

# Basel Mission Archives

---

"Ramseyer's Report of his Exploration Journey Early in 1884"

**Title:** "Ramseyer's Report of his Exploration Journey Early in 1884"

**Ref. number:** D-01.43.II..14

**Date:** Proper date: March 1885

**Description:** The background to this journey was the fact that while the extent of the Afra, plains to the Northeast was known, its extent, and its population (if any) to the north was unknown. The Kwahu people said that in 10 days one reached the province of Ateobu; further once in the early 1880s a deputation from Ateobu travelling through Kwahu had called at Abetifi and warmly invited the missionaries to visit their home country; and it was known that Ateobu was like Kwahu one of the provinces which had thrown off the Asante yoke. The expedition came to 16 men - Ramseyer, Kwabi, Kwabi's son, 6 hammock-carriers, and 7 carriers. Ramseyer remarks that it would be courting death to cross the hot grass plains on foot - he envies his friends in South Africa with their wagons. There is a long description of the trials of getting the group together - one of the carriers in the end could not come because one wife had sworn the king's oath in her wrath at another wife, and had been fined 2 Benas, which the husband had to pay. Because of this kind of problem the party could not set out at time. Their first halt was at Sadae, a place they frequently visited on preaching journeys. The village was swarming with Salaga travellers. They were easily recognisable by their lean and hungry look. They were travelling with shea butter and other products. Some had slaves with them, though Ramseyer remarks that although it is sad to see such people in Kwahu they at least will not lack food, and like many others may sooner or later find their way into the land of freedom. Ramseyer and his party bought provisions in this place. They spent the night at Aframso, a place with about 25 huts not completely walled because of the heat. Ramseyer had never been there before. He remarks that it was the place where at certain times of the year hundreds of Kwahus go to catch fish. Someone brings a bundle of a herb called efwe. This is pounded and put together in a heap. The next morning the fetish priest murmurs some words, whereon the whole mass of people in a wild scuffle grab handfuls of the efwe and drop it in the river - at which the stunned fish begin to come to the surface and are gathered up. (The fish are a species of catfish). This is a day of gross intemperence, and respectable people do not let their daughters get involved in it at all. Aframso was crowded with people but a hut was found for Ramseyer in which he spread his indispensable mosquito net. They met in Aframso a friend of the missionaries - an under-chief of Abetifi who was going to be healed by Krakye Dente. Ramseyer remarks that he had been a conscientious attender at street preaching. He is also a 'son' of Atieyaw. Next day he was interested to see how the heathens greeted the fetish Afram with a hiss, and they passed Gyanobofo and came to Kotwebo, both resting places, the latter under a hill of the same name. He was interested to see his men make fufu by pounding boiled yam with sticks on a flat rock. Next day (15th March) over the Bosombone river, they spent the night at Ohemang-ama, a hunter's hamlet.

# Basel Mission Archives

---

Ramseyer adds that there are many such on the plains in this direction, selling their products in Akim and Kwahu. Their greatest stroke of luck is to kill an elephant - the tusks are sold for 4/- a pound in Kwahu. At this place they met a hunter with 2 full loads of flesh and fish, and three parties of Salaga travellers, including some acquaintances from Abetifi. Next day after 1 1/2 hours they left the main path to Krakye and Salaga and struck out for the North West. They slept in an unnamed and very bad resting place that night. Next day they came to the first village after 1 1/2 hours - Kancku, a settlement with about 50-60 inhabitants, Asantes, earning their living by hunting. Their prey seemed to be mostly buffalos and various kinds of antelope, although they had also killed an elephant. They met there at Salaga caravan travelling to the coast via Kwahu, led by two Fantes from Cape Coast. They were both Christians - one judging by his conduct was little better than the villagers. The other claimed to be half-Mohammedan and prayed audibly not only in the Mohammedan fashion to Allah, but also in Twi and English to Jesus. 'On the coast already many Fantes with their superficial Christianity have become Muslims. Ramseyer's preaching was welcomed by the people. Next day they slept at the hamlet Sabu-so. 19th March they reached the town of Anyina-efi. A very friendly reception and gifts of food exchanged for gifts of headkerchiefs etc. Heard reports of great commotions in the district because the Ateobu chief has closed his road to Kola-nut caravans - they must pass through Krakye where a duty of 100 nuts per load is levied. (Ramseyer offers little general information about the Kola trade - a load of nuts is sold for 6/- in Kwahu, and 30/- in Salaga. They are especially produced in Kwahu and Asante-Akim). 20th March - they crossed the Sene river, and came to Nkumem. There they met a group of ambassadors from different Asante states - Mampong, Nsuta, and Asante-Akim on their way to Krakye to put themselves under Dente as several Asante states have already done. The motive was surely to enable them to trade with the interior, something impossible for states adhering to Kumase since 1874 because of the threat of death. As leader of the expedition Ramseyer found to his immense surprise an old acquaintance from his imprisonment in Kumase - a Fante Christian who had been imprisoned with them. Sadly he was no longer a Christian, but called himself a Mohammedan, though Ramseyer saw later how haltingly and with what great effort he got out a couple of Mohammedan greetings and formulae. From there they reached Aberewanko, the first Ateobu village. There they found themselves among a new people, the so-called potofo barbarians because they speak such impure Twi. They also looked a different race - their cheeks were tatoed like those of people of the interior tribes. Although they were technically slaves they enjoyed freedom in practice. They could speak Guano, and also the vulgar dialect of the Salaga people. A young man called Kwaku seemed to be the man in charge of the village - he it was had to know Ramseyer's mission, find him accommodation etc. 21st March - across the plain, but in this district it was being busily farmed. Ramseyer was astounded to hear that a man might plant as many as 1000 yams in a year, and held the people up as an example to his Kwahu carriers. He saw as well as yams, groundnuts, rice, and a little corn. Ramseyer refused to be delayed to allow the Ateobu king to prepare a grand welcome. Ateobu he felt

