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"Mohr to Basel - The Main Report of the Ramseyer/Mohr Expedition to Kumasi"

**Title:** "Mohr to Basel - The Main Report of the Ramseyer/Mohr Expedition to Kumasi"

**Ref. number:** D-01.33.XIV..237

**Date:** Proper date: 28.09.1881

**Description:** There is a printed version of this report in Heidenbote 1882 pp 26ff, which covers the actual visit to Kumasi. Additional material: In talking about the preparations for the journey, Mohr says that Ramseyer had received reports from various people about the route, which had in fact been closed to salt and munition by the English government for some time. In fact just before they were due to set out the news arrived of an agreement between the colonial government and Asante, and it was said that salt was again moving north into Kumasi and could be bought there in the market. They were delayed in setting out because the Abetifihene Kofi Denkyi feared that their visit would be taken as a political gesture of his - the missionaries made it clear that they were going on their own initiative and responsibility, but had recruit carriers from Mpraeso, since Abetifi people were forbidden from going with them. (Mohr explains in outline political situation. in Kwahu, and says that Obo had maintained a secret link with Agogo 'the most notable town in Eastern Asante). 3 of Mohr's Begoro carriers also refused to go further out of fright, and he had to recruit new ones. August 23rd from Obo Twenedurase through Zwasihu (where Mohr preached on John 6.37) and stayed the night at Akwaboa. August 24th a hard day's journey to the first Asante Akim village, Sankore. They failed to get as far as Bompata, their actual objective for the day. A load of foodstuffs was sent from Sankore direct to Obogu for use on the return journey. Bompata they reached after 20 minutes the next morning. August 25th - passing through Bompata where their preaching was attended by a large crowd, they visited Adomfe, and stayed the night in Kurofa. In the former they found a Fante rascal, one of the 'bush magistrates' who function on the order of the Protectorate, settling disputes and being paid for same. Of course he was very pious and warned the people to take the preaching to heart. But the missionaries warned the people against him. In Kurofa they found a young man chained, and after Ramseyer's intervention, the chief promised to set her free. She had done nothing but she was a citizen of that part of Asante-Akim which was remaining loyal to Asante, and out a pure spirit of revenge she was being made to suffer. When the people repented of the chief's promise the next morning, Mohr told them that this was no way for them to behave if they were trying to get English protection - and the missionaries promised to try to intercede for Kurofa people imprisoned in the other part of Asante -Akim. August 26th - they preached in Kurofa Ezekiel 33.2., then after a hard hour's march reached Dwansa. The king, a relative of the Asantehene would not see them. Before the Asante-Juaben war this had been the capital of Asante-Akim, but now with its chief, has thrown off the Asante allegiance. They preached, on Col.1.12-13, then after a short march crossed the border into Asante at the river Owere, and a quarter of an hour later came to

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Domeabra. There they found several Kumase people, recognised by Ramseyer sitting with the chief. The linguist informed them that their visit to Kumasi must be announced to the Asantehene, and they were sending two sword-bearers to Eumasi for this purpose straight away. The missionaries proposed to spend the time of waiting in a visit to Agogo, and a messenger was sent to announce their arrival there as well. Mohr preached later in the day on the subject of the heavenly journey on which one embarks after changing one's character. They found a slave in the block whom they were able to have freed but they could make no way with getting the freedom of 4 people from Kufofa. August 27th - after 2.5 hours they reached Fwereem, from there the 40 minutes long walk to Agogo was along a broad way which had been specially cleaned in their honour. The welcome in Agogo was the most splendid of any they received, other than in Kumasi. As they preached the town they heard on all sides 'Ao! Sise ni!' (A pencilled margin refers to '4 Years in Asante' and the Asante word for white man being a derivation from Süß' name) - and Yaw Asamoa the king did his best to receive them in the friendliest possible way. When they went to see the place where the Ramseyers and Kühne had been lodged as prisoners they found the hut fallen in - Mohr remarks that not one of those places has survived. The king showed signs of real alarm when Ramseyer recalled his irons, and had to be assured that Ramseyer bore no grudge on the subject. August 28th - They had hoped that they could make an arrangement to visit Agogo every year in the Harmattan season, but they found that Asamoa was unwilling to contemplate any arrangement on the lines. He affirmed continually that he would live and die for the Asantehene - it appeared that as the farthest chief from Kumase in this direction he was not trusted - so that any visit to him would have to go through the formality of being known to the Asantehene. Nevertheless the secret link between Agogo and Obo was real enough for Mohr and Ramseyer to send their wives letters from Agogo. At a preaching they had almost the whole population to talk to - Mohr reckoned it was about the size of the population of Abetifi. Ramseyer began with Matt 11.26 (Come unto me...), Mohr took Acta 4.2 on the name of Jesus and young teacher Koranteng closed with a short word on Is. 4.22 (The Godless have no peace....). Despite pressing invitation to remain, they insisted that they must leave Agogo that day in order to be in a position to reach the Asokore farms in one day's march, rather than spend a night in the bush. On their return journey they travelled via Twerem, then down to Asantra, where a few people remained, and stayed the night at Wiawoso. August 29th - after they had descended to the Juaben plain they found themselves on a road which brought them in 6 hours to an Asokore farming village, Nyamfa. This was the area of the important Asokore Kola nut woods, where the trees are carefully tended. The village where they spent the night was in one such Kola nut wood. August 30th. Asokore was reached after 2 1/4 hours, a place which relatively speaking most Juaben people have returned. Afidwase and the capital Juaben are- still almost totally in ruins, only a few isolated huts have been rebuilt among the ruins. In Asokore they asked for a guide to take them to Totorase the village where the Ramseyer's son Fritz was buried. The previous chief of Totorase - which no longer exists - took them - they located the position of a hut which Ramseyer could remember, and found the

