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MUSGU CHIEF.

TRAVELS AND DISCOVERIES
IN
NORTH AND CENTRAL AFRICA
BEING A
JOURNAL OF AN EXPEDITION
UNDERTAKEN
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF H.B.M.'S GOVERNMENT
IN THE YEARS
1849-1855

DR. HEINRICH BARTH

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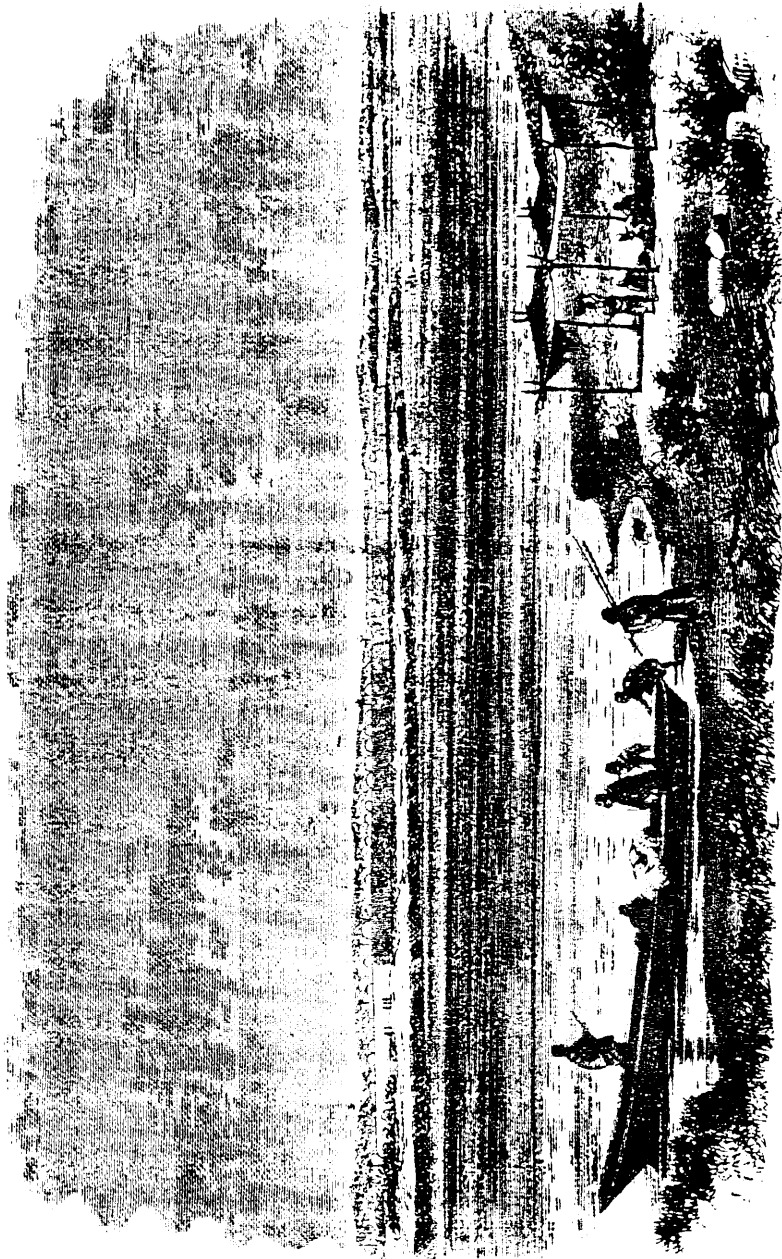
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CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TWO RIVERS.—ENTRANCE INTO BAGÍRMI.

