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Notes of a Journey from Lagos up the River Niger to Bida, the Capital of Nupè and Illorin in the Yoruba Country, 1879-80

Author(s): John Milum

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after in vain trying to find another way over the river, sat and watched. When the long-wished-for dawn broke we went back into the town, and found the road. We were all desperately tired, and Mr. Comber was getting faint with his wound; but we pressed on until we had crossed the Kwilo, passed Banza Mputa, and reached a friendly town two hours beyond. Here Mr. Comber was quite 'done up,' and the small flask of brandy—the only thing we managed to save—failed. We sat in this town about an hour, and ate a little rice. Mr. Comber revived a little, and we started again. Fortunately, we were able to get a few men, and I made up a hammock with a blanket, so that we got on as far as Sanda by the middle of the afternoon, Mr. Comber in the hammock, Cam and I walking. At Sanda we were among friends—warm friends too—and their expressions of indignation and kindly sympathy almost brought tears into our eyes. Everything we wanted they got for us, and we laid down to sleep with a feeling of comparative safety, knowing that if we were followed our friends would have protected us at the risk of their own lives."

Having ascertained at Sanda what injuries the party had received—Mr. Comber was the only person seriously hurt—they procured fresh carriers for the hammock and a large escort, and in two days arrived at Congo, having travelled about 80 miles in three days. On the evening of their arrival, Mr. Crudgington extracted the bullet—described as "a square piece of ironstone"—and at the conclusion of his letter Mr. Hartland reports that Mr. Comber was doing very well.

Notes of a Journey from Lagos up the River Niger to Bida, the Capital of Nupe and Illorin in the Yoruba Country, 1879-80.

By the Rev. JOHN MILUM.

ON August 14th, 1879, I left Lagos in one of the branch steamers belonging to the Mail Company *en route* for Bonny, from which place I transhipped for the river Niger.

At Akassa, on the 2nd of October, I embarked on a trading steamer of the United African Company, and began my journey up the river. We passed quickly through Louis Creek, and arrived at Darrall Island, where the Niger proper begins, and the mangrove swamps end. The banks are here thickly strewn with trees of large growth and beautiful foliage; very noticeable are the bomban, oak, oil-palm, and cork-wood trees, and here and there are extensive plantain farms, the fruit of which seems to be the staple food of the natives. Small villages appear, the houses of which are built of mud and covered with grass, and as the river is now in flood the water surrounds them, and in some instances covered them entirely. In most of the villages there are curious thatched houses raised upon tall sticks, in which the native fisherman stands in the wet season, and plies his art with a common native basket attached to a cord.

Between the villages of Anjama and Otua, a whole bend is left out in the Admiralty Chart.

After passing the Wari branch, the river spreads out to over a mile in breadth, and forms a splendid sheet of water. Beyond the village of Utchi the scenery alters; the banks are not so densely wooded, and the river has flooded large tracts of country, covering what are in the dry season large islands. Great numbers of white cranes, fish-eagles, divers, and kingfishers now appear. For the purposes of irrigation the natives have cut small gutters from the overflowing banks into their farms, which are many feet above the river in the dry season. From the town of Alenso may be seen the first high ground after leaving the coast, a range of hills running north-west and south-east.

Onitsha, a large trading town situated on the eastern bank, has given trouble to the European traders for many years, but has been recently bombarded, and the ringleaders punished. On the opposite bank, a few miles further up, is the town of Asaba, beautifully situated on the slope of a hill; it is reputed to be the healthiest spot in the lower river, and has been used by traders as a sanatorium. The river here presents a beautiful appearance, winding away between banks well wooded with fine trees, but not so thickly grown as to hide the well-cultivated farms between, and far away on the distant horizon is a splend range of hills, apparently wooded to the top. At the town of Abokein, where the Igarra country begins, the river stretches out in long perspective, with the banks on either side forming alternately bays and headlands, whilst tulip trees in flower make the banks glorious. At the town of Idda, on the eastern bank, remarkably situated on the top of red ironstone cliffs, rising perpendicularly 180 feet from the water's edge, the view is again enchanting; the cliffs, the wooded slopes of the hills, the conical-roofed houses of the town, a branch of the river winding away to the east, and the broad river stretching out majestically towards the mountain ranges, forms a sight not easily forgotten. The course of the river is now between steep rugged hills, rising so high as to deserve the appellation of mountains, which sometimes so enclose the river as to give it the appearance of a lake, alternating with verdant slopes well cultivated with maize and guinea-corn. The range of hills on the west finds its highest point in Mount Oril, 1400 feet high, at the base of which we passed, but could not see its summit as it was covered with clouds. The hills on the east terminate in well-cultivated slopes, and at the confluence bend away up the Binue, and again crop up on the Niger bank. On both banks are small villages picturesquely situated, surrounded with farms, and here and there gigantic granite boulders, till arriving at Lukoja, at the confluence of the Niger and Binue, which town is situated on the slope of a hill, surrounded by a series of other flat-topped hills, so high and steep as to shut out the horizon from view. Soon after leaving the confluence the immediate neighbourhood of the river banks is low, but the range of hills continues on either side in the distance till nearing Egga, when they again close in on the east, and