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banana trees under which the grave been made, but they could find no stone to mark it, and the king had not kept his promise or least not been obeyed. In Asokore they preached on the subject of life being the search for God. They passed through the ruins of Afidwase in ten minutes after leaving Asokore, and came to Juaben. There was a fetish priest there, and a vulnerable old man who took the role of the chief, which is not to say much considering the few people in the town. He said "The Asantehene has placed me here to give strangers fire for their pipes, and the departed-spirits water to drink." 31st August to 5th September. On their way towards Kumasi on 31st August they met a herald in Bomfa coming to meet them with the two sword-bearers from Domeabra. These brought the news that the Asantehene would meet them on the next Monday at sunset - so they had 5 days in which to wait. They spent the time in the district, preaching as far as, possible. For three days they were based on Asotwe, where Ramseyer renewed his acquaintance with Odogo. They sent another messenger in to the Asantehene urging that he meet them at least on Saturday, but the reply came that this could not be, since they were celebrating the custom of a linguist who died a few days before. Mohr comments that the real reason for the delay was the Asantehene's wish to bring in a large population from the villages around Kumasi in order to make the welcome of important strangers as imposing as possible - it is by this means that white men have been welcomed by a crowd of as many as 20'000. The kings in the Protectorate openly bemoan that they are no longer able to exhibit their majesty on such a scale. From Asotwe they went to a farming-village belonging to the Asantehene, Fomesua, after having passed through and preached in Abankurow and Tikurowni. And on the Sunday, separated in the morning, Mohr going to preach in Nboma-so, and Ramseyer to Koko-bra. On the Monday they went through Osubeng and Nsupow to Kumase. (From here the account is mainly printed). Additional material - that under the shade tree at Dadeso-aba they were the spectators of several .processions of mourners being led, toward the cemetery by fetish priests or priestesses. The market in which they were received was the Dwabirim. The King's wives' eunuchs were again in evidence and strictly obeyed by the men. The Wesleyan Missionhouse is in ruins. The 'other chief" to whom they had communicated there was Owusu Koko. (The account of the return journey was not printed in Heidenbote). Here was some anxiety about then they would be allowed to leave Kumasi. The Friday was the day of the audience, and on the next Monday the king's present arrived - £8 in gold dusts (plus sundry provisions). And in the end they were assured that they would be able to leave the following Monday. Their carriers felt that they were prisoners - several decamped the Sunday after the audience, though two came back the next day troubled by what their status would be without the missionaries. And Mohr reports that when they did leave the people whom they passed in the streets were surprised that the king had let them go so soon (this seems another of hints that he gives that the population of Kumasi were rather more hostile than Ramseyer portrayed them). The first night they spent at Ayigya, having had difficulty keeping up with the carriers. Next day via Fomesua, where the two ways fork, through Oboankrah, and then a row of fine-looking villages (Kwamo, Krapa, Adweso, Mmerease, Dosebi, Dadentam,

