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Author(s): Alfred Sharpe

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A Journey from Lake Nyassa to the Great Loangwa and Upper Zambezi Rivers.

By ALFRED SHARPE.*

Map, p. 776.

ON March 15th, 1890, I started from Leopard Bay, Lake Nyassa, in latitude $13^{\circ} 45'$, on a journey to the Loangwa and Zambezi rivers.

March is unfortunately the worst month in the whole year for travelling in this part of Africa; the rain at that time is incessant, the grass at its full height, and swamps and rivers full of water.

Immediately on leaving the lake shore, I entered a swamp which reaches to the foot of the mountains, some 18 miles back from the lake. I was in this swamp for two days, the water reaching up to our knees in most places, and it was not until the third day, on reaching the hills, that we once more got our feet on dry land. On March 18th I reached Chiwere's, having ascended 1550 feet from the level of the lake. The people here, calling themselves Angoni, are a mixture of Zulu and Achewa, but very little Zulu is now left. Chiwere is a powerful chief. His country, which is of considerable extent, lies at from 3000 to 4000 feet above sea level, is healthy, and has good soil and a pleasant climate. The eastern portion is well wooded throughout, but to the west of Chiwere's own kraal, the gullies only are timbered, the general character of the country being open rolling downs, covered with grass. Villages are numerous, and cattle and sheep are seen on all the western portion. Two missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church, Messrs. Murray and Vlok, have lately settled near Chiwere's, and find him well disposed towards Europeans, and anxious for their settlement in his country.

After leaving Chiwere's I passed through open hilly country for two days. On the third day I descended some 600 feet to the vast plain which stretches west to Mpeseni's country, and in a northerly direction over 120 miles to Mombera's country. This plain lies at an elevation of some 3000 feet, is thickly wooded, and only very sparsely inhabited. Water is somewhat scarce, and not much game is met with. During the rains, however, elephants seem to be fairly plentiful. A few miserable stockaded or mud-walled villages of Achewa or Achipeta people, who live in constant fear of war from all quarters, are scattered through the bush at distances of 15 to 30 miles apart. At two villages which I passed, the elephants had been eating the young corn growing in the gardens, and in one case within a hundred yards of the mud wall surrounding the village.

I reached the Bua river at a distance of eight days' journey from Lake Nyassa (some 90 miles as the crow flies) and found it in full flood. It was here running from south to north in a broad shallow marshy valley, and we had to wade through a quarter of a mile of water, reaching in some places to our shoulders. Owing to the quantity of flood water,

* Communicated by Ottilie L. Perry, Esq., F.R.G.S., F.R.HIST.S.

it was difficult to distinguish the true banks of the river, but I fancy it is only a small stream in the dry season. There is, however, running water in the Bua all the year round, and elephants and game collect about its banks during the dry months.

After crossing the Bua, going west, there is a gradual and gentle rise until the foot of the mountain range is reached, which forms the eastern boundary of Mpeseni's inhabited country: the stretch between the Bua and the mountains being uninhabited.

Climbing over this range which rises some 800 feet above the plains, I then descended slightly to the Bua river once more, which is here running south, and in a small stream. I here crossed Livingstone's track. The country about the Upper Bua is only sparsely wooded, and, after we had crossed the river, was entirely open, and dotted over with villages of the Angoni. I reached Mpeseni's own kraal some 30 miles west of the Upper Bua. While at Mpeseni's, I was deserted by half my lake porters, and was compelled to leave many of my loads behind.

Mpeseni's is a splendid district, the general level of the country lying at from 3500 to 4500 feet above sea-level. It is undulating, with low hills, and here and there small rocky peaks. From here flow streams to Lake Nyassa, to the Loangwa, and to the Zambezi. It has rich soil which continues right up to the tops of the low hills; heavy crops are grown in the bottom lands, and large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep are seen in all directions. The hills, which are in all the inhabited parts of Mpeseni's country, are low and not steep, rising gradually from the valley bottoms, and covered with rich chocolate-coloured soil. Two short days south-east of Mpeseni's, at Missala, alluvial gold is found, of which I saw specimens. All this high-lying country is undoubtedly capable of colonisation by Europeans; the climate is charming, and appears to be healthy.