March 16th. It was ten o'clock in the morning when I left Kárnak Logón in order to penetrate into unknown regions, never before trodden by European foot; and a short time afterward I was sitting in the boat, while our horses, the camel, and the bullock were partly swimming across and partly fording the river. The water was in general shallow, though in the deepest place it measured eight feet and a half. The current was about three miles an hour. The country at that period had a very different appearance from what it presented on my return from Bagírmi. At present all those low grounds, which later in the season are entirely inundated, had a swampy, cheerless aspect, and I hastened onward in order to escape from the unhealthy locality, heated by the rays of the midday sun. Only now and then a small patch of cotton-ground was seen between the tall jungle. Close to the river there is scarcely a single tree; but, farther on, where the country becomes more cultivated, isolated karáge-trees, together with straggling groups of cottages, were seen here and there. Not having exposed myself to the midday sun during the last few days, and the heat being very great, I looked for a place to pass the hottest hours of the day, and, to the disappointment of my companions, who were anxious for a good dinner, I dismounted under the cool shade of a beautiful wide-spreading fig-tree, "ngábbere" or "zérá," as the people of Logón call it, at some distance from a little village called Sóso, situated toward the north, while on our right there was a water-course winding along through a shallow depression in the green meadow-grounds, without any visible inclination. These shallow water-courses are, as I have already had occasion to mention on my journey to Músgu, one of the most characteristic



LOGÓN BIENI

features in this part of Central Africa, which formerly was thought to be a dry, elevated waste. Naked young lads were splashing and playing about in the water, together with wild hogs, in the greatest harmony; never in any part of Negroland have I seen this animal in such numbers as here about the Shá-rí. Calves and goats were pasturing in the fields, with wild hogs in the midst of them.

When we pursued our march at two o'clock in the afternoon, I was greatly pleased to see numbers of fine horses round the groups of Shúwa villages which bordered the water-course, while the whole scenery was enlivened by the rich foliage of wide-spreading trees. Onions likewise were cultivated here in considerable quantities. On the right of our path were very extensive fields of a peculiar kind of winter-corn, called "sáffará" by the people of Logón, and "kérirám" by the Kanúri. This belongs to the ruler of the country; but, in general, very little grain is raised in this part of Logón, the inhabitants being afraid of the people of Bagírmi, who used to gather the harvest of what they themselves have sown. But small cotton grounds are occasionally observed.

After a march of about nine miles we reached a place called Báta, half deserted, and surrounded by a clay wall in a very decayed state. Nevertheless, the few cottages that remained, simple and unpretending though they were, testified to some degree of industry and cleanliness. Of hospitality, however, we received no proof, and the authority of the Miyará Y'suf seemed to be naught indeed, these poor people affirming, with some show of reason, that as the ruler did not protect them against the unjust exactions of their neighbors, they need not respect his commands. There was, therefore, little necessity for the servant of the sultan accompanying me any farther, for if they did not respect his orders here they would certainly not do so farther on.

Wednesday, March 17th. We continued our march alone. On the east side of the town a little cultivation was to be seen, the country here being very swampy, and inundated during the rainy season. It is covered with a dense jungle, and wild beasts

