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"Buck's Report for the Year 1879"

Title: "Buck's Report for the Year 1879"

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Description: The numbers of Christians' houses in Kibi and Kukurantumi are given as 12 and 14 respectively. There are 'several' houses in the process of being built on the mission land at Abomосу. There is a new outstation at Asunafo, again with 'several' houses in the process of being built. Another new outstation - Apapam - a place where the Christians have built a chapel and catechist's house in the town. The year was a difficult one, with the death of Lodholz shortly after he had been appointed to the Kibi station. All things considered Buck spent much of his own time travelling on mission business - only with the application of all his strength to the situation could he keep up outstation visits, and the care of the Kibi community was very much in the hands of the local agents. There was a certain amount of transfer of these in the course of the year - Date went to Abomосу, W. Mensa the Kibi catechist was transferred to Asunafo, and Cat. Tete was brought from Kukurantumi to Kibi to replace Mense. On the whole however the year - though sorrowful and difficult for the missionaries . was one of progress and increasing strength for the churches. There were 158 baptisms, composed of 135 heathens, including 16 wives of christians. There was thus an increase of 16 in the number of christian marriages in the district, and indeed the attitude of the women showed how firm were the roots of Christianity in Akim. In Abomосу two wives became Christian while their husbands remained heathen, and Abomосу girls prefer marrying Christians to heathens. Another sign of strength is that the Christian communities are doing some things for themselves - building chapels and catechist's houses (though Buck complains that the older catechists wait for support from the missionaries - it is the younger ones, specifically Mensa and Odee, who managed to lead their community to build them houses). It is difficult to say much about the situation vis-a-vis the Okyenhene. In the early part of the year the situation varied between hostility and friendliness, culminating in the Okyenhene's instructions being received in Kukurantumi Apapam and Asiakwa as to how the Christians should be treated. At this time a female slave of the late king's was made to swear an oath in Tete that she would not become a Christian at this stage. Buck himself travelled to Christiansbog to put the case against the Okyenhene personally, various petitions from Christians having failed to make any impact. He argued that it was not a question of the Governor getting mixed up in religious matters, but rather a question of freeing crop and livestock farming from the limiting regulations of the fetish cults. Buck then received written instructions from Governor Usher on this subject, which the Governor suggested should be handed over to the Okyenhene by Buck himself. Buck is very grateful, and hopes this point will be mentioned in the English Annual Report. Kibi - only 13 heathen adults were baptised, 6 men and youths and 7 women. 47 Christian children were baptised, but against this were 8 deaths in the community, 6 exclusions (for

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adultery, including the wife of an elder, a carpenter who had been 'vagabonding' for years, and 2 pupils of the boarding school), and the numbers of Christians moving away from Kibi (mostly catechists, teachers and school pupils) far outstripped the 6 Christians who moved into the community. Boakye is the heart of the community- and Buck reckons that ground has been won among the heathen in the course of the year. Wandering is somewhat less among the Kibi Christians now that many of them have laid out farms. Kukurantumi has increased less than any others. 14 baptisms. Buck ascribes this to the effort of building. The community lacks money except what can be earned from hammock carrying and load-carrying. He misses a zeal for the extension of the gospel there, but is perhaps this will be cured by the newly appointed evangelist Andr. Ewi. Asikawa had passed through a time of trial in the sense that Cat. Mullings had passed all problems, great and small, on to Buck in Kibi. In the end he had sent a party back to Asiakwa with the simple message 'I am not catechist in Asiakwa' - from when on Mullings had exerted real authority, been instrumental in getting 4 people excluded who needed to be excluded. From that moment (as Buck portrays it) the life of the community was much strengthened - the Christians began building a temporary chapel, and refused financial help from the mission for the building of a catechists' house. A number of catechumens announced themselves (16, 8 of them adults, were eventually baptised), the congregation came regularly to services. A fetish priest had been found guilty before the Asiakwa elders of causing the death of people who were ill by giving them damaging medicine. After much worry about his punishment he was sentenced to live with the catechist, and attend all services, sermons and catechism classes. There was a stormy year in Abomosu also. At one stage the whole community was excommunicated until they should exclude adulterers. This was eventually achieved, the Abomosu heathen interesting themselves in the whole matter and urging a proper settlement. Date was transferred there, the number of members increased by 23, and the Gemeinde now numbers 57. 4 Christian children were born in the year, and all died - Abomosu is the worst of the Akim towns for its uncleanness and its death rate among children. Abunafo - now a separate community. At Easter there was an incident when a fetish priest Otobo from Asiamangma collected the fetish priests from Akim (Buck explains he was the chief fetish priest in Akim) to make some sort of demonstration against the Christians in Asunafo. The Christians at first retreated from the main street of the village to one side, but were followed and a fight broke out when a pipe was knocked out of a Christian mouth by Otobo, using a cutlass (or knife) - smoking being taboo to Otobo's fetish, though Otobo himself is a persistent smoker. When knives and cutlasses were brought out by Otobo's party the Christians scattered into the forest and had to stay the night in the pouring rain - meanwhile the chapel was destroyed. Buck advised the Asunafo Christians to take the matter like Christians, but they decided to go to court in Accra. They were awarded £20 damages on condition that the chapel was rebuilt in 2 months, but, Buck received an angry letter from the Governor - he was surprised such a letter could be written by a 'gentleman' (English word used). He himself felt that the case had done them no good - they were