Mpeseni, and a few of his headmen, are pure Zulus from the south; there is, however, now a great mixture of blood, and most even of the headmen have Achewa or Asenga blood in them. They are superior in every way to the Achewa, are great orators, and intelligent, but very superstitious and suspicious. During the yearly war season they are constantly harrying the surrounding weaker tribes, and catching slaves. Mpeseni himself does a brisk trade in slaves, selling to the Arabs.

Leaving Mpeseni's on April 6th, I travelled for four days a little north of west through uninhabited country to the village of Msoro, the road descending more or less all the way. The only river crossed was the Litembwe, which, rising in the same hills as the Bua, flows north-west and north to the Lukusha. We crossed the Litembwe some 15 miles north-east of Mpeseni's kraal. It was 12 yards wide, with a fine stream of clear water, which flows all the year round.

A few miles before reaching Msoro, we descended a steep fall of 800 feet, into the valley of the Ripandi river, which flows past Msoro.

nearly north, to the Loangwa. Its width is twenty yards, with a sandy bed and low banks, and it is said to dry up entirely in the rainless months. The valley, which is 2000 feet above sea-level, is some three miles wide, has good alluvial soil, and, round about Msoro, is covered with large fields of grain. The inhabitants call themselves Akunda (*not* Achikunda), are subject to Mpeseni, and are a remnant of the original occupants of this part of the country. In appearance, language, and customs, they seem to be identical with the Achewa.

Leaving the Ripandi, and travelling rather south of west, two days through broken country brought us to the village of Chasaiva on the Sangazi river. This flows north-west to the Loangwa, and is a small stream some ten yards wide, with very little water in it. The valley itself has good alluvial soil, but the surrounding hills are poor, broken and stony, and covered with thorns. From Chasaiva I travelled south-west, almost parallel with the Loangwa river; but at a distance of some thirty miles from it. After reaching the village of Chirupe, and rounding a mass of rocky mountains to our right hand, we turned towards the Loangwa river, and, passing through Chisimbwe, reached the river at the point opposite the village of Muliro in S. lat. $13^{\circ} 45'$ on April 18th, the height by aneroid being 1450 feet. I found the river some 130 to 150 yards wide, a swift stream of muddy water; its banks are 15 feet high, soil sandy, and the river keeps a fairly straight course. The immediate valley of the Loangwa is here 8 or 10 miles wide. A high range of mountains runs parallel with the river, some 10 miles distant on the north-west side, and broken hills, four to six miles distant, on the south-east side. The range on the north-west is called by the natives "Mchinga," but this is only the word for a high "range" of mountains, and is applied indiscriminately throughout this part of East Africa.

From the time we reached Msoro, in the Ripandi valley, we had travelled through an entirely different country from that lying to the east. Just before reaching Msoro there is a steep descent of 800 feet from the highlands lying to the east, the country from Mpeseni's to the west always descending a little. From Msoro to Chisimbwe the altitude was seldom over 2000 feet, the country broken and stony, covered with scanty forest, and, with the exception of the village of Chirupe, uninhabited. Tsetse fly is abundant about Msoro, and west of that place to the Loangwa; consequently no cattle are seen.

Nyassa carriers are useless for a journey of any length. On my arrival at the Loangwa two-thirds of my men were incapacitated by illness; the last few stages had been very slow, and it was useless for me to attempt taking the men on. I therefore decided to leave most of my carriers and goods at Muliro's village and attempt the descent of the Loangwa to the Zambezi by canoe, although natives do not travel up or down the river in canoes, as the current is too swift for any going

down stream to return. Accounts were conflicting as to whether canoes could descend or not. After some trouble I secured three small canoes, and stowing four men in each, and myself and a few provisions in the largest, made a start from Muliro's on April 20th.

The river was here running south-west, and kept this as its mean course for our first two days, during which we made good progress, being in the canoes for nine hours each day. The stream ran at some five miles per hour, and was free from rapids or sandbanks. The immediate banks of the river are covered with thick forest, and game is abundant owing to its being entirely undisturbed. Almost every reach of the river brought us in sight of some kind of game, buffalo, koodoo, waterbuck, zebra, eland, sable, antelope, &c. Monkeys were numerous; I also saw several lions.