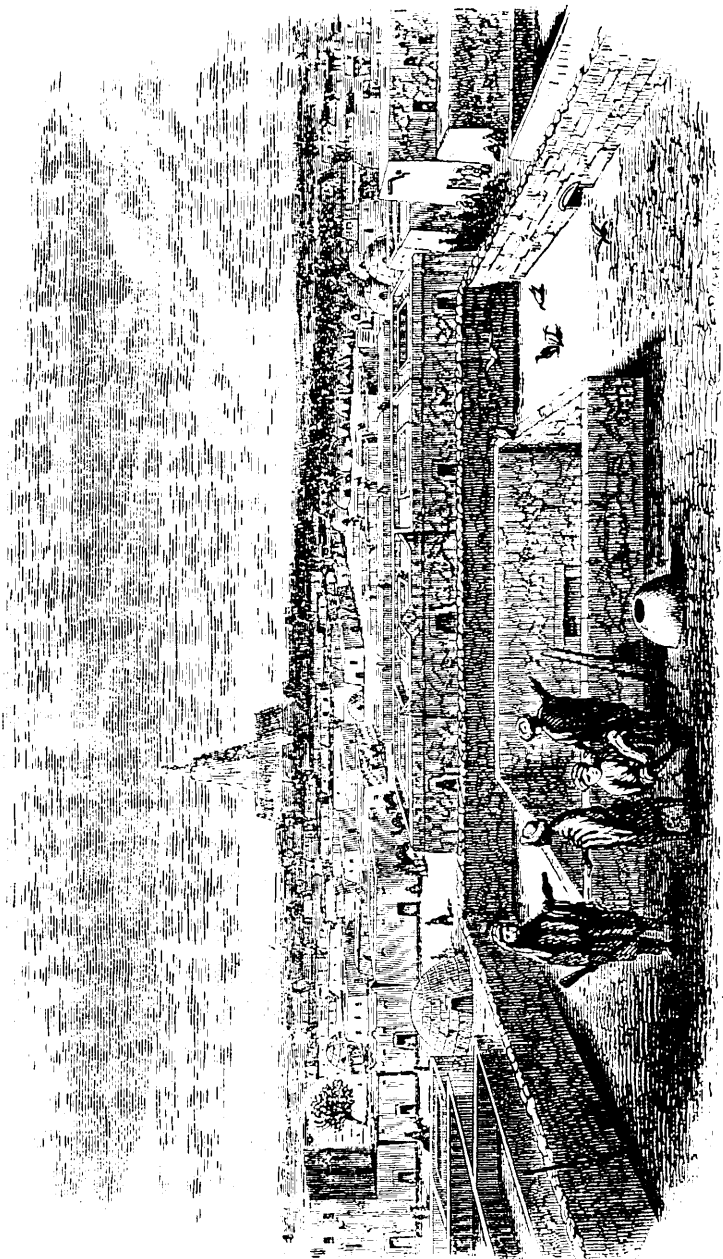
in great numbers. Water is close under the surface of the ground; and the well that we passed, near a Shúwa village, was only three fathoms deep. Near the village of Atmarchári, which we left on our right, there were traces of cultivation, trees being cut down and the ground cleared to make room for corn-fields; the village is inhabited by Kanúri people. Soon after, the forest became denser than before, climbing plants running up the trees, and hanging down in festoons from the branches. Here it was that I first saw the footprints of the rhinoceros, an animal which is unheard of in all the western parts of Negroland. The people of this part of Logón call the animal "bírní," the name usual in Bagírmi, while the real name in the language of the country is "ngirmé." The Kanúri call it "kárgadán" or "bar-kaján"—the very name mentioned already by El Edrísí.* It is greatly feared by the inhabitants, who sometimes encounter these ferocious animals on the narrow footpaths which wind through the thick forests of their country.

I had gone on a little in advance, when suddenly I beheld through the branches of the trees the splendid sheet of a large river, far larger than that of Logón. All was silence, and the pellucid surface of the water undisturbed by the slightest breeze; no vestiges of human or animal life were to be seen, with the exception of two river-horses (called "niyé" by the people of Logón), which, having been basking in the sun on the shore, plunged into the water at our approach. This, then, was the real Shá-rí, that is to say, the great river of the Kótokó (for Shá-rí, as I have said before, means nothing else but river), which, augmented by the smaller but very considerable River of Logón, forms that large basin which gives to this part of Negroland its characteristic feature. The river at this spot runs from S. 30° W. to N. 30° E., but its general course is rather winding, coming farther upward from the south, and beyond forming a reach from E. 38° N.

The shore where I stood enjoying the tranquil but beautiful scenery is close approached by the forest, and has an elevation

* Sherif el Edrísí, trad. Jaubert, vol. i., p. 72. كركدان.

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TIMBUKTU, FROM THE TERRACE OF THE TRAVELER'S HOUSE.

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sour milk. But, besides the small dry water-courses just mentioned, we had also to cross a very rapid torrent, which is called Górebi, and is said to come from the direction of Kulféla, a very important market-place in the interior of Mósi, and which caused us considerable delay. Before we entered Champaláwel, also, where we took up our quarters half an hour before noon, we had to cross a considerable sheet of water, three feet and a half in depth, and about thirty yards broad, about the relation of which to the neighboring water-courses I am not quite certain.

