

Basel Mission Archives

"Zimmermann to Basel"

Title: "Zimmermann to Basel"

Ref. number: D-01.21b.VII..6a

Date: Proper date: 04.07.1869

Description: The day before Sakite sent a messenger to Akwamu - a Krobo man who was born in Akwamu - with someone else who had been being held in Odumase as a hostage. With them went a written message as urging to the Akwamuhene the release of the captive missionaries), also wrote a letter asking for news, and advising that at least the Ramseyer family should be allowed back, if only for the sake of the peace of the area. The day the letter was written Zimmermann and Laissle had been to the Akwamu border, visited the last Krobo village Yogaga and its single Christian inhabitant, and preached there. Their journey was partly to see if they could learn any news from the other side of the Volta. On their return they found Odumase in a great state of excitement. A lapsed Krobo Christian, who was also a grandson of Oloku Patu in Yilosí, by name Natanael Nate, along with an ex-Basel Mission school pupil and baptismal candidate had captured 5 Akwamu women by a trick, and brought them to Krobo. The local people, fearing the impact of this in the border areas, had taken the women from his control and chained him to the block. The Chief was not present while all this was occurring. Nate called the missionaries to be eye-witnesses of his maltreatment, and claimed to have been acting under instructions from the Government and kings Takyi and Kodscho in Accra, and in the mission's interests since the Akwamus had captured the missionaries and destroyed the station. The local people were saying that, rather, instead of annoying the Akwamus messengers should be being sent to ask for their release. Zimmermann and Laissle knew that the cunning man had promised to commit this act in Accra in order to make good the fact that he had been smuggling goods into Akwamu hands (people even say he has been involved in supplying them with ammunition), and at the same time to find a way to pay his debts. He certainly has no orders from the Government for what he has done. The missionaries spoke with him about all this but asked the people to give him the respect due to a son of a Krobo king, to free him, but to keep him in Odumase until his grandfather and the Krobo leadership had decided what should be done in his case. They also urged them to treat the Akwamu women in a friendly way. The missionaries' proposals were accepted. They had scarcely arrived home when a letter was brought in from the Executive Committee, along with a formal letter from the Civil Commandant stating that attempts to rescue the imprisoned missionaries on human grounds would not be regarded as making illegal contact with the enemy. The Executive Committee asked Zimmermann and Sakite to do their utmost to achieve the freeing of the prisoners, or at least obtain for them the opportunity to return to the Station. At the same time arrived a messenger from the chief of Kotropeli, an Akwamu village on this side of the river, a man who is also related to the royal family in Odumase. This included the news that Anum and Peki have accepted Akwamu's overlordship; the

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Akwamus and Asantes want to return home; that Sakite should send an embassy of the utmost reliability to negotiate with the Akwamuhene about the missionaries, or to receive them at his hands. Sakite discussed the matter with them and in the morning his brother, Peter Nyarko, accompanied by 'our people' will set out to find the Akwamuhene in his camp in order to do what he can for the release of the captives. The Nyarko expedition went with only a little money from the missionaries in order not to excite the avarice of the Akwamuhene. Sakite considers that, even if the men want to return to Anum, they should at least accompany Mrs Ramseyer into Krobo, so that everyone can see for themselves that the Akwamuhene has released them, and that they return to Anum of their own free will. The king's sons have a good hope in relation to this mission, because the Akwamu villages this side of the Volta are almost entirely without food, and depending on Krobo for their supplies. (A coloured sketch-map is attached to this letter).

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