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ITINERARIES IN PORTUGUESE CONGO.¹

By Rev. THOMAS LEWIS, Baptist Missionary Society.

It is remarkable that a country like that of the ancient kingdom of Kongo, discovered by Europeans in the fifteenth century, should be so little known at the beginning of the twentieth, and that its development should have been so sadly neglected to the present day. The rush of civilisation into Central Africa has naturally been by means of its mighty waterways, and hitherto our knowledge of the interior has been to a great extent confined to comparatively narrow strips on the banks of its rivers and the shores of its lakes. The greater facilities for travelling seem to keep Europeans in the valleys, and this fact may account for the lack of enterprise—commercial and otherwise—on the part of many, in opening up districts where overland transport is a tedious undertaking and a great expense. Perhaps also the government, into whose hands the development of the south-western portion of the Congo has been intrusted, is not so active and energetic as we might wish. At any rate, in years gone by the Portuguese Government were more concerned in the development of their plantations in the West African islands than in the welfare of their Congo territories; and for generations they looked upon the mainland as a rich field to supply West Indian markets with slaves and their coffee plantations with “hands.”

Thus, the ancient kingdom of Kongo has been pulled to pieces, and drained out of its best blood and life, because those in power forgot that the only way to develop the country was to develop the character of its people. Until recently the only lucrative business in the country—in which blacks and whites were equally active—was the traffic in human flesh; and even to-day the chief concern of the Kongos is how best to sell one another.

Fortunately the Portuguese Government of the present day shows signs of a desire to open up the country to legitimate trade, and to take its place in the march of civilisation. In 1887 an official Resident was appointed and stationed at S. Salvador. In 1896 a military and fiscal station was established at Makela, not far from the boundary of the Congo State, and on the outskirts of the Zombo country; while in the year 1899 another *poste* was established on the Kwangu river. We take these as sign of good intentions, and hope for better things in the future.

It is important to remember that on the Congo, the immediate banks are populated by riverine tribes, who generally have little in common with the inland natives, and they act as middlemen between them and the white traders.

Noqui.—A traveller sailing up the Congo will find very few native towns on his journey. On the Portuguese side he will pass S. Antonio at the mouth, where there is a government-house and a Roman Catholic mission; then the flourishing trading stations of Kassanga, Mossuca, and Noqui, which is the principal port on the Portuguese side, and about ninety miles from the coast. Noqui has the name of being, with

¹ A paper read before the Geographical Section of the British Association Meeting in Glasgow.

Matadi (a few miles higher), the most unhealthy and deadly spot on the Congo, and for excessive heat and general discomfort it cannot easily be surpassed; and the death-rate among Europeans is very high. Commercially and politically, it cannot be dispensed with, as it is the receiving *dépôt* for all places as far as the Kwangu river, a distance of about 300 miles. Most of the trading houses have their representatives here.

Noqui Hill.—Happy, however, is the man bound for the interior whose carriers are ready to take him out of this sweltering and swampy township: and although the famous “Noqui hill,” with its rough boulders of rock and steep winding path, tests the soundness of one’s respiratory organs, when the traveller looks down from the top, and finds Noqui 900 feet below him, he begins to feel more comfortable, and is glad of a cooler atmosphere to breathe in. When he has cast a final glance on the waters of the Congo, he begins to look around him for a friendly native town where he may spend the night: it is then that he wonders where the people are, for he can see nothing but bare rocks and tall, coarse grass, with here and there a few clumps of palms and small patches of green bushes in the well-watered ravines. He finally decides to pitch his tent by the first stream of water and camp for the night. Thus he gets on for two or three days through an exceedingly monotonous country, which is only relieved by an occasional stream or river. The roads are narrow tracks, and, except in the valleys, where one complains of the tall elephant grass, they are covered with loose quartz stones, which are very trying.

Mpozo River.—About the third day he crosses the Mpozo river, which empties itself into the Congo above Matadi, but at this point in the dry season its water only reaches to a little above the knee. Then come the Luzu and Lunda, with other lesser streams all joining the Mpozo. On the fourth day it is refreshing to come across some native towns, and to be able to buy fresh food for himself and carriers. As he nears S. Salvador, the country is more hilly, and he can see more ground under cultivation, a sure proof of the existence of more people; and when he consults his aneroid he finds that he has been gradually ascending, until he is now at S. Salvador, 1840 feet above the level of the sea.

