

Basel Mission Archives

"Widmann and Mader to Basel"

Title: "Widmann and Mader to Basel"

Ref. number: D-01.04a.47

Date: Proper date: 23.03.1852

Description: Second journey to Akim Accompanied by three pupils Jonathan, Paul, Wilhelm and a number of carriers. Setting out 10 Feb. In five hours had reached the last Akropong farming village Hawanti, having passed through Amamprobi (described as the farming village of the Häuptling - King of Akropong). Metaase, Bünase, Apenkwa and Obum, Overnight at Hawanti, next day through poor farming villages of Oponto, Tumase, Koforedua, Engkwankwadia, Amosaw, Osucheng, spending the night in the latter. The trees of the Akim forest are straighter and taller than those on the Akwapim hills - they have seen trees of 6-9' diameter, with 80-100' trunks below the branches. On Feb 12th after two hours they came to Kukurantumi the first Akim village. Neat and clean, with fairly wide main street, the house walls made up of sticks, roffed with banana or palm leaf thatching, the outside daubed with white clay, the inside with red. From there passed through Maase, Jaginaseng, Boate where they spent the night. Next day through Tete, Pando, and into Kibi. On this day they passed many gold diggings, some with steps out into the sides for entry, some with ropes made of creepers. The writers describe the traditional routine of welcome and conversation in Kibi through the linguist in a way which Süess (Letter No 44, 1852) does not. S. definitely gives the impression of a tete-à-tete with the king. On their first introduction to the King in Kibi they describe him as seated with his council in a circle under a tree, the assembly making them feel Ehrfurcht - respectful awe. The king was sitting on a brass studded stool, with a bell at each side of it, under a large coloured umbrella....on his right the linguist, right in front of him several of his young sons. Widmann and Mader were lodged in a little house fitted out with some European furniture which belonged to a man who had served one of the European merchants on the coast. His real attitude to them of course they regard as unknown as yet. But he gave a very friendly impression with his many valuable gifts (vielen u. kostbar), and his many (häufigen) visits and in his requests for a BM station in Kibi. 17th Feb they continued to Gyadam, which they describe as bigger than Kibi (which they considered about the size of Akropong, except that at any time there would be more people in Kibi because they do not seem to go out to their farms like the Akropong people) and giving a more welcoming impression to the visitor, because it has a wider belt of cultivated land around it (Kibi they describe as having only a band of about 20-30 paces between its outer houses and the forest). They stayed there till the 19th, and then returned to Akropong in 2 days. As for Akim as a whole, they say that their description of Kukurantumi is characteristic of the towns and villages, and that the land earns its living by gold-mining, the arts of cultivation are not much developed. Gold digging they describe as hard work in which the whole family has its part to play, and this 'appears to exercise a good influence over their social and

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economic set-up'. The above summary was made from the text in Heidenbote 1852, No. 11, pp 90-92. This appears to have been edited from the manuscript, mainly stylistically, tho' the manuscript is difficult to read. The material which is marked as not having been printed on the manuscript is a long passage near the end, concerned with the advisability of setting up a mission station in Akim, and if so whether it should be at Gyadam or Kibi. The main point contra is transport and travel difficulty in the rainy season. The arguments for and against each station follow the material already abstracted on the whole, though the following are reemphasised or new points of note: (i) pro Gyadam; Widmann and Mader were obviously impressed by the greater agricultural activity in Gyadam vis-à-vis Kibi (ii) pro and contra Gyadam the town itself is 1/3 bigger than Kibi and its villages are nearer (also fewer and close for defence?) than the Kibi villages (though this is also used as an argument to show how much more influential station at Kibi would be. NB Atta's first village on the road from Gyadam is only two hours away). (iii) Auyeman at Gyadam does what the white 'governors' wants him to. (pro Gyadam) (iv) (contra Gyadam) these people are not real Akims, nor is their king a real Akim prince perhaps their arrival and settlement was caused by the last Asante war. (v) (contra Kibi) Kibi being lower lying might prove less healthy. (vi) (pro at least a school at Kibi) since the BM may be in competition with the Wesleyans in this area, to create good realtions with the most important and powerful king it would be advisable to place at least a school in Kibi. Atta seems indeed to be interested in the influence of the mission (presumably this referes to the influence of education: the phrase is used tout court with no indication of its full significance).

- Subject:** [Archives catalogue]: Guides / Finding aids: Archives: D - Ghana: D-01 - Incoming correspondence from Ghana up to the outbreak of the First World War: D-01.04a - Ghana 1851-1853
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