

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Zimmermann, unaddressed"

**Title:** "Zimmermann, unaddressed"

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**Description:** In the Basel Mission area the effect of the Emancipation is so far limited. Abokobi in the past has been a place of flight for slaves, but fewer slaves have been coming recently as in former years. The Proclamation will only become known by degrees in the more distant parts of the colony, and it leaves the responsibility for reacting with the slaves. Where the latter - as happens in Adangme and to a certain extent among the Gas - are made part of the master's family, and have part of his property, they will tend to remain with him, especially if they were born in the house, and enjoy protection and privileges from him. Admittedly the situation of the slave is different with educated slave-owners, the merchants on the coast, mulattos, and the great princes among the Twis. Such people do not work and eat with their slaves, and in general stand further away from them. Among such people slavery has more or less lost the character of a mild house-slavery, and often seems similar to American slavery - indeed, where among the Twis wives and slaves are killed on the master's death this sort of slavery is much worse and more despot-ridden. From this kind of situation one hears that slaves have either run away, or where they work on their master's land, now neither pay him part of their produce nor work for him 3 days in the week as was the case before. If the master has no land he simply sends the slaves away, except to pay them wages for their services - 6d-9d for 8 hours work, rising to 1/- to 2/- per day for load carriers and canoe crews, and still more for hammock-carriers. If he has land he loses the produce and drives the slaves away. With the normal situation where the master treats his slaves in a fatherly way, the slaves leave only in particularly tense situations or out of their own light-headedness and disobedience. There is as yet no influence from the Emancipation causing prices and wages to change. Prices have been going up since the cotton-rise of 1860-64, with the war assisting, and recently because of the money to be earned in Government Service. Although the ex-slaves who before had worked in groups now often refuse to keep agreements and promises, wage-labour is still not easy to get since the majority of firms are substituting Krooboys for their earlier labour supply. The fisheries are less productive too, and fish and meat are being sold for unheard of prices. Nor is any increase in the proletariat and robber-population visible. Over the land question the handling of this will go far to ensure that no increase in robbery develops, especially in the farming interior. The ex-slaves on the coast will earn a living as wage-earners in the various operations open to them (soldiers and policemen head Zimmermann's list). In the farming areas there is enough land available to make of the ex-slaves orderly and productive members of society. 90% of the land is not used, and a robber economy of shifting cultivation is the form of farming practised. 'Improving agriculture, and increasing the population of free farmers, and settling the land question, these points are of critical

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importance for the material well-being of the land and of the people, and the Government would be doing a useful job if it could deal with them soon.' Zimmermann suggests that the slaves who do not get land within their own local district should be settled by the Government on unowned and unclaimed land on the Addra-Adangme plains or in the uninhabited jungle. Government should also take steps to see that slaves remaining with masters become land-owners too repeating the healthy established trade of the Adangmes from Tema to Ada, in Shai, Krobo and Osudoku. On the Ga-Adangme plains (from Accra to the Volta) all the bush and woodland has its recognised individual owners; the same is true for all the forest up to that part which divides Akwapim, Krobo and Akwamu from Akim. On the other hand the grasslands of the Accra plains have no particular owner, they are either regarded as pasturelands claimed by the nearest village, or are quite uninhabited and ownerless. Anyone planting palms or fruit trees on them, or farming them, regards himself as the owner. Already there are many small settlements in this district, especially of freed slaves, Donkos, and Krepes. The area lends itself to livestock farming, and the cultivation of cotton, cassava, ground-nuts and oil palms. The Government should now decide how many miles villages can claim as pasturage, claim the rest for itself, use it to settle freed slaves on, such villages being put under the authority of the nearby villages and chief. The same sort of thing could be done in the uninhabited forest, which is an area 1-3 days' journey x 4-5 days' journey. Here however, the Government should act to avoid the waste of wood for building and burning traditional, and encourage people to plant long-term crops like oil-palms rather than continue with the robber economy. As for the slaves who take on part of the land of an existing village, their form of renting should be established in law - with the payments involved (Zimmermann suggests one tenth) and the tenants' freedom to inherit, sell their position etc., assured and protected by the Government. Zimmermann names Kpong as one of the freed slaves settlements, and writes that it is because the freed slaves have so far shown little tendency to set up communities on their own that they should be put under the authority of the local chiefs. In his final paragraph Zimmermann judges that the Emancipation is working slowly and surely, as it is intended to, and without leading to violent revolution.

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