

Basel Mission Archives

"Baum to Basel"

Title: "Baum to Basel"

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Description: In describing the difficulties involved in getting people to act as carriers in the expedition with the two new brothers from Christiansborg to Gyadam, Baum says he had his two people with him. On arriving in Gyadam they found that a new house which someone had promised to complete was not completed, and still has not been finished - Baum complains that he has only been working with three men on the fields. He also experienced considerable problems buying building materials and arranging payments (inflated rumours of) are quoted to him. One interesting incident occurred when he needed bundles of palm leaves for thatching, and when this was known a group of about 20 men came and offered to bring some for him, at 24 Kreuzer. Normal price 6 Kreuzer. Baum refused - and a few days later was able to buy some at the proper price from a slave, to whom after they had agreed on 6 Kreuzer, he in fact paid 12. Baum preached it twi for the first time on April 26th. And he discusses the problem of preaching a little: It has to be quite unlike preaching at home (he implies a simplicity of structure by listing the sermon-designs common in Europe which you leave on one side in mission work). First you say what God is, because as far as he can see when he has talked about God in the past people have thought of the clouds in the sky. Even the two boys whom Süss gave catechumenal instructions to, and two mulatto boys from Osu who had baptised parents seem to think of God in this way. Baum also recites an incident in which a man had recently wished to seem pious, and he told him that he had been praying to God for gold. Baum asked him where God was and he pointed upwards. Baum then suggested to him that eternal treasure for the soul were more to be sought after, and that in this context gold was a "Nichtigkeit" (nullity), the man laughed and quoted a proverb to him. "Look up at the top of the trees, and you will see the vultures". As a comment he offered the aphorism that for the Akims, gold is their god - the belly is inappropriate in this case because they do not eat as well as Europeans, and apparently do not regret their diet much - he reckons he had heard a proverb which goes "Better an empty belly than a tired arm". Baum reckons local people do not really pray - he had asked his people about this and they say that people pray for health. He had asked his people if they pray themselves, and though they said "Yes", they wouldn't tell him anymore. He is clearly preaching not simply in Gyadam, but in the surrounding villages - his audience's number 10-50, though once in an afternoon he could not get anyone to listen in one village, although people were sitting around in the street. It is not done, however, for elders to stand around in the street, so that unless, as in one case mentioned, Baum preached near where a group of elders was sitting, it was unlikely that his audiences included people of this rank. Baum does mention one elder who stayed within earshot one day - his son visits him a great deal (In the discussion of this point Baum mentions that while before the

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breakdown in relations between mission and chief Agyeman came to visit them often, his successor came seldom). At p 10 of the letter he gives an account of the labour force on the station: (i) There is a man and his wife who have a debt of 32 Thalers which -they are paying off by working for the mission for 6 years. (ii) There is a man with a debt of 37 Thalers - he has brought his sister, and together they are working and praying off (1/2 or 1 Thaler each month) (iii) Another man with a debt of 25 Thalers. (iv) Three boys from Osu whose father and his youngest uncle together owe Baum 20 Thaler Süß had the system of boarding these people at the Mission station, but since the crowding at the station resulting from the coming of more missionaries Baum has been saying them only their monthly wages, and sending them into the town to sleep, though this cannot last long because of the bad influence the town will have on them. The monthly wages for the man and his wife are 4 Fr. 40. Baum says he needs more labour, but he has little desire to buy slaves. He has morning prayers at dawn for the people now in the station, and the whole labour force comes evening prayers after work. Baum also reports a case of a Fante who cohabited with one of the king's wives - for over a year he has been chained to the block and she is allowed to go about with her feet chained together, The man's fine is 68 Thaler, and since the price of a slave is only 30-36 Thaler he cannot raise the money. A message has come from the new governor that that the king may execute him if he wishes, but nothing has happened so far. Baum remarks that the king has 39 wives - they do not live in his house, but in the town, and while the oldest is 60 years old, the king usually takes a new young girl each year. (Subscripts from 22 and 26 July). Baum discussed news concerning crime and the English government. Atta at Kibi has just executed a man believed to be guilty of the death of his (the king's) mother 18 months before. Baum obviously puts some trust in the rumour that Atta has altogether put 30 people to death on his count, although when he visited Kibi in may he met a teacher sent there by the governor with whom he discussed the rumour, who said that Atta could possibly not have done this (Baum also reports a rumour that the teacher had left Kibi and returned to Cape Coast out of fear). Ada's twin brother is said to have left Kibi and settled in one of the Accra villages where he is seizing Akim people to sell them, this on account of pique (according to Baum) that he had not been chosen king by the people. Baum himself was asked to read a proclamation to Agyemang from the British government. This reported some ritual child murder in Akim, and recited the punishments meted out to the guilty chief, stated that life was given by God and could only be taken away by lawful authority, and forbids anyone enforcing the death penalty other than the Governor. Baum is sceptical about this - the proclamation is to be made known to everyone under British rule, but no Akim man could read it. Agyeman said that it brought him to money or clothes, so he was not impressed and said no-one should be told about it. Baum also comments that the Akim people like the British in the same way as the Jews liked the Romans. Baum also raises problems about slavery. He has in fact acquired a slave - the rumour about Atta's twin brother has reduced Akim's trade to Accra, and he has had many slaves offered him for sale. He has bought one, a very strong man, for 28 1/2 Thaler; he comments that this is little money

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for a slave, and they need more people. The slave was told straight away on purchases that he would only have to work off the purchases price to be free, and he seemed to come into Baum's possession willingly. A greater problem was presented by a woman slave who told Baum her master wanted her killed, and asked for baptism. In addition to the problem of what to do with a single dependent woman, what were the missionaries to do when someone sought refuge with them from the wrath of one of the kings? Furthermore, there was the problem that if the missionaries became known as a place of refuge, Baum thinks they would be overwhelmed with people the bulk of whom would not be grateful but think this was the missionaries' duty.

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