Basel Mission Archives

"Berichte über Reisen nach Salaga / Reports about journeys to Salaga"

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Description: Reports from David Asante (German), Theophil Opoku (English) and F. Buss (German) on their journeys to Salaga], with a German translation of the report from Opoku (and a type-written transcript of Opoku's report, pp.33-40). Summary on Asante's report: The account was written down only at the express command of the Basel Missions Committee, and Asante says that he has done it as far as he is able from memory, and from his notebook. The inspiration for the journey was the idea that he might be able to purchase cows for milking in Salaga, now that the way to be Salaga through Kwahu was open. He could however get no-one to go, since everyone was afraid of robbers, elephants, lions, leopards etc. He was troubled about how to raise the money, however, and eventually took goods on credits to the value of £20. As provision he took only 2 tins of chocolate, as medicine some quinine, and a bottle of Cognac. The Abetifi brothers also gave him some maize and groundnuts, and he had several loaves of landbread made. He set out with several of the Kibi Christians and reached Abetifi in three days where he rested. He was almost brought to turn back, but could not for shame. He got very tired having no hammock bearers, however. 24th January he travelled from Abetifi to Nkwatanang, the last Kwahu village. (4 hours journey begun late in the day.) 25-30 January: From Nkwatanang to Aframso, and then across the uninhabited lands to Pae (Pai). The Afram is well known in the 'African world', but this cannot be on account of its beauty - it must be on account of its wealth of fishes. In the dry season one can cross the Afram in places on foot, but in order to make money the Kwahus have made the path cross the river at the deepest part, and it cost Asante and his party 1 ½ shillings to go over. On the other side of the Afram they saw no houses - the grasslands are like the Accra plains, though here and there the bushes are formed into little woods. It is well watered, and there are large quantities of game. Their maize and groundnuts ran out before they reached Pai, and they were on short commons. Pai - these people really live on the east bank of the Volta but having let part of the Asante army cross the river through their territory they were driven to the west bank by the Anums. They are a twi people, and subjects of the Kwahuhene. Their own government is weak - the chief fetish priest of Biebie is as powerful as the chief himself. They are a simple and primitive people, still in the pigtail-age. They have small round houses with pointed roofs with entrances only about 5'x2'. They have sheep, goats, ducks, hens, guinea-fowls, fish and hunt. They plant many yams, cassava, 2 kinds of corn (guinea corn), maize and tobacco. They brew beer from the guinea corn. Cotton they plant, and use for themselves. Their pottery is very good, better than the pottery in Akem - more beautiful, and as strong as stone pitchers. The wife has a whole row of these pots, kept very tidily in her house. The

land of the Pai people was 6-8 hours across as they travelled. Its capital is Ahenkuro, on the east bank. They crossed the Volta at the first Pai village, Gyato, and in this dry season the Volta was neither especially deep nor wide - the Oti which they crossed 2 hours after crossing the Volta is deeper and filled with crocodiles and hippopotamus. They passed two Pai villages on the East bank, in one of which, Ahenkro, Asante preached. From Pai they came to Krakye country, where the people speak a sort of twi like a Kyerepong dialect. They are emigrants from Akwapim, having come from the then 30 Larteh towns and villages during the time of the Akwamu overlordship. The Krakye people are more numerous than the Pais. In Krakye because of the commands of Dente there are neither courtyards nor fences, and one is not allowed to have a light after dark. Asante however, conducted evening prayers with a light and resisted his host's commands to put it out. He also publicly announced a service for the following Sunday afternoon (Feb 4th) and in spite of menaces carried it out, and there was no tumult, even though he had announced that he would hold it outside the high priest's house. Quite a lot of people were present. He spoke on the 'biblical history' since the fall, which is what he does in all these new places. (This sermon involves some discussion of fetishes, which he remarks did not provoke a tumult). According to Asante, the authority of this fetish is linked with the fact that rather than speaking through priests he speaks directly to the questioner out of a hole in the ground. On the whole the Krakye people are like the Pai in customs and economy. But the roads leading from the Krakye villages to the capital are kept clean just as they are in Asanti. Despite the fact that Krakye has a suitable position, however, there is neither cattle raising nor trade carried on there. But the merchants going to Salaga both by land and water meet there because of the falls. They left Krakye on 5th Feb, and after two short days marches they were in another area - Ntwumuru. The people there speak a twi rather akin to Kyerepon. They are not so numerous as the Krakye people. Before the war between Asante and the English in 1869-74 they were subjects of the Asantehene, just like the Krakye people. Apart from the facial marks they are quite similar to the Krakyes – indeed if it were not for their different names one would think the Pais, Krakyes, and Ntwumurus were the same tribe, although the Pai people are twis, while the Krakye and Ntwumuru people have accepted twi. They all bury their dead in front of their houses - the Krakyes bury theirs in communal graves in front of their houses. The capital of Ntwumuru is Bagyamso, a bigger and more beautiful place than Krakye, also on the Volta shore. At Bagyamso the road to Salaga bifurcates, one way going to the north-west, the other going to the north. (It was on account of this that Asante and Opoku did not meet). 5 hours march from Bagyamso they came to the boundary between mohammedanism and heathenism, formed here by the river Daka. There is a town on this border called Nkwankwankuro - 10-12 days journey from Kwahu. By appearances this town is hardly mohammedan politically, no mosques nor schools nor priests. Also no signs of fetish worship, however. The people seem related to the Krakyes - as well as twi they speak a form of Kyerepon. They practice cultivation without cattle rearing, like their brothers on the west bank of the Volta. Only their facial marks differentiates them from the tribes previously named (presumably Ntwumuru-Krakye-Pai). There

