

Basel Mission Archives

"Mader's Travel Report"

Title: "Mader's Travel Report"

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Description: Report of a journey to Akwamu. Little information on the journey through Krobo. The first Akwamu town reached was Kotropee, apparently on the bank of the Volta, A fetish priest here forbade the catechist trainees from entering any of the houses because they were wearing European clothes. In Akwamu they were received and lodged by a 'Feldherr' by name Kwame Boo, probably accompanied with Mader because it was late evening, and there was a fetish prohibition on the King meeting them. In the morning the King received them with full ceremony in the assembly of his elders and people with firing of guns etc. In describing Akwamu Mader writes as if the development of trading is something to happen in the future - they foresee a time when there will be steamboat connections between Ada and Akwamu, though the river will not prove easy to navigate where it flows past the end of the Akwapim mountains. The town site is little above the level of the river's and is therefore hot, especially as it is hemmed in on three sides by hills. There are also swamps around it in the wet season. Around it are groups of ruined houses, and there is discussion as to whether these are from some previous river-side town, or whether they are a sign that Akwamu itself has declined. Mader estimates that it has about half of the population of Akropong: They are farming peoples, mostly in cooperation with the local peoples. Akwamu seems to be in some sort of secret alliance with Asanti, and could be a bridge between Akwapim and Asante. The king's rule seems rather despotic, and this makes Akwamu like Asante, so does the history of the cruelties of the former Akwamu, though publicly at least these are no longer practised on such a scale. The missionaries noted that they saw hardly one healthy young man in the town, and people seemed old before their time. Though the chief welcomed them, his face was stamped with a coarse vulgarity. The whole life of the town seemed subject to the fetishes, and Kwame Boo told them in quite matter of fact way that 4 slaves had been killed at the recent death of one of the members of the Royal family. For the present Akwamu seems closed to the mission (this refers not to a prohibition by the king, but the likelihood of a response to the mission by the people). On leaving, they received no satisfactory reply to their request for a son of the king to be sent to school, and they were delayed for several hours by "deceitfulness" on the part of the king, when they were set to return (NB: the mission in Osu had had a lot to do with a son of the king, now about 10 years old, who had been in the fort as a hostage, and who suffered from epilepsy). After their return to Akropong, Mader heard that Kwame Boo who had looked after them very well, had been accused of poisoning and condemned to death. This is report he had reason to believe was true. The local mission people believe that he was really not guilty, and that he was removed by the king because of his wealth and eminence.

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