On April 22nd we passed the village of Pakalimapua on the left bank. On the 23rd the river entered broken rocky mountains, contracted from 130 to 40 yards in width, and went racing through deep gorges at eight or nine miles an hour: rapids were frequent, and our progress was slow, as I had continually to discharge the canoes and send them down the rapids with only one or two men in each. During the afternoon we lost one canoe in the rapids, and on the following day, in shooting a very bad one, all the canoes were lost, and we had to make our way on foot down the rocky banks of the river, reaching luckily the small village of Chirakanga the same evening. This is one of the only two inhabited spots throughout the 200 miles I descended the Loangwa river, the original inhabitants, Asenga, having been almost exterminated throughout the Loangwa valley by the Zumbo half-castes under Matakanya.

Down to Pakalimapua, the mean course of the river had been south-west. From there to Chirakanga our course was south, and continued in this direction as far as the junction of the Lusenfwa river.

At Chirakanga the natives said there were no more bad rapids below, and that canoes could reach the Zambezi. Finding a large canoe here, which the Chirakanga people used for crossing the river, I bought it from the headman, managed to pack my twelve men in it, and started again to descend the river on April 25th.

We passed the junction of the Lusenfwa river on April 26th. The Lusenfwa is a large river joining the Loangwa on its right bank; it is said to be navigable for canoes for two days' journey up. At its junction it is flowing from the north-west, and its valley extends in that direction as far as one can see up it from the junction. The Lusenfwa, where it joins the Loangwa, is some 300 yards wide, being spread out into several shallow channels, with reed-covered sandbanks between. The water from the Lusenfwa is quite clear, and for a mile or two scarcely mixes with the muddy water of the Loangwa. After the junction, the Loangwa turns to the south-east; the mountains on the left bank trend

away to the east, and the river spreads out into many channels with islands between; the mountains on the right bank continue, however, for some twenty miles below the junction of the Lusenfwa.

The lower portion of the Loangwa, from its junction with the Zambezi, up to a point 15 miles below Chirakanga, might be navigated during four months of the year by a shallow draught steamer drawing not over 16 inches.

From Chirakanga up to the top of the rapids (a distance of some 40 miles by the river) could not be ascended by any craft, but from the rapids upwards to Muliro's a small shallow draught steamer might work during the four months of rain. Rubber is plentiful throughout the valley of the Loangwa, but not collected by any one. Beeswax might also be obtained. Ivory is finished.

When within 25 miles of Zumbo,* I left the Loangwa, having hidden my canoe in some reeds, and travelled overland south-west, through Chasor and Chyoa, striking the Zambezi in two days, 30 miles above Zumbo, at the village of Varamanje. The Zambezi here is a magnificent stream, some 400 yards wide, deep, and running at about three miles per hour. There are now no inhabitants on the Zambezi above Varamanje until after the junction of the Kafwe (or Kafukwe) river is passed, all having here been killed off, or driven away by the Zumbo half-castes. I ascended the river for a day's journey but could get no food, as the country is desolate and uninhabited: no canoes are now seen on the river, nor any signs of human life.

On May 2nd I left the Zambezi and retraced my steps to the Loangwa which I crossed a few miles lower down than where I had previously left it. The people here refused to ferry us across, and I had to send up men to bring down the canoe I had hidden: luckily they found it safe. My men were badly in want of food, but every one refused to sell to us.

Having crossed the Loangwa, I went east, directly away from it, in search of a road which I had heard of from Zumbo up the Loangwa valley. I soon struck this, and our course was then for three days a little north of north-west until we reached the Loangwa again at the village of Chirowe. The country passed through was hilly and very stony, but with numerous small valleys having good soil and a luxuriant vegetation: running water is, however, rather scarce. From Chirowe the path took us rather north of north-east through pleasant country full of running rivulets of good water. Population is very scanty, though the frequent remains of ruined villages showed that very recently this must have been a well-populated country. About the ruined villages and on the road we constantly saw human skulls and bones, all that the Zumbo half-castes have left of the original Asenga inhabitants.