S. Salvador.—Some two or three hundred years ago this ancient capital of the kingdom of Kongo must have been a large township. Cavazzi, Pigafetta, and others have given us their account of this great city in the wilds of Africa, where kings and their courts appear in great splendour, where churches were numerous, and where all the natives had embraced the Christian faith. Many of the statements of these eminent men must be taken with caution, but the fact remains that the ruins of several churches have been discovered, and the main arch of what is called “the cathedral” still stands in good state of preservation. The ruins of the city walls we have seen, but these are fast disappearing, for the stones are being dug up and used to erect government and other modern buildings. The arch of the ruined cathedral is the only remaining monument of a great and glorious past.

At present the whole population barely amounts to 1500, and the king has become little more than an ordinary chief—a tool in the hands of the government. There are two missions, one Roman Catholic and

one Protestant, and two trading firms have their agents there. Trade is small, and the only article of commerce is rubber. Now that the Government has established posts at Makela and the Kwangu, the trading houses prefer to send their agents there, so as to be nearer the native markets of the rubber-producing country. On this account S. Salvador is becoming less important every day.

Three years ago the committee of the Baptist Missionary Society decided to extend its operations into the Zombo country, and I was requested to undertake the work of prospecting, with a view to establish a mission station in the most populous and suitable district. I had spent over twelve years at S. Salvador previous to this, and had itinerated pretty extensively in several directions, and had learned something about Zombo. Hitherto, journeys made by European traders were confined to the northern region of Makela and along the frontier. The natives farther south were considered too dangerous for ordinary unarmed travellers to venture among, and I was accordingly warned by the Resident as to the danger of going unarmed.

I may be permitted here to mention that I never carry firearms, neither do I allow any of my carriers to do so. And I have never had any reason to regret it. My wife as usual accompanied me.

Map.—In the course of the past three years I have traversed the country between Zombo and S. Salvador by four different routes, which I have marked in a sketch-map of my itineraries. Only the places which came in my way and were carefully observed are put down on this map, which I look upon as a rough outline to be filled in on my return.

Luvu River.—Leaving S. Salvador by the Makela road we travel in an easterly direction, and cross the Luvu river twenty miles from the capital. Proceeding on our journey over a fairly level road we reach the foot of Bangu hill, and an hour's stiff climb brings us on to the plateau with an altitude of 3000 feet. It is here that the river Mbrizi falls over the precipitous rocks into the valley, the main leap being about 500 feet. This has been called the "Arthington falls," and is well known. There are two more falls a little to the south, the waters of which run into the Mbrizi. These I have seen from the Kimbubuzi hills, two days' journey to the south-east of S. Salvador, but as I had not then acquired the use of instruments, I was not able to locate them with any degree of accuracy. To all appearance they were equal in volume to the main stream.

Mbrizi River.—The river Mbrizi itself rises at a point four or five hours' march farther east, and bubbles up from the ground in a shady ravine 3300 feet above the sea. A mile or two from here is the highest point on the plateau, having an altitude of 3425 feet.

Kwilu River.—The most noticeable feature of these highlands is the numerous streams of clear crystal water everywhere. It is veritably a land of springs and rivers. The Kwilu and Mbrizi rise within a short distance from each other, the one winding its way northward to the Congo river, and the other runs south-west into the Atlantic.

Making our way eastward on the Makela road, we cross the Fulezi, and Loangu, and other lesser streams, all running north towards the

Congo; while on the route some miles farther south we find all the streams running south-west to join the Mbrizi.

Lufunde River.—Two days' journey over the plateaux brings us to a large valley through which runs the Lufunde river. Itself rising a little to the south of Makela, it is joined by multitudinous streams and rivulets precipitating themselves over the rugged and perpendicular rocks on both sides of the valley, providing the traveller with the pleasing sight of glittering waterfalls and comparatively wild scenery, which is most refreshing after the tedious monotony of grass and swamps. The Lufunde joins the Mbrizi towards the south-west, and is much the larger river of the two. Why the larger stream should lose its name and be known by that of the smaller is a mystery which I cannot explain. The valley varies in width from six to ten miles. It is very fertile, but unlike the higher levels it has its swamps and malaria.

