

Basel Mission Archives

"Lodholz' Report for the First Quarter of 1870"

Title: "Lodholz' Report for the First Quarter of 1870"

Ref. number: D-01.22b.VII..5

Date: Proper date: 28.04.1870

Description: A report of a serious dispute between the missionaries and the Kibi chief and elders over the question of their subjects' becoming Christian. The occasion of the dispute was a case concerning the convert Sakyi (see Lodholz' Report 1869 No 16). He had been accused before his Asafohene of some misdemeanour by a Kukurantumi woman, after which he was fined two sheep by the Asafo for taking baptismal instruction and intending to be baptised. He had no warning that this was to be raised, but stoutly defended his statement that he no longer believed in fetishes and wanted to become a Christian. The missionaries immediately took this question up with the Okyenhene and his elders, citing the fact that in English law no-one in the protectorate could be persuaded against becoming a Christian. In this hearing Sakyi again spoke for himself as someone wanting to become a Christian. The court decided against Sakyi. On the missionaries pressing the matter, Kwasi Amoako (Sakyi and Doku both belonged to his household) expressed bitter opposition to the missionaries especially on account of their having carried on the baptismal instruction of his people behind his back. He would not allow it - 'they are my sons, they must obey me'. Most of the elder spoke in the same vein that they would never allow their slaves and pawns to be baptised. The Okyenhene said nothing. Eventually after much to-ing and fro-ing, the elders agreed that if someone wanted to be baptised, the missionaries themselves should, ask the masters permission, that this in the context (so Lodholz' working implies) of many statements that slaves and pawns should never be baptised. The meeting broke up with the missionaries offering to draft an agreement on these lines for signature on the next day. Overnight the Christians warned them that this was only a front for a secret agreement to sell away slaves and pawns who proposed to be baptised. They also agreed that, since Sakyi had not broken away from his Asafo before, they should not send his case to the English courts. The next day, however, the council, did not go as had been agreed. Kwasi Amoako openly stated that he hated the 'Word of God', and for the first time (in this council) the Okyenhene spoke against them - the missionaries thought that he must have been worked on by his mother Ampofoa and aunt Sekyira. 'Must I let my horn-blowers, my drummers, my pipers my sword-bearers and executioners, my hammock-carriers etc. become Christians? If I do, when I can no longer carry out my (fetish) ceremonies, nor can I receive foreign embassies worthily. Whoever has an obligation to serve me will never be allowed to become a Christian.' Lodholz' comment is that this was an almost annihilating stroke for their work - it would involve its being restricted to their boarding school pupils, since almost everyone had some small office at some ceremony to perform. Kromer replied in terms that God had done great things for Akim through the agency of the Europeans - they were free of the Asante yoke. This attitude was poor return

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for such blessings. At this the king stood up in a rage and shouted 'Do you mean, Kromer, that if you go away I shall have to carry stones from Accra to Kumasi like my fathers? - and went out. At the yam festival which followed soon after the Asiakwa chief tried to mediate between Okyenhene and missionaries, but the missionaries stood firm on their condition that there must be freedom of religion. During Mader's January visit, however, the king returned, to a friendly attitude to them, and the original agreement was revived. Nevertheless Sakyi, though attending services refused baptism at the last moment, offering no satisfactory reason other than that his relatives were opposed to it and he feared evil consequences.

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