

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Eisenschmid's Report for the Second Quarter 1868"

**Title:** "Eisenschmid's Report for the Second Quarter 1868"

**Ref. number:** D-01.20b.VI..8

**Date:** Proper date: 14.07.1868

**Description:** The report is almost exclusively concerned with the Akim gold industry. Washing from the rivers is carried on by women and children who are happy if they earn 3d-4d per day. A particular type of earth is known as ore-bearing, and if a gold-digging comes across this type of earth it is hollowed out as far as possible. Eisenschmid gives the maximum depth of the gold diggings as 100'. The normal rate of earning may be as much as 1 dollar a day from gold-diggings (i.e. this is the earning of a whole group, miners and women and children doing the washing). Small nuggets and gold-dust belong to the miner, but nuggets over 9 dollars value have to be divided - 1/3 to the Kibi chief and elders, 1/3 to the landowner, and 1/3 to the miner. Although people try to conceal the discovery of such nuggets this rarely happens partly because so many people are involved (including women); and partly because the Akim people lack the carefulness which marks the successful European deceiver - for the same reason it is usually possible to uncover cases of theft on the mission station. The impact of the gold-diggings is seen in the lack of industry (only smiths and carpenters, the latter making doors, windows and boxes from split wood) and in the comparatively slight amount of farming going on. Only in Kukurantumi, where there is no gold, are large farms made - in a dear year the Kukurantumi people send their provisions to Accra. In the gold-bearing areas of Akim the people only farm enough for their own needs. One problem following from the area's gold-mining is that by a law of the Okyenhene no silver coins may be used in merchandise. This results in much loss of gold through the weighing out of small quantities, and also much strife, since there are no standard weights. The mission's policy has been to have their own weights at approximately the average of the local variations and then stick to them. This has sometimes meant not getting the indispensable article they were trying to purchase, but there is almost a proverb now in Kibi 'The white man only has min weight' - Eisenschmid explains this means only one weight for dispensing and receiving gold-dust. The king, of course, has a set of heavier weights for receiving fines. Eisenschmid links gold-digging with the worships of the Berem, not organically however - only in pointing out that the Berem is a gold-bearing river. However, he repeats the information about the processions of women to the Berem during Ata's penultimate illness, with the point that they were led by his elder sister. Eisenschmid actually saw Ata after his death, and describes how he had a nugget of gold in his mouth, and others bound on his arms and legs, and head. He remarks on the terrible awakening he will suffer when he finds that no gold will save him. The apparatus of gold-weighing has religious significance judging by the way that Eisenschmid was unable to buy a 'fotu' and the scales, though he would have paid well for them. It was explained that a man's soul is in his fotu - and indeed at the yearly cleansing festival the fotu is also sprinkled

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with blood. He has, however, managed to collect a fotu etc. as if for his own use, and send it to the mission. There are scales, scoops, and vessels used to see if the gold is pure. The things of greatest interest, however, are the weights, Up to 4 ½ d. they are seeds from various plants, the finest brass weights come from Asante. Usually they are made by cutting and engraving a piece of wood into the required shape, making a clay mould around it, and then putting this into the fire, after which the burnt wood can be extracted. Into this mould the liquid brass is then poured. There do not seem to have been any geometrical weights.

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