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Notes on the Basin of the River Rovuma, East Africa

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*Notes on the Basin of the River Rovuma, East Africa.*

By JOSEPH THOMSON.

(Read at the Evening Meeting, January 16th, 1882.)

Map, p. 128.

[Mr. Thomson's paper was read to the Meeting by Sir John Kirk, H.M. Consul-General and Political Resident at Zanzibar, who prefaced it by the following remarks:—

In the paper about to be read Mr. Thomson gives an account of an examination of the Rovuma valley and surrounding district, which he was commissioned to make by the Sultan of Zanzibar. His expedition had for its object to ascertain the nature and value of the coal that had been said to exist in the southern part of the dominions of Zanzibar. The probable existence of coal in this region was first indicated in the course of the Government East African Expedition under Dr. Livingstone; fragments of apparently good mineral were then seen in the river-bed, but the rocks from which these had been washed were not reached, and nothing was known beyond the fact that somewhere higher up, there must exist beds of a carboniferous nature.

On the attention of the late Seyed Majid, the predecessor of the present Sultan of Zanzibar, being called to this observation, natives were sent to bring back samples and to discover whether coal existed in the rocks along the course of the Upper Rovuma. These men reported that coal had been found in the face of a low hill. The substance they brought back consisted of surface coal or shale much weathered by exposure. On being sent to Bombay this was reported on by the Government analyst as a sort of inferior coal, fit only for local use, and containing in the samples he had to examine 25 per cent. of ash.

After the accession of the present Sultan, Seyed Barghash, the inquiry was resumed in order to discover whether coal might not be found nearer the coast, at the same time the Rovuma was again examined. The search near the coast was rewarded by the discovery of a peculiar kind of lignite, which has been examined by Dr. Percy, of the School of Mines, and found to be similar to that from Trinidad, remarkable for containing an unusually high amount of included water, which renders it of no economic value. The party that ascended the Rovuma found that the rapids near the junction of the two rivers could easily be passed in canoes, and that the so-called coal-beds were accessible. A most important and essential preliminary to any

No. II.—FEB. 1882.]

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further examination was also effected about this time by Seyed Barghash, through the pacification of the native tribes referred to by Mr. Thomson in the course of his paper.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Thomson was sent by the Sultan of Zanzibar to determine and report upon the nature, extent, and economic value of these coal formations, and we are greatly indebted to him and to the Sultan of Zanzibar, with whose permission it has been communicated, for this interesting account of a journey, in the course of which Mr. Thomson has succeeded in throwing valuable light upon the geology of a part of Eastern Africa.]

THE river Rovuma, near the boundary line which separates the territories of the Sultan of Zanzibar from Mozambique, has received no inconsiderable share of attention from various classes of people. Along its banks Livingstone proceeded in his last journey, and by his revelations of the horrors attendant on the slave trade there, drew the eyes of Europe on that leper spot of East Africa. Since then the Universities Mission has established itself within easy distance of its upper waters, and its agents have made frequent excursions along the river and its tributaries.

Notwithstanding these visits, however, comparatively little is known with regard to the geographical and other scientific aspects of the region. Livingstone did not live to fill up and extend the somewhat