terminate in Kippo-hill, opposite to and about five miles from Egga. The town of Egga is situated upon three very low-lying islands, at the western bend of the river; it is dirty, ill-ventilated, and thickly populated, but well situated for trading purposes. We arrived in Egga on the 8th October, the steamer having, therefore, accomplished the journey in seven days, steaming only by daylight and anchoring at night.

On October 14th I started in a canoe for Wanagi, *en route* for Bida, the capital of Nupè. Our passage was over what is, in the dry season, farm land and prairie, but is now covered with many feet of water from the flooding of the River Baku, which flows in a general south-easterly direction into the River Niger. When this great overflow subsides great numbers of fish are left behind, to catch which the natives set the grass on fire. Wanagi is a town of some importance, situated on the slope of a hill about 450 feet above sea level. Our journey from this place to the town of Bida, a distance of about eight miles in a westerly direction, was through well-cultivated land, with table-mountains and sloping hills on either side. The town of Bida, with a population of nearly 100,000, 450 feet above sea-level, is surrounded with a wall, square in shape, with a deep trench, the height of the wall from bottom of the trench being about 20 feet, entrance and exit being made through gates connected with all the principal roads. Flowing through the midst of the town is the river Lauja, a considerable stream during flood. The town is laid out in large square compounds, the walls of which are sometimes 20 feet high, and built of sun-dried bricks. The round houses, called katambas, are built of clay, and the conical roofs are made of grass. The entrance to one of these compounds is very intricate, one having to pass through several of these katambas with a doorway on either side leading into a courtyard, where the dwelling-houses are contained. These round houses, standing out from the square compounds, give them much the appearance of ancient castles. The streets are generally broad and clean, with here and there fine squares, in the middle of which are mosques surrounded with fine banyan trees, and in the town are several large markets where fresh meat, milk, vegetables, and articles in general use, from country cloths to native sandals, may be bought at a moderate price. The people are industrious, smelting their own iron, and working it up into articles of general utility; they grow and card their own cotton, weaving it into cloths of various patterns, and they have extensive dyeing establishments. Some are employed in melting glass and shaping it into ornaments for the arms, or in working brass, copper, and leather into ornamental and useful articles. There are also great numbers of barbers, who sit in their shops, and will shave a man's head or face and cut his nails for the consideration of a few cowries. Education is very generally enforced, for nearly every boy can read and write Arabic, having been taught in one of the numerous schools of the

town. There are regular courts of justice, presided over by judges properly appointed, who, as well as I could observe, administered the law righteously, in keeping with the statutes and precepts of the Koran, Mohammedanism being the national religion. Theft, however, is punished with severity. For light crimes a hand is cut off; another mode is to sell the culprit into slavery; but the most severe form is to behead the thief, and stick his head on a pole in the market-place, as a warning to others.