* By Article III. of the (unratified) Convention (of August 20, 1890) between Great Britain and Portugal, "The settlement of Zumbo with a radius on the northern bank (of the Zambezi) of 10 English miles remains under the dominion of Portugal," but with this exception, the (Great) Loangwa valley lies entirely in British territory.—[O. L. P.]

On May 10th I reached the village of Chisimbwe, where I joined on to my former route, and on the following day arrived at Muliro's and rejoined my caravan. During my absence some of my men had made a short journey to the north-west. They reached the Mchinga range, climbed it, and descended to the valley of the Lukusasi river. This river, although only some 30 miles directly distant from the Loangwa, flows parallel with it for some distance, and eventually runs into the Lusenfwa.

On May 13th I finally left the Loangwa, and again passing through Chisimbwe, took a new and more northerly route viâ Chisenga and Lundu to Chasaiya, through the district called Pakaundi. The country was of much the same character as that travelled through on my outward journey. I was informed at Muliro's, and at the villages of Chisenga and Lundu, that giraffes are to be found in Pakaundi, though they do not exist in any other country for hundreds of miles round. At Chasaiya a man was brought to me who said he had shot a giraffe, and described it accurately to me; the name they give them is "Inyamarakiti." I saw none myself.

From Chasaiya, where I crossed my outward route, I took a shorter route to Mpeseni's by avoiding Msoro and keeping to the south of my old track. Buffalo are very numerous in this country, but other kinds of game are scarce. I passed through no inhabited country, and reached Mpeseni's on May 21st.

On 23rd May I left Mpeseni's and took a north-easterly direction to Muasi's at Kasungu, intending to strike Lake Nyasa at Karali considerably north of Leopard Bay from where I set out on this journey to the Loangwa. I have already referred to the streams which flow east, west, and south from these Mpeseni Highlands. Twenty-five miles north-east of Mpeseni's kraal, we crossed the head streams of the Luarezi river, which runs east to the Bua river. On existing maps of this part of East Africa, streams are shown on the line of my journey to Kasungu, as flowing to the Bua and to the Lukusha, but none exist in the positions in which they are mapped. Going north-east from the Luarezi, no running water of any description is met with for a distance of 65 miles, until the Loangwa river is reached. This Loangwa flows into Lake Nyassa, and, is of course entirely distinct from the river of the same name which flows into the Zambezi river.

From Mpeseni's to Muasi's is four days' journey; the country lies in long waves or undulations, and is covered with small forest, with the exception of the hollows, which are devoid of timber, and have water close to the surface; in the rains these hollows become "oozes."

On May 28th I entered Muasi's inhabited country, and left all timber behind, the districts round Muasi's villages having been long since denuded of trees. The south-westernmost villages are all surrounded with mud walls and ditches as a protection against Mpeseni's warriors.

Mokanda, one of the original inhabitants of the country, now occupied

by Mpeseni, took refuge with Muasi many years ago, and his village was one of the first I reached on my way to Muasi's.

I had already, during 1888 and 1889, paid several visits to Muasi, and was received by him as an old friend. He is the successor to the Muasi whom Livingstone saw here. Kasungu is the name of the high conical peak which overlooks Muasi's own village, but the district all round the mountain is generally known by that name. Kasungu is situated in a vast treeless plain: the villages themselves have a few shrubs and trees growing among the houses, but with the exception of these there is not a tree to be seen for miles: the nearest running water is the Loangwa (the Nyassa Loangwa); water for drinking is obtained from holes near the villages, and is dirty and bad. Wood, both for fuel and for building purposes is procured from the (Nyassa) Loangwa, and the women have many a weary day's work bringing heavy loads of firewood this long distance. The plain is dotted over here and there with conical peaks rising to a considerable height, and topped with masses of rock. The Kasungu Peak (above referred to) rises some 1000 feet above the plain, and is visible far in all directions. The country round about abounds in iron ore, which in some places is worked by the natives in the usual primitive African fashion. They build clay furnaces some nine feet high, bottle-shaped: the ore and charcoal are put in from the top in layers, near the bottom short earthenware pipes are inserted all round to let in the draught: the iron, together with the slag, runs down to the bottom and when cold is broken out.

Kasungu is the centre of a considerable ivory trade, and is visited by caravans from Nyassa and from the coast. The ivory must come from places far distant, as no elephants are left now in Muasi's country. There is, I think, little doubt that at no distant date elephants will be extinct in all the Nyassa districts.

