

Mombas June 24 [1864]

Dear Sir!

As the first leaf of my letter shows, I intended to despatch it to you with the earliest opportunity that should offer, but I was prevented from finishing it at the time requisite for that purpose by a feeling of some illness, which, it seemed, had been the effect of exertion I had made on that day in bodily labour, but which passed away again as fast as it came on so that hitherto I felt as healthy as I ever did before.

The last lines of what I wrote at Zanzibar say, that on Saturday, the 6th of June, I hoped to proceed to Mombas; the fact however was this, that, accompanied again by Capt. Hamerton I took leave on that day from the Imaum, who then presented me with a cask of white biscuit, 4 bottles of sirup and 6 Halwats (a sweet arabic confiture) while my departure from Zanzibar was put off to the following day which was a Sunday. I do not think it necessary to justify to you my travelling on that day under such circumstances; this was indeed the earliest eligible opportunity to proceed to Mombas and my heart was extremely desirous to see my dear brother, Dr. Krapf. The passage offered to me in one of the King's boats was gratuitous. On Sunday the boat sailed only to the northern end of the island, where we stopped during the night, as the Arabs would sail during the daytime only. The two following nights we stopped at a place called Qwale [Kwale] and opposite Wassan [Wasin Island].

On Wednesday, the 20th of June we arrived safely at Mombas, which I found a very pretty place indeed and which must be the healthier than other parts of the coast between Zanzibar and Mombas, as the coast is a little more elevated here. Immediately, when Dr. Krapf had welcomed me in his house, I felt quite at home with him. The first days I had to spend in arranging the effects I brought with me. On the 16th we made an excursion to the nearest Wanika-cottages, south of Mombas. When Dr. Krapf spoke to some individuals of the love of God, one of them asked: Does God love us? Besides they expressed some fear, as Dr. Krapf had never been at that spot before, that we might have come to sell them. It is also to be remarked that those Wanikas who have much intercourse with the Muhammedans at Mombas, are according to the experience of Dr. Krapf as also according to the comparison I could make between the behaviour of these Wanikas and those I saw afterwards more inland, less accessible to the gospel than those Wanikas who live at a greater distance from Mombas. When we went back to our boat, one of the men we had seen followed us at some distance in apparent suspicion, and on this my first visit to the Wanikas gave me a deep impression of the many prejudices, which must first be removed, before we can expect that the gospel will have a free course and be glorified.

In this respect it was deeply interesting and very pleasing indeed to witness the remarkable difference of behaviour shown by those Wanikas, among whom Dr.

Krapf was already known by his visits and frequent addresses to them. This was the case on a second excursion which we made on the 19th and 20th of June more inland to some hamlets and the villages Pemboni and Rabbay Empia. Here we met with people whose countenances were marked with confidence and even joy and who stretched out their hands to welcome me as the friend of Dr. Krapf. Our object in making this excursion was to ask the chiefs of Rabbay Empia whether they would allow us to settle among them, as both of us, after having had a consultation on the subject of our farther movements respecting our missionary work, were impressed with the necessity of making now an actual missionary-attempt with one village of the Wanikas, well knowing, that if it should please God to give us success in such an attempt, farther travelling necessary for the furtherance of the evangelization of Eastern Africa would be easier in every respect than otherwise. So we set out on the 19th in a small boat which brought us up the beautiful bay at Mombas to Abdalla's plantation, from which place we visited in the evening some neighboring hamlets and on the following day we went on a circuitous route by the village Pemboni to Rabbay Empia, Dr. Krapf being anxious to show me the first village also to enable me to judge for myself which of the two would be most suitable for a missionary station. In his humility of judgment and being conscious of his great responsibility he would think it necessary for me to see not only this but all other places he had visited before my arrival, to examine, whether Rabbay Empia was indeed the most suitable place for our first settlement, what Dr. Krapf had long thought it to be, but I had reason enough to put so much trust in his experience and judgment as to immediately coincide with him in his fixing on Rabbay Empia without spending any more strength and time in travelling about for this special purpose.