were two more villages inhabited by members of this tribe to pass before reaching Salaga. Salaga he reached on 10th Feb. From a distance Salaga looks like a long stretched-out fort, with little round towers - for the houses are also round in this town. It takes 20-30 minutes to cross the town, and there are 10,000 inhabitants. It is built in a very disorderly way, with narrow dirty streets. There are two big market places, as well as other little ones. In the 'morning market' all sorts of things are sold, but especially food - yams, guinea corn, maize corn, peppers, incense, black European potatoes, and fresh meat from oxen, sheep, goats. Each day between 10 and 20 goats and sheep were slaughtered to provide supplies of fresh meat. A peace of beef weighing 2 lbs cost 100 cowries or ½ id. According to the time of the year yams cost about 100 cowries each. Butter is offered for sale, but it is noteworthy that this is as a leather polish and pomade rather than for eating. People say that earlier, when the market was more visited 30-40 oxen were slaughtered daily. Salaga is a true trading town, visited by people from all parts of Africa - Morocco, Timbuctoo, Bornu, Yaruba, Dahome, Hausa, Mosi, Gyaman, Tagyan. (Gyaman lies to the west, and Tagyam to the east). Earlier, white people came to the market, but they were not Europeans; since arabian and Egyptian goods are to be found at the market perhaps they were Arabs, or from Fulaland. The afternoon is more interesting than the morning market. You see goods of all types on sale there. European and African fabrics, like silk, cotton, leather etc. as well as the wares on display on the market itself, there are more to be found in shops around the market, by which barbers and nail-cutters also do business. The chief merchants are the Hausas and the Mosis in Salaga. The latter bring in especially. ivory, woolen robes, half-woolen carpets, all types of silk articles, corals of red and other colours, horses, donkeys, mules, large cattle, the so-called Guinea Sheep, here and there hornless woolly sheep, and leather goods (saddles, sandels, slippers, and sometimes knee length boots). It is extremely interesting to see a caravan of Hausas coming into the town or leaving. In addition to the slaves it will have 20-30 horses and donkeys in a long train, loaded with leather sacks. The chief of the caravan rides at the rear, his head swathed in a magnificent turban - it very fine sight, and he thought if only they could come as far as the Gold Coast. The Mosi people come in caravans also. The Mosis bring in addition to locally-made cotton cloth especially men, cattle, donkeys, sheep, poultry, and shea-butter. (He describes the latter saying that it is used all over the Gold Coast as an ointment). The Tagyan people bring especially ivory and soap, and the Gyaman local cotton cloths, and gold-dust. All sorts of European silver coins are to be found in Salaga, even Prussian thaler. They are also offered for sale. It would be impossible without study to write down all the nationalities of the merchants who come to Salaga, and describe their wares. What do the numberless merchants return to their homes with in exchange for the articles of trade brought to Salaga? Apart from a little salt, and a few cotton goods from Europe, they take away mainly kola-nuts, or kau-nuts. These are taken by people rather as tobacco is smoked in Europe. They taste pleasantly bitter, and make the lips red. These nuts come from Asante. Before the war between the Asante and the English the Salagas were subjects of the Asantehene, and obeyed his representatives. Now they