# Basel Mission Archives

---

was a town with a history judging by the huge stems of the shade trees in the main street, He was surprised to find himself in a town with flat roofs. The Ateobuhene was wearing a 'country cloth' with silk embroidery. (His name was Gyan Kwaku). He was alarmed about reports of another white man in the district, and wanted to know what this implied, though Ramseyer tried to assure him that there was no question of his mission and Captain Kirby's being interrelated. Ramseyer's presents to the chief were a carpet, some lights, some matches, and pins and needles. 22nd March. Visited the king in his palace - a building about 4-5' higher than the average house - the rooms mostly small, and the walls indicating a building of advanced age. Going through dark rooms visit the king he stumbled over clumps of earth which he presumed must have been steps. In the street people showed him a brass beaker, 2 1/2 in diameter, quite covered with verdigris and half filled with rubbish. They said it had fallen from heaven - Ramseyer could not see the maker's mark. The more Ramseyer stayed in Ateobu, however, the more he was impressed with the skill and industry of the people - e.g. in house building. The house in which he stayed was, he writes, one of the best - the walls were covered with a dark paste, and then painted with the juice of a certain tree and so water-tight. Enquiring about the geography of the district he heard that there were many farming villages 1/2-1 hour from the town. Then 4 to 5 hours to the west was the small province of Trofwe, a subject of the Ateobuhene. 10 hours to the west was mother such - Abease. He could discover nothing about a Lake Buro, and reckons this must be really the river Poro 3 hours to the North, which one crosses on the way to Pran and Salaga, and which joins the Volta at Yeji. Ramseyer comments that it must be a notable river - the Ateobu fishers use harpoons when catching fish in it. 23 March. They preached before a large crowd, including the Ateobu notables, Ramseyer on 'Come unto me', Kwabi taking it up and repeating some of Ramseyer's preaching, and stressing that it is only through Jesus that a person can become holy. Parting presents came from the King - 3 sheep and many loads of yams, a sheep for Catechist Kwabil and for Ramseyer a 6lb elephant tusk. 24 March and after. Since the Müller-Mähly-Zimmermann expedition had found so little of note in Salaga Ramseyer had decided not to trouble to visit there, and instead set out for Krakye, 5 days journey. He passed Kakofu (still an Ateobu village) and then Dentemanso, Bantaman, Apaaso, Prangwiase, Basa, Primase, Kofere. Several years ago the three small district chiefs from this area with a number of their followers went to Krakye to put themselves under Dente - whether out of fear of the Asantehene. Ramseyer does not know but they have never returned, and this is much regretted by the people of the villages and the hamlets. The chief town of this Dwang district is a Wiase, but Ramseyer is not sure whether this is Prangwiase, they spent the night there but it is not a notable town. In Primase Ramseyer saw for the first time the round huts about which he had heard so much. It was a guan speaking area, but many of the people understood Twi. Little of note is written about Krakye. The chief and Kwaku Sakyi, the priest of Dente, were away from the town, although in contact with Ramseyer through messengers. Ramseyer judges that Dente holds its subjects by fear - he heard that a man had been executed recently for publicly arguing that Dente did not exist. In Kete they found many

# Basel Mission Archives

---

Mohammedans, including many newly arrived who could not speak Twi. A mohammedan band escorted him back to his lodging. 31st March - through Makokwae and Tuntumkurom, Ramseyer deciding to go towards Tapa since the other missionaries had visited N. Buom. 1st April - spent the night in Akaneem - houses on the Akwapim model. On the following day they visited Tapa where were listened to most attentively, following which the chief said that the 'Word' was a sweet one, but how could they reform their way of life according to this word if no teacher was with them? And they pressed him to make a request for a teacher for Tapa to Basel. In Tapa they discovered that the Boem state, though under Borada, consists of 3 sections, Borada, Worawora, and Tapa. Part of the Boem people speaks Guan, but part of them speak only Twi - e.g. the Tapa people. They went on from Tapa the same day and spent the night in the hamlet of Brankoro. Besides the houses of the inhabitants there were several round huts put up by Mohammedan traders, and the same night that Ramseyer slept there the trading parties in the village coming from both north and south. The village is in fact on the main path between Pae and Akoroso. From here his route followed that of the other Salaga party, except that he sought out the Wusuta villages and met the people who had been captives in Kumasi at the same time as he. They wanted to know why no missionaries had been sent to them. NB an account of the above journey was published in the Mitteilungen of the Geographical Society in Jena, apparently from a different manuscript.

- Subject:** [Archives catalogue]: Guides / Finding aids: Archives: D - Ghana: D-01 - Incoming correspondence from Ghana up to the outbreak of the First World War: D-01.43 - Ghana 1885: D-01.43.II. - Aburi
- Type:** Text
- Ordering:** Please contact us by email [info@bmarchives.org](mailto:info@bmarchives.org)
- Contact details:** Basel Mission Archives/ mission 21, Missionstrasse 21, 4003 Basel, tel. (+41 61 260 2232), fax: (+41 61 260 2268), [info@bmarchives.org](mailto:info@bmarchives.org)
- Rights:** All the images (photographic and non- photographic) made available in this collection are the property of the Basel Mission / mission 21. The Basel Mission claims copyright on the images in their possession and requires those - both individuals and organisations - publishing any of the images, to pay a users fee.