King Omuru, the Emir of Nupè, is a pleasant-looking man, about 55 years of age, somewhat stout, moderately tall, very intelligent, and of an inquiring turn of mind. He will sit for hours listening to information concerning the wonders of European civilisation. I learnt that he is not a blood-relation of his predecessor, King Massaba, but was formerly his chief war-captain. The circumstances which led to his accession, instead of Massaba's children, are somewhat romantic. Massaba had sent Omuru to Kano to settle some troubles; during his absence a chief of Kambari rebelled, and drove Massaba and his people from the town of Rabba, the old capital of Nupè, in which place the old kings are buried. The king fled for protection to Illorin. Omuru found the country, therefore, in a very unsettled state when he returned from his expedition to Kano, and immediately summoning his warriors, attacked the rebel chief, drove him to the banks of the Baku, near Wanagu, where, rather than perish by Omuru's sword, he leaped into the river and was drowned. Order and peace being restored, Omuru invited Massaba to resume his throne. The king was so grateful for the service thus rendered, that he commanded that Omuru should succeed him without molestation from his sons. On assuming the title, he established the present capital of Nupè, and called it Bida, which means in the language, "Follow me." He appears to rule his people with firmness and wisdom, and to the extreme borders of his kingdom his power is respected, and there is safety for the stranger. I had an opportunity of witnessing the popularity of Omuru when, on a Friday, he invited me to accompany him to the mosque. He appeared gorgeously dressed, riding a beautiful horse, a present from the King of Houssa, an umbrella being held over his head as he rode, attended by about one hundred horsemen, his body-guard and chiefs, all gaily dressed. In front of the king's horse a man walked, throwing cowries to the crowd, for which they scrambled. The populace crowded the thoroughfares, got upon walls, and occupied every available space, and on the approach of the king prostrated themselves in the dust and shouted "Baba! Baba!" (Father!) The greatest enthusiasm was shown both on going to and returning from the mosque. As the king's stranger, the place of honour was allotted to me; I rode next to the king. After prayers in the mosque, the king met his chiefs in a house close by, ate kola-nuts with them, and introduced me to the company. In short, the greatest loyalty

and enthusiasm were manifested by all, and I confess I was myself impressed by his kingly bearing and friendly manner.

On October 25th I left Bida for Illorin, in the Yoruba country. Our journey was south-westerly, through a charming tract of country, undulating in character and sometimes closed in with hills, ranging, I estimated, from 500 to 1000 feet in height. There were extensive farms of cotton, maize, guinea-corn, and garo, and in the marshy ground near Dokomba there were large rice-fields. Partridges, guinea-fowl, and crown-birds are plentiful throughout this region.

Dokomba, situated on the river Lavon or Kaduna—the former being the Tapa, and the latter the Houssa name—about 18 miles from Bida, is a very dirty and over-crowded town, containing a population of about 5000.

From Dokomba, we descended the River Kaduna, in native canoes, furnished by order of King Omuru. At the canoe-village of Dokomba the river flows south-westerly, and is about 100 yards broad, and generally widening to a quarter of a mile till reaching Muraji, where it enters the Niger. The river flows through the ancient territory of the Tapas, the ruins of whose towns may be seen upon its beautiful banks. The sand-banks abound in pelican, crown-birds, duck, plover, and other birds of beautiful plumage. The stream is navigable for steamers of light draught to the town of Dokomba. The journey from Dokomba to Muraji was accomplished in eight hours and a half, and may be reckoned at 30 miles.

Muraji is a closely-packed town situated on three low-lying islands, containing a population of about 4000. The chief of the town is called the Kuta, and has been recently punished by Omuru for his ill-treatment of a European trader belonging to the European factory, which has been since deserted on this account. With native mats, bamboo poles, and canoe paddles, we erected a temporary tent, under which I passed part of the night. It being moonlight, there was not much sleeping with the inhabitants, but the night was passed by them in playing, singing, and dancing. The Kuta seemed to be having a specially grand time, and, as I could not sleep, I walked to his compound to see and hear all I could. To my surprise, I found it was the Kuta's fashion of holding a *levée*. Drummers and performers upon bones were gathered round in a circle playing native tunes, to which the honoured guests danced. The master of ceremonies stood in the midst, and as each one was introduced spoke in his praise, and dilated upon his great deeds, after which an extemporised song was struck up in his honour, to which he danced, prostrated before the chief, and retired. A man newly appointed as chief was introduced, and was reminded of his duty to the people, and warned to deal righteously with his subjects. The Kuta and his sons danced, striking out with hands and legs most vigorously, and evidently enjoyed the excitement. Something was said in my praise, and the

Kuta presented me with six pots of shea-butter as I had honoured him with my presence, and had witnessed his dancing.

