

Kisuludini/Rabbai April 15, 1854

Reverend & dear Sir!

I send a duplicate of a letter which I wrote & despatched to you in January last. It is its being sent out of the regular time that makes me do so. The representation I have given there of our position in East Africa is such as I should now only repeat though some months have passed in which I have had time for further consideration. But nothing has since occurred that could induce me to change in any way the views and convictions I have expressed in that letter. I cannot agree with the view which is taken in the Church Miss. Intelligences (No. 9 Vol. IV) with regard to the Church's duty to East Africa, when it is supposed and spoken of as "that Mission that most needs help" etc. etc. I myself in former years used to second Dr. Krapf in his appeals for Missionaries to E.A. , but since I have read more about the Missionary fields & especially since we have had more opportunities to witness the weakness & wretchedness of the Arab Government - & since the little friendship which in fact had only been forced upon it by the English Consul has been unhappily forfeited I can no more wish that any Missionaries be sent to E.A. for the present. East Africa has been raised to an undue importance as a Missionary field - undue because if your Missionary records are true there are heathens in other quarters of the globe & especially to the west of the Continent, who have learnt to want a Missionary as such, while here he is barely permitted to come & that for nothing else but his cloths and beads. The confusion which therefore forces itself upon me is this: that as long as you have not even sufficient Missionaries for West Africa, as also for the North American Indians, no duty, comparatively speaking, devolves upon you for sending any to E. A.*. No husbandman will spend his time & strength in clearing of bush and stone a new piece of ground to the neglect of fields which are ready for the seed. The first kind of work will only be done when he has time & strength to spare. The same holds good with a Miss. Society. If you have not sufficient men to saw the seed on fields all ready for it - do not send any to cut and carry wood & stones - Let no ambition for being the first in Central Africa be mixed up with the desire to promote the Redeemer's Kingdom. It would be as strange fire before the Lord to burn ourselves. Since I have been in E.A. I know of the danger of flattering ourselves with the belief that we are going on an errand for the Lord - while in a distant corner of the heart - proud self - is lurking to come in for a little share of the laurels of this world's honour & praise. To be the first - to be the first - that's what our fallen nature is so very fond of. Let us guard against this enemy & follow the only safe maxim for a Christian:

* p.s. this sentence is perhaps rather too strong & liable to misunderstanding - for there is certainly a Duty on the Ch. M. Ser. With regard to E.A. - as God in his Providence has assigned it to her as one of her fields of labour. I only mean to say, that your Duty is greater to such Nations as are prepared to make sacrifices for obtaining & sustaining a Missionary as is evidently the case in the W. and S. of this Continent, than it is to Nations to whom a Missionary is still an absolutely strange being & any thing but recognized in its true characters. Here we must still wait for the Lord to crush the Nation under his arm of power, before the gospel can be effectually preached to them. It is far from me to say, that E.A. should be given up; I only mean to guard it from its being raised to an undue importance in comparison with other Missionary fields.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God & His righteousness, & all these things shall be added unto you, Matth 6, 33.

Of that preparatory work mentioned above which I have been engaged in this half year, I would first mention the gathering of a Vocabulary of the Kinyasi language, which I have now carried to the letter "m". I need scarcely say that it also belongs to the great South African family of languages. Sounds we have not yet met with in other dialects are "pf", or "po" (??) or "bs"(??), for the latter of which I have chosen the Greek "Ψ". My informant is a slave from Mombas, who came into our service before I knew any thing about his origin, which I rather accidentally discovered when I heard him once speak to one of his fellow servants in a strange dialect. On enquiry I was told that he was a M'niassa, who in consequence of international expeditions on slave catching was seized by a tribe called Wapogera, who sold him to the Wamaravi & these to the Suaheli-Slave-merchant who had come from Uibu (a small island belonging to Mozambique & on the maps called Ibo). At Uibu, which was reached after two months travelling at a very slow rate (in effective march only half the time is wanted) he was at last bought by Slave-merchants from Mombas. This, he thinks, happened about 10 years ago, while he is now a man of about 30 years of age. The remembrance of his country & language can therefore be well supposed to be still very distant. His native country he calls Kumpande, two days west from the lake, which by the tribes who live on its banks is called Niassisha (or Niassja), of which the Suahelis evidently made Njassa. He states that he used to go very often to the lake in search of "mia" (pl. of "mua"), a species of palm of the leaves of which the Natives make mats, bags etc. , as also to buy cotton, which is grown near the lake & of which they weave a coarse kind of cloth, while their better articles of clothing, as also their beads, brasswire & especially their guns (called "fuds" in their language) they buy from the Portuguese who seem to have some settlements at no great distance from them called "Kubaler" or "Kum Koma". The Portuguese are called by them "Wakigumja", while the name generally given by the East Africans to the Europeans is "Wasunga". From that part of the lake's banks he used to come to from his home, the opposite side cannot be seen, but a boat starting at daybreak will reach it at sunset. Their boats are however not provided with rudders, wherefore they only use oars. Following the margin of the lake to the South through the territory of Mazawi for a few days, its breadth seems gradually to decrease till, as my informant expressed himself, people on the one side are within call of people on the other side, but of its extent to the N. he & his countrymen have no idea.