are independent, and the Asantes may come to the market no more, and so it is less well frequented, though it is freely available to the members of other nations now. A load of kola nuts costs, according to the time of year 6-20 shillings. That may seem little, but it is not nothing. The Asantes in years gone by have bought sheep in Salaga for scarcely 1-2/- which thes sold for £1-£2. Also men, which were often the articles most in demand among the Asante merchants, cost 10-15/- in Salaga, and were sold in Asante or on the coast for 2 ouces of gold or 36 dollars. The bulk of these people were prisoners of war, or kidnapped. The largest part of the inhabitants of Salaga are people from the tribes named above. The real Salagas, however, are Kyerepon people who today still speak a sort of Kyerepon-twi, though because of their contact with so many other peoples their Kyrepon is more affected by other languages than that of their neighbours to the south. The Salagas are stronger and more handsome that their neighbours to the south, too, because they live better. The average Salaga man has a horse, an ordinary house or a courtyard with several small houses for the people of his household and his guests. He usually eats three good meals a day. Every house has at least one well either in the courtyard or else immediately outside the house - the water is a little salty to taste. The rooms are kept so clean - despite the state of the streets - that you may not spit onto the floor - there are calabashes filled with ashes for spittoons. Salaga is obviously a Mohammedan town, judging by 'the mosques and the public and private schools'. Every ordinary Salagaman can read and write arabic. As Mohammedans they drink no brandy and not very much of their beer brewed from Guinea corn, although this is very mild. They make a kind of spirits frog honey but again they drink little since it is strong and leads to drunkenness. They are very hospitable to strangers. The lower ranks and the women greet the notables and their husbands by prostrating themselves, and the notables greet each other in the same way. The greeter is not to get up until the person greeted has said 'Kafra' - get up. Interestingly enough there are many beggars in Salaga - something which is not the case in other African towns. You find quite blind beggars, and people who are lame and cannot work - they are not unashamed, however: they are at peace with what you give them, and bless you in a way no Catholic priest could better. The notables of Salaga carry on a commission business. To do this you build many houses in which the travelling merchants can be well entertained. When a merchant arrives he must displace all his wares to his host, and arrive at a price which the merchant receives in exchange for them. Purchases must be carried through on the same pattern, otherwise the host cannot stand security for the transactions in the case of lose. The host takes his percent on these transactions and tries to see that the merchant is satisfied with his treatment, in order to attract other merchants. Outside the town are farmers, but inside you find traders, household staffs, musicians, singers, and craftsmen in copper silver and iron. The latter work iron which they have mined and purified for themselves, and their razor blades are as good as razors from Europe. They also make iron pots. There are tanners in Salaga also -- they die the leather red, yellow, and blue to make saddles. Everywhere there is busyness in Salaga, so that even blind people can be found employing themselves in making baskets. There is no

king or chief in Salaga. The chief lives in a village called Pami a short hour's trek to the eastward. He is a subject of the Jane king; Jane lies to the north of Salaga. The town is governed by the notables of each quarter. There are also representatives of the various tribes who do business in Salaga, rather like the European consuls. The notables of the quarters levy a tax which is paid to the chief in Pami. Were the Salagas still heathens it would be a splendid place for missions since preaching here would spread over almost the whole of Africa, Asante preached once on the streets, since the inhabitants spoke good twi. He left Salaga on 26 February, having transacted his business. The Akims who were with him had bought 30 sheep, 3 cows; he himself had 1 horse, 2 donkeys, 4 cows, and 2 young bulls. For the Kwahu missionaries he bought 1 horse 2 donkeys, 1 cow, 1 calf. With his white turban and his two horses they looked quite a caravan when they left Salaga. They returned by the same route as they came. At Bagyamoso they stayed for two days outside the village, under a large shade tree and disregarded the warning of the fetish priest that the fetish did not like horses under that particular tree. Asante describes the elders as saying to the ‘bystanding merchants' that this was the sort of man who does not care for fetishes. Odente was against horses going through Krakye, and threatened that Asante would die before he left Krakye territory. Asante offered to shake hands with the High Priest of Dente (if one was allowed to shake his hand) on the wager that he would get home safe and sound. (In fact people are not allowed to shake his hand). South of Krakye they left their previous track and took a south-westerly course (a) because it avoided the terrible Oti river, and (b) because it was shorter. From there the journey was unremarkable; they arrived back in Kibi on March 24th; though the horse and the donkeys died soon after. The account of Theophilus Opoku's journey to Salaga: A german translation of a summary of Opoku’s account of the first part of the journey (as far as Krakye on the way home) is printed in Heidenbote 1878 pp66ff. For the second part of the journey only Christaller's German translation is present in the archives. This is noted also below in a seperate section. Material in the English text not present in the printed German version. p.1. He describes both Asante and Koranteng (catechist at Kukurantumi) as cousins. p.2. Enquiring Mpraeso after David Asante, he met a sierra Leone trader named Macauley who was able to supply him with needful things for the journey, and also told him many useful things about the way to Salaga since he had been there himself. He also heard descriptions of the way from other travellers which deterred him by their stories of dangers from animals and the heat. p.3. (10 Feb). He gives the names of the villages between Sadang and the Afram as Little Sadang, and Nkwatanang. p.4. (11th Feb.) He gives the impression that there are a series of regularly-used halting; places across the Afram plains, some of which have huts for sleeping, but in others one has simply a clearing in which to sleep. These are called after the hills and rivers near which they stand. The first day they passed the rusting place of Obra, and came to Gyaneboafo. p.5. (12th Feb). They passed the halting places known as Bonkurong (lit. the deep valley), Amogyanesua, Odonkyeae, and Asanyansu, spending the night at Obosomso. The latter is one of the principle resting places. They saw elephant tracks which might easy have misled them as-to the proper way, had they not had a guide. (13th Feb).

