

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Buck and Huppenbauer: From Kyebi to Kumasi and back"

**Title:** "Buck and Huppenbauer: From Kyebi to Kumasi and back"

**Ref. number:** D-01.33.XIII..215

**Description:** The letters No. 205, 213, 214 and 215 belong together. A summary of the four letters is given here. A report of the journey is also printed in "Der Heidenbote", 1881, pp 43ff (based on No. 213). The letter No. 215 is printed for the Friends of the Asante Mission, June 1881. Reports having had 5000 troops march by them - they reckoned that 50,000 people were present at their ceremonial welcome. The letter No. 215 is not a comprehensive translation, although it has a calculation which seems to be absent from the version in the "Heidenbote" and indeed from Letter No. 213 that they passed through 79 inhabited places, in most of which they preached. The letter No. 214 seems to be independent. Huppenbauer offers as part-justification for the journey the idea that the missionaries must be much more mobile if they are to have their full effect. In discussing their journey towards Kumasi Huppenbauer mentions the stretch of deserted woodland which stretches between Akim and Asante, and says that the Akim people have many horrifying creatures - one an enormous man clothed in iron. To prove his existence they told the story 80 hunters who went in search of him, only one of whom returned with a frequent of the iron, which was now a fetish in a village which the missionaries visited on their return journey. The fetish Huppenbauer says was an old European helmet gone rusty - they concluded it must have belonged to some earlier slave-raider who had been killed or in some other way lost the helmet. Describing the street preaching at Yayaso on the first night after leaving Asnum, Huppenbauer writes that it is no good when you are the first person to preach in a village talking about salvation in Christ, when the people have no idea that there is a living God, and have no idea what sin is. Instead you have to persuade them with different examples that there is a God who rules over men; and then by talking about the commandments you introduce the idea of sin. After Huppenbauer had finished speaking in this town Deacon Date took up the 10 Commandments with the chief who claimed to keep the Sabbath holy, but on the other hand agreed that they did not work all of the other six days of the week. Date also questioned people as to how they stood in relation to the commandment against adultery. They had a tent with them. In a description of their visit to Obogu Huppenbauer mentions conversations on the streets in evening, which went on so long the missionaries felt they were being kept from bed; and the fact that one of the topics discussed was Europe. They seem to have been repeatedly asked to sing. The report that they slept in the bed of the Chief of Odumase seems to have originated out of the fact that after their great argument with him about their movements, they had a further argument about where they were to sleep. At first they could find no suitable hut, so they started to pitch their tent. But then people told them that a leopard had been active in the village, and had mutilated no less than 5 people in their own huts in the previous few days. The chief personally tried to dissuade them from using the tent when they proved stubborn, but he was not able to persuade them to come into a hut. In

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several of towns during this part of the journey their coming caused a major panic - the worst example seems to have been Obohankra, where most people packed their possessions and left the town for the first night of their stay. One of the things which the people of considered a possible reason for their visit was that they were to force new laws on the Asantehene - but they explained on the contrary that they were ambassadors of God. After confidence had been established, Huppenbauer reports that many people came from the surrounding district to see them, and to hear what their 'Word' was. There appears to have been some to-ing and fro-ing over the question of when they would be allowed into Kumasi. In Obohankra they were told that they would meet the king on Saturday; after they had endeavoured to have this brought forward they were told they must wait till Monday, but they then acted as if Saturday was the day, having informed the Asantehene that he must not change his mind when he was dealing with Europeans. On the day when they expected to be taken into Kumasi they were lead throughh the bush on narrow footpaths, and believed that they were being deliberately led around till it would be too late to enter the town - they then refused to eat until they knew what the position was (they remembered this as a feared sanction in Remseyer and Kühne's account of their captivity). Whether they were being fair in their judgement is not clear, since the messenger who was sent off to the king to report their hunger-strike returned within 30 minutes with the answer that they should eat because they would certainly meet the King, and an advanced party of their own people whom they sent off to check that the path indicated was indeed leading to Kumasi returned with this assurance within a quarter of an hour. On the other hand, they spent the previous night at Ayegyeya, which Huppenbauer reckons was  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour from Kumasi, and they walked for much longer than  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour before reaching the town. Huppenbauer writes twice that this entry was on a Saturday (the account in Heidenbote has Sunday as the day of entry). Describing the various processions of welcome, he gives the name of the chief linguist as Opoku, the three senior princes bringing up the rear before the Asantehene as Nsuta Mampong and Bantama, and the Asantehene himself preceded by 4 boxes of gold dust which must have weighed 152 pounds (he gives no indication of how this figure was established). On the Sunday the King had given instructions that no-one was to disturb them. Date conducted a service in their lodgings from which some Ashantes were excluded by the sword-bearer on the grounds that they were a disturbance. In his description of the audience with the Asantehene he says that there were 15-18,000 people present. They informed the king that they were wanting to see whether it would be possible to travel in Asante, preaching. They were given by the king, besides a great deal of food, £16 gold dust. They wanted to refuse the latter, but were advised that it would not be tactful, so they took it to cover their travelling costs. Indeed, they needed much of it to buy gifts for the servants etc. who had been looking after them. The occasion when permission for street preaching was refused was a return visit paid by the missionaries to the palace after the king had visited them in their house, in order to see how they were accomodated etc. That occasion was not one which the missionaries found they could turn to conversation, however. Their street

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preaching was apparently received with considerable interest - the day they began it, their house was surrounded constantly and far into the night by people wanting to hear what they had to say. Writing in general about Kumasi and Asante, Huppenbauer says that the place where Ramseyer and Kühne stayed is now marked only by the mango and breadfruit trees which they planted - otherwise the place has become the sanitary tip for the town. It is half rebuilt - but is still a really big town, and very thickly peopled. The market is now of little importance, since the closing of the ways north, and everything especially salt and tobacco is exceedingly dear. People sigh under the hard yoke and long for delivery. Mensa does not have so many people executed as Karikari, he prefers levying heavy fines. Nevertheless Huppenbauer doubts if the 'murder-system' is totally disused - there was a terrible smell from the place where the corpses used to be thrown, and they were not allowed actually to go there - people turned them back, saying the king did not wish them to visit it. Missionary work would be impossible in the areas still under Asante rule, since they are all slaves of the Asantehene, and would not come forward for baptism without his permission.

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