

Basel Mission Archives

"Mohr to Basel"

Title: "Mohr to Basel"

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Description: Governor Griffith's letter suggesting Mohr should be posted away from Akim had arrived in the hands of the Mission the day after he sailed away. And this was after Mohr had been in Osu for three weeks; and could have answered the allegations had they been made. Mohr then reviews the evidence etc. against him. The main support for Griffith's letter was the letter which Mohr had sent to Ata's secretary Kwaku Nyako (otherwise Hudson), and their ex—teacher Oforidee. They believed that Bosompem really was in danger of his life, also that they could not be sure that the messenger sent from Apapa would get through, and this was one way of alerting the Akropong brethren to the dangers of the situation. Rottmann the cashier in Christiansborg had been especially puzzled as to why they had paid the money out which they did pay out in Kibi (Mohr points out in passing that this letter is evidence that £500 and not £3,500 was the losses stated at the time from the alleged theft. The latter figure was what was being put forward in the Accra court proceedings.) Even had the £500 been paid and lost. One man's life was worth far more than the money. Mohr reckons the Fante involved in the affair had told the others in prison that he was receiving £4 and 1/- per day for his part in the affair, no money had been stolen. Commenting once more on the letter sent to Oforidee and Nyako, Mohr points out that Oforidee had worked previously under his supervision. Moreover they work with the Okyenhene's linguist Agyeman and Ata's brother-in-law Odo of Tumfa, were the people to whom the cash collected by the missionaries was actually given over for safe-keeping. Mohr had also warned Oforidee frequently to hold the king back from his illegal acts, while in fact they were both privy to the secret plan. Then the Okyenhene died, the Governor allowed the heathen party to return to Akim and indeed gave them £50 for the custom, while they spoke threats to the Christians and indeed in the Nsawam district beat up a number of Christians whom they met with the result that one of them died later. Mohr therefore sent this letter with the objective of saving the £126 pounds and including the point that their original 'devilish plan' as known to the missionaries. He argues that the tone of the letter should not have surprised anyone who among the mission's friends did not believe that Ata's death was a judgement? One problem seems to have been that the letter include the phrase that a copy would be given to the Governor. This was not done, and Turton had viewed this point in its worst light. Mohr however explains that he had been busy with a memo which Rottmann had asked him to send to the Governor, and having finished this was immediately overtaken with by the news of the destruction in Kibi etc. and the holding of a Council which decided Mohr should return to Akim with a military escort. The accusation had also been made that the letter had contributed to the anger and was thus partly responsible for the destruction. Unfortunately the Kukurantumi catechist

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could not remember whether it had reached Kibi on the 12th or 13th February. Nevertheless an Apapam Christian had seen pieces of the Kibi mission-house furniture in Apapam on February 5th and Mohr was able to report a series of misdeeds on February 5th, so that it was immaterial whether the letter had arrived on the 11th or 13th. In fact the procession with Ata's corpse had arrive in Kibi on February 4th. Mohr also goes through the events from the Governor's side. His version of what happened after Ata's death repeats other earlier material except that about Cleland's representatives (he calls them 'chiefs'): 'I have learned that they started in Nsawam last Wednesday the 9th, and will probably reach Kibi this evening the 11th. Up to the day of the death of the Okyenhene Christians and heathen from Akim had been given subsistence. This ceased on the day of the death, but while the heathen were given £50 the Christians were simply told (through Mohr) to remain in Osu. Mohr also quotes from a memo written on 9th February that a chief called Atshery(?) boasted that they had been given a letter by the Governor in which it was forbidden for any Christian to return to Akim to preach in any Akin town, while in Nsawam Okyerewa swore an oath on chief Obeng that he should kill the Christians in the town - the Governor had given permission for this. He complains that after the hearing of early May no proceedings had been taken for false witness against witnesses on the Okyenhene's side who had been shown to be lying, while the costs of the action had been laid on the Christians. This even though the Attorney General was friendly disposed to them. Turton he identifies as their chief adversary - a Catholic. He was the chief cause of Boakye's case against the Asuum people being held up, and had caused Boakye to be known as a 'bad fellow' - a phrase used of him by Griffiths in an interview with Rottmann and Mohr. Mohr defends himself vigorously from the suggestion that the soldiers are being kept in Begoro (where they have commenced to trade) for the sake of his safety. In April he journeyed without escort to Aburi. The comparison which showed that Obuobisa had written the Kibi letter about Mohr was not a comparison of texts, but a comparison of handwritings. In discussing this point Mohr writes that he had explained to Lethbridge that (who is named as the officer who had said he would have thrown the Christians out of Akim if he had been king) that the missionaries saw the-struggle as one between heathenism and Christianity which now promises to become a power - but he had derided this view. He reviews the history of the conflict once more, especially in the light of the accusation by the Governor that he had acted in such a way as 'had materially affected the moral influence which a Christian missionary should exercise', pointing out that they were taken back to Kibi by force and that the aggression was all on the side of the Okyenhene. The guarantee of responsibility signed by the chiefs who called Mohr back from Apedwa was required by Ata on 22 December and Mohr handed it over, but only after secretly making a copy and having it witnessed by a number of the Christians. One point he present in evidence of the cordiality of relations between himself and Ata in May 1886 is the fact that Ata had allowed him to photograph himself, his mother, his sister, and two of his wives. He defends himself against the saying, common among the missionaries even, that he was Ata's chief accuser - he had after all gone to Begoro rather than the coast deliberately in order to

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avoid this appearance, and went to the coast in early January only after pressure from the Governor per Missionary Rottmann. Mohr's subscript dated 15 August reports that Lethbridge had been instructed to go to Kibi and force four chiefs to sign the bond of peace - those of Abomosu, Osenase, Wankyi and Akyease.

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