

Kisuludini, Nov. 27 1854

Reverend & dear Sir!

We send you a document, the contents of which, if you should not have received my letters of Sept. last – which we have some reason to suspect – might perhaps take you by surprise. Painful, as the document might be for you, so much will be clear, that it is not made up of our own fancies & misgivings, but of simple matter of fact.

It seems indeed to have been a want of discernment & sound judgment – partly also want of experience that we could ever believe the favour of an independent mohamedan ruler to afford any thing like a basis for Missionary operations. Certainly it might have been sufficient if we had stayed quietly on the spot – but with this neither the Missionaries nor their Society would have been satisfied. This settling at Rabbai among the Wanika was indeed the first step toward the guilt they were now contracting in the eyes of the Arab Government. From there they managed to smuggle themselves (for so it must be called from the circumstances of the case) farther & farther beyond the limits Arab friendship had meant to allow them. Nothing, of course, was said against them, as long as no serious consequences had shown themselves. By a singular combination of circumstances however, when H.H. & H.B.M's Consul were absent at Mascat, & Dr. Krapf in consequence was thrown upon the friendship & hospitality of the French Consul, "the travels of the Missionaries", without their slightest intention or perhaps even from erroneous information, proved at last injurious to the revenue of the Government. Whatever blame may justly be attached to the conduct of the Missionaries (for we are all included in the offence) the one fact stands out in the clearest light that as long as the East African coast is not thrown open to the Europeans in general, neither will the Missionary be able to procure any thing worthy to be called a footing. – Nor will the heathens ever understand or appreciate our coming among them as long as a Mohamedan power stands between them and us. Our profession of teaching them our "book" (for so it appears to them, standing as we do by the side of their Muhamedan superiors & under their authority) is set down by them as a mere pretence, while our real intentions are believed to be nothing else, but the possession of their countries. – But even viewed by themselves, without the relation they stand in to the Mohamendans – farther experience & a deeper acquaintance with their characters have forced the conviction upon us, that the heathen tribes of E.A. stand as much in need of "being broken with a rod of iron & being bashed in pieces like a potter's vessel" as their brethren did in the W. & S. of the Continent, before they will prove fit material for Missionary labour. – Take for an instance the Rabbai people, who of all Wanika had the best advantages for enabling them to form a right judgment about our intentions – what was the immediate impression made upon their minds, when the news of a "great many Wasungu" (i.e. of the Hannoverian Missionaries) having arrived at Mombas,

reached them? The old story was revived again of the Wasungu having come to reoccupy their castle. Another of their stupid fancies is that we keep men concealed in our boxes to be ready again at some lucky day for an attack on Mombas. Yea the very money allowed us by the Society, which, this the Natives well know, we receive from the Custom-master at Mombas, is turned a proof, that somehow or other we are in political connection with the Arab Government, because we have "ushuru" (duty) paid to us. They seem to fancy that in a measure the Arabs were subject to us, but that we were not contented with any thing short of the actual possession of their countries. Up to this very day even the Rabbais consider it a disgrace to become the servant of "the Mulungu", & if in one the love of money so prevails as to disregard the disgrace & actually enter our service (as we have had one instance) he is soon teased & ridiculed out of it. From the journal of Mr. Erhardt you will find that at Tanga a man in his presence preferred selling himself to becoming the servant of "the Mulungu". And even here at Rabbai, we have often witnessed our Muhamedan servant from Mombas ridiculed for being in our service. At Tanga again, Mr. Erhardt told me, men, who begged at his door for food, & were desired to fetch a bundle of grass for his donkey, refused to do so, though one hour's work for the European stranger would have procured them food for 2 or 3 days. –

While therefore a Muhamedan Government considers us dangerous to the resources, from which it has to drag out its miserable existence – & the East African heathen, haughty as he is in spite of his utter ignorance & degradation looks upon us with contempt & treats us as liars at the very outset – (& all this by no means for the sake of the gospel) – you can no more wonder, that we put the question not only to ourselves, but to those who have sent us – whether our continuance in E. A., under such circumstances, can be justified while there are many heathens on other parts of the world, for whom the appearance of a Missionary is at least intelligible & in a measure acceptable. Had not E.A. for the present better be left until providential changes in its political & social aspect, perhaps similar to those in the W. & S. will have taken place? – These questions we are most anxious, to have answered by the Committee, & in order to be relieved, as soon as possible, from the painful uncertainty about our position; we would request you, not to postpone your writing to us to your usual time, as letters sent via Hamburg or via Aden may reach us at any time. Desirable indeed it would be to keep an eye on E.A. & perhaps even to pay it an occasional visit, in order to avail one's self of the first opportunity for reentering the field under more favourable circumstances.

Praying that the Lord may grant both to you & to us the wisdom from above to discern - & a willing mind to follow his directions

I beg to remain
My dear Sir
Yours respectfully

J. Rebmann