The appearance of the country through which we had to pass pleased me very much indeed, especially as I found that the mild formations of mountains and valleys could be compared in this respect to some parts of my native country, which comparison would be still more striking if the soil would be cultivated as it is in mine. No lofty mountain nor steep overhanging rocks with corresponding vales are here to be seen, but you meet with that more gentle rising and falling of the land, which imparts to a country a peculiar though modest beauty. When I had found Pemboni a very pretty place, Rabbay Empia appeared to me as truly beautiful. Far in the interior a range of lofty mountains is present to your eyes always inviting you to pay them a visit; to the South and W. the large plain of Wakambaland is spreading before you; to the N. the mild & gentle appearance of the Wanika-country reminds you of the peaceable, with respect to other African tribes, harmless people of the Wanikas, while to the East your view is extended even to the Sea.

The advantages of Rabbay do however not exist merely in its greater elevation of land producing a better view around it & allowing of a purer air, but it is also nearer to the bay of Mombas as well as to the country of the Wakambas and lies above all on the road into the interior. As to the water there is scarcely any difference between the two places.

We reached Rabbay just in the right time for transacting our business with the chiefs of that place, they being just about to go to their plantations. Those who had seen us first called the remaining chiefs together and now the most important and interesting palaver was held. The chiefs, 12 in number sat down on the ground, and we and Abdallah, who accompanied us, did the same. Then Dr. Krapf introduced me to them saying that I was of the same mind and of the same calling with himself, that I also was come to promote their true welfare and that he would be glad if they would receive me in the same friendly way as they had received him. When they had consented to this, which was done very cheerfully, Dr. Krapf began to lay before them our special object of settling among them, saying that he had now seen all the Wanika country and felt sure that all the villages he had visited would allow him to live among them (which circumstance they readily acknowledged), but that Rabbay Empia seemed him best suited for this purpose and that they from the beginning had shown him the greatest friendship, on which account he would ask them first whether they would allow us to settle among them. And now without making a single objection or even a single condition, without asking for any present, with one mind and one voice they cheerfully consented to our petition, assuring us in the highest terms of their friendship that the whole land should be open to us, that we could travel where we liked, that (to use their own expressions) they would seize us by arms and feet defending us, & that we were the Kings of the country. These assurances were followed by further debates on the matter, one chief speaking after another for a certain time and on a certain point. When the matter was so far settled, Dr. Krapf mentioned our need of houses, the debates on which subject began by putting the question: Is there any bird without a nest? Dr. Krapf then told them that we had already seen two cottages not occupied at present and which wanted only some reparation for our dwelling in them; that after a fortnight they should give us information of their proceedings and that we in the meantime would prepare for our settlement among them. To all this the most ready consent was given, so that our hearts were enlarged and filled with great hope for all Eastern Africa. The time of their salvation has now come. It was a great comfort to the mind of my fellow labourer, Dr. Krapf, to have such an evident proof set before our eyes, that he had not spoken to them the word of God in vain. For though we looked on the important transactions of this assembly as a wonder of the lord in the wilderness, still it was also the fruit of the missionary labour of Dr. Krapf, as God is pleased to carry out His bright designs through human instrumentality. It is for this very reason that we must cry for some, at least for one morer labourer, especially as the precarious state of Dr. Krapf's health might soon make me the same lonely missionary, as Dr. Krapf had been. Allow me dear Sir to tell you of the ardent wish, our dear Brother B. Deggeller felt, when I was still in London and he at Basle, to be sent to this very Station. He was however at the same time ready to submit his wish to the destination of the Committee, which is the test of a proper Missionary Spirit, but notwithstanding I thought the Committee would not be displeased to be informed of this circumstance. I will not farther urge the necessity of the most speedy help for this mission, as I feel convinced that the facts related in this

letter speak as powerfully to your own hearts as they do to ours. If you are able to have those brethren who will be sent out next, ordained Priests before they leave London, it will be better, but if not they might perhaps receive their second ordination in Bombay, where such things should not hinder the promotion of the Kingdom of God, but rather further it, on which principle, I am convinced, the Committee is desirous to act. May the Holy Spirit himself lead you and your missionaries to know and to do the holy will Him, who willeth all men to be saved.

I remain, dear Sir, with the deepest
respect to yourself & the Committee

Yours faithfully

J. Rebmann