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away for months on it, and several of them had not spoken the precise truth. And the last stage was that when the community elder, Mose Tinnyase went to Accra to receive the money he died, and Otobo gave out that the fetish had killed him. Nevertheless over the whole year the community increased by 9 to 37. Kwabeng - A slow development, 9 adult men baptised in the year, no women and few children. 'The chief enemy is Gold'. A quarter of the population are Juabens,- whose desire for revenge prevents them entertaining other thoughts. Buck feels there is an explanation for this. He writes that he will never forget how an old man told him how when their powder was all used up, they were surrounded by the Asantes ('that is to say, the Kumasis') and all the prisoners whom they took in the district were cudged to death, and how the Juabens, to avoid this kind of slaughter, were committing suicide by families. Buck moralises on this point, however, that earlier it had been the Juabens who had the worst reputation for cruelty in Akim and Akwapim. Asantes (including these Juabens, whom Buck describes as very cool to the mission) are eager to learn, but not well-disposed to Christianity. Apapam - community has increased to 38, 6 wives having been baptised in the course of the year. Andr. Odee, a young man, has travelled from Apapam the villages along the source-valley of the Berem and won considerable respect - of the 38 Christians there are one or two in most of these villages. The people of Apapam originally agreed to have Odee providing he did not bring goats or dogs or pigs with him. Now such animals run around the village, partly because of the Governor's letter, In general he calculates Akim is 50 square miles & if on average there are 500 inhabitants per square mile, then 0,5% of the population is baptised. Therefore preaching journeys are the soul of the work - if necessary to be carried on at the expense of school teaching - indeed the number of pupils in the local schools has decreased in the course of the year. He reverts at the end to a general discussion of the problem of women and conversion. He understands that for a marriage to be regarded as fully settled something like 18 dollars and several pieces of cloth must change hands. If this is the rule among Christians then their ceremony of blessing marriages can hardly be leading to their gaining respect. And what can be done for women who want to become Christian ahead of their husbands? If the latter want to exert pressure on the women they have simply to ask for the dowry to be returned. Three cases where this could potentially occur are cited - 1. A woman called Pensian who for over six months had been asking her husband for permission to become a Christian - eventually she was assaulted by him with a knife, and the case was sent by the Okyenhene to Accra. 2. At Christmas one of the Okyenhene's wives came to be written down as a catechumen - she had already made approaches during Lodholz' stay. Buck seems to think that it is very unlikely that anything can come of it - the Okyenhene may not put away any of his wives. 3. On New Year's Day the wife of a rich and important Kibi elder came to announce herself as a catechumen 'accompanied by the community elders, many Christians and many people from Kibi town.' She had been to services several times, but usually was beaten on her return. Imm. Boakye went to find out what the husband thought and the wife received white earth on this occasion. She was also asked for £10. Buck's advice in this case is to carry on quietly with

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baptismal instruction and refuse to go before a heathen court; he reckons that people will not bother to go to Accra. This, however, is a subject which must be quickly regulated, it is too explosive otherwise.

- Subject:** [Archives catalogue]: Guides / Finding aids: Archives: D - Ghana: D-01 - Incoming correspondence from Ghana up to the outbreak of the First World War: D-01.31 - Ghana 1879: D-01.31.XIII. - Kjebi
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