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EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS
OF AN HUNGARIAN TRAVELLER
IN CENTRAL AFRICA

(Read February 14, 1853)

Communicated by Dr. H. RÓNAY. With Remarks by Mr. W. D. COOLEY

Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, 1854, Vol. 24, pp. 271–275.

Ladislaus Magyar, born at Szabadka in Hungary, after having studied in the naval school at Fiume, went to sea in 1844, and served subsequently as lieutenant in the navy of the State of La Plata.

In 1847 he proceeded to the African kingdom Kalabari, whose king, named Trudodati-Dalaber-Almuazor, after two years gave him permission to travel in Central Africa.

On the 15th of January, 1849, he left Benguela, and after a troublesome journey of some days in a dry and desolate country, with scarcely any vegetation except the casonera (a kind of aloe), he came to Kiszagin, the first inhabited place in the kingdom Hambó, near the river Kubale, 2800 feet above the sea.

After 7 days' journey he arrived at Kandala, a larger town, built on a pyramidal mountain, with a fine view around the country.

From this place, after 5 days' journey, he reached the mountains of Kindumbó, which contain mines of metal and mineral springs. He ascended one of the highest mountains, called Lingi-Lingi, the view from which was magnificent, the plain being overspread with many villages and forests. After travelling through some of these villages, he arrived at Colongó, the second city of the kingdom Hambó. The river Izésze rises in this country (11⁰ lat.).

From Colongó, passing over the mountains Dsamba, the rivers Keve and Kutalu, he came to Kimblenge, the first village which he saw in the kingdom of Bihé.

The kingdom of Bihé, situated about 14° lat. and $18^{\circ} 22'$ long., is 4500 feet above the sea; the heat is generally 14° to 15° Reaumur. The boundaries of this country are – on the N., Bailundo and Andul; on the S., Kaking and Zambula; on the W., the mountains of Hambó; on the E., the great river Koanza. The country is generally level; the soil an aluminous and siliceous mixture, and is extremely fertile. The mountains, which are not very high, are covered with beautiful forests. The inhabitants, called Kimbundu, are more civilised than other negroes. Both sexes are tall and well formed; they are hospitable; and in these parts of Africa the only ones who patronise merchants and travellers. They are very fond of ornaments and coloured dresses; are usually armed with spears 6 feet long, short Turkish knives, and some of them with fire-arms. They are polytheists, and have also several wives. The form of government is rather oligarchical, the king being obliged to share his power with the chieftains of the different tribes or families. The whole population is about 50,000, of whom one-tenth are slaves.

In the kingdom of Bihé, at Maszisikuitu, the Hungarian traveller settled himself, marrying the daughter of a chief. "I received," says the traveller, writing to his father, "no gold with her, but many bold elephant and tiger-hunters."

On the 20th of February, 1850, he left his new home with his wife and 285 armed men, and passing the river Kokema, he proceeded towards the E., and after 7 days' journey he arrived at the river Koanza, along which he marched, and found that it rises near the village Kapeke in about $15^{\circ} 9'$ lat., 20° long. The soil, from the river Koanza, a distance of about 300 geographical miles towards the E., is mostly sandy. Zebra, gazelle, wild oxen, horses, and elephants are here found in great numbers.

Passing the rivers Vindika, Kuiva, Karima, and Kambale, having left to the S. the kingdom of Bunda, he arrived in the great forests of Kibokue, which, from the 6th degree of lat., extend from W. to E.

Having visited Kariongo, the last town on the limits of the kingdom of Bunda, he came to an elevation 12 miles in circumference, in $10^{\circ} 6'$ lat. and $21^{\circ} 19'$ long., and 5200 feet above the sea.

"This country," says the traveller, "might be termed the mother of the greatest rivers of Central Africa." Here rises the river Kaszabi-Kandal, which being in some places several miles in width, and receiving many rivers, after a course of 1500 geographical miles,

flows into the Indian Ocean. The rivers Lunge- Bungó, Luefia, and Lumegi flow through the kingdoms of Lobar and Kalui, and disappear in the unknown distance. Besides the above-mentioned rivers, the Vindika, Kuiva, Karima, and Kambale rise also here.