Leaving Kasungu on May 31st, I went north-east, intending to strike Lake Nyassa at the village of Karali, some 30 miles south of Bandawe. A march of 15 miles brought us to the (Nyassa) Loangwa river, which I have already referred to. There are many Loangwa rivers in East Africa. This one, taking its rise on the watershed between Lake Nyassa and the (Great) Loangwa, flows north-east to Nyassa, reaching the lake some 50 miles south of Bandawe. It is a considerable stream during the rains, but in the dry season becomes a succession of dry rocky pools. Its bed is 50 yards wide, but is only filled during floods,

The journey from Kasungu to Karali takes from five to six days, and during the whole distance no habitations are met with. A few years ago elephants were plentiful in this stretch of country, but are now practically extinct. For three days after leaving the Loangwa the country is covered with stunted forest, and water is scarce; the trees are heavily draped with orchilla weed, and the journey is uninteresting, as one can nowhere see over a hundred yards in any direction. Game is scarce

and carried provisions have to be entirely relied upon. Quick travelling can however be done, as the ground is free from long grass.

On the fifth day from Kasungu we got out of this stunted bush country (which lies at a general elevation of from 3000 to 3500 feet) and, ascending gradually, entered what is known in Nyassaland as the "Vipsha" (or Zipsha) country. This name is applied to the high-lying open grass hill country west of Nyassa. Throughout nearly the whole length of the west side of the lake, there is a steep mountain range thickly wooded and abounding in permanent streams of excellent water. Towards the northern end of the lake, as far as Mount Waller, its range descends abruptly down to the shore, but further south it recedes to the west, leaving plains or low hilly country for a few miles back from the lake. After reaching the top of this range, going west, the open hilly grass country is reached (the Vipsha). Travelling through the Vipsha is pleasant work during the dry months; there is always a south-easterly breeze blowing, and one can march throughout the day without finding the heat unpleasant. The Vipsha lies at from 4000 to 5000 feet above sea-level. The nights are very cold, and I have seen hoar frost in this country. Game is plentiful.

On June 5th I descended 2700 feet to the Karali plains, and on the same day reached the village of Karali on the Lake shore.

The latitudes shown in the sketch map accompanying this paper are correct, as far as Muliro's. From Muliro's down the Great Loangwa river I had no sextant with me (as I durst not carry it in the rickety canoes). Throughout the journey down the (Great) Loangwa, I took the course of the river every 10 or 12 miles, and made up the sketch map from the notes I took. The longitudes are approximate (as I had no chronometer with me.*

* The foregoing paper is in continuation of that published in the 'Proceedings' of March 1890, recording Mr. Sharpe's journey between the Shiré and the (Great) Loangwa. In a private letter just received (and dated Mandala, July 15th, 1890), Mr. Sharpe says, "I am just starting on another journey northwards to the Mambwe country (near Lake Tanganyika), via the north end of Lake Nyassa. From the Mambwe country I go west, crossing the Luapula river (between Lakes Moero and Bangweolo) to Katanga (Monidi's country) and Garenganze. Perhaps I may get as far west as the Lualaba (Kamorondo) river, and then, turning southwards, return by the southern shores of Lake Bangweolo to Lake Nyassa. In this case I hardly expect to be back before January or February 1891." A reference to the map of Africa just published in the November 'Proceedings' shows that the territory west of the Luapula, as well as the valley of the Kamorondo, belong to the Congo Free State. In Mr. George Cawston's "Treaty" map of Africa, we find Katanga (about 130 miles west of Lake Bangweolo) marked in the Highlands of Garenganze which form the southernmost boundary of the Congo Free State, and send forth the headwaters of the Congo to the north, and of the Kafwe, Kabompo, and other westerly affluents of the Zambezi to the south. The Mambwe country mentioned in Mr. Sharpe's letter is part of the district bounded on the north by the Stevenson Road and Lake Tanganyika, on the east by Lake Nyassa, and on the west by the Luapula river, and is shown, in the R.G.S. map (above referred to) to be within the British "sphere of influence."—[OTTLEY L. PERRY.]