

# Basel Mission Archives

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"J. Müller's Report of a Journey to Akim in March 1868"

**Title:** "J. Müller's Report of a Journey to Akim in March 1868"

**Ref. number:** D-01.20a.I..20

**Date:** Proper date: 03.06.1868

**Description:** He reports that the steep hill you climb on leaving Ahabante is called Kyatamya by the Ga-people. Koforidua is a small village, and deliberately built poorly, since a bigger settlement would attract the jealousy of the neighbouring tribes and cause border troubles. In Koforidua they were brought water to drink in a snail shell - he remarks that such large snails are an important food source in Akim, and that there was hardly anyone in Koforidua since everyone was out catching snails. The smoked snails are exported to Akwapim. Poultry is - as in Accra and Akwapim -- imported from the lower Volta. The grasscutter is much eaten, and dogs which Müller reports are imported into Akim for this purpose. Other forms of game are killed and eaten - Müller mentions a type of buffalo, though these are not much shot partly because it is dangerous, and partly because a man who has shot one is taunted. From their forests the Akims export gummi-copal and what is called 'Guinea grain' - a seed like laudanum, which is sold in Accra and Cape Coast and exported to Europe, though it fetches lower prices than East Indian laudanum in Europe (NB the gummi-copal he writes is exported chiefly to the USA where they pay very high prices for it). The route he describes is narrow, root ridden etc. They met no people between Koforidua and Kukurantumi, and no people between Kukurantumi and Asafo. The population centres which impressed them were the circle of villages around Kibi, and that around Asiakwa. He makes an estimate of populations based on the number of weapons in each town: Kukurantumi: alone 150 guns, including the surrounding district up to 3-4 hours, 340 guns. Kibi: alone 300 guns, including the surrounding district 850 guns. Asiakwa: alone 400 guns, including the surr. district 980 guns. Begoro, 700 guns Asiaman, 600 guns Akyase, 800 guns Asuom, 200 guns. Multiplying this figure by 5 (the proportion used in calculations about Akwapim, Müller does not say by whom) and one gets a total population of 22,000. Other missionaries have estimated 25,000, others higher still - he feels that 20-25,000 is the right estimate. He has checked this against the poll-tax estimates which give 13,364 for Kibi-Akim, and 7,935 for Gyadam-Akim. Since then the Kibi people may have increased, the Gyadam people either scattered or migrated to the western district. The population as a whole has probably remained about the same. Müller uses these figures having judged that the lists provided by the mulatto poll-tax collectors were too detailed to be falsified - they gave themselves too much trouble to have been doing the job dishonestly. If missionary estimates for Akwapim and Krobo make the poll-tax figures of 13,000 and 15,000 respectively seem too low, Müller is not sure that they are not too optimistic - he himself does not know of any certain grounds for the missionaries' arriving at the figures they have offered. He felt that Akim houses and villages have a pleasing aspect - cleaner than those in Akwapim and on the coast, in the better houses with the interior of the walls and the

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floors plastered with a shining red clay. Under the roofs are decorations of lattice work, representations of animals, and the doors too are decorated. The finest house they saw was that belonging to the chief in Asiakwa. Overall the Akim people made a good impression on them. True they were met by some coarseness in Kibi and Kukurantumi, but in Tette and Asiakwa the whole town turned out for preaching, and they were all clothed. Müller asked about the latter and learned that they put their clothes on out of courtesy for their European visitors. He reckoned there was an element of hospitality in their all being present at the preaching - nevertheless one is not treated with such consideration in Akwapim or on the coast. Perhaps the Akims are not so used to Europeans. Müller also writes about the gold—diggings. He arrived at the best time to see them and found, near Kibi, a place which sounded like a fair through the forest as they approached it - 300-400 people at work. The surface of the earth was a yellow clay, it was the underlying grey clay which was being washed for the gold. He remarks that there is no co-operative work by which larger holes are made, nor is any attempt made to find and work the gold-bearing quartz. Though the earth is honey-combed with holes in some places people do not join them up and so exploit the gold-bearing clay which lies in between them. The washing he describes as being done in wooden bowls 2' in diameter with a shallow inverted cone, actually under the surface of the Berem, at least in the early stages. The wood used was the same as that used for canoes. Nuggets of up to 30 ounces are found - indeed a Gyadam miner found a 60 ounce nugget in 1859. Müller gives the vision of the worth of nuggets as 1/3 shares to the Okyenhene, the elders, and the miner - no mention of Eisenschmid's 'owners. Gold is the currency in Akim, silver is now used a little, following the introduction of silver by the mission, but it is gold which has to be used to buy provisions. Describing the Kibi station Müller reports inter al that the community consists of 10 adults, 25 boys in the boarding school and 7 girls. The coffee plantation has 6-800 trees, and yielded 200 pounds weight at the last harvest. The 10 adults include only 6 local people, none of whom live on the station. In Kukurantumi the Christians have begun to make their own coffee plantations. In Kibi he saw the Sunday street preaching, a regular service in the open air. About 90 heathen were present, all dressed. When parties of non-Kibi Akims are in town then the numbers of onlookers may be as many as 200. The School he thinks is good, and it would be better to keep it so rather than extending it and reducing standards owing to their lack of competent catechists. To this report is added a subscript by Missionary Schrenk, dated 10 July 1868. He clearly regards Kibi as a very good station, an ideal community.

- 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-01.20a - Ghana 1868: D-01.20a.I. - Africa
- Type:** Text
- Ordering:** Please contact us by email [info@bmarchives.org](mailto:info@bmarchives.org)

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