

Basel Mission Archives

"Baum to Basel"

Title: "Baum to Basel"

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Date: Proper date: 03.01.1857

Description: It emerges from the text that he is keeping pigs and asking if he can sell the pork, spending his times of health in carpentry. The news of the sending out of two new missionaries to Gyadam arrived on a day when he could not read his letter till the evening but then he felt "as young as an eagle, and hardly knew what to do. I clapped my hands, beat on the table, jumped in the air (his staff laughed at his childish gestures, but he could not help them and laughed too)". The king of Gyadam once said that if the missionaries left, he would live in their house. After the first few pages in fact this letter is concerned with the question of what to do about Gyadam, in view of the bad health conditions there (as exemplified in the careers of both Süß and Baum - the first part is an account of his illness in the last quarter of 1856). The question is pondered from several angles - Agyeman (the king of Gyadam) has been extremely friendly to Baum since Süß left, but the brothers agree that his face shows a basic duplicity, and Baum agrees that when, for example, the king tells him that he can have a wide stretch of land reaching right to the banks of the Birim, it is more significant that in spite of requests for this to occur proper boundary stones have not been set up along the land already occupied by the mission. The people as a whole would probably want the mission to stay. Trade is somewhat slack since the troubles of the summer, but then in Gyadam, as in the whole of Akim, the missionaries have probably overestimated the possibilities of trade. The predominance of gold-dust as currency is a check on trade since it is bound up with so much dickering and fraud - even 6 year old boys in Gyadam are taught how to practice deception with the gold scales. The problem with land in Gyadam is that if the king makes land over to the missionaries in any permanent way he is pressed for similar by other people. There is some discussion of the relative merits of Gyadam and Dauromadam as mission stations, and indeed as sites for colonies of German settlers (Süß has suggested Gyadam would be suitable for this). Most of the points raised are the expected ones, but it is interesting that he compares Gyadam unfavourably with Dauromadam on the grounds that he knows that a few hours away from Dauromadam there is a market where twi and krobo are spoken, and different articles can be bought, while in Gyadam it is possible to buy only bananas, plantains and some meats. The second half of the letter is mostly taken up with a discussion of Baum's relations with Süß while the two of them were at Gyadam together. The main picture which emerges is of Süß being quite unable to live communally with Baum in the tense days of the struggle with the king. But Baum also says that there were only weekly prayers on the station: that he and Süß never prayed together about their difficulties: that as far as he could see never spent time in private prayer; and that he had the time and strength to go preaching away from Gyadam though he never did.

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