Early next morning we exerted ourselves to obtain a canoe and men to take us the remainder of our journey, but did not succeed in starting till 8.30 a.m. Our general course was north-west by the inner channel of the river Niger, here called by the Yoruba name Oya. The canoe-men, to keep out of the current, passed through the long grass covering the level plains now flooded with water, and only occasionally striking the river proper. The journey was an excessively trying one, arising from the constrained position that one is obliged to keep in a canoe, and from mosquitoes, sand-flies, bad food, the delays caused by the men stopping at every village and trying to pillage, and by losing our way and sticking fast in large rice-fields; but at midnight of the fourth day we arrived at Shonga-wharf, where we were well received by the agent of the United African Company, and entertained at their factory.

From Muraji we passed the following villages, at short distances from each other, viz. :—Ajuka, Lanifa, Adafo, Esunlatchi, Gogah, Latchi, Dokko, Woiski, Kasoji, Kuson, Konji, Pashea, Ipaji, Bonfofo, and Shonga-wharf.

Shonga is situated upon the lowermost branch of the river Niger, almost due south from Rabba, but is not marked upon charts or maps. There are two distinct towns, one to the east near the river, known as Shonga-wharf, where all the trading factories are situated, and under the absolute control of the Emir of Nupe, who collects all customs from the place. The town of Shonga, about half a mile west of Shonga-wharf, is walled and ditched, with a population of about 5000, and has a king whose name is Aliyu, who rules with limited power, being tributary to the Emir of Nupe. Rising behind Shonga-wharf are two hills, measuring 450 feet above sea-level. To the west of the town, a range of hills strikes southerly. As none of these hills are marked on the chart, I have taken the liberty of naming the most easterly "Gregory's" Mount; the next "Kilner's" Mount; and the range to the west of the town, "Punshon's" Mount. The town is 450 feet above sea-level, and is situated upon the slope of a hill, the highest point of which is 650 feet above sea-level. These hills overlook the beautiful valley of the Niger, now appearing green with the rice-fields laid out in plots, marked off by streams of water trickling between like silver threads.

From Shonga these are the following chief roads, viz. :—To Illorin, in a general south-westerly direction, about 118 miles; to Lafaji, in a southerly direction, two days' journey; and to Rabba, in a westerly direction, taking ferry at Kusaji.

On November 5th, we left Shonga for Illorin. We passed out of the Illorin gate and over Shonga Hill, which makes a rapid descent after reaching 650 feet above sea-level, when again we ascended to the height of 650 feet, at a distance of about 10 miles from Shonga, where is

situated a small town, surrounded with a wall now sadly out of repair, named Idumaji. From this place a gradual descent is made till reaching the river Bandana, 16 miles from Idumaji, flowing south-easterly at the ford, and being 2 feet deep by 20 feet broad. From this valley a gradual ascent is made till the aneroid indicates 1000 feet above sea-level. A descent is then made to the river Epwa, 2 feet deep and 10 feet broad, about four miles from Bandana. From this valley a gradual ascent is made till reaching the town of Sharè, sometimes called Sharegi or Sariki, 10 miles from the river Epwa. Besides the above, we crossed several streams flowing south-easterly, dried up part of the year, but of considerable depth in the rainy season. We passed through numerous farms, cultivated with guinea-corn and garo. The shea-butter and locust trees grow in abundance by the wayside. The rocks generally are of ironstone, and occasionally granite shows up to the surface. The path in some places is so thickly strewn with mica, small pieces of quartz, and rounded pebbles, that the horse was much distressed in walking over it.

Sharè is a walled town beautifully situated at from 1000 to 1100 feet above sea-level. From the north-west round to the east of the town is a range of flat-topped ironstone hills, about 300 feet high, up the slopes of which the town is creeping. Away on the distant south-eastern horizon blue mountain ranges stretch out for miles, whilst the rich level ground between is green with guinea-corn or tall grass, the whole making up a view of the grandest description. We found an invigorating and refreshing breeze blowing over the town, whilst from the hill Okeawon, rising out of a limestone bed, enclosed with a large plantation of trees, and made sacred as a fetish grove, flowing easterly through the midst of the town, is the river Shawsay, which supplies the inhabitants with an abundance of pure water for drinking and domestic purposes. This river, I was told by the inhabitants, flows into the river Oye, which in its turn empties itself into the Oya (Niger), and from the height of the banks must be ten to twelve feet deep in the rising season, and is so swift that it can only be passed by the native bridges thrown over some very narrow parts where the river has worn the rocks into a deep chasm. The physical peculiarities of this town mark it out as a healthy spot; and I imagine Europeans might reside here with little or no danger to health.

