

Basel Mission Archives

"J. Müller's Report on a Journey around Akim"

Title: "J. Müller's Report on a Journey around Akim"

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Description: In a geographical introduction he remarks that though there are huge stretches of empty land in Akim, especially towards Kwahu and southwards towards the coast, there are frequent land disputes and if the neighbouring tribes encroach on Akim in any way - for example in snail collecting and hunting, then they must pay tribute. There are only 10 settlements of over 1000 inhabitants, but about 100 settlements in all, many only small hamlets. At present about half these can be reached on preaching tours. He writes forcefully about the difficulty of penetrating through the forest - many settlements are closely hemmed in by forest, others are surrounded by a low bush which is still difficult to penetrate. 'Their main business is, not trading, but digging for gold'. He remarks how filthy the job is, a mason (making swish) has a much preferable task. He also says that the most rewarding tracts are often reserved by the chiefs or fetish priests. 'It is characteristic of the Akim that have never been approached for advice as to how to be holy, but only for advise as to how to get water out of their diggings easily'. They are not concerned whether they sleep on the ground, or on a mat, or on a simple bed. 'But at present many Akims come to Akwapim and buy oil, and with the profits which they get from taking the oil to the merchants they buy salt and tobacco and cloth and take them into the interior.' At times they come in large numbers with loads of dried: snail and trade these in Akwapim. Apart from Asantes and Akims Mohammedans come through this district (Aburi) in small groups. Beginning to describe his actual journey he reports joining the Akim route at Mampong, descending from Mampong at the bottom of the hill passed for several hours through magnificent palm-farms before leading into the forest. They spent the first night in Koforidua and the next morning passed through several Juaben villages before arriving in Kukurantumi. Kukurantumi - You enter the Christian village directly after leaving the forest. There are 15 compounds, about 40-50 huts. Koranteng he describes as a proved servant of the mission, and stresses his promotion of an orderly Christian life in the village, and his building of the new chapel. The teacher he names as J. Asumeng. Ewi he merely says should be working among the heathen of the vicinity. The school has only 11 pupils. In his examination Müller found arithmetic bad. The teacher's wife has been many months in Akmapim. He went from house to house in the community greeting the people and was very pleased with what he saw - tidy clean houses, and it seems they live together peaceably. Several were absent carrying oil from Akmapim to the coast in order to earn some money. The community consists of people have come together from all parts of Akim and Asante. In Kukurantumi town, he heard later, 10 fetish priests had gathered for the obsequies of a dead fetish priest, though he had been poor and almost destitute. Asiakwa - he went from Kukurantumi to Asiakwa via Mmase and Anyinasing, the path being so bad he had to walk the

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whole-distance. Everything is in its early stages in the Asiakwa community. Mullings and the Christians live in the town still - an odum tree which they had prepared for its final felling was blown by a storm onto the half-built house prepared for Mullings. The site of the Salem is much threatened by such trees, and since it is near a fetish-site the local heathens are deriding the Christians about what had happened. There are few families in the community, most of the Christians are young people. Müller considered it urgent that they form a Christian village as had been done in Kibi, but this would be difficult in a place where the crown of the forest was 120' up. The service was well attended, but catechising showed how on its beginnings everything was, and the pupils in the school also had far to go. 'I stressed to Deacon Mullings that the young people should learn to read. Whether this can be achieved is questionable, however. One would do much better to require some knowledge of reading before baptism, and proceed more slowly to baptism. This would be good policy especially where the catechist is new to his job and possesses little authority. Mullings is industrious and willing and exerts himself, but not consistent and unexperienced. At the moment everything is at a stand-still in Asiakwa. Kibi - In Tete he found little hunger for the ward, but the local Christians have contributed to that situation their obnoxious conduct. To the school he must give the credit of being a place where the teachers have worked ably, and brought about a happy state of affairs. 'The fresh and happy life of the pupils and their prompt answers were very cheering.' Of course with only four classes and 40 pupils (6 of them actually resident in the school) the pupils-teacher ratio is much better than in Akwapim. They could do without Anoba, for example, or the youngest teacher in the girls' school. He is worried by the way the teachers have departed from the set syllabuses, however, and wonders if this is not the cause of their rate of losing pupils (his examples of topics taught out of turn not noted, except it involved the most junior teacher teaching through dictation of notes and the pupils learning such notes by heart; the actual loss rate is not stated). The community gives a very good impression - one seldom has a sense that God is acting in the hearts of his people as one has it in a service in Kibi. The town, by contrast, is in a poor shape. Even the palace will have to be repaired soon if it is not to become a ruin. Quite a few people came to the street preaching, but their preoccupation with their king being in prison drives away any other thoughts. Date receives high praise - industrious, humble, true servant of God, spends much time talking to people, especially among the heathen, by whom he is known and respected. He asked especially that church-tax should not be raised in Akim - all the members regularly contribute 1/2d every Sunday. Apedwa - the place where the king's wives etc. have gone since his imprisonment. Though there has been opposition to preaching Müller and Date were able to preach without hindrance, even in one of the villages where a funeral custom was in progress, an elder asking an obstreperous drummer to keep quiet. Of the four Christians they met only one: no progress is being made by this small group in clearing the mission land. Apapam - over 50 in the community, with 10 pupils in the school, all of Christian families. Apapam he estimates has 100 families in all. The mission land is partly cleared and some of the families live there already. The tiny

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chapel - 'stock'-walls and palm-leaf roof, a few windows openings - is right in the middle of the street at the entrance to the village. It is an answer to a 'gambling house' (Spielhaus) set up by the heathen, in the centre of the village with shingle roof and a flag-staff. You often see such a 'Spielhaus' in an Akim settlement. Tumfa - Teacher Okanta once more without his wife who had returned to her family in Akwapim for her confinement. There is only one family in the community - they are already on the mission land. A group of young men and women have already lapsed back into traditional practices. A rich man has been causing the Christians much trouble in Tumfa. Abomосу - 6 Christian families on mission land, some Christians still live in the town. A temporary chapel has been built in the middle of the path at the entrance to the town. The building of the deacon's house had been at a standstill since Date's departure. Presbyter Abraham complained that this was because of the unruliness of the community, so Miller asked each member if they were willing to obey the Presbyter and each answered 'yes'. He promised them a teacher as soon as the work was finished. Abomосу Müller reckons at 500-600 inhabitants. Asunafo - 40 in the community, some fallen away individuals holding up further progress by setting the village against Christianity. Part of the community lives on mission land. Kwabeng - met only three Christians, makes the point as with most of these new stations - that the catechist is very young, and found in street preaching that the people of the town were rather hostile.

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