They only know that it gets much broader there than it is with them, so much so that they are deterred from following it because they lose sight of the banks, therefore only go to neighboring islands for fishing. During the cold & rainy season the lake is said to be extremely boisterous, but during the hot season quite calm. When my informant spoke of the cold in his country, he described the water as getting a hard crust during the night, which of course can be nothing else but ice, called "Kungir" in his language. This however is only found in small collections of standing water (& never in the lake Njassa). The Wakiao (not

Wakian) are spread on the Eastern banks of the lake, to the South are the Wamaravi, & N. from there the Wakamtunda, of whom the Wakumpande & Wapogera are only subdivisions. The name Maravi which in our maps is given as the name of the lake I have never heard before from a Native. Salimini, my informant, never applied it to the lake, but to a large territory bordering upon it & in fact forming its S. Western banks. The occupants are called Wamaravi & these together with the Wakamtunda & perhaps still other tribes are by the Suaheli on the coast generally comprized (sic) under the common name Wania'ssa. The Wakamariga whom on the map of 1850 I have placed to the East of the lake, are according to Salimini to be placed even to the West of the Wakamtunda, to whom they stand in the same relation as the Wakamba to the Wanika. He also mentioned a large river to the South of his country, which he called Temba & the people living on its banks Watemba. Temba may be identical with Tembo about half a degree S. of Ibo (Uibu) (see W. Keble's map of Africa, printed for the Chr. Knowl. Society). In the vicinity of the Watemba are the Wanzunsi, who, from an abundance of iron in their country, seem to be the principal blacksmiths among all the tribes around. On being applied to for hoes by people who have come from a distance with a cow or a goat for their barter they will work all the night at their fires. I might mention many more names referring to regions of Inner Africa, but what would be the benefit – The great thing is to go & to see with your own eyes - & whenever I make enquiries about those unknown regions, I feel as if I must go & visit them. But alas – now that we must suspect the Imam to be secretly our enemy, a most uncomfortable feeling would accompany you all your way, for the Imam could move (?) without much [*nachstehend fehlt offenbar*]

Among our visitors (who are far from being the enquirers after the truth) we also had for the first time a Galla. You have been informed in former communications that the Gallas come twice a year to the Wanika of Kiriama for trade. Farther to the coast they generally do not venture themselves, so that all the time I have been here I never saw nor heard of a Galla coming to the Rabbai territory. Nor did the Galla with his two Kiriama friends start from their encampment with the purpose of seeing the Europeans, but he had only accompanied them to a Suaheli man who carries on some trade at a little distance from us, & only when they did not find him at home, it was that they resolved upon visiting the Msungu [Europäer]. He was a middle aged man & said to be the son of a chief still living, which he also quite looked. We treated him as hospitably as we could & felt very anxious to know him return home not only with amazement at what he had seen, but with some knowledge of the object for which we are staying in this country. This was greatly facilitated by one of his Wanika-friends having a most perfect knowledge of the Galla-language. After I had reason to consider myself being understood by the Galla, I put the question to him, what he had to say to the supposition of my going to his country with the same object - & especially whether we could at all enjoy some protection from them – upon which he very truthfully & with much good sense replied, that the Gallas, though they were men, still they were no men (meaning not human). As to himself who

had now got acquainted with me, he would do all he could for my well-being – but other Gallas would look upon me as a sorcerer, who had come to destroy their cattle, on which account they would also allow no Suaheli man to come to their country. Again he would be sometimes absent on trading business, when he could no more be responsible for my life etc. If I should like to come to their country & stay there, he would advise me to get first acquainted with as many Gallas as possible when they come to Kiriama for trade & then I should be safer. I thought of the Hannoverian Missionaries & Mechanics but did not think it judicious to mention them to the Galla man. Those poor people will, on account of their large number, have to struggle with immense difficulties in these poor & wretched countries. Major Hamerton in writing to me about them, says “I fear, all will be a failure”. The Imam, I am afraid, will look upon them with suspicion & displeasure. Strange to say, that, as far as we know, they have not yet arrived, though their ship is said to have sailed on the 17th of Sept. Last.

Mr. Erhardt, after he had stayed with us for about 2 months since his return from Usambara on the 22nd of Dec. left again on the 1st of March for TAnga. We have had a letter from him stating his safe arrival & informing us of the great scarcity of the necessaries of the life, & that again new hostilities have broken out between some tribes in the vicinity of Tanga. So the prospects of that Mission are at present very dark – but we must wait in patient hope for the time when we shall be able to say of Eastern Africa with the Psalmist: Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he has made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow & rutteth the spears insunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire, Ps. 46, 8, 9. And in the mean time we must pray: Arise, o God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations, Ps. 82, 8.

P.S. Your letters of Oct. 8, 1853, have been duly received on the 17th of January.

P.S. 22nd April. With great cause of thankfulness to our heavenly father, I have to add, that Mrs. Rebmann was this morning safely delivered of a son. Both mother and child are quite well.

Commending ourselves to your Christian

Sympathy & prayers,

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours respectfully

J. Rebmann

P.S. 24th April. Yesterday, as on the Lord’s day, I baptized my little son & called his name Samuel, dedicating him to the Lord as Hannah did of old. According to previous agreements, Dr. Krapf & Mr. Erhardt are to be his Godfathers & Mrs. Lieder in Cairo his Godmother. The mother herself had to answer the responses – no one beside ourselves being present but Abbe Gunja & his boy. Both mother & child continue to be well. J.R.