Its political relations are peculiar, it being the border town of the Nupe and Yoruba kingdoms, and regarded by both as neutral ground, although as a matter of right it is claimed by the Emir of Nupe, who has a consul living in the town named Galajema. There is a chief called by the people king, but I suspect his power is extremely limited, probably less than that of the rich prime minister, Adek-eye, and as nothing can be done without consulting the king, the consul, and the prime minister, who in their turn will do nothing of importance without

consulting the inhabitants, it becomes a slow and costly proceeding to obtain one's wishes, and requires some skill to prevent jealousy.

From the hills may be seen the Nupè portion of the town, with the round katambas well marked and separate from the Yoruba portion, which has its characteristic compounds, the latter portion being by far the larger. I estimate the population at from 25,000 to 30,000, one-third only being Nupè. The religion of the town is that represented by the two tribes, the Nupè affecting Mohammedanism, but mixing with it superstitions and heathenish rites; whilst the Yoruba pays homage to the numerous gods of his nation.

From Sharè important roads lead to the following places, viz.:—To Odi in a south-easterly direction; to Illorin in a south-westerly direction; to Lafiaji in an easterly direction; to Baraba (Barga) in a westerly direction; and to Shonga in a north-easterly direction.

After leaving Sharè the road becomes very undulating and rough, unavailable for wheeled traffic, and difficult even for horses. We crossed several small streams, all flowing south-easterly, and I was informed that they emptied themselves into the river Oye, not marked upon the chart. The principal of these are as follows, with their distances as nearly as I could judge:—Kaja, one mile from Sharè; Abba, two miles further on. The ascent from this stream over the granite rocks of Abbageaji hill is troublesome. Obere, three miles; Olushi, three miles; Ahau, three miles; Lokotododo, three miles; Ologoji, four miles, with a village of the same name; Boddé, five miles, with a small market on its banks. After leaving this stream the ascent is difficult over the Ode Boddé Hill, as huge pieces of granite rock stand out from the surface, worn quite smooth by exposure. About six miles from Boddé is situated the town of Akpado, on the slope of a hill, about 1400 feet above sea-level, the road winding around its base measuring 1100 feet above sea-level. At this place the numerous caravans rest for refreshment, the people of the market finding a ready sale for country soup, boiled yams, and fruits.

From Akpado the principal roads are the following, viz.:—To Shonga in a north-easterly direction; to Illorin in a south-westerly direction; and to Ireshi in an easterly direction.

The next place of importance is Iporin or Sansani, marked on the chart Kpani, about six miles from Akpado. The town, 1000 feet above sea-level, with a population of about 3000, is beautifully situated on the slope of a hill named Oke Popo, to the west of which is another hill named Apaykun. At the base of the hill, flowing round the town with an easterly course, is a small stream named Iporin. I was told by a native that it flows into the Popo, which empties itself into the Kanja, which in its turn flows into the Oye; the latter river flowing round the base of Mount Papala about 10 miles to the east of the town of Iporin. I learn from the natives that the river Oye is a large river, and judge that it must be so from the number of streams said to flow into it, and

that it takes its rise in Mount Kolli in the Effou country, and taking a general north-westerly course empties itself into the river Niger, a short distance to the west of Shonga. At night and early morning the thermometer went down to 68° F. inside the house.

The following principal roads strike off from the town, viz.:—To Shonga, north-east; to Illorin, south-west; to Abayiji, east.

From Iporin the road becomes excessively rough, being in some places over large blocks of granite so steep and smooth as to make it dangerous, and in other places the stones washed down from the hills caused the horse to limp along cautiously. Huge granite boulders stand out on either hand, and there were the usual farms of guinea-corn and garo, and the shea-butter and locust-trees; the notes of the partridge, guinea-fowl, and other birds were frequently heard.