Champaláwel is the residence of the governor of the Tórobe; but it was at that time in the utmost state of decay, and almost deserted, the slight remains of the ramparts being almost hidden in a dense forest; for since the decease of Mo'azu (a celebrated chieftain mentioned also in other accounts), who died about twenty years ago, the power of the Fúlbe in this place has greatly declined. The present governor, a younger brother of that energetic chieftain, himself tolerably advanced in years, proved to be a very illiberal and unamiable man, and he would not even assign me quarters on my arrival, so that I had the greatest trouble in taking possession of a miserable little hut on my own account, while good shelter was very essential, as a great quantity of rain fell in the afternoon. However, all was changed when, toward evening, a cousin of the present governor, of the name of 'Othmán, arrived, and I then received a present of two sheep. I also had the great and unexpected pleasure of meeting here an Arab, of the name of Mohammed el Wákhshi, a near relative of my friend Bú-Bakr el Wákhshi, the Ghadámsi merchant whom I have mentioned repeatedly in the preceding part of my narrative. This man was then on his return from Gonja, the northern tributary province of Asanti, the Gúro caravan having been induced, by the state of the country, to abandon its direct road from Yendi to Komba on the Niger, in favor of a northerly and very circuitous road by way of Yágha.* But I was disappointed in the hope of

* The principal stations of this interesting route, at a very slow rate, are the following, starting from Yendi:

- 1 day. Kaña, still on the great high road to Komba.
- 5 days. Natóngo, a village inhabited by Dagómba.
- 5 " Wúlawóla, a large place inhabited partly by pagans, partly by Mohammedans, and dependent on Yendi.
- 10 " Béri, a large place belonging to Mósi.
- 3 " Another Mósi place, the residence of a powerful officer of the chief of Wóghodoghó, to whom these native travelers give the title of Yeríma.

corresponding with Europe by means of this man. The letter which I gave to him, and which I had already written in Say, never reached its destination, for El Wákhshi succumbed to disease in crossing the province of Núpe in the height of the rainy season, before reaching Kanó.

Wednesday, June 29th. On leaving this desolate residence of the chief of the Tórobe, reduced to an entangled thicket, we passed the encampment, or zango, of the Gúro caravan, which, as is generally the case, consisted of small round huts, erected for the occasion with branches and rank grass. The caravan consisted of about one hundred individuals, with a couple of hundred of asses, which form the usual beasts of burden of these native travelers. Scarcely a mile beyond the town we had again to cross a river which, bordered by the richest vegetation, and by abundance of rank grass, runs at this spot from S.E. to N.W., with a depth of about three feet, and at times, when a great deal of rain has fallen, forming a far more considerable volume of water.

The country which we then entered was hilly, tolerably well cultivated, and thickly inhabited. It was adorned here and there with the baobab-tree, and a fine leafy tree called here "harúna." But we made only a short march, being induced, on account of the danger of the road before us, to take up our quarters in a farming village, situated in a very rich tract of country, behind a flat-topped cone, at the distance of a little more than four miles from Champaláwel. Notwithstanding the fertility of the district, no corn was to be obtained here at present, the last year's harvest having failed entirely, so that the people were obliged to supply their own wants at Bosebángo. This scarcity is increased generally in districts where only one species of corn is grown, all the produce here being reduced to millet; while, where various grains are raised, which ripen at different seasons, even in these countries, dearth can not prevail to such an extent and for so long a time. All the inhabitants, including even the head man, belonged to the native Gurma race. All the cattle-breeding is in the hands of the Fúlbe, who regard "the cow as the most useful animal in creation," "negge ngombúri déya fó náfa;" and, there being no such people in the neighborhood, no milk was to be obtained. The

- 1 day. Sálugu, a market-place, residence of a governor.
- 1 " Belússa, a large place of Mósi, to be mentioned also in other itineraries.
- 7 days. Libtúgu, a small Gurma village.
- 1 day. Yágha.

dwelling where I was lodged, with its numerous compartments and court-yards, presented quite a labyrinth of itself. Three servants of Galaijo, all armed with muskets, had attached themselves to my troop, and I supplied each of them here with ball cartridges, in case of any attack on the road.

