

Basel Mission Archives

"Charles Strömberg: Opinion as to the best place for a trade- and missionstation on the upper Volta"

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Description: From the Basel Mission's point of view Anum is the best cotton market in the upper Volta region. Though Boso market gets a lot of cotton, the amounts are in fact less than what comes to Anum, and Boso is further from the river. Uncleansed cotton can just as easily be carried to Anum as sold in Boso, and much cotton does indeed come through Boso to Anum already. It would not be advisable to propose Peki as a Basel Mission station, partly because it is an old Bremen station. There must be a lot of cotton in Peki market, judging by the fine cotton farms which the Commission (i.e. the Mission's exploratory party) passed en route from Boso to Peki. Peki must be at least 4 1/2 hours from the river. Advises that, for thus the future, the best road from Anum to the river would be to the place from which you cross to Pese. This road would have to be prepared by taking a different line it could avoid having to pay the fetish tolls being levied now. The more frequently used road goes to the small Anum village of Dodi, but this has the disadvantage that it crosses a steep-sided hill. There is another way to the river from Anum - via Owlutoi (probably Ofletoi) to Asadsale (Asutscharee). It crosses no hills, and is important when the Akwamus block the river below Pese, but it is 14 hours long. It is also only practicable in its low-lying parts in the dry season. There are already small cotton-cleaning machines in Anum and Peki. Larger cleaning-machines, and balers, could be taken to Anum (a) When the water level on the Volta is higher than in the Harmattan (b) When the road to Anum from the Pese crossing has been made. Once the machines are in Anum it will probably become the best market for cotton, and therefore the best place for the residence of the Agent of the Handelsgesellschaft. Anum would also be the best place for a mission station. It is the healthiest town in the district, lying high, but not so high as to be impracticable. Admittedly it is a little lower than Akropong (probably - he had no barometer with him), and the proximity of the river would make for greater humidity in the wet season. However, in this district the bush is kept down by the annual practice of burning the high grasses. Anum lies at the end of the district inhabited by the East-Volta Kyerepong people, but in all probability the population would be drawn towards a trading centre on or near the river. He visited the Kyerepong towns of Nkrakubew, Kwasiatia, Anum, Toseng, Boso and Dodi. Together the population of these must number 10,000 to 12,000. But Anum contains #4,000 of these. Boso is the political capital - the chiefs of Boso and Anum are sons of the same father. Boso has a smaller population than Anum — c2,500. The character of this people pleased him. They are capable of learning, and keen to do so. They have a mind for industry and trading, are true to their religious traditions, and place a great deal of trust in the external power of their fetishes. They

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are a religious people, thus. In a conversation with the 'King' (presumably the chief of Anum) Strömberg asked what he had done to prepare to meet the threats of the Asantes, and he replied that they had made offering to the fetishes. Strömberg then told him he believed that fetishes were nothing, and could not help anyone, and the chief replied 'You just I teach us, and we will do what you say'. Certainly the people thronged around whenever the missionaries preached. And they all understood them, since they all understand Twi and speak it themselves. It would be good also to use Anum as a base for preaching among the Akwamus. This Twi—speaking tribe is shrinking in number, faced with severe problems and morally in decay. In comparison the Anums are morally increasing in stature. (He writes a final paragraph arguing against siting a new station on a hill which stands near the Volta between Dodi and the Pese crossing. One reason worth nothing: one of the most important Anum fetishes is located on this hill, and it would involve a lot of difficulty securing permission to settle there.)

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