After crossing the river Iporin, we passed Oke Obba, a small farm-village about four miles distant. About eight miles from this place is the river Oshin, flowing south-easterly, 30 yards broad and three feet deep. On the southern bank is situated the town of Oshin, with a population of about 1000. Six miles further on, on the top of a hill 1200 feet above sea-level, is situated the large farm-village of Okeoye, containing a population of about 1000. In a valley six miles distant is the river Ori. Six miles nearer Illorin is the farm village Oke Oshi, with a population of about 500, situated on the top of a hill 1450 feet above sea-level. From Oke Oshi to the river Onya, about 30 yards broad and two feet deep, the distance is five miles. The country is now very undulating till the village of Pulanji is reached, four miles from the river Onya, on the top of the hill Obanikinsuwi, from the summit of which a good view may be obtained of Illorin. A prominent object to the north-west of the town of Illorin is Mount Sobè, a bare, black granite rock, marked on the chart as being 250 feet high. One is also struck with the wonderful bareness of the country all round the town for miles, there being scarcely a single tree to be seen. Passing down the hill-side, our course lies through a swamp. Three miles from Pulangi, flowing north-west at the ford, 30 yards broad and three feet deep, is the river Aza, said to take its rise in the village of Erazza, 30 miles to the south of Illorin. From this river a gradual ascent is made for about half a mile, when the gate of the town of Illorin may be entered.

The whole distance from Shonga to Illorin I estimate at a little more than 118 miles, which took us nearly four days to accomplish. Illorin is one of the largest towns in the Yoruba country, the chief town of the northern portion formerly wrested from the Yorubas by the Fulah power. It is surrounded by a high mud wall and deep ditch, and is supposed to contain a population of 150,000. It is situated upon a range of hills, 1000 feet above sea-level, and covers a large space. Besides the river Aza, which partly surrounds the town, a small stream flows through the midst of it in a south-westerly direction, named the Salioluku, which is a running

stream all the year round, but in the wet season is over three feet in depth. The population is composed largely of Yorubas, the remainder being Nupès, Fulahs, Houssas, and Kanikis, the king himself being of the last-named tribe.

The following are the chief roads from Illorin, viz.:—To Ajasha, south-easterly; Owo, easterly; Shonga, north-easterly; Ogbomosha, south-westerly; Banja, westerly; Ondoko, north-westerly.

The national religion is Mohammedanism, but we found a great deal of superstition and covert heathenism; and if one might take this town as an example, Mohammedanism is certainly little or no improvement upon heathenism as far as it affects the life and morals; the grossest lying and deception is practised without shame, and the licentiousness of the people is unbounded, extending even to little children. The people are unclean and idle in their habits, but to this there is some exception, as cloth and tobies of great value are woven in the town, and there are workers in metal and leather. The men pride themselves on their skill in horsemanship, and in the use of the spear and sword, which are their weapons of war. I judge the town to be in a state of moral decay, and there are so many signs of weakness that I suspect it would become an easy prey to a determined and courageous foe.

The present government of the country seems to be that of a limited monarchy, the king not daring to act in any matter of national importance without consulting his chiefs. The army, represented by the war-chiefs, seems to have a large share in the government of the country.

The present king is named Aliyu, and, to distinguish him from the king of Shonga, who bears the same name, he is called Aliyu-Dan-Shita, i.e. Aliyu, the son of Shita. In personal appearance he is not very imposing, being small and short of stature; but he has the credit of being intelligent and wise. He is of the Kaniki tribe, as above stated, and just now does not appear to be very popular with his subjects, especially on account of a difference of opinion with the commander of his army respecting the war now waging with the town of Offa, about 60 miles to the south-east, and said to contain a population of 25,000; the king being opposed to the war, whilst the chief is determined to carry it on, the country being therefore divided into two powerful factions, the majority being in favour of the war. The history of the origin of this war reaches back to some distant date. The town of Offa, by conquest, was tributary to Illorin; but the inhabitants, being Yoruba, received constant taunting messages from the powerful and warlike Ibadans for submitting to the Fulah stranger who had come across the Niger and taken their country, and, receiving encouragement from Ibadan, determined to throw off the yoke. The like taunts seem now to be bearing fruit in Illorin in the disloyalty and factious spirit manifested, and in the return of great numbers of Yorubas to Ibadan.

