

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Schönhuth to Basel"

**Title:** "Schönhuth to Basel"

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**Date:** Proper date: 13.08.1868

**Description:** He intends to omit a description of Klaus' death and the two Volta journeys connected with that, since these have already been reported. But if those experiences were painful, still more painful ones are to be expected. Almost daily they are being subject to formal requests for money to help pursue the war, and must spend time getting the people to understand that they are children of peace. They often say that they are fighting for the mission, to get open ways to the coast. The future is so uncertain that the missionaries have decided, in the event station's being captured, to stay put, but to hide money and the most valuable goods. It is known that the war began in 1865 with the fighting between the Gas and Adas on the one side, and the Anglos on the other. After the unsuccessful expedition across the Volta by Ada and its allies in 1866, the theatre fighting moved up the Volta until it cut off the station from the rest of the Basel Mission settlements. The most dangerous and hostile of the groups involved are the Akwamus, who control the Volta from Bauromadam to Pese. Their allies are the Dafos and Volos, who control the land south from Akwamu to opposite the Asutsuare mountain, and thus make the land route (Schönhuth presumably means to Kpong) unsafe. The war in this part of the Gold Coast began with a surprise attack by the Akwamus on Dodi on Whitmonday 1866 (Schönhuth describes Dodi as a major trading centre). Few of the inhabitants escaped captivity or death, and the place was left in ashes. Dodi had been a place where merchants congregated from many places, especially Asantes who exchanged gold dust there for salt and other articles. The trading activities of the mission were much linked up with Dodi. Among the dead were many notable Akim merchants: and now an Akim chief is seeking to revenge their death with a large number of warriors, determined to inflict a decisive defeat on the Akwamus. The chief is called Dompere, and he is to be thought of as a robber chieftain rather than anything else. Through his activities, however, he has obtained an ever greater reputation among his followers and allies, so that he is now head of the combined armies. Schönhuth remarks that wars go on for a long time when fought in the fashion of this one. Things barely come to a battle. The narrow paths do not allow for large numbers of men to move about. The burning of Villages is usually the farthest things go. The soldiers need very little. They simply take the food they need from farms they find; they do need powder, but for bullets they use lead, stones, pieces of wood, and pieces of iron. Three times since Schönhuth's arrival in late March the army has moved off from Anum on a campaign. In the first, in April, 3 Akwamu farming villages were burned down and their inhabitants put to flight. In the second, at the beginning of July, there were Peki and Awudome forces along with the Akims and Anums, a total of about 3,000 men. By African standards this is a large army, and the share of the Kyerepong towns was about 1,500, which probably means a total Kyerepong population in this

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district of 6—7,000. The Akwamus are supposed to be able to waste 1,000 fighting men. This second expedition was involved in a battle on 13th July on the hills 6-8 hours away. The smoke and fire was visible from the Anum station. The Ahudomes were put to flight, but the Anums and Akims managed to defeat the enemy forces. There seem to have been many casualties - the next day the Anum drums were decorated with 20 bloody heads. During the battle the Anum women paraded around the streets in sections making a fearful noise. A number of young men who were sick retreated onto the station to be free from their persecution, and some members of the mission's staff who set off at 4a.m. for Ho with cotton bales were turned back by them. The third expedition set out the day the letter was being written. Another development which Schönhuth reports: an army has been gathered by 'the deposed Accra King, Dake' at Battor, in order to attack the Defoe and Volos. In this crisis situation the Akwamus have sought help from the Frobos, Anglos, and Ashantes - but have been everywhere refused because they are such unreliable allies. They even applied to the English for help, but this has been refused. At the time the second expedition was mobilising the missionaries had persistent difficulties with people asking for money for the war. Dompere send an embassy with an armed escort with the message that he must have 300-400 heads of cowries (he gives a rate of 2 francs 25 per head). Schönhuth proposed to buy them off with 100 heads. They have altogether on the station 450 bales of cotton, 1,000 worth in goods and something over 2,000 heads of cowries. The local people know something of this, and there is a real danger that they would have been given over to plunder if they had completely refused. But when the elder of the second section of Anum came with a request for 100 heads, Schönhuth sent him packing with the remark that he had not forgotten that it was this section of the town which was responsible for the incident on the Volta on his return from Odumase, and that had on that occasion got away with 80 heads. Eventually, by negotiating with the Anum chief in his war camp at Kwakubio, and after another visit by the head of the second section of the town to the Mission station, they have been able to get things under control. With the second section of the town they entered an arrangement whereby a 10 head present was followed by the quarter sending 60-70 men to help move cotton bales to Ho for an agreed payment of 100 heads. (Schönhuth mentions three sections of the town. He also mentions that the young 'king' of Anum does not in fact possess much in the way of wealth, and thus has to pay attention to, and not expect to control, the wealthier of his sub-chiefs and elders. The second section of the town possesses several of these. In the negotiations with the head of the second section of the town Schönhuth had Obobi present, and elder of the king's family, who has consistently taken the Mission's part, though he is not a man of great influence). Since these events Dompere has given Schönhuth a 13 year old boy whom Schönhuth likes very much - he is obedient and industrious. And the despatch of consignments to Ho has been going very well. With this third expedition everything is again full of war-like excitement. Dake has sent a message that he has defeated the Dafos and Volos, and burned their villages, and that the forces under Dompere should attack quickly and put an end to it all. Akwamu appears to be disintegrating. The Akwamuhene is at

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his wits' end in the difficult situation, and Bakai, the chief elder, who is known to have caused the collapse of the Freeman peace mission, is said to have fled to Anglo. A number of Akwamus have also fled to Zimmermann at Odumase and put themselves in his hands for protection. The future will show what the exact truth in all this is, but the Anums are mostly already away, and the rest will follow the next day.

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