

Basel Mission Archives

"Dilger to Basel"

Title: "Dilger to Basel"

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Description: Report on his journey to Kuwamu. Kwabi accompanied him on the journey. The report starts after Obogu, Konogo and Odumase had been visited. Their decision to go to Kumawu seems to have been largely a matter of the difficulty of travelling (owing to the rainy season and the roads) in the Asante Akim district, and the hope of better conditions elsewhere. They travelled through Dome, and Ani-Nsuwa, the latter a very poor village, the people more backward than any they had so far met. From there to Wiawoso, via a route on which there were many hamlets, though they only saw one. Dilger writes poetically on Wiawoso as being a town on a hill whose light cannot be hid; one thing he says is that the paths in the vicinity were broader and better cleaned (presumably than those he was used to travelling in Asante Akim). In Wiawoso they asked for a house to spend the night in which was willingly agreed though it was difficult finding one because many of the women from the Kumawu towns had fled here. Dilger preached on the text 'God is love' and they both had great joy in their preaching. In Wiawoso was also a very impressive figure - a Kumawu chief there with hill people. A calm and decisive old man. They exchanged gifts, and the chief gave Dilger one of his hunter to lead him to his town. The next day they travelled from Wiawoso to Woaso, losing their way at one stage (having gone on ahead of their guide) and finding a group of people in hiding under a step rock by a waterfall 3 hours march from Woaso. In Woaso they were met by the heir to the stool, and dashed paw-paws. He slept there on a bedstead covered with a grass mat, but both the bed and room were too small for him to lie straight. A house opposite to the one where they slept was shut up, and upon enquiry their host said that his sister's body was in it, lying in her coffin on a bedstead. She was also a sister of Kwaku Dua, the future king. When she died the Kumasis directed that her corpse should be left in this house - according to her dying wishes this brother had remained in the town ever since - he would rather die than see his sisters bones taken to Kumasi to be destroyed. The village probably held 1000 people, most of them were fled, but Kotia the chief had told them that would come back to see them if they would stay two days. In the event Kotia did not arrive back in the village on the appointed day, and the missionaries left without seeing him again. Their host and the dead woman's sister was Kotia's nephew. From Woase they visited - at the invitation of the chiefs - Ananaya where their preaching received a great welcome, especially on the part of the chief. The latter said that their message was the message they really needed, and when Kwabi asked him how he was so sure his reply was that experience told him this - had he not served God his hair would not be so white. They also visited the three hamlets together known as Teteabran - these were only temporary settlements of the Tetabran people. Dilger preached on the parable of the lost sheep. The next day they travelled through Ananaya to

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Obodomase. This is currently the head state of Kumawu in view of the fact that the Kumawuhene was taken away to Kumasi after the Juaben war. From Obodomase, where they stayed the night, they visited Mmedimmesabi, a fairly large place, from which the people had not fled, and two little villages Besoro and Abease. The people in these two offered to come to Kumawu to hear the preaching in the morning but the mission party explained that this was a 'Word' for women and children as well as sent and so preached on the spot. The following morning they visited three further farming settlements Domaben ('I am the light of the world' was the text there) after which they passed the grave of the recently dead young chief of the village, whom their escort greeted by name, and came to two villages called Tomade. There all the population came out willingly to the preaching except one man who tufted out to be the fetish priest. Dilger feels it noteworthy that he was suspicious of that although in his opinion he could not have known of their purpose in coming. In an aside he writes that the fetish priests are accorded more honour in Asante than in Akwapim Akem and Kwahu. Even in the smallest village the fetish Tano, imported from Gyaman, is honoured with a small well-built fetish house (it is not clear whether this last refers specifically to this particular settlement of Tomade or not). In Kumawu he preached a sermon which Inspector Josenhans had told him would cause stones to be thrown in the mission field, but in fact none were thrown though the old man of Woaso stood up and left the gathering part way through. Kumawu is in a sad condition - a larger and a smaller group of houses separated by a high grass. The town-site itself is much greater than what remains. The Kumawu people say it once had 77 streets and alleys, and was the same sort of size as Kumasi. Also that if a man died he was buried before the mourners could arrive at the house - and that a child who had strayed only a little way from his parent's house would not be able to find the way back. They say that only an eighth or a tenth of its old size. Dilger reckons it to about one fifth. However, Dilger says the town is not very small even in his day, for on the Sunday in order to give everyone the opportunity to hear the gospel they preached in 3 different places. The town has suffered heavily from the depredations of the Kumasis and Juabens. He was constantly being shown places where rich men lived who had been plundered. In one case a man had lost 60 or more slaves. In another a man, still rich, claimed that he had been ambushed by the Asantes and had lost 600 dollars & 25 children and grown-ups. Dilger concludes by writing that there was a general desire for a teacher. He remarks (while in the Woaso-Tetebran district, though the implication seems to be that this is generally the case in the Kwahu hills) that the tall trees are less closely packed than they are in Akem and that you see patches where the underbush had been cleared and pineapples are grown. He also writes that in his two days with the silent people of Kumawu he began to feel something of what it must have been like living with a deceitful people for 4 1/2 years as Ramseyer and Kuhne had to. (The only overt sign of hostility in Kumawu was that it took a long time to find them a house for sleeping).

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