Passed Nsoeyaso, Chemmenabomma, Horeyenkyerem, Ata ne Ata (two small villages opposite each other) and spend the night in Nkwaetam (lit. the middle of forest) - it is half way from the Afram to Pae/Pai. Here he met several travellers on the way back from Salaga, who gave them news of Asante's progress. (14th Feb). They were forced to spend much of the day searching for wild yams to eat, and in the afternoon went on to Sumi for the sake of the water there. They were told of the fire in Akropong by some Kwahu travellers who caught them up. (15th Feb) Passed Bonaso, Atwerenan and Atwerenan Nama Sua, and slept at the Wa river. He describes their joy at the possibility of seeing human habitations again next day - presumably the villages of Ata and Ata were collections of unoccupied huts. (17th Feb). Agyabo, the first Pae village, was deserted. After crossing the Didwa they came to Abrawade where the yam festival was being celebrated. The chief Kwadwo Mensah gave Opoku a present of yam and a river fish. The next village was Abanwabi and the next Nkakyena, on the banks of the Volta. Opoku remarks that the Paes are subjects of the Kwahus, and 'of course' tributaries of the Asantes. Formerly they inhabited the east bank of the Volta, but owing to Asante hostilities they have crossed the river and built Agyato, Abrawade, and Nkakyena as places of refuge. The Paes are renowned for the snuff which is fragrant above that produced by the Krakyes and Hausas etc. p.7. (19th Feb). It was on this day that they came to Ahenkro. pp.7-11 (the days spent in Dadiase 20th Feb). He gives the name of two small Krakye villages through which he passed before reaching Dadiase as Dentemanso and Kotoaboama. The Heidenbote summary of the Dadiase visit is full and accurate. Additional material: - Odente is described as 'Odente of the nations' - Opoku had not one Christian companion. - He lists as examples of the nations who come to Odente the Asantes, Kwahus, Akems, Akwapims, Paes, Buems; the present king of Akropong would only proceed with the custom for his predecessor when Dente had advised him that it was the correct time to do. p.11 (21st Feb). He gives the name of the only village between Dadiase and Krakye as Mpampani. pp.11-14 (22-23 Feb). Krakye, Kete, Katanfore. – Notes several people from Buem in Krakye waiting to enquire of Dente, but forced to wait till the High Priest of Dente returns from his village Otareso. He is clearly disgusted by Krakye, describes it as unclean, the people as untidy, notes that the women are naked till the age of 18 and half-naked in old age, and that there is a lot of prostitution. There are no trees in the town. The king has a large swollen breast. Kete is 45 minutes from Krakye, and Katanfore about 1 hour. They are slave-market villages where you find many Nta-men, Hausas, and Awras. They import slaves ivory sheer-butter etc from Salaga and then sell them here. At Katanfore there were a few men from Buem waiting to enquire of Dente (he does not make it clear, that these were additional to the Buem people he has already described in Krakye). In Kete he argued about the slave trade with the people. He said it was a sin to sell people - to which the reply was that it was justified in the Mohammedan religion - someone selling you a slave was bestowing on you a sign of God's blessing. So, asked Opoku if your son were being sold to me by that man over there you would be happy because God was blessing me? He also tried suggesting to a woman who had a 6 year old girl to sell that the child heeded compassion and love and

why didn't she take her for a daughter? p.14 (24 Feb) Travelled through Kete, Kudenkpe, Woroto to Otareso where they spent the night. (25. Feb) In Otareso he preached on the 'Unknown God'. pp.14-16 (26th Feb at Bagyamso). They marched overnight from Otareso to Bagyamso apparently passing no villages. Bagyamso, Opoku notes,is a very comfortable town - much more so than many they had hitherto passed. They were met with suspicion because the Accras and Adas etc., have been smuggling powder to sell it to the Hausas at Salaga, and the latter have been selling it to the Asantes at Kunsu. The King of Ntwumuru has been ordered by the Juabenhene and Odente as a result to examine every box and bag of travellers passing through Bagyamso. However, Opoku's guide who was a Juaben explained who Opoku was and what his mission was, and so he was allowed to pass unexamined. They think that this instruction concerning the examination of baggage has come ultimately from the Colonial Government. There is also a law that any Ntwumuru caught smuggling powder to Asante is to be executed. p.16. (27 Feb). Travelling in the night 26/27 Feb they came to Akaneem, and by 9a.m. to Tamkranku, often called Fishtown because of the plentiful fish of the river Daka. (28 Feb) Overnight through Fametwasu to Kurupi, the first town of the Ntas (the Donkos). This walk was accompanied by an eclipse of the moon. p16-17 (March 1st). He gives the word 'tefa', for the commission earned by the host on his guest's trade. His landlord entertained him on the fleet day with 4-5 lbs. beef, 10 yams, and a pot of beer. The next morning he brought a goose, 15 yams, 2 head of cowries. Opoku in turn dashed the landlord 2 fathoms of white shirting, 12 sheets of paper, 2 slips pf Tinten cartons and some pens. To his wife he gave one fathom Turkey red chintz and a hair net belonging to Opoku's late wife which he found in his baggage and which was quite a novelty. He was impatient to see the market, so went out to the Dwakese-ase but unfortunately most of the market people had gone to the the other market Marowaso, near the Hausa quarter. p18-20 (March 2nd). His account of Pami includes the point that these is always disturbance and confusion in a commercial town like Salaga, and so the local king lives quietly in a clean town to which there is restricted access Opoku gives an account of the skins which serve instead of stolls - and says that the heir to Pami king is the Kanase chief - he gives the name 'Sumgbula chief' as an example of the title of one of the other nobles of the courts. The Kanase chief possess 11 horses, and goes out with 10 mounted attendants. During Opoku's stay he came to Salaga to try to buy a white horse, since he had been advisad that his soul requires this by the Mohammedans. Describing Mohammedan oustoms etc. he notes that on Fridays long lines of Mohammedans are to be seen sitting looking at poles - this is to keep their minds from being disturbed by sights likely to stir up lust. And they count their heads in order to meditate on the infinity of God Education is by means of private schools in which a teacher takes on at most 4 pupils and when a pupils masters the due lessons his father pays the teacher 40,000 cowries and gives him a robe and a turban. The little children are washed in very hot water in which are some medicines - this is to strengthen their constitution. And they are hung with leather packets in which are to be found texts from the Koran - this is to make them susceptible to receive the Mohammedan religion. On March 2nd, Opoku also