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Ampedame). In Oboankra they went into the forest to see those great granite blocks - and as well as the giant blocks they found other blocks strewn around in the immediate neighbourhood. They spent the night in an Odumase village (no name) and next day through Konongo to Obogu. They found building in progress in Obogu, and is a neatly laid out town. Although it belongs to Asante Akim it is at the moment independent of Asante Akim, Akim Kotoku and Asante. The background which Mohr gives to this is that several years ago the King was involved in a court-case in Cape Coast, was imprisoned and actually found himself carrying night-soil. He could have been saved by payment of £70, but no-one came to his rescue, and so, he resolved to cut himself off from his neighbours. Like the rest of Asante Akin he is deterred from pressing too hard to be admitted to the Protectorate, because of his dislike of any idea of slave- and pawn-emancipation. (18th Sep). On the Saturday they crossed the Kome after 2 1/4 hours, and found on its left bank some Kotokus settled. From Praso they left the usual way in order to visit Afosu, a village settled by colonists from Domeabra; in Afosu they met a Christian from Kukurantumi. Then they lost the way and came to an isolated hut built among the ruins of a village - this was Aberem, the village having been destroyed in the war when Gyadam was sacked. From there they reached Ekwae where they held their Sunday services. That day they walked through Asuom (where the people said they would become Christians if the chief told them to) Owiawoso, Tweapease, Mpeha, to Bomsu where they spent the night. The party separated there, Ramsyer travelling to Obomeng/Mpraeso via Obomosu, and Mohr going via Tumfa, Kwabeng, Anyinam to Begoro. At Kukubi on the Berem he found a ferry built on the same principles the cable ferries in Europe. The cable was 4 Spanish Canes plaited together, and made fast to trees on the banks, and a strong woodcutter is the motive power. According to reports the two missionaries heard in Kwahu and Begoro, Boakye Tengteng was already returning or about to return to Kumasi- Also, although the quality of the reception of their preaching is nowhere described in detail, Mohr says early on that the usual thing in an Asante village, during this journey, was for the whole population to turn out for street preaching. The most extended general account of affairs not printed concerns the condition of Asante Akim. He gives the reason for the movement of people from Amantra to Bompata as their wishing to declare themselves independent from Asante. He himself had had to quite re-orientate his idea of the geography of Asante Akim. He had thought that Obogu was the capital and the centre of the district with Amantra to the north. But instead they found Bompata - unknown by name before Brethren Dilger's visit at the centre, and Obogu, though a notable village on the edge of the district. Geographically it is clear that the work in Asante-Akim should be an extension from Kwahu. The Asante-Akim people have put themselves under the authority of Akim Kotoku, and wish, as is known, to put themselves under British protection. This is not surprising - Akims are still fleeing from Asante and settling in the district. Their appeal for a teacher is part of this strategy - they feel they will be safe if the missionaries station a man among them. The seceding towns and villages unfortunately live in enmity with those remaining true to Asante, and though this has not expressed itself in open battle, the trade way is closed (unlike

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that via Adanse), and many people are kept in chains having found themselves on the wrong side of the border. Many slaves are coming across the border, too, in order to enjoy their freedom in the Protectorate - and thus much money is being lost on, both sides. There are cases too of pawns not wanting to accompany masters into the independent area. On his side the Asantehene is trying to handle the loyal Asante-Akim people as gently as possible - they were in Kumasi a case arose in which an Asante-Akim man who had sworn the King's oath falsely was not put to death. On account of this instability Mohr thinks it would be unwise to station a man in Asante Akim, but the district offers rich opportunities to people conducting preaching tours. Describing the part of Asante Akim remaining under the Asantehene, Mohr lists its towns as Domeabra, Nyabo, Kononmo Twereem, Agogo. From there it is a hard day's march to the Juaben villages. According to the chief in Domeabra that town alone has lost 750 people (to the independent area presumably). Amantra has disappeared, except that the Asantehene has sent several people to settle there again. As an appendix to Mohr's account is some information about routes: 1. Begoro-Abetifi-Konongo-Kumasi 2. Begoro-Abetifi-Agogo-Kumasi 3. Begoro-Tumfa-Asuum-Obogu-Kumasi Mohr remarks that the 1st route is the least exhausting from Abetifi to Kumasi, and offers the most opportunities for preaching. Route 2 involves two days through thick wood to Agogo, and it is forest again from Agogo to Asokore, small farming villages excepted. And an additional advantage to the first route is that after Oboankra there is a mass of notable villages, while on route 2 you pass through the area of destroyed Juaben villages.

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