

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Mohr's Report to Basel"

**Title:** "Mohr's Report to Basel"

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**Description:** A report of a conference of their local agents, which included an extended mask of studies for their evangelists. Mohr encouraged them to teach their catechuminate more biblical history, and sure of the life of Jesus: at the moment dares people at baptism were well informed on the catechism, but not the life of Jesus. Having fever one of the days he was forced to ask them to write a report on their community in letter form. He reports, that like many of the Basel Mission employees, they are not good at writing, and do not practice unless they have cause to write. He gave them some training in preaching, discussing especially what they should preach about, since he found they tended to preach from one group of texts - the Epistle e.g., or the Old Testament. Not one of them was preaching on the Words of Jesus. So he stressed the latter, and preaching descriptions of the Kingdom of God, and also the joyful news of the saviour from sin. In the part of the conference where the evangelists were encouraged to raise issues which worried them, Mohr mas happy to find that they all were interested in striving to create Christian villages. But the other point of major concern was the position over Asuum. Boakye pressed strongly for the missionaries' help in getting the matter sorted out, and so did a deputation of Asuum Christians who said that they had been prevented from going to get their property in their houses, and in any case did not want to leave since this would be a victory for the heathen. There was incomprehension why the English Government had done nothing when at Ata's re-enstoolment the English Officer had stressed that each side was to have complete religious freedom. - Ata had been operating in such a way that the Governor had wanted to keep out of the affair - when Boakye had gone to the Coast Ata had sent a letter to the Governor asking him to stay out of the case, he Ata had had repeated messages from Asuum that Boakye's's property was safe, and that he could come to Asuum to fetch it away. The evangelists feared that more trouble would follow. They complain that they obey English law, pay their tax under English law before they marry, but are not properly protected. In the conference for pastors the first period was concerned with the congregational census records (generally filled in faultily - e.g. no distinction being made between adult and child baptisms), and the new forms of the Marriage Ordinance. Another session was concerned with marriage. The new Ordinance was one problem - it concerns only a small proportion of the population - the Christians - and involves the Akim Christians in long journeys to go through the proper procedure. So many are simply marrying, and though then excluded, are received back after a year provided they have conducted themselves well in the interim. The problem of the lack of Christian girls of marriageable age still affects some communities - in Begoro there has been only one Christian girl married, all the time Mohr has been on the station. Another problem is the lack of consistency over blessings of marriages, for of the 93 marriages

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of which Mohr is aware among Akim Christians, only 51 have been either concluded in church or blessed. Though a Christian married to a heathen could not have his marriage blessed, obviously some marriages between Christians are not blessed either. This is important, because the Christians themselves make a distinction between a blessed and an unblessed marriage, and the partners do not regard themselves as fully bound if they have not been through one of the Christian liturgies. This sort of marriage is called 'woanhyira so e', and is a sign that the parties do not trust each other fully, or perhaps have not yet been blessed with a child, since if they do not get children they will absolutely refuse to stick together. But the problem goes further than simply that. The marriages of several presbyters in Kibi and Asiakwa, Teachers Gyima and Oforidee," Evang.-candidate Apeakese are all not blessed. It would be difficult to enforce a general blessing of marriages - many would be against it. And many people want a small door behind them in case of difficulties. At a catechist's conference the missionaries suggested that their sermons were too long. Among the reasons for this offered by the catechists were insufficient preparation, and the habit of taking a long text and going through it verse by verse. Mohr reports one question raised by Catechist Anoba at another session - should he accept into the community in Anyinam slaves who have fled from their masters in Kwahu? Such slaves' masters usually follow soon after, and then there is a 'palaver'. Anoba complained that since the bulk of these people are virtually unable to speak Twi instruction is virtually impossible, and he often gets into severe difficulties with their masters. Mohr replied that if he took in one of these poor people every now and again, that was only his duty. If they submitted to the rules he should not send them away. In the case of a woman with a child or children she should be sent on to Kukurantumi or better still Begoro, to be safe from the danger of her children being thieved away from her. He remarks in a digression that the 'Donko' families in Anyinam and Kukurantumi have an industriousness which is shown off to advantage by the Akim background.

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