

Basel Mission Archives

"Auer: Report after Journey to Gyadam"

Title: "Auer: Report after Journey to Gyadam"

Ref. number: D-01.10.VII..30

Date: Proper date: 05.05.1859

Description: Reports that on the first day out (21 march) they spent the night at Habantew (the last Akropong village) where there were a party of about 12 Asantes with beautifully made baskets full of salt. Missionary discussions with them did not get very far: their comment was "Give us money". The fetish in this village forbade them collect water in a brass jug. On the journey beyond Akwapim territory they report that 2 ½ hours on from Habantew they came to Adyeso, a little place, where the path leads over a very steep hill where you climb over bare rock and loose stones. The other side of this hill are two hunters' houses. Half an hour away is Koforidua, where the houses are built of split sticks bound together. Only one house was occupied, the rest of the people were on the farms, so there was no lack of accommodation for them to spend the night. Auer is very impressed with the 5 hour stretch of jungle after Koforidua, and describes it as quite populated with animals and birds. He also points out how uncertainly the path maintains direction, and in one place recorded its windings. More or less half way through this great wood is the ruins of the village of Suhyen. Kukurantumi he describes as a village built with an almost European degree of order; after Kukurantumi they passed through Ati and Tafo where they spent the night. In Tafo were many gamblers. The missionaries had with them salt tobacco and some handkerchiefs with which to buy provisions and presents - old women came to them offering eggs for a pipe of tobacco. Auer preached that night with the help of an interpreter and had a sizeable and attentive audience - the gamblers stopped to -listen to him. Text: I Tim 1v15. Next day they reached Osiem in one hour. Widmann talked to the people (about eternity, and Christ as the way to the father) but the people listening laughed to one another most of the time. The poverty in Osiem is intense, and it is as bad as it is because the people do not realise how bad it is. They would like white people to come and improve things for them, and when you travel through they are keen to get what they can, and perhaps use some of it (In this paragraph is a short digression about fetishes in these villages. It is mainly designed as a background to the argument point that most of the things offered to fetishes in fact are either the worthless things (the worst pots or the waste from gold-digging) or else (if food) find their way into the stomachs of the offerers. However, he does describe two types of fetish seen, without localising either of them to villages. In one place he has seen a large black fetish surrounded by black pottery pots and dishes. In another are little balls of earth stuck up on the top of sticks. The latter is a gold-digger's fetish). Odumase is described as a dozen sleeping huts in the middle of the bush. The way to Fankyeneko is difficult, over rocky hills and through narrow valleys. Then one hour south-west to the Berem, and through Osino, a village built in two wings where a large hill stream joins the Berem, to Gyadam. In describing the view from the station Auer describes

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Kwahu, "behind which the Kwahu ridge rises abruptly. You can see a perpendicular black wall of rock, which must be at least 50' high" (Brethren Baum stood on the top of it, and the rock is revered as a God). Below, about 100 huts can be seen in Gyadam among the trees. On the station itself there is an air of life. Near the station two parties of woodcutters are at work, a stone house is being built, there are several busy carpenters, over there you can hear the singing in the school, and everywhere there are sheep and goats going about after food. Points of interest in the visits to Gyadam town: - The town catechist is living in the old mission station. - The school contains about 25 young boys and adolescents. - The old mission station is described as being at the upper end of the town, and was obviously much more impressive as an achievement than the new, while also looking quite adequate and pleasant as a mission station. When they visited the chief there was a Mohammedan there whom they described as a priest. About one hundred hearers attended Sunday morning a service in the town, text Matt. 28vv18-20. Afterwards there was some crude dialectic with the Mohammedan who certainly was acting as a missionary - preaching and claiming to have warned the Gyadam people, like the Basel Missionaries to give up fetishes. In their journey to Kibi the following towns/villages are listed with comments: Osino Saman where there was a standard for flying a flag Asokyi and Abinasu: Two small villages on opposite sides of a stream Asiakwa (reached at midday): A village built in 4 partes - or better built along 2 Main streets which cross in the middle of the town. Sedyomase Then a three hour stretch of forest to Tete, many gold pits. Tete, a large and beautiful village. A large man-like ape is to be found in this district. Apano, 15 minutes Kibi. In Kibi the king caused them some difficulty - being for short time angry that they did not greet him early enough on the first morning searching their belongings "like a policeman" and wanting to have many things. Although on the whole he was friendly, when they started to give him religious advice he yawned very quickly and turned to speak to his advisers. There seemed to be very few people in Kibi - Auer guesses that this is due to fears surround the death of the old king and accession of the new. One of the old king's sons is sick in a village two hours away - the other wants to come back to the Institute (they are described as having run away and been dismissed) but Auer and Widmann are clearly not certain enough of his character, although Auer says he was always ready enough to serve. Their departure from Kibi was delayed by the king who did not give them their reciprocal gifts as a means to achieve this. On the way back they passed Apano, and in Tete a slave of one of their old pupils had prepared them breakfast. 3 hours after Tete they passed Nyiansen, where there was a festival, 2 ½ hours later they reached Mmase, and in ½ hour back in Kukurantumi. In Kukurantumi they were pressed firstly themselves to preach, although it was very late; and the chief asked them to send a teacher, promising a plot of land and a house. Near Koforidua they came across very fresh elephant spore. He gives an alternative name for Habantew as Ahabantew.

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War: D-01.10 - Ghana 1859: D-01.10.VII. - Gyadam

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Contact details:

Basel Mission Archives/ mission 21, Missionstrasse 21, 4003 Basel, tel. (+41 61 260 2232), fax: (+41 61 260 2268), info@bmarchives.org

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