saw the horse racing which happens every Friday evening. Except it seems clear from his description that there was no competitive racing - people went out in their best clothes and galloped their horses one after the others. He also saw two rich gentlemen (Madugoos) dancing their horses ‘in a manner of dances that the drummers will direct'. He says people divert themselves every Friday evening in this way. pp23-27 (March 4th). Blind people are brought to Salaga from other places to beg. In the market he saw on sale vegetables, barley bread, wheat, Arabic cloaks, leather, beads of all kinds, ivory, ostrich shells, shea butter, blue and white yams, paper; the two great markets are surrounded by huts which serve as sale shops where 'country clothes' of all descriptions are to be found, velvets, silks, pure wool robes. There are also workshops with tanners (though the best leathers are brought in by the Hausas), barbers of great dexterity, tailors, blacksmiths, rope-makers (blind people are sometimes employed in this trade), goldsmiths, bag and cushion makers, sandal makers, dyers. Also walking around you find nail-trimmers, and water-carriers. In the centre of the market are to be found the butchers and dyers. Cowries are valued more highly than silver coins – the latter are often put on open sale, and Opoku bought one half-dollar for 25 strings of cowries. Half dollars and five frame pieces are made into rings. The most extensive merchandise is slaves, however. There is a long passage about the iniquity of the slave trade - people chained closely together in gangs of 10-15. The slaves are eager to be sold on the chance that they will meet a humane master. One of the major evils is the seperation of mothers and children, which Opoku thinks is normal, and the lack of demand for the elderly and the sick. Prices which Opoku has observed being paid for slaves are £1 to £2 on the average; he has also seen as low as £1 paid, and a slave sold in exchange for an Arabian cloak. His long preaching with the Moslems he describes in some detail. His line was a whole-hearted attack on a religion which allowed evils like polygamy robbery theft, and to warn them that there can be.no peace of heart in a religion which is propagate by the sword. The thing which seems to have excited most interest is the Christian teaching of monogamy - how can a man stay pure if he has only one wife (i.e. how can he restrain his appetites within legal limits?). Opoku says that he has little admiration for a religion which demands that people live in a holy way but does not provide them with the means to do so, and offers as the Christian remedy prayer, and faith alone in Jesus as the enlivening power. As Opoku phrases his resort of this conversation it seems that his hearers thought that they were on the point of learning something about new methods of birth control - 'You must have possessed some remedy then against this abstinence, otherwise it is far from passible for a man to perform such a deed, and would you not give us some of such a remedy?' p.27 (5th March although he writes 4th Mar). He bought two oxen which were afterward stolen - the Salagas are great thieves and many strangers sustain great losses. pp27-28 (6th March). The conversation with the chief of Pami was about Christian doctrine, the work of the missionaries on the coast. He was greatly interested in this. (He paid a second visit to Pami to complain about his lost bullocks, and then the conversation concerned monogamy, which was a matter of great surprise to them). At the first visit too ‘I had the opportune to speak to him of the

