WILEY

Colonel Long's Mission to King M'Tesa

Author(s): Chas. Chaillé Long

Source: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1874 - 1875), pp. 107-110

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of [The Royal Geographical Society \(with the Institute of British Geographers\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1799812>

Accessed: 17/12/2014 01:42

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley and *The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

was from Colonel Long, containing an account of his journey to the Victoria N'yanza. Colonel Long was despatched by Colonel Gordon, on a mission to King M'tesa, and had given a most interesting description of the route he followed. The second paper was by Captain Elton, on his journey to the Delta of the Rufigi. Although that district had been recently described by Mr. Stanley, with his usual graphic power, Captain Elton's paper would be found interesting, inasmuch as his journey was undertaken a year previous to that of Mr. Stanley. It differed in some points from Mr. Stanley's account, and possibly might be found to be more accurate. The last paper would be one by Mr. St. Vincent Erskine, on a visit to Umzila, south of the Zambesi. Mr. Erskine had explored entirely new ground, and filled up a portion of the map of Africa which previously was a blank. He had the misfortune to lose his journal and observations, in crossing a river when on his return; but he preserved his map, which would be a credit to any geographer, from the care with which all the points were laid down in it. He had the map about his person when his journal was lost, so that the practical results of his exploration had been preserved.

COLONEL LONG'S MISSION TO KING M'TESA.

The following letter was then read by Mr. MARKHAM:—

"To the Geographical Society of London.

"GENTLEMEN,

"Gondokoro, 20th October, 1874.

"I deem it a duty to communicate to your honourable Society the result of an Expedition confided to me by Colonel C. G. Gordon, c.b., of Her Majesty's Service, Governor-General of the Provinces of the Equator, to Uganda, the kingdom of M'tesa.

"Arrived in Gondokoro the 18th of April last, I received order from Colonel Gordon on the 21st to visit M'tesa, to present him gifts, and obtain information about his country. I started on the 24th April, with hastily collected *impedimenta*; myself armed with Reilly No. 8 Elephant, two soldiers, Said and Abdel, armed with Snyders, and two servants.

"The rainy season had commenced, and the difficulties of the route thus enhanced, a detachment of soldiers returning to their garrison at Fatiko, in their representations only added unfavourable auguries.

"Fifty-eight days of painful marches, and I arrived, weary and foot-sore, upon the hills of Uganda. The palace of the Great M'tesa faces me upon the brow of another hill, five hundred paces distant: the broad, well-swept roads; the mountains that lose themselves in the mist that conceals the Victoria N'yanza; the thickly populated banana-forests, from which ascends smoke from countless 'Zeerebaz,' were all in contrast to the flat, pestiferous marsh of Unyoro. The barbaric pomp and circumstance with which M'tesa received me as the 'Great M'Buguru' (White Prince) are details that to recount seduce me from my proper intention to give you information. You will pardon, however, a digression, when I tell you that my imposing presentation to M'tesa the following day was honoured by the decapitation of thirty of his subjects. What strange combinations are there not in the African character! M'tesa oftentimes showed me much feeling when I was seriously ill; and when permission was accorded me to visit the lake, and from thence to return via the Ripon Falls by river to Urondogani, in decapitating seven men—guardian spirits of the lake; and now M'tesa said to me in broken Arabic, 'It is necessary that I kill these men because you wish to go by the river (they would prevent you); they have done me much injury, but it pains my belly (heart) to kill them.' M'tesa is, say, thirty-five years of age, tall, and bears himself 'every inch a king.' He shows a glimmer of a higher intelligence than the *vulgar*

populus. How reconcile, then, this common propensity to sacrifice his subjects, which places him upon the same level as Dahomey? I remained twenty-nine days as the guest of M'tesa; frequent visits were honoured by the decapitation of eight to ten on each occasion. Although thus honoured (?) I claim for M'tesa a higher intelligence than any other African prince; he has many qualities that distinguish him from his confrères. My horse, the only one ever seen in Uganda, was an object of the greatest wonder to M'tesa—wonder and fear to all M'Ugandi. Over difficult roads, and streams, and marshes, through which he swam rather than walked, I brought him back in good health; neither in Unyoro nor in Uganda does the redoubtable fly, 'Tsetse,' exist. Honoured as never stranger was before honoured, I sat upon a chair in the presence of M'tesa—a consideration which the M'Ugandi recognised in prostrating themselves before me. He called me brother, and I soon awakened in him the desire to be really the great King of Africa. Contrasting his *mesquin* royalty with that of a prince in the world without, by long stories of brilliant carriages and equipages, and all the paraphernalia of royalty, aided by photographs and pictures, he said to me, 'All that I have is yours, if you will build me a palace and give me a carriage.' I succeeded in gaining his consent to all my propositions.

