

# Basel Mission Archives

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"Zimmermann to a small Number of Gold Coast Missionaries and to the Basel Committee"

**Title:** "Zimmermann to a small Number of Gold Coast Missionaries and to the Basel Committee"

**Ref. number:** D-01.21b.VII..8

**Date:** Proper date: 22.07.1869

**Description:** Report of Peter Nyarko's journey into Akwanu/Asante held territory 7 Messengers were sent, including the ex-Catechist Peter Nyarko, and another excluded Christian, Andrea Mate, son of a former elder of the church. These two were at the head of the expedition. They had set out 16 days previously. The Kotropeli chief welcomed them, and sent them on to Senkyi with of his servants as escort. Senkyi is on an island in the river 'in' Atimpoku. The Senkyi chief sent them on with messengers to the King's Wife in Akwamu, who is responsible for the town in this situation. She immediately sent them on to Pese accompanied by two women, and 14 men to crew the canoe(s). All of these officials fear an attack by Krobo or Ga in the absence of the Akwamu army, and were very obliging on that account. The Pese chief's deputy was less obliging. Nevertheless, he allowed them to go to Anum on the Friday thirteen days before the despatch of this letter. They found Anum town burned down totally deserted. The station buildings, on the other hand, were almost undamaged. The property was almost totally plundered, however. Only some heavier things - big pieces of furniture - remained, and so did the cotton in the store, though it had been turned out of its sacks, and they had been taken. From Anum they went three days march north through the Peki towns, and the once thickly-peopled Peki valley and Ayigbe land. They found all the towns burned down and empty. The Asante-Akwamu camp is at the foot of the Nyankpo mountain, on the top of which Dompre's army is supposed to be. The Akwamuhene welcomed them, but the Asante general was less friendly, openly told them he thought they were Ga and Krobo spies. The next day an open palaver was held, and they learned that the missionaries had themselves expressed the wish to be taken to the Akwamuhene once they had been captured by some Asantes. The latter had wanted to release them (Zimmermann adds '?') but the Asante general had said he was not permitted to do that without instructions from Kumasi. Perhaps, he suggested, the missionaries would make their appeals there. All their appeals against this were in vain. At this, the missionaries had asked for a place some way away from the scenes of blood-shed (Zimmermann adds in parentheses that although the men of Anum etc. mostly fled, and there has been no serious fighting, the Asantes have already beheaded 970 prisoners and killed many women and children). At this the missionaries were taken to a place on the Volta 2 small days' journeys North West of the camp - Nsuta. This is on the same side of the Volta, and a few hours downstream from Dschome which was once visited by Süß, Steinemann and Hornberger. They are currently there, served by two of their own people, and in good health. (Zimmermann adds in parentheses that this almost certainly means they will be going to Kumasi, since a main road leads from Dschome and its great market to Kumasi). Having heard all this, the Embassy asked

# Basel Mission Archives

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for the release of the prisoners, or at least to be given permission to see them. The Akwamuhene and his chiefs supported 'this' request, and so did the Asantee who have received good treatment 'from us' in the past. But all this was in vain. If instructions come from Kumasi that the missionaries are to be released, they would be brought to Pese in 8-14 days, and P. Nyarko could collect them. The Embassy could not go up to Nsuta, the ways were too unsafe (Zimmermann adds '?'). Nor were they allowed to write, neither to the captives nor back to Odumase 'in order not to let the cat out of the bag as far as the Asantes were concerned'. They were simply to enquire again in Pese in 14 days' time. They could get no further with the negotiations, and so they came away with heavy hearts (Zimmermann writes of them as 'poor men who had no easy path to travel'), arriving back in Odumase on the evening the letter was written. In Akwamu their fruitless journey caused consternation. The 'Queen' immediately sent messengers again up river to press for the freeing of the missionaries and saying that if this did not occur they, the women, would leave the town and the Volta set and set out for Asante. They pressed Peter Nyarko to go back with these messengers, but he refused: the Akwamus are totally in the hands of the Asantes. In the Asante-Akwamu camp they also saw the white prisoner — probably a Frenchman - from Ho. He was not able to speak English to them, however, and they were not allowed too near him. They were asked if he were a missionary, but they replied that they did not know this, and did not know the man. People had also wanted to give them some mission property, but they had said that without having the missionaries in their charge they could accept nothing else. The other white man was a short young man with a beard. They left the letter for the missionaries with the Ahwamuhene, asking him to send it on: but this can only be done with very great difficulty. The carpenter Kwao from Dauromadam was in the camp, and assured them that he had seen the missionaries with the Ramseyer child, and they were well. Their 'people' had mostly in fled before the Asantes came. Lay Smith and Nils Quist (Z adds to the latter '?') are also prisoners of the Asantes. No Akras or Akwapims have been killed, however, they want to release them once Dompere has been killed. In this situation it appears from the closing paragraph of the letter the missionaries are against violence against captive Asantes, but feel they cannot speak against having Asantes held captive until a general release of captives takes place. Once more Zimmermann mentions that the educated Gas are pressing the Krobos to behead Asantes held captive. He also repeats a rumour that John Ansah has written to the Asante general ordering the release of the missionaries in the name of the Asantehene. Zimmermann judges this to be untrue: Peter Nyarko had heard nothing of it. But argues that it suggests the Mission should make a direct approach to Kumasi via John Ansah, or perhaps the Governor at Elmina. Zimmermann asks Rottmann to send up a few pieces of cloth and some tobacco for use as presents in the negotiations happening from Odumase.

**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-01.21b - Ghana 1869: D-01.21b.VII. - Odumase

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