

Mombas Dec. 18, 1856

Reverend & Dear Sir,

The intimation given you in my last letter from April – that on the death of the Imam we should have to leave the country – has suddenly become a reality. Sultan Said Said is no more in the land of the living. The particulars of his death you will find in the copy of part of a letter written to us by the British Consul at Zanzibar – as also the consequences it immediately confers on the East African Mission. Thus the Lord has made plain what up to now had been a matter of so much misapprehension, doubt & suspicion at home - & of so much anxiety & uncertainty with us on the spot. Your eyes will be opened now to see what mine were constrained to see two years ago – when the Hannoverian Missionaries were refused to set a foot on the Continent of Africa – that there had never been any real foundation for Missionary work in this part of the world - . You will learn to understand more the infinite difference that exists between countries truly & effectually opened to the message of salvation by the arm of the Lord as displayed in India, & countries as truly & effectually shut up by the permission of the same God, who, though he has mercy upon all, yet has appointed not only times & seasons, but also laws & conditions, in which & according to which alone His mercy is dealt out to His fallen creatures. The uncertain favour of the late Imam had just promised for us the mere possibility of staying within his dominions, but it also placed us in an unnatural & untrue position to a people, who – in addition to this were destitute of all & every means of understanding & appreciating the object of our coming. That favour was not only uncertain but also unavailable as soon as we left the immediate coast & proceeded to the more doubtful heathen subjects of His Highness. - Presents of cloth & beads had to make up the deficiency.- Truly we were permitted to stay in the country – but our persons were nobodies & our word a mere sound. I well know that such statements by the side of those of Dr. Krapf, made it almost impossible for the Committee to know the truth. Yea they must have savoured of despondency, faint-heartedness & unbelief. I myself – only three years ago – should have looked upon them with the same suspicion – so backward all of us were to arrive at a true estimate of the state of things. – On this account I was truly glad & thankful that Mr. Daimler was sent to join me. He not only had brought with him the freshness & vigour – but – through more than a year's stay in India – a personal view of a Missionary field of the most undoubted character. Through him it was soon proved to me what I had often thought – that one who had seen a wide door & an (?) effectual opened to the Gospel as in India, & even in Africa as in the South & West – might discern at once, what we – from inexperience – could not understand for a number of years; for Abessinia too, in which Dr. Krapf had previously laboured, was otherwise destitute of those conditions, which must always constitute the foundation for Missionary labours. Indeed Scripture & history proclaim the fact alike, & I trust, the lesson – the Abessinian & East African Mission teaches – has now been thoroughly learnt -: that doors of usefulness are never opened by presents nor the worthless favour of independent native princes – but only by the manifestation of the power of God in history – by the continuous fulfilment of the declaration of the Eternal Father to His Eternal Son – and written in the Second Psalm: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a pottery vessel" – which He executes by the nations which bear his blessed name.

Although the important event of the Imam's death might now dispense with my answering your letter brought to me by my dear brother Mr. Daimler, yet I cannot refrain from touching on a few points. "That I should have acted in a wiser & more proper way, if I had regarded the invitation from the Committee to come to England as imperative" must be rendered doubtful to yourself by the event just mentioned. Ever from the time I became a conscious partaker of grace, the resolution of not following my own inclinations, but the directions of those who are set over me in the Lord, was identical in my view with true Christianity. But in that instance the circumstances in which I was placed together with the strongest conviction that the hopelessness of E.A. in its present state would after all not be acknowledged & render all consultations of no avail – compelled me to act as I did, & I am now thankful that I have done so. As to the further contents of your kind letter – I must confess, that I was amazed & grieved to find under what misapprehension of the real state of things in East Africa you were still labouring when you gave me an imperative direction to itinerate & say, that I had alleged no impediments to our labour to evangelize the inhabitants of the country round Rabbai Mpia – encouraging me by the examples of Missionaries in Tinnewelly, as you also refer me to success of Missionaries in Turkey & speak at last of a plan of procuring native teachers for our assistance. – My dear Sir – what greater impediment to Missionary work can there be than the absolute absence of all & every desire after instruction – yea even the absolute absence of the very means by which heathens of utter ignorance even of the existence of Christian nations – can be enabled to understand & appreciate a Missionary. And have not both Dr Krapf & myself gone many a weary step under a vertical sun in visiting our Rabbai people, scattered as they are on their little plantations. Neither the poor cripple Anringe nor Abbe Gunja would have learnt to know their Saviour, if we had remained quietly at home. But remember that these two men prove nothing as to any readiness of the people for the Gospel, because they had been outcasts. – When I used expressions in my former statements, which led you to think "that I regarded Christian missions as incompatible in principle with a Muhamedan sovereignty – I beg to remind you that the Muhamedan rule I always had in view was only that of the Imam of Mascat . His rule most certainly rendered all Missionary labour impracticable – & if the Sultan of Constantinople or the Pasha of Egypt were allowed to pursue the same policy – of forbidding Europeans as such, be they Merchants or Missionaries – to settle on the Continent, would not the result be the same? When Turkey from the pressure of Christian Europe upon it, is gradually more opened to the Gospel, the case with Muhamedans in E.A. is very different. My dear Sir – not even the news of the wonderful revolution of the Muhamedan mind near Europe does reach poor Eastern Africa. While New Testaments are purchased there, no Moslem will thank you for one here. The Muhamedans here are as little prepared for Christianity as their heathen neighbours inland. – That we cannot anymore be encouraged by looking to what our brethren are doing in Tinnevelly in W.-Africa – will now no longer need a word.

But while the Africans of the East in their own homes are thus found unprepared for the message of salvation, I would call your attention to those whom Divine Providence has placed on British ground in Bombay & thereby entrusted to your cares. There exists a direct Native communication between E.A. & Bombay but none between Aden nor the Mauritius & the Cape. Might not Bombay be destined to become a similar channel of spiritual blessings to E.A. as Sierra Leone is now to the West? Five years ago when I went to Egypt I asked the history of all the

Africans - & wrote it down - who were employed on board the Victoria, & they were highly pleased with finding at last a "Msungu" who could converse with them in their own mother tongue. Since then I sometimes asked myself the question, whether to them a Missionary might not be truly acceptable - & lately it was often the subject of conversation between Mr. Daimler & myself. I now would propose it to the serious consideration of the Committee.

In conclusion I would only inform you, that, according to the advice of the Consul, we intend leaving for Zanzibar as soon as convenient, whence Mr. Daimler, with my full approbation will proceed to Europe, as he can have no inducement for learning the language under the present circumstances - while I with my dear wife will await there the further instructions of the Committee, as I shall be at least able to continue the study of native languages & to gather further information about the Interior. Preparatory work of this kind can of course be continued at Zanzibar & its importance for the future, when God's own time of mercy for E.A. will have arrived, needs no pointing out.

Commending ourselves to your Christian sympathy & prayers

I remain - my dear Sir -
yours most respectfully
J. Rebmann