"My projected return by the Victoria Nile (Somerset) was resisted by sorry means: 'Speke tried it and failed; the river is full of rocks, savage tribes, and certain death awaits you; the Grand Sultan will avenge your death upon me.' To all this I opposed an unalterable resolution, and, finally, he yielded a reluctant consent. The 14th July I visited the Victoria N'yanza. From the palace and Murchison Creek—three hours by a beautiful and romantic road—I arrived, and was met by a thousand of his warriors in canoes of bark of tree sewed together, ornamented by the head and antlers of the Tetel. The 'Magarra' drum (accompanied by vocal imitations of the crow) and horns re-echoed by the surrounding hills. Down Murchison Creek and out upon the lake I was accompanied by this numerous escort. I measured its transparent depth, 25 to 35 feet. A cloudless sky disclosed me the opposite shore, 12 to 15 miles distant (?) to an unnautical eye. Deceived in this; more than double this distance it cannot be in width. The water is sweet. I visited the right shore (too ill to cross to the other), found no traces of shells. I had intended to pass from the lake via Ripon Falls to Urondogani. Superstition and fear of Afrites were too potent influence, and, notwithstanding my assurance that M'tesa had decapitated these devils, I was forced to abandon this project, and return to M'tesa; to whom again presenting my adieux, I left for Urondogani, the 19th July, where, after much suffering due to duplicity and hypocrisy (the Chief opposed me because I had closed the road to Zanzibar, and had received assurances of M'tesa that all ivory should pay to Gondokoro), I arrived, having consumed twenty days—a trajet of only three or four days. Robbed of all my baggage and provisions, and deserted by my porters—the work of these miserable M'Tongolis. Speke has recounted all the miseries suffered on this same route. This was a painful rehearsal of what he suffered. M'tesa, as soon as he heard of it, offered to make me every amends. Ill from dysentery, weak and exhausted by fatigue, I replied, 'No, nothing; the river is my path homeward.' African diplomacy had done its best to deter me from my purpose to navigate the unknown river. I seized from the unwilling chiefs two canoes, and at last I was free from their devilish intrigues and daily annoyances. The 9th August, at dawn of day, having my two soldiers, two servants, and three children, I enforced presents from M'tesa, and folded my tent like the Arab, and silently stole away down the river, with scanty provisions, unknown to what fate. I had two brave soldiers with me. We rowed incessantly and together, though ill. On the 11th August, having on my right (say in lat. N. 1° 30', or thereabouts) a high mountain, I entered a large

basin or lake; the bed of the river here loses itself. Beset by storms and without compass, I was forty-eight hours struggling to find my way. This lake is at least 20 to 25 miles wide (wholly unable to perceive land from either side). Finally, the storm abating, I succeeded in again resuming my way. The 'gerch' here prevented my landing, though upon the floating turf-like gerch I succeeded in making a fire, and serving out to my half-starved suite and myself a meagre repast of flour and water.

"This lake seems the great reservoir, not alone of the waters of the Lake Victoria, but of the waters of the plateau, that great watershed extending southward, the real source of the Nile. Eternal rains (save in July and August) here have place, and from its almost immeasurable depth a lily with flat head seems to hold these waters in abeyance. Withered by the sun's rays, once a year they loosen their hold. Here perhaps is a demonstration of that still mysterious periodical inundation of the Nile. On the 17th I arrived near M'Rooli, where, attacked by 400 men of Kaba Rega in canoes, I defeated them after a fight lasting from midday till sunset, with a loss to them of 82 killed, of whom two were chiefs, causing them to desert their sinking boats. I received a wound in the face. I arrived at Foweira, near Karuma Falls, the 20th August; where, in a sad plight, suffering from want of food and swelled limbs from exposure and humidity, I was joyfully received by the adjutant of the garrison and by Rionga, whose delight evinced itself in dances. I had defeated his old enemy Kaba Rega.

"The river then from Karuma and Foweira to Urondogani is navigable even by the *Great Eastern*.

"Resuming my march northward the 15th September, I arrived at Gondokoro the 18th October.

