

To the esteemed Mission Committee in Basel
Annual Report of the Ussu Station 1849

Ussu, 17 April 1850
Johannes Stanger

Dearest Directors!

When I sent you my last annual report, I was eagerly awaiting our dear Köster. We were only granted two months together, as he fell ill on 15 May and died on 15 June. These were difficult days, for I myself was often unwell at that time and frequently visited him at the staff¹, therefore unsteady on my feet, and it was often unclear who should comfort whom. Several officials from the Danish fort visited us very often during this time and demonstrated their friendship through advice and action. Kösters' death wounded my heart deeply, and I wished him well in his better fate. As I sat beside his lifeless body for a while longer, the thought often occurred to me that I too would like to die. However, on the day of his funeral, I regained my joyful courage and soon regained my physical strength, so that I was able to continue my work, albeit alone and mourning my faithful colleague. But I missed his company very much, and often, when my boy called me to dinner and I did not find dear Köster in his usual place, I could hardly control myself, and the work was too much, and the result was that I became ill again, for if I tried to take it easy, I soon saw that everything went downhill and many things caused me even more trouble after a short time, and in the end I could no longer cope at all. Before I had recovered, I was forced to get up and work as long as I could stand upright, and so I remained.

I often had difficult times during this hopeless period, and I cannot hide from you that I sometimes asked myself: what is better, to ruin my health here in a short time and then be of some use, or to resign from a job before it goes too far, a job that in the end does not satisfy our superiors and in any case cannot be continued by me for much longer.

The public church services on Sundays and the house devotions were held as usual. Dieterle von Akropong stayed with me during the last quarter of 1849 and the first quarter of 1850. Once he had settled in here, he was a great help to me. At the end of 1849, our new chapel was completed and inaugurated on New Year's Day. Danish officials from the local fort garrison and a large number of mulattos and natives filled the building and the space in front of the door. I first addressed a few words of welcome to the congregation and then said the words of blessing before the altar, whereupon Dieterle entered the pulpit and preached on the words "Grace and peace from him who is, who was, and who is to come." The following Sunday, I confirmed six daughters from the girls' school entrusted to us by the government, and on the Sunday after that, Holy Communion was administered. These were blessed days for us, and it seemed to us that the Word of God made a completely different impression on the listeners in this lovely place.

I was unable to visit the natives in the city very often. The completion of the chapel, the furnishing of apartments for the expected brothers, and the repair of dilapidated parts of the mission house took up too much time, in addition to my other duties. However, some of those whom I used to visit often came to my house. But I was so busy with business matters that I

¹ walking stick

often had to tell them, "I don't have a moment today," so that one of them got so used to it that he would ask with a smile as soon as he greeted me, "Do you have time today?"

However, my business dealings brought me into frequent contact with the natives. But the more I got to know them, the more I became familiar with their customs and fetish practices, the more abhorrent this malpractice became to me. All the activities of the fetish priests are aimed at practising their carnal works. I was recently an eyewitness to a scene at the fetish house that I do not wish to describe. I would not have believed that man could become so animalistic. The greatest and prevailing sin of the sons of Ham² is that of their father, and their father's curse apparently still rests upon them in a very special sense. Only through complete conversion, not partial conversion, can this curse be lifted and turned into a blessing. It is much more difficult for a native to convert than a European, because he has become too animalistic. I am not referring here to his raw side, but to his body, soul and spirit-debilitating flesh, and the resulting appalling dullness to spiritual matters. The native as he appears here is not only unconverted, but he is also a fleshly man in a very special sense, a sarkikos³ categorically⁴. It is not fetishism itself that prevents the natives from converting, nor is it polygamy itself, but rather the willing practice of sin (if one can say so) from which they can hardly refrain⁵.

For the reasons mentioned above, we should not be too surprised when this or that person outwardly renounces the fetish service and a number of people show some love for the word of God. Most of them are still under Ham's curse because they have not yet completely renounced Ham's sin. However, none of this discourages us. We already have a pledge of better times in some, and an even more certain one in the word of God, namely the promises of Jehovah, which must come to pass. Once Ham reaches out his hands to the living God, things will be different. Oh, if only that time would come soon!

In our schools, most things proceeded as usual. There are 120 children here, compared to only 8 in Tessing. The children are generally hard-working. Some love the word of God, others do not. However, I dare not judge the extent to which even the better ones open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

This year, local merchants launched a special attack on schools. They tried to dissuade people from sending their children to school because some young mulattoes who had been educated in our school and the Wesleyan school were also starting to trade. However, they did not cause much trouble, and after being rebellious for a while, they improved on their own. Some of the gentlemen were also angry for a while because of Thompsen's dismissal. They thought I should not have inspected so strictly, etc. I pretended not to notice, and it soon stopped, because after a short time he himself became too unpleasant for them and can apparently no longer be in their company.

Mrs Mulgrave works with zeal and dedication at the girls' school, and makes a special effort to give private lessons to some of the girls who have the desire and ability to do so. One of the six newly confirmed girls works as a monitor at the school and uses her time outside school faithfully to further her education.

² Book of Genesis, Noah curses his grandson, who was a son of Ham, a progenitor of mankind.

³ animal nature

⁴ written in the original with Greek letters

⁵ in the sense of the text

In the last annual report, I informed you that of the six schoolteacher pupils initially enrolled, three were no longer there, having either run away or been dismissed for insubordination. However, one of them returned remorseful and is now working satisfactorily as a teacher in Tessing. He has a great aptitude for preaching, but I usually tell him: you should learn more yourself before you teach others, and apply it to yourself. But I don't forbid him anything; rather, I rejoice in his zeal.

The other two are now engaged in trade, which was their intention from the beginning. They have been replaced by two new pupils (one is from the Cape Coast School and one from ours). Another was taken away by his parents because he was so often ill, and a few weeks ago we lost another, James Okoi, through death. I had made him an interpreter in the church service, and he had recently brought me and others much joy through his obedience and his earnest and humble walk before the Lord. One afternoon, he went down to the sea to bathe. A shark seized him and bit off both his arms. One of my boys jumped in and brought him ashore. To stop the bleeding, his arms had to be amputated. He endured the pain with great patience and felt better. But late that evening, he died from poison administered by someone in his family. I don't know how, because I hadn't left the room. These cruel people consider such a thing a blessing in such a case, and insisted that I should give him poison.

This hurt us deeply, but we thought it best to refrain from investigating. It would have been easy to find out, because they do not hide such things among themselves. I hope that his death and funeral did not leave some people without a lasting impression.

As for the other pupils, their work outside school hours consisted of memorising passages from the Holy Scriptures and Bible verses, as well as doing chores around the house, which also enabled me to observe them more closely.

Finally, I am delighted to conclude my annual report with the news of the arrival of my dear wife and my two brothers, Locher and Zimmermann, who will be joining the team here at the station.

May God the Lord rule.

With faithful love,

Yours sincerely,

Johannes Stanger