After a journey of 33 days, passing the kingdom Kibokue and the river Lumegi, he arrived at Yah-Quilem, in Kalunda. Yah-Quilem is situated on the shores of the great river Kaszabi, in about 4⁰ 41' lat., 23⁰ 43' long.¹

Specimen of a Poem in the original language of the kingdom of Bunda, with translation:

"Tumbalambendu o peku vi a poszoka.
Dongonossi ziangambu mujembe.
Zingaveju ge mungomba.
Dizona mulela boma.
Ditimbi sumbua ja vihua.
Mazon dani peraba.
Dizulo gue mukongo.
Mubila gue kindele kumbaua. "

"Tumbalambendu, the pretty girl.
Her beautiful eyes are bright as the stars of heaven.
Her hair and eyebrows are black as the mane of the zebra.
Her full bosom is beautiful as the tooth of the boa.
Her navel resembles the young mush-room.
Her small teeth are white as paper.
Her mouth is small and round.
Her stature is tall and graceful, as that of the white man."

¹ From this city the Hungarian traveller wrote, on the 20th of April, 1851, these letters to his father, suggesting that the Government of Hungary might assist him in publishing his maps and the geographical description of his travels, or in sending to Europe some specimens of the vegetable productions of the country, skins, etc. "From the Portuguese Government," he says, "I might hope for support, but I give the preference to my own country." These letters were sent to Dr. Rónay by Bertalan Szemere, late minister of Hungary, with the request to communicate them to the Royal Geographical Society.

"One evening," says the traveller, " before my departure, some of the negroes sang as follows":

"Kindele vendatu catala poutu,
Tumboca ovina kanaszuszu utyiti.
Kiszala cuinue – Son-angé van-angé! "

"The white man, who came from so far to us,
May he be happy, and without sorrow on his voyage.
His memory is in our heart. God's blessing be with us!"

REMARKS BY MR. COOLEY

The Hungarian traveller, on leaving St. Felipe de Benguela, directed his course south-eastwards to the elevated land called Namno or Nano, whence rivers flow in all directions. Hambo or Huambo, on the northern side of this table-land, lies N.E. of the Portuguese fort of Caconda. The river to which the traveller here alludes was undoubtedly the Catombéla, the name which he gives it, Kubale, being probably borrowed from the Mucobále, called by the Portuguese Cobaes, who occupy the country round Nano on the W. and N.W. In 12 days more he reached the mountains of Kindumbo on the eastern side of Nano, and here, as he remarks, rises the river Isésze. The river thus indicated is probably the main branch of the Cunéne; for this latter name, which merely signifies great, is properly given only to the stream lower down after it has united numerous rivers from Nano, and we know that the Cunéne rises on the Eastern boundary of Hambo in the territory of the Sova Candumbo, evidently the Kindumbo of our traveller.²

From Colongo (perhaps the Galangue of the Portuguese) Ladislaus crossed the mountains of Dsamba – the Samba or Sambos of Portuguese accounts – and entered the country of Bihé. On subsequently leaving this country, to proceed into the interior, he crossed the river Kokéma, and in 7 days arrived at the Quanza. It is remarkable that among the scattered particulars learned from the

² *Annaes Maritimos*, 1844, p. 160.

Bachuána and set down as memorandums in the margin of Livingstone's map, the river Kokéma occurs in the neighbourhood of the Kuanja or Quanza.

The Balojeza also of the same map may be conjectured to be the people dwelling on the left bank of the Isisze. The distance from Bihé to the Quanza has been found to be 30 leagues, or about 70 geographical miles, in a straight line, so that the Hungarian marched direct about 10 miles a day. He then traced the Quanza some distance up, till, as he says, he ascertained the position of its sources, which lie, according to his calculations, about 90 miles S. E. of Bihé. This statement refutes the opinion of M. José Lopez de Lima³, according to whom the Quanza flows from a great distance in the interior; and it confirms the account of José Botelho de Vasconcellos, a traveller in those countries, who places the sources of the Quanza on the confines of Galangue and Bihé, in the territory of Samba Catenda,⁴ a name which calls to mind the Dsamba Mountains crossed by our traveller on his way from Candumbo to Bihé.

On his march from the Quanza to the interior, Ladislaus crossed four rivers, which, as he assigns their sources to the central highland, may be conjectured to belong to the basin of the Lulfia. He then came to the forests of Kibokue (Quiboque), extending E. and W., Bunda being on his right hand, that is, to the S. It is evident that these two countries, Quiboque and Bunda, lie, the former on the northern, the latter on the southern slope of the ridge that separates the basin of the Lulúa from that of the Seshéke. Leaving Quiboque, he crossed that ridge to the southern side, and passing through Kariongo, a village of Bunda, he came to what he calls "the Highest land of Middle Africa, and the mother of the waters."

The great rivers mentioned by him as flowing from this elevated tract are the Kaszabi Kandal,⁵ that is to say, "the Cazembe river, flowing in the opposite direction" (from Benguela); the Langebongo and Lueña both belonging to the Lulúa; and the Lumegi, which is the Luambegi of preceding travellers, and the Liambae of the Bachuána – the main branch of the Seshéke. These rivers flow, he says, through the kingdoms Lobar and Kalui – the Lobale and Luy of my map.

