

Kisuludini, Apr. 4 1853

Reverend & dear Sir!

Your kind letter, dated Sept. 8/52, came to hand on the first of March. First of all I must thank you for your congratulations & Christian sympathy on behalf of my dear wife. The anxiety under which my letter of April 52 left you will have been removed by my letter of Sept. last, & thank God I can now add that she is going on very comfortably & has been enabled to make a small beginning in teaching some children to read, who occasionally pop in, not indeed as seeking instruction, but still submitting themselves to it on being desired to do so. The Lord only knows when the time will arrive in which these scattered, careless beings will be gathered together to learn the book which now appears so useless to them. Events of recent occurrence which will afterward be more fully mentioned make me think that God is preparing a rod for them to make them feel that the time of their ignorance winked at by God is now past & that the command has come forth to them to repent. See Acts 17, 30: such is the hardness, pride and stubbornness of the human heart that without a nation first crushed, humbled and reduced by the arm of God's power in some way or another, His offerings of grace and mercy will always be slighted, & in Westafrica such a crushing was effected by the slave trade – in the South by international wars & the European Settlers, while the South-Sea Islanders were left to crush themselves. I believe there is not one Mission in which any considerable success has been realized, where the powerful arm of God had not been previously active in crushing the national spirit. India is probably the most striking in this respect of all the Missionary fields of the present day. Still we must not conclude from this genial feature of the history of Missions, that the Missionary can do nothing among an unhumbled and unsubdued people – for he it is that must teach them to make the right application of God's judgment upon them as a nation, where his special attention is to be directed to such individuals as may be compared to the last sheep of the house of Pessach in the ways of our Saviour & who are privileged to be the first fruits of a nation. Such was Mainge who departed this life in faith on the Redeemer – & such is now Abbe Gunja whom we intend to baptize as soon as our Chapel will be finished, if we are indeed allowed to finish it.

As to my labour among the Natives I during the latter part of this half year which includes the dry season discontinued my visits to their scattered habitations because during this time the men are seldom found at home, being absent on their drinking companies & celebrating their festivals in the Kaya (i.e. a sheltered place for a division or the whole of a tribe, to which in time of necessity they all will resort). So while my time was principally occupied in working out my Kinika-English Dictionary, I only now & then spoke to those who occasionally visited us, not indeed for the sake of learning the book, but as they say, merely to meet us but commonly to beg some trifle as black pepper, which they have none

themselves, ginger, salt, needles, vitriol for wounds, other medicines, cotton cloth (this latter article however is now seldom begged of us, as experience has taught them that we only give clothing to such as are unable to work). Others come with some articles to sell as fowls, sheep, goats, gnu, cassada, bananas, pineapple, etc. In fact, the interruption caused by such visitors is so frequent that I can seldom write much during the daytime but must avail myself of the night. As to our chapel the carpenters' work is nearly finished & a good quantity of stone has been quarried from places very near our home, the workmen being superintended by Mr. Erhardt.

The decision of the Committee regarding this my colleague arrived just at a time when no more reason of importance existed for his further stay in Rabbai. Mr Erhardt had no doubt a great disinclination to go to Usambara, but that would never have been a sufficient reason to keep him here had it not been backed & strengthened by a combination of circumstances which in a great measure excused his conduct not only to his own convenience but also to mine. When the Directions which instructed him to begin that Mission, arrived in 1851, our house in Kisualdini had already been commenced according to a plan which none but he could execute. Mr. Diehlmann who was to accompany him had not yet arrived – Mr. Pfefferle died – the Mechanics were soon reduced by fever to such a state of weakness as very soon rendered the necessity of their return to Europe evident to us. I myself was going to be absent from the Station for an indefinite time - & when I returned, a chapel was to be built – add to this his own formerly uncertain state of health & deficiency in language (both of which obstacles are now removed) & you will no more wonder when in his last letter he puts the question to the Committee whether after circumstances being so much altered they would notwithstanding abide by their former appointment. His situation of mind and body as well as outward circumstances were indeed such as rendered the renewal of the Committee's Direction greatly desirable to him, while his aversion to go to Usambara was by no means such as he could not or would not overcome. In short, the truth is that he was hitherto kept back from Usambara no less by an inward state of mind than by the state of affairs in the Mission, on which – it must be acknowledged – his superior talent in mechanics conferred a lasting benefit, but which a man like Dr. Krapf who is never determined to stay anywhere for any length of time, will never acknowledge. Why did Dr. Krapf, when he was in Usambara a year ago, instead of merely asking the King's permission to stay in his country, which had already been done before, begin the Mission there at once? What necessity was there for his return to Rabbai? The only excuse that could be pleaded was the rainy season, but that was by no means an insurmountable difficulty after he had once arrived in the country. I spent nearly a whole rainy season in Jagga. When he went there a second time a few months afterwards he found there was war in the country which indeed may have been sufficient cause to think himself compelled to return to Rabbai. It seemed as if the Lord's time for a Mission in that country had not yet arrived – inasmuch as not only the internal disturbances which have lately taken place there, but also the recent question about its political relation to the Imam of