Offa began cautiously, and did not at once break out into open rebellion ; but sent a request to Illorin that the tribute might be remitted for one year, to enable them to build a wall round their town to protect them from the attacks of robbers, especially as they were so far from those to whom they were supposed to look to for protection. The bait took, permission was given, and the wall built. The year following the usual tribute was required ; but the Offas, now fortified with a wall, refused to pay, whereupon the Illorin army laid siege to the town ; but the Offas, being helped by the Ibadans, have succeeded not only in keeping the Illorins at bay for nearly two years, but have inflicted upon them several severe defeats, and have added a fourth wall to their town. Though the Illorins persist in their determination, they seem to be further from attaining their object now than when they began.

The king received me and my party very graciously at the palace on several occasions, and took an intelligent part in many conversations with us. His manner of receiving us was purely Yoruba, the people of which country being particularly careful to shroud the person of their sovereign in a mysterious secrecy. The king was lying in a room with his head out at a small doorway, about three feet high and eighteen inches wide, opening into the piazza where we sat. This opening has a mat hanging over it, which is partly lifted when he receives visitors, but let down when the interview is over or the king is not to be seen.

The palace is situated in the midst of a large square compound, after the Yoruba fashion, built of mud and covered with grass, a somewhat better house than the ordinary town residences. There are many large markets in Illorin, and food is plentiful and cheap. Slavery prevails, but the fact of being a slave is not necessarily a mark of poverty, as many slaves are so rich as themselves to possess numerous slaves, horses and cattle of their own, and extensive farms, lands, and houses. A slave in irons being led with a rope round his neck is a common sight on the roads, and both in Bida and Illorin I saw the slave marts crowded with hundreds of slaves. Apparently the one object of war with the mass of the people is to capture slaves.

The chief languages spoken from Bida to Illorin are Fulah, Houssa, Nupè, Kaniki, and Yoruba ; but, as an interpreter, I imagine a Yoruba would be found the most useful. Little difficulty is experienced in obtaining carriers, as the Kambaris, a large tribe of strong, muscular men, follow this as their profession, and will carry a load of 70 lbs. or 80 lbs. from Shonga to Illorin for five or six shillings. Horses may be bought at a moderate price in the country, and if salt, cloth, or beads can be obtained for barter, they may be purchased very cheaply.

The disturbed political state of the country prevented my passing to Lagos overland, which was my original intention, Lagos being only

fifteen days' journey from Illorin, viâ Ogbomoshô, Ibadan, and Abeokuta.

The natives told me of a river named Moro, which they exalt into a deity. It rises at Agbanda, 30 miles south-west of Illorin, flowing into the river Amon, which in its turn flows into the Niger. It flows by a town named Sawo, 10 miles from Illorin, at which place it is said to be about the same breadth and depth as the Aza at Illorin, in the month of November, i. e. 30 yards broad and three feet deep, and in the wet season becomes very broad, swift, and deep.

On this river in the month of June a yearly festival, named Moro, after the river, is kept by the heathen of the country. They spread skins and mats of different colours across it, making them fast to the banks, so that they may not be washed away, and offer annual sacrifices to the river. One year it demanded a bullock as a sacrifice, which the people refused to give, and, as the tale goes, the river got angry and washed away the skins and cloths. About the same time a Shango priest was drowned in the stream, whereat the thunder-god Shango became angry and declared war against the river. The encounter was furious, but was decided by Shango casting down a thunderbolt into the stream. The commotion caused was so great that a bank of sand was formed in the middle of the river, upon which great numbers of country pots washed down by the stream rested, and the water flowed in exactly opposite directions on either side of the bank, but when the fight was over the stream flowed on, and flows now as before the great contest. Such is the native story, firmly believed in.

Many rivers and towns were named to me not marked upon the chart or any maps that I have seen, which leads me to think that an intelligent traveller would find here an interesting field for discovery.

The way overland being closed to me I was obliged to return to the coast by the way I came. I found the Niger strangely altered in appearance; the villages and towns that were surrounded or covered with water on my way up, were now standing high up on banks from 20 to 30 feet above the surface of the river, and the channel in some places had only five or six feet of water, making our progress very slow and precarious.

I left Shonga in the trading steamer *Fulah*, belonging to the United African Company, on the 30th December, and arrived in Lagos on the 24th of January, 1880, having been absent, in all, 164 days.