³ *Ensaio sobre a Statistica dos Possessies Portuguezas, &c.* 1846.

⁴ *Ann. Marit.* *ibidem.*

⁵ The adverbial form (Quiandale) of this word is given by Cannecattim in his Dictionary of the Bunda language, under *Ao contrario, Ao detraz, Ao travez.*

Continuing his march from Bunda, Ladislaus crossed the Lumegi, and consequently his route lay to the S. of the Lualaba. Thence he proceeded to the kingdom of Kalunda, that is, the country of the Alunda, and arrived at Yah Quilem on the river Kaszabi. By this we are to understand that he came to the residence or village of the local chief; Libata ya Quilembe, situate on the Luapula, or, as he calls it, the Kaszabi (Cazembe) river. Quilembe is a Benguelan term of official rank, and would be naturally employed by a traveller speaking the dialect of Benguela; but it is possibly used also by the Alunda, for the Angolan, Pombeiro Pedro Baptista, relates that the Cazembe appointed Quilembes and Quilolos to conduct him to Tete.⁶ There is reason to suspect that the Quilembe is the officer who collects toll or tribute,⁷ and therefore the village of the officer (ya Quilembe) at which Ladislaus arrived may be presumed to be the same which, according to the Pombeiro's narrative, be-longed to the lord of the port or ferry.

The river at this place has a width of 114 yards; it is manifest, therefore, that when the Hungarian speaks of the great width of the Kaszabi and of its flowing to the Indian Ocean, he only speaks from hearsay, and repeats the accounts of the natives, in whose language the river is constantly identified with the lake into which it runs, the term Murisuro or Curisuro being equally applied to both. Having crossed the Lualaba into the country under the immediate sway of the Cazembe, he conceived that the hazards of his journey were at an end, and wrote to his friends announcing his success.

It now remains only to say a few words respecting the purely geographical details occurring in the narrative of Ladislaus. There is no ground for supposing that he was provided with maps or instruments, or any means of scientific observation ; and furthermore, it must be borne in mind that we are not dealing with the original narrative, but with an abridged translation of it, in which the assigned geographical positions may possibly have been introduced for the sake of clearness by the translator, who would naturally in the course of his work make reference to a map.

The Hungarian traveller, starting from Benguela in lat. 12^o 25' S., went S.E. by E. He crossed the table-land of Nano to a comparatively

⁶ *Annaes Maritimos*, 1843, p. 432.

⁷ Rilemba means toll or tribute.

low country, Bihé, which he observes is level, and has on the W. the mountainous country of Hambo. Yet to the latter, on the elevated table-land, he assigns an elevation of only 2800 feet, to the former of 4500 feet. These estimates have no solid foundation. The sources of the Isisze are placed by him in lat. 11^0 , obviously far to the N. of his route. Bihé he places in lat. 14^0 S., long. $18^0 22'$. This position seems to have been taken from some old map M. Lopez de Lima sets that place in lat. 13^0 , long. $16^0 15'$ E. The traders from Benguela reckon its distance by a circuitous route to be 118 leagues, or about 350 miles on the map. From Pungo a Ndongo it is about the same distance, or 12 days for a courier.

It is evident, therefore, that the position assigned to the Hungarian's starting point on his journey into the interior is affected by a considerable error. Bihé must be carried back 2^0 of longitude and at least 1^0 of latitude. The sources of the Quanza, therefore, at the village of Kapeke (lat. $15^0 9'$, long. 20^0), must undergo a corresponding change. Further on it is stated that the forest of Quiboque is in lat. 6^0 ; nevertheless the traveller's next step is to the highland of Middle Africa, in lat. $10^0 6'$. These statements are utterly irreconcilable.

The highland in question lies somewhere near lat. $10^0 11'$, long. $24^0 25'$. His assigned positions are based on the assumption that his general course was N. 7^0 E., and Yah Quilem is placed in lat. $4^0 41'$, long. $23^0 43'$. Now nothing can be more certain than the general direction of his route, E. 18^0 N. He went through Quiboque and Bunda, on the head waters of the Seshéke; he passed S. of Lobale, and reached the country of the Alunda and river Luapula, at the village of the Lord of the Ferry in lat. $10^0 5'$ S., long. $28^0 25'$ E., where he was not quite a hundred miles distant from the last position determined by Lacerda.

His geographical positions are not merely discordant, but wholly erroneous and unfounded. His estimates of distance, however, are tolerably correct.