Having climbed the hill on the eastern side we are once more on the plateaux, and after about an hour's march we notice the streams running east and north-east towards the Nkissi river. It is on this plateau, in the populous district of Kibokolo, that the Baptist Missionary Society opened a mission station two years ago about twenty miles to the south of Makela, in latitude $6^{\circ} 17' 20''$ S., and longitude E. $15^{\circ} 17' 30''$, exactly one degree east of S. Salvador. The character of the country continues the same until we reach the Nkissi valley, where at Kibulungu, the most eastern point of my itineraries, the river is 2500 feet above the sea. It is known here as the Malewa river. The whole valley is swampy in the extreme, and is constantly in flood during the rainy seasons. There are canoe ferries established by enterprising natives at various points. Nowhere in this part is the river fordable, and it is infested with crocodiles.

Climate.—There is very little one can add to what is already known of the climate. It is certain that the farther we are away from the larger rivers, and consequently from the swampy lowlands, the healthier it is for both Europeans and natives. The thermometer reads about 10° less at S. Salvador than at Matadi or Noqui, while on the Zombo highlands, the difference in the lightness of the atmosphere and the cold at night is most marked. I have only 18 months' meteorological record taken at our Kibokolo station. The average maximum temperature in the shade is 83.5° for the hot season, and 81.2° in the cold. The average minimum temperature shows 66.7° and 57.0° respectively. This makes an average daily difference of 20° .

Rain.—The rainfall for the past year at Kibokolo was 55.5 inches, which, if the natives can be relied upon, is below the average, while at S. Salvador the average fall is about 57 inches. The rainy season is from October to May.

Soil.—On the Zombo plateau the soil is very sandy, and the country is well drained; it is rarely one can find any stagnant pools of water. Indeed, this is a conspicuous feature of these highlands, which adds materially to the healthiness of the people, and more especially of the few Europeans there. From the point of view of health, this Zombo district is far preferable to any other in West Central Africa. Malarial fever has not been prevalent so far, the greatest danger being the liability to chills,

and great care is needed in the matter of clothing. However, the final verdict as to the healthiness of Zomboland must be given after further experience.

Flora.—These highlands would delight the heart of any botanist, and supply him with magnificent specimens. Around Kibokolo there is such a display of wild flowers and shrubs as I have not seen anywhere else—not the least pleasing to me being the large clusters of tree ferns which grow in profusion along the clear Lusengele stream close to our dwellings.

Population.—Some parts of Portuguese Congo are very sparsely populated, notably the districts near the banks of the Congo, and along the Kwangu river. The land is so little known that it is impossible to make any reliable estimate of its population. Zombo is decidedly far more thickly populated than any district I have yet visited on the Lower Congo—say from the Coast to Stanley Pool. In the Kibokolo group of towns, I estimate 5000 inhabitants, and there are similar groups all over the country.

Native Races.—The question of *Native Races* is growing to be one of the most important of all African problems. From the Cape to Cairo, and from Zanzibar to the Atlantic, there is no doubt but that the Africans are increasing very rapidly. There are districts which seem to have been devastated by the ravages of disease—especially of that terrible sleep sickness, which is the terror of the blacks, but this is local and temporary. It is only when we consider the terrible history of the African race that we can realise its wonderful vitality.

Slavery.—The Arab slave-raider has for ages worked his caravans to the coast, and sent shiploads of slaves across the seas, where they have to-day become a force which our American brothers find it difficult to stand against. Yet this continued exportation of its best blood has not destroyed the negro race.

Transport.—Another thing which has wrought havoc among the natives is the overland transport of goods and produce. It is surprising how many there are who succumb to this. The chiefs send their men on long journeys to the coast with heavy loads, and for the most part they live on raw cassava and palm nuts, while they sleep on the ground in the open at all seasons, with the result that many die on the journey, and more get sickly and die soon afterwards.

Wars, etc.—Then again, the tribal wars and murders, and the cruel superstitious customs of the natives themselves, have told against them. When we think of all this, it is a marvel that there is a man or woman left to tell the tale.