"In Uganda I had induced M'tesa to close the road to Zanzibar, and, in the interest of Egypt's monopoly of ivory, to send his ivory to Gondokoro. I had explored the Victoria N'yanza, and in returning had navigated the unknown reputed unnavigable Nile to Foweira and Karuma Falls. Colonel Gordon will soon have a steamer upon the Albert N'yanza, and also one to go to Lake Victoria from Foweira.

"The country of Uganda is mountainous and picturesque, soil fertile, and impregnated with iron, crystal, and l'argile.

"Climate insalubrious and debilitating for Europeans. The valleys are cut by morass and marsh, the wallowing-ground of herds of elephant and buffalo. The jungle-fever is prevalent, and even the native is not proof against its deadly influence.

"Products: coffee grows wild; is chewed by the M'Ugandi; no decoction. Tobacco is largely cultivated, superior quality, and resembles 'Perigne' of Louisiana. Sugar-cane, Indian corn, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, pomegranate (only in the garden of M'tesa, but does not perfect), banana, and plantain of excellent quality; the whole country is a banana-forest.

"The population I estimate at half a million. The army has no organisation, consisting of say 50 soldiers, armed with guns of most ancient system. All M'gandi are armed with lance and shield. A General-in-Chief, called Kongowee, makes raids and despoils his own people. The character of the people is mild and child-like, superstitious and timid; in nowise warlike. The M'gandi works but little, or not at all; his pipe and merissa the haven of his happiness.

"M'tesa is absolute. He holds council every day; his M'tongoli on bended knees render their reports. He adjudicates only in serious cases, and his verdict is death. For serious offences a M'tongoli may cut off the ears. Since four years M'tesa has adopted the Moslem faith, introduced by some Zanzibar traders; the practice, however, is but little known. A few people may be seen with pieces of board, on which are inscribed, in Arabic characters, phrases

of the Koran, the happy possessors of which are regarded with something akin to awe by their fellows. The origin of the race is obscure. The theory of Capt. Speke may or may not be valid. Arabic traders from time immemorial may have given a type to this people, a cross which certainly resembles the Abyssinian, and perhaps may have been produced by the Arab and the Negro. A large portion of the people are Negroes, black; but for characteristics of the Ugandi proper this is a field of speculation, and requires serious study.

"I ought to pay a tribute to His Highness the Khedivè of Egypt, who has recognised my services to my adopted country. A prince who places himself in the van of civilisation and progress, and who has chosen for the work my able chief, Colonel Gordon, requires no eulogy from me. I trust that the result may be the spread of order and enlightenment in Central Africa.

"I have the honour to be, gentlemen,

"Your humble and obedient servant,

"CHAS. CHAILLÉ LONG,

"Colonel, and Chief of the Staff to Colonel Gordon."

The CHAIRMAN said Colonel Long's was one of the most romantic and extraordinary stories of African travel he had ever heard. It was impossible not to admire the courage and determination with which Colonel Long had accomplished his arduous task. The paper afforded a very graphic idea of the perils and dangers that beset all African travellers, and should increase the admiration which was felt for those who willingly devoted themselves to such a work.

Mr. MARKHAM next read :—

1. *On the Country between Dar-es-Salam and Kilwa.* By Captain F. ELTON, Assistant Political Agent, Zanzibar.

[This is published entire in the 'Journal,' vol. xlv., pp. 238 *et seqq.*]

The CHAIRMAN said this was another chapter in the romantic history of exploration in Africa, and was filled with the same kind of perils and difficulties which had to be encountered in making any progress in discovery on that continent. Whoever went into those regions must carry his life in his hand, and have no ordinary powers of endurance. He regretted the absence of Sir Bartle Frere from the meeting. If he had been present, he would have been able to add valuable testimony to the interest of these explorations, which were all carrying out the great object for which he was despatched on the late mission to Zanzibar.

The following paper was then read by Major ERSKINE :—

2. *A Journey to Umzila, in South Eastern Africa.* By Mr. ST. VINCENT ERSKINE.

[ABRIDGMENT BY MAJOR ERSKINE.]

IT will be within the recollection of the President and many Members of the Society, that in the year 1868, Mr. St. Vincent Erskine, then a mere boy, explored the course of the Limpopo River, from its junction with the Lipalule or Elephant's River to its mouth, which was found at the Inhampura of the maps, and not as previously thought by many the Sabia, near Inhambane! This expedition was a most extraordinary one, considering that the