was honouring the king (Eisenschmid had in fact heard

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that the blow was simply a result of an upward movement of the head or arm when Doko was not aware anyone was in the way at all). Over the next two days the matter was brought to a settlement - grey-headed elders had to argue for hours with the king against depriving Ammoako of his stool and robes of office in the end the king agreed to dash him the whole affair, and this involved a return gift of 90 dollars before things were fully settled. The second case concerned the theft of £80 gold dust en route from Christiansborg to Kibi. 2 messengers had been sent to carry loads, and the one carrying the gold dust had disappeared. Eisenschmid was told that he was last seen at Apedua where he had rested because of a wound on his foot. When he was two days overdue Eisenschmid set in motion the various means open to him to get the money recovered. The Okyenhene in contrast to his apathetic elders swore an oath that he would find the money, and set out immediately the complaint was made to him about it to Apedua, and Eisenschmid outlines the commotion this caused, with people being called in from the other towns to provide him with an appropriate escort. No trace of man or money was found in Apedua however and Eisenschmid began to hear hints that the carrier involved had indeed reached Kibi without delaying in Apedua at all. Eisenschmid felt that this meant that his master was involved - the carrier was a slave of Apiedu, the head elder of Kibi about 100 years old, the head of the Okyenhene's family. Apiedu was quite uncooperative, however. Eisenschmid then received two hints that the slave might be found at night sleeping in Apiedu's farming hamlet 1/2 hour's march from Kibi (Eisenschmid names as sources of the hints 2 schoolboys, and Wilhelm Dazu who was in fact a nephew of Apiedu). A party including Eisenschmid and Chr. Asante went to the place, gained admission (Eisenschmid writes that 'Agoo' was particularly used of a friendly visit at night) found the man, and Eisenschmid had to check his followers from giving him a hard time. (They said to the carrier that he had been taking the bread out of their mouths). The journey back to the Okyenhene's house became a triumphal procession - all the Christians from the station joined it and they marched into Kibi singing hymns. The carrier was given over to the Okyenhene, along with a sermon from Asante about the evidence which the event offered for the power of God. Judgement was put off for 48 hours, and in the end Apiedu was found guilty the box was produced with only 1/2 dollar lacking from the money. (NB this case is also referred to in outline in the Annual Report for 1868).

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