Drink.—The curse of intoxicating liquor has its own victims—not only the pernicious “fire water” imported from Europe, but the native concoction of cassava and millet beer, and fermented palm wine. In Zombo there is not much “gin” or “rum,” but the drink kills its hundreds. And yet, in spite of it all, the people increase, and, in a sense, prosper.

A Change.—Things have changed considerably in later years. The export of slaves has been stopped, and although hundreds of natives are recruited on the “apprenticeship system” for the plantations on the islands—yet it is an improvement. We do not any longer see

the large chained gangs moving ponderously and slowly towards the coast along the old routes whose many towns retain still such names as "Vunda," and "Vemadia," marking the spots where the gangs rested at mid-day, and where the accompanying priest or priests sang their "Ave Marias" at evensong. What is done to-day is done in secret. Twice only have I seen chained slaves at S. Salvador, and those were immediately liberated on my reporting the cases to the Resident, a fact which I wish to put on record in acknowledgment of the ready assistance the Portuguese officials have rendered in these and other instances.

The days of the Arab slave-hunters are also numbered, and the sight of villages and districts laid waste by the sword and fire will not be so common as hitherto. The construction of railways, and the placing of steamboats on the inland lakes and rivers, will prove to be one of the most civilising forces in Central Africa. It will be a deathblow to slavery, and release the native from the degrading position of a beast of burden. Unfortunately, Portuguese Congo has very little to expect in this direction at present. Still it must come sooner or later.

Schools.—Another influence at work is the enlightenment which civilisation and Christianity bring in their train. Wherever schools are established, and the natives become educated, the cruel and murderous customs, and the barbarities of the people must disappear; and the thoughts of the natives be led to higher and better things than the killing of witches, and the destruction of slaves and women.

It is when we take into account these manifold forces at work in Africa to-day that we can form any conception of the wonderful vitality of the race and its possibilities for the future. Under these more favourable circumstances and enlightened ideas, the natives of Africa will increase rapidly, and the future of the Dark Continent will depend to a great extent on the way we deal with this all-important question. Unless this is wisely and firmly dealt with by a master hand, there will be much more trouble in store for us than that which confronts us to-day in the South African War.

Development.—The development of the country is proceeding more slowly in Portuguese Congo than in most parts, and for various reasons. What the mineral wealth of the country is I cannot say. We have heard of copper mines to the south of S. Salvador towards Ambrizette. The gold-hunter has been told that his precious metal is to be found in the same direction, but that the King of Kongo and his people are careful not to disclose its location. The old king, Don Pedro V., some ten years ago, was anxious to convince me that there was gold in his country, and one of his men, a friend of mine, was sent to procure a sample for me. The "nugget" was duly brought, and it certainly was golden in colour, and, in my absolute ignorance of the subject of minerals, I sent it home to England to be reported on, but the only gold discovered by the analyst was the one guinea which he got out of my pocket for his fee. I have taken no interest in Congo gold since then. The development of this part of Africa I believe must be in other directions than gold-mining, and I venture to submit that the resources of the country can only be developed by uplifting and developing the character of its people.

Produce.—To-day, from the coast to the Kwangu river, nothing of commercial value is obtained from the soil, and the cultivation of the ground is confined to the bare necessities of daily life. There are districts in Angola where cattle are reared and rubber cultivated. The Kongos and Zombos produce nothing for trade purposes. Much of the land is not suitable for rubber producing, but the soil is good and fertile, and could be used. Coffee grows well. Life among the natives is very primitive and their needs are few. There is no possible reason why the savage should do any hard work so long as he is satisfied with bare animal existence.

Labour.—The question of *forced labour* is a dangerous topic to introduce into a paper like this, but the longer I live and the more I know of the natives, the more confident I am that this policy is as unwise as it is revolting to the English idea of freedom. If we create new needs and cultivate new tastes among the savages, they will be compelled to cast aside their lazy habits, and engage in some definite and useful work. Such compulsion can only be an unmixed blessing to the people and to the country.