European nations, and the many wonderful things of their making which are the effects of the enlightenment they received in the belief of the Saviour Jesus Christ the son of God'. p.28 (11th March). One of the people at the service which Opoku held for a small congregation that Sunday was a Wesleyan Christian from Cape Coast. p.28-29 (16th March). Describes a very bent set of slaves carrying firewood, and on explanation heard that they were bent like that because that was their usual way of carrying loads – they were Kambaris from a country far from Salaga. Under this day he describes the tedium of walking with one of the notables of Salaga since the greeting rituals are so long drawn out. p.29 (19th March). Describes the arrival of another caravan of both Hausas and Mosis, slaves, cows, donkeys, shea-butter. He reckons 350-400 slaves, mostly young ones, so all sold quickly. The slaves are bought by Hausas who need carriers to take merchandise (kola and cowries etc.) back to their country. Some are bought by the Salagas to work as domestic slaves, or to work on their own plantations, and some are bought by foreigners who come to Salaga on purpose. The caravans he saw were not so big as the old ones, who used to bring slaves in thousands. Under this day he offers a short judgement of the people of Salagas, though fanatics, barbarous, wild and cruel, a nation in whose hearts Islamism has deeply taken root, nevertheless they are highly to be appreciated and characterised as an independent race who live on their own resources dependent on their own handicrafts and manufactures; an industrious hard working, time redeeming (time valuing) people; men of physical strength. Their mental calculation is very astonishing. It is therefore to be considered, that the blessing of education, Christianisation etc. (which should take the place of Mohammedanism) are alone wanting to make these natives intellectual and morally equal to any civilised nation on the face of the globe.' A short note on his leaving Salaga (p30.) Attacked apparently be smallpox: there is a passage where he writes as if in a diary at a time when he thought he was dangerously ill and possibly not likely to return to Akwapim. At Dadiase he preached to some Kwahu travellers on Easter Sunday. Manuscript Concerning Theo. Opoku’s Journey from Salaga down the East Bank of the Volta and back to Larteh in 1877 This is taken from the second part of the diary of his journey to Salaga, the first part of which is printed in German in Heidenbote 1878 pp66f. It’s provenance appears to be via Johann Gottlieb Christaller, who made German translation of the English original.This manuscript is that German translation. He (Opoku) has been inspired to set to work on his account of this journey again so that people in the coastal district of the Gold Coast should recognise the great changes which have place in their area. He cites the change in clothing, and the use of blocks of wood for pillows and compares that kind of early situation on the coast with what he encountered on his journey, where fully grown people, though not married, were to be seen running around naked. He connects this straightforwardly with mission work. Another purpose of the report is to convince the Basel Mission of the need to carry on a great battle against Krakye Dente, the prince of Fetishes in this part of Africa. He says little about Krakye Dente other than this. Other than that there are few lands of the Gold Coast out of which people do not come with requests to Dente - he specifically mentions Asante Akim and Akwapim. Often they wait in Krakye a

long time. He hopes to write further about Dente in the future. Apr 2nd. Set out for Buem, passing through the two Krakye villages of Makokwae and Makogya, where he preached. They crossed the Oti - there were hippopotamus in it - and Opoku got into trouble with the ferryman for wearing his hat across the river. 7-8 hours later they reached Tuntumkrom, the last Krakye village. This is a hunting village, where they work mostly with dogs. He bought a good piece of meat for 4 strings of cowries. His preaching apparently received a good reception, and he describes the people sleeping outside the room where he lodged (local people), discussing well in the middle of the night the things they had heard, and Opoku cites some of these: 'Jesus Christ is come into the world to save our lives'; 'Anyone who disobeys the fetishes and accepts his Word he will free'; 'He will judge evil does and fetish servers and they will die'. April 3rd. 8-9 hours march to the Asuokoko River. This was a march through apparently uninhabited country - they were unable to buy anything to eat until they were on the south bank of the Asuokoko where they met some men working on farms who were very happy to exchange roast yams for salt and some matches. They also met some women with head-loads of yams who sold them some strings for five cowries - they were fine yams, and a part of one was enough when boiled for the whole party. Opoku preached to the assembled women from a stone on which sacrifices were made to the river fetish, they were at first very alarmed for his sake, and after he had spoken to them about fetishes he describes them as being astounded that someone was able to do this, and left him in the end audibly wondering if this was a real man. One of his major themes seems to have been how irrational their fetish beliefs were. The women had come across the river and Opoku ridicules the idea that it might be dangerous just to touch something (the stone, presumably) with the hand, when it was all right to splash through the butter with dirty feet and wash one's clothes in it. 4 1/2 hours from the river they came to the first Buem town of Akaneem. Opoku asked the chief who was also called Opoku to call his people together so that he could explain the purpose of his journey. His speech was accompanied and encouraged by the traditional exclamations of support and encouragement to him, and admonitions to attentive to the audience, spoken by one of the elders. He explained the whole thing briefly - how the Europeans had come bringing the Word of God and many people on the coast had accepted it. He also gave them a quick conspectus of the gospel story from the fall of man onwards. His audience was most attentive and receptive and he was much pressed by the chief (who called him 'Grandfather Opoku') to stay with them longer. But he could not on the grounds that there were still many other places to visit on the way home, and his provisions etc. were almost exhausted. April 4th. He had planned to travel through Worawora to Apafo, a place famous for its iron smelting, and which supplies the whole surroundings area with iron implements for agriculture. However, it turned out there was a war between Gyasekan and Apafo, so that anyone travelling that way would probably not escape uninjured. So he turned westwards, and came after passing through three small villages Abease, Dekyeku and Kofaremu to Tapa. The farms at the bottom of the hills reminded him of Akwapim. Tapa is a fetish village, and the chief is the fetish priest. A long description is given of an evening's