Mascat justify the thought that it was perhaps better that none of us hitherto stayed in that country. In consideration of all this & especially on the ground of Mr. Erhard's perfect readiness to begin that Mission now, far earlier than he would go to Bombay, Dr. Krapf after a consultation we had together on the subject, declared that he would take the responsibility upon him of requesting the Committee to take back their decision & to allow Mr. Erhardt to follow out the instructions formerly given to him & in order to lose no more time about it he was advised to proceed to Zanzibar at once as the first step to be taken towards the establishment of a Mission in Usambara, was to ask the permission of his Highness the Imam, a nominal dependency of whom that country is now also to be considered.

Believing that Dr. Krapf will give you a detailed account of the Imam's proceedings on the coast since his return from Mascat in Dez. last I only briefly allude to these matters & I sincerely wish that there was less occasion for me to do so than there is, but as even the mere existence of your East African Mission has been made questionable for the future, I cannot be expected to remain silent. The state of affairs appears to be thus that during the Imam's and H.B.M. Consul's stay in Mascat, the French endeavoured to obtain authentic information about the question whether the coast of the Usambara country between Tanga & Pangani actually belonged to his Highness or not. Such information they obtained in a covert way from Dr. Krapf, who during his journey in that country had seen proofs enough to answer the question in the negative, upon which a statement seems to have been made by the French to the Imam - to say - that although he claimed the whole of the East African coast, there were parts contained in it which did not actually belong to him. Seeing his claims thus disputed the Imam upon his return to Zanzibar put again subdued to him the Island of Lamoo which for some years had been in a state of rebellion & then on his arrival at Mombas caused the chiefs and elders of all the Wanika tribes to make their appearance there & required them to renew their homage to him, which the Wanika did without any show of resistance, well knowing that their independence would remain just the same which it was before, as long as no tribute was demanded from them. His Highness having finished with the Wanikas, proceeded to the coast of Usambara & instituted the same negotiations, the result of which was that Kimeri, the monarch of that country, is henceforth likewise (nominally) to be considered as a vassal of the Imam, for he levies no tribute from him as he does not from the Wanikas. It is clear that all these troubles were caused to his Highness by the French, who are endeavouring to get a footing in the region. A French fleet is expected from the North, to the Commander of which, according to what Major Hamerton told Mr. Erhardt, the Secretary of the French Consul communicated the notes, which he had contrived to obtain from our colleague Dr. Krapf. No wonder therefore that Mr. Erhardt during his short stay at Zanzibar, had the grievance to witness H.B.M.'s Consul's sore displeasure about the Missionaries at Rabbai having politically interfered in the question about Said Said's dominions. Mr. Erhardt strongly assured H.B.M.'s Consul that no such charge could be brought against himself & me, but was sorry

to admit its truth against our Colleague, Dr. Krapf. Upon Mr. Erhardt's return to Rabbai, the Major gave him a letter to me which I inclose together with a copy of my answers to him, by which you will see the nature of our present position in East Africa. But let us look up from men whose breath is in their nostrils, Jes. 2, 22. to Him, who in the end ordereth all things to work together for good to those who love Him, Rom. 8, 28 & who in the empire of France may be preparing a rod not only for nominal Christendom, but also for Heathen-nations afar off which want to be crushed under His powerful arm before He can embrace them with His everlasting arms of grace and mercy.

In conclusion I would express my feelings of thankfulness to God for the Christian spirit of forbearance with which you so ably defend our statements in connection with our Miss. journeys into the Interior. Far from being discouraged by the attacks made against the truthfulness of our Geographical statements – I am ready to take up my travelling staff as soon as I shall see the hand of God making way for one – not for the sake of supplying with materials the proud geographers of Europe, but for the sake of Him who came down from heaven to save a perishing world. Far from holding me back, my dear wife even encourages me to go & desires me to tell you so. Only let me know that I do not go on any other account, but the conviction that I am called by the Lord.

Yours respectfully

J. Rebmann

I have taken the liberty of inclosing a letter to my brother in Germany, not knowing at present another way of sending it. I beg you to forward it with the earliest opportunity.