Thursday, June 30th. We had a long day's march before us, through the unsafe wilderness which separates the reduced dominion of the chief of the Tórobe from the territory of Yágha. It was a fine morning, and tolerably clear. Corn-fields now and then interrupted the dense growth of talha-trees and prickly underwood, while occasionally a baobab or a tamarind-tree gave greater variety to the scenery. About four miles and a half from our starting-point, we passed, on the right of the path, some peculiarly constructed smelting-furnaces, about six feet high, and a foot and a half in diameter at the base. The proceeding is very simple and unsophisticated. On the ironstone is placed a large quantity of wood-ashes till the metal begins to melt, and is then, by means of three channels at the bottom of the furnace, received in the basin.



Close behind these smelting-furnaces, which happened to be the first I had seen in Negroland, though there are plenty of them in some districts, we passed the site of a former encampment, or zango, of native traders, or fatáki, in a spot clothed with the finest *Poa*, and adorned with large, wide-spreading trees. Ascending then a little, we passed the village of Bangapélle on our left, situated at the eastern foot of an eminence, and then kept along the northern base of the latter, while on our right a dense forest spread out, broken by a rocky ridge. The whole wilderness through which our way led was in general very dry, and did not possess any fresh pasture-grounds, although about two miles beyond Bangapélle we passed a considerable pond of water, with numerous traces of the elephant; but gradually the country became more rocky, granite prevailing. We encamped, at length, on the site of a former hamlet, called Kófe, situated on a rising rocky ground, close to a depression, with water, and clothed with a fine pasture interspersed with flowers, in whose sweet blossom numerous butterflies were indulging. Here again the footprints of the elephant

were extremely numerous; but by far more interesting, and of much higher importance to me, were the traces of the rhinoceros, an animal which at present seems to be wanting entirely in the regions between the Niger on the west and the Shári toward the east. Our rest at this place was greatly disturbed; for after an alarm in the evening, which, fortunately for us, proved to be false, we were kept awake the whole night by a terrible thunder-storm, which broke out with great violence, and rendered our situation, in the midst of a low, swampy ground, very uncomfortable indeed.

Friday, July 1st. In consequence of the storm we started rather late. Close behind our encampment we had to cross a very swampy ground, which we might have passed more easily the day before. We were therefore greatly cheered when the boggy ground was succeeded by sandy soil, which became intersected by several small water-courses, affording a channel to the watery element; but, after a march of about six miles, it was again succeeded by a considerable pond, which we had to avoid by a long circuitous road. Here, also, the ground was marked by numerous footprints of the elephant, while monkey-bread or baobab trees were in great abundance.

In the afternoon the whole aspect of the country changed, the surface becoming rugged, and broken by small rocky ridges; and here the danger increased on account of the vicinity of the town of Lárba, the inhabitants of which, as I have mentioned before, are the inveterate enemies of the Fúlbe. Only a few days before they had robbed and murdered some people of the governor of the Tórobe. But, well-armed as we were, all the people round about being aware that an attack upon us would not be an easy affair, we proceeded without any accident; and having twice made a considerable descent, we reached, a little after three o'clock, the village of Bosebángo, which is surrounded by a strong stockade. It is inhabited by the Karábe, who, although kinsmen of the inhabitants of Lárba, fear and respect in some degree the authority of the Fúlbe; however, we soon convinced ourselves that the character of their allegiance is very precarious. The mayor of the village, being a man of advanced age, dressed in a ragged shirt, lodged me in his own quarters, which seemed to contain a very remarkable household, the most interesting objects being his two wives, very stout females, richly ornamented with copper rings on their arms and legs, and with strings of beads round their necks, but having, besides, another ornament, at which I was more