sermon and discussion with the assembled people. His preaching was about redemption. The first spoken reaction was that this was a new word, and they needed someone with them to teach them, but that if they had that they would cease serving the fetish priest of Tapa (he was sitting listening on his stool - 'still a young man') and serve the living God for he is great and in fact more powerful than this fetish priest. Another said that if Opoku himself would stay with them they would plant a holy tree (Gottesbaum) and sacrifice white hens and pray only to Gods Son Jesus Christ. Opoku then explained the nature of this new religion - God had let Christ be an offering and thus things had been ‘arranged' between men and God. The only requirement was to love Christ with your whole heart and pray to God with your whole heart. Another listener took up them metaphor of the darkness over places until the gospel comes with the tradition about God distributing people about the lands out of a hole at the bottom of a net. How the people in the lands the other side of Salaga were properly completed while those of the middle land (Krakye, Buem and Nkonya) balled themselves together to get out and made a great slit so that they all fell out in a heap, not properly finished off, with soft heads, - that is why the people in these lands know little other than farming and eating. God only saw what had happened when he had crossed the Volta, when he mended the net, and so the people to the west, and on the coast, have wide-awake minds. Asked what he meant by bracketing the coastal people and the people of Donko Land; he asked whether when Opoku was in Salaga he had not seen things which seemed to have been made in heaven rather than by mens' hands, and did he not see clothes such as he was wearing in Salaga? The reply was there was great interest shown in his clothes, although they were made from simple materials and had been damaged on the journey. They were compared with the materials produced by a local weaver to the substantial detriment of neither. On the net story, Opoku said that God had really made men all of one blood, the Buems included. Through sin the devil had been able to change the world to a place of sickness and misery. God's Word was bringing to people who held to it, however, light, peace, and true life. Conversation was also about secular topics – they asked him about Europe, and the strange things he had with him, like a Stearin candle. It was midnight before he was allowed to sleep, and the next day he was strongly pressed to remain, or at least to return. Apr 5th. Through the village of Biribiriwase. Opoku had travelling with him an underling from his host in Salaga. Kramo Yaw who was going to the coast with his wife to buy goods for him. In this village they were stopped by the fetish cast priest who said that it was forbidden to pass through the village with a load secured by a cotton net. Opoku poured scorn on this - the fetish priest was wearing a cotton garment, yet the fetish did not harm him. The incident was not serious – the fetish priest was only asking for an offering of palm wine for the fetish. From Biribiriwase they came to Anyinawase, where the chief was a female soothsayer. Opoku preached to them along the lines - all men belonged to God, he has made them well, but the devil has misled man into all sorts of evil and suffering, but that God's son has redeemed men through his death, and all who turn to him, and want to dispense with evil wishes and evil actions he will come to direct, and evil doers will be punished. He describes

the effect of this speech as deep - the villagers brought him many presents, most of which he gave back. They asked for directions as to what to do should God's son come to their village - Opoku explained and advised them not to treat people bringing them God's Word like the people in Biribiriwase had treated his party. He also quoted the verse about whoever helped a poor brother was helping Christ himself. After Anyinawase they passed through two small villages Domabenase and Furukoso. In the latter the two paths from Krakye, one via Akoroso and the other via Buem, meet up. People who were with Opoku in Krakye, and went via Akoroso, reached Nkonya two days ahead of him. From there they reached the last Buem village Tewobabi, sometimes called after its chief Kofikyekye. This is a great meeting point for travellers, since whoever has come across the (empty) stretch of land from Nkonya is too tired to go further, while marching south you cannot reach an Nkonya town before nightfall unless you start off early. They met in Tewobabi slaves recently released in Fante and Accra on their way to their homecountries with their families. They spent the night together with this party. He sums up his knowledge of Buem at this stage - it is a land partly wooded, partly composed of grasslands. The Buems are Guans (Christaller notes that this is questionably), their language a Guan it was difficult for Opoku to understand – like a very old form of twi (Christaller footnotes that David Asante considers Buem a separate language, different from Guan and twi). They are mostly farmers, their main crops being yams rice, groundnuts, and their main dishes fufu and boiled rice. They have too, although not so much, plantains, bananas and palmnuts. They hunt the large animals - elephants, buffalo, and large antelopes. They know a little about weaving, but garments are not plentiful (soon there will be more as trade opens up) and they use the bark of the Bofe-tree for over and undergarments, cushions, and head-pads for load-carrying. They plant this tree especially; because its bark is so useful to them. In Krakye, Buem and Nkonya there is the hateful custom of having the women naked until their marriage. The houses are neatly built, but small – he could neither stand up straight in them, nor stretch out his legs when he was asleep. Apr 6th. After a 9 hour march, and a crossing of the Konsu they came to the largest Nkonya town of Wurupom. This was once much bigger, but since the Asante war of 1869 the population has been much smaller, and many houses have collapsed. They found the village holding a custom for its dead in the war. There were still eight days before it would finish. Apr 7th. He preached in the streets early and had a readily attentive audience, then greeted Adu Kwadwo and the priest of their great fetish Sia. They welcomed him as a compatriot of theirs since they knew of Lateh (calling it Lete) and part of the townspeople had originated from there. He was not able to hold a formal preaching for the whole town and the chief and elders since someone died suddenly that day, but he was able to preach in different quarters of the town to passers-by in the morning and afternoon of the next day (Sunday). He notes that burial customs are held on the open street whatever the cause of death - in Akwapim this only happens when someone has died a violent death. Apr 9th. At Tepa, not far from Wurupon. Opoku had sent his boxes and loads from Krakye to a spot 4 hours away from this place by river, and he expected to meet them here – and indeed he only had to have them