Missions.—It is here that Christian Missions are doing a work in Africa which cannot fail to be recognised by those who have little sympathy with their spiritual work. Schools have been established, and in the neighbourhood of S. Salvador alone hundreds of natives can read and write. Literature has been provided for them in the vernacular, and their minds have been enlightened and stimulated, so that they no longer satisfy themselves with the old savage life, but dress themselves decently; and, instead of filthy grass huts, they want better houses, they demand better food—more comforts, and some kind of a home life. Some of the younger educated men at S. Salvador have built themselves houses far more comfortable and imposing than that in which the Portuguese Resident has lived in for years. All this means higher ambitions and greater needs; and whoever aims at this higher civilisation must needs shake himself free from the sloth and inactivity of the African savage, and apply himself diligently to higher things.

Industrial Training.—In connection with our Mission, we have trained a number of young men as carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, and blacksmiths, who now occupy positions as skilled artisans at various trading companies. Also they are employed by the government and the railway company.

Church Building.—Two years ago we completed the erection of a large church, 70' \times 40', which we consider to be one of the best buildings anywhere in that part of Africa. It is built of stone chiefly obtained from the ruins of an old convent, and the timber used for the roof and rostrum is all local. All the work has been done by the native lads trained at S. Salvador, and under my supervision; and not only no stranger's hand ever touched the work, the whole of the cost has been defrayed by the natives themselves.

Conclusion.—This industrial training, together with schools and literature, is calculated to lift up the African from his depth of degradation and slothfulness, and fit him to take his place as a responsible being in the progress and development of his own country.

This is not the place to discuss the yet higher aspects of his mental

and spiritual development which the Christian missionary has first and foremost in view : suffice it to know that in a purely secular sense we have been able to contribute something towards the opening up of the Dark Continent to the invaluable blessings of civilisation and progress.

THE CLIMATOLOGY OF AFRICA.

TENTH AND FINAL REPORT OF A COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF MR. E. G. RAVENSTEIN (*Chairman*), DR. H. R. MILL, AND MR. H. N. DICKSON (*Secretary*). (*Drawn up by the Chairman.*)

METEOROLOGICAL returns have been received by your Committee in the course of last year from twenty-one stations in Africa, including Asiut and Omdurman; Old Calabar; Blantyre, Lauderdale, Fort Johnston, and Nkata Bay in Nyasaland; Kisimayu, Malindi, Lamu, Takaunga, Mombasa, and Shimoni on the coast of British East Africa; Machako's, Kitui, Nairobi, and Kikuyu in the interior of that Protectorate; and from the four lake stations in Buganda. We are, moreover, enabled to give the results of seven years' observation on the rainfall at Mengo (Buganda), taken from the unpublished journal of the late Mr. A. M. Mackay. A table giving the rainfall since 1890 at a number of stations has been added.

Since the appointment of your Committee in 1891 meteorological reports from as many as seventy-one African stations have been published through its agency, and it may safely be asserted that many of the more valuable of these observations would never have been made or become generally available had it not been through our action. Amongst these stations, however, there are only fifty-six the records of which embrace a full year, and eleven from which we have received full returns for at least five years. These latter are Lauderdale, Dunraven (rainfall only), Kisimayu, Malindi, Lamu, Takaunga (rainfall only), Mombasa, Chuyu (or Shimoni in Wanga), Machako's, Fort Smith (in Kikuyu), and Mengo (Namirembo and Natete). Among stations having a less extended record, but distinguished for the care with which the observations were taken and the interest attaching to the results, are Bolobo in the Congo State ($3\frac{3}{4}$ years); Zomba (4 years), and Fort Johnston (28 months) in Nyasaland; Kibwezi (18 months) in British East Africa and Old Calabar. We should also refer here to the high value attaching to the observations on the lake level of Victoria Nyanza.

A summary of Dr. Livingstone's meteorological work during his last journey (1866-71) will be found in our Report for 1894.

In *Egypt* Major Lyons, Director-General of the Survey Department, is gradually pushing meteorological stations into the Sudan.

In *Nyasaland* the scientific department organised by Sir H. Johnston, and placed in charge of Mr. McClounie, an able and zealous officer, who during a recent visit to Europe has availed himself of opportunities offered to gain a competent knowledge of the working of a thoroughly equipped meteorological observatory. Zomba, the headquarters of the