

Basel Mission Archives

"Süss to Basel"

Title: "Süss to Basel"

Ref. number: D-01.07.IV..63

Date: Proper date: 16.10.1856

Description: The letter includes some account of happenings in Gyadam. Before his departure he had prepared some people for baptism - a Gyadam young man, an Accra man who had been living in Gyadam for several years, and several of our own people. In his version of the history of the difficulties the king bought the cloth on 14 days' credit, and only later declined to pay. The pawn was actually banded over by the king, and Süss handed him back, after seriously threatening to retain him. The disorderly event in the mission compound emerged from nothing in particular, except that the two idlers in tattered clothes described by Baum are according to Süss' people sent by the government from the Coast over the question of the head tax. He also threatened to use his gun when the crowd of people who came with the king broke down the doors of his house - it was at this point- that the gun was seized. It also seems that in the week or so on each side of these violent scenes the missionaries received two consignments each of two loads (Kisten) of cloth. The second was brought from Christiansborg partly by a slave of the Gyadam chief's. Later the king tried to fine Süss 32 Thalers for threatening with the gun. He gives some history of his early days in Gyadam. How one of the king's wives having agreed to feed him for 2 months went away to trade after 14 days, but when, he appealed to the king for restitution of the goods, he had paid to the woman, the king gave him one of his female slaves to look after him (at this stage he went through two severe three-week bouts of fever). He remembers seeing from his sickbed a fish-trader passing through the town, from whom he bought fish. There is a long story about his supplies of meat from the king, the point of which seems to be that the king had not been a very careful host during his illness. Following from this is a history of conflict over the fixing of rents in which again the king is seen by Süss as not protecting his appropriately (Hence his desire, for a separate independent homestead). The trade theme emerges from this discussion too, at one stage Süss agrees to a price for the renting of a whole house, but the landlord shortly after takes back much of the house for his trading affairs (In this context the troubles which broke out between Süss and the king in .the summer of 1856 were simply a continuation in an intensified scale off difficulties which had existed before. Süss makes this point in the latter part of the letter, and indeed it is one that Baum makes at the end of 9 Aug 56, that Baum's coming increased the scale of wealth present in the station, and this sharpened the king's capacity. On these grounds Baum reckoned that the king's original protection of Süss was in the nature of a long-term investment. Neither comment on the possible discrepancy between this apparent objective and the amount of income the king was obtaining from the missionaries. Süss' rent palavers before he set up on his own were concerned with 12-25 thalers yearly. On the other hand one can see how Baum's coming may have upset

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a precarious balance of misunderstanding; on his fever-ridden journey to Gyadam he had had much carrier trouble, and been forced to pay as much as one thaler per carrier for distances like Kukurantumi-Gyadam. This sum had been the price for the whole journey Akropong-Gyadam before presumably the king wanted his cut of the new scale of incoming available from the missionaries. Another factor of course which does not emerge clearly from the letters is that Süß was getting more and more interested in the trading possibilities in sites like Gyadam; the dating of the growth of this is not clear, but again must have given the king the feeling that there were increasing resources to tax in this field. One minor social history point emerging from this letter is that one of the houses which Süß rented had locks on the doors put there by the landlord. Another point: he and Baum actually had plans for a journey to Ada to buy cattle when the trouble broke out.

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