brought from the river bank about 4 hours away. In Tepa he was present at developments following from the death the day before in Wurupong. The corpse carries who had taken their load into the wood to enquire of it came into this town and created great uproar. The body came to push with its feet (not with the head, as in Akropong) of the house of a certain man - but in fact the owner of the house had left the town long before the dead man fell ill. Upon enquiry Opoku learned that both the dead man and the man accused of his death were called Tete. They were duty bound to offer palmwine to the main fetish of the town; the older had done this for a long time, and was given the younger Tete as an initiate to introduce him to his duties. The law concerning this duty was that they were not to drink any palmwine until they had offered some to the fetish and the chief priest. This particular trouble had started one day when the wine calabash was over-full, and the younger Tete had drunk some before taking it to the fetish. The older Tete knew about this and said nothing about it. The younger Tete then died because of the anger of the fetish. Asked what the responsibility of the older Tete was, then, the people said that the fetish was putting the blame on him because he had not guided the younger Tete correctly. If he were there he would have been punished by burning or punished to the value of seven slaves. He also notes that when the people in Tepa have heard rumours of European clothes and books, they have imagined something like the Mohammedans - he cites one case of someone thinking he was a Mohammedan. Apr 10th. Leaving Tepa he was accosted by a woman who wanted his help, in the belief that he was a Kramo. She had lost all her children through illness, had had several husbands. Witches and magicians had robbed her of her children and grandchildren and now she lived alone in a ruined house. Opoku advised her to get rid of the little 'housegod' which like as in all Nkonya and Buem houses was to be found in her house. She demurred - but Opoku pointed out that far from defending her this housegod had at least done little to help her, and went on to explain that God's wrath was upon people who worshipped idols, and that the lamb of God had taken on himself the sins of the world. He advised her to turn herself and give her heart to God. But she would not listen to that sort of talk, and wanted to know simply what his word was about her problems, and how much she must pay him - if it was a sheep, for example. She also got him to read her a letter which had been written to her in 1869 by an Accra man whom she had met, and who in 1869 was in Anum. That he could read this to her persuade her more than ever that he must be a Kramo. Opoku tried to recruit carriers in Tepa for the journey to Bato, and did this by issuing to people who agreed to serve him a note. This caused trouble because the older men in the village remembered someone they called Nkromma-Srani who had given people slips of paper and taken them away and sold them into slavery. Opoku says little about Nkromma-Srani except that he was from Amannokrom (presumably the Akwapim town) and had served as a soldier in Cape Coast before coming to this area. On Apr 11th therefore he was forced to proceed to Ntomda to try to recruit carriers there. In Ntomda they pressed him to have a teacher sent to them on account of the 'sweetness' of his words. But there was difficulty in raising a body of carriers in this town too, until Opoku came across an Ewe man who had been in Mamfe and knew

him, who was prepared to be his security against the danger that he was planning to sell the people he recruited as carriers. Apr 12th. Through the Nkonya towns of Kagyabi, Ntshumuru, Praprawasi, and the Ewe towns of Agbenohoe, Fesi, Kpando. In the latter there were rumours of Christians from Mayera who had settled in the vicinity and still held services, although they had no teacher. He could communicate only with difficulty in Kpando since the people knew only a few words of twi, and he no Ewe. In the next town Okyerefo, however, he found an Ewe who had been in Aburi, knew the missionaries, Dieterle and Mohr, and had indeed worked for Mohr in the coffee farm. He acted as Opoku's interpreter. Apr 13th. Through Anvoe and its villages and Tuntunya and its villages, and rested the night at Ahafe (Hawhe). Apr 14th. Through Nnyeduase villages and spent the night in Kpewehe. Apr 15th. His carriers ran away stealing some of his possessions - but fortunately was able to persuade a party of people travelling to Bato for yams who came through Kpewhe to take his loads and come back for the yams. Apr 16th. Through Bami, Akurofufu, Asuogya to Sokdei. He was delighted with the Bremen mission station there after the isolation of his journey. He also met Nkromma-Srani. Apr 17th. Came to Okole, a town of the Abtoia people. The Ewe people he met on this part of his journey were most hard-hearted and in this town they did not want to offer him house, food, or drink. During the night one of the houses was burned down and for a time the townspeople suspected Opoku and his men of being to blame. They are worthy of the proverb - 'As hard-hearted as an Ewe man'. Apr 18th. Through Ton villages - Sonu-Kowhe, and spent the night at Amadeka. They were in serious want of food because their money had almost run out, but they met a Christian from Ada who knew him, who shared his food with them, and helped with money to sustain them till they came to Bato. Apr 19th. Through Awowats to Dewhe. Apr 20th. Met a Christian from Abriw working in a village (unnamed) where Millers Brothers were buying cotton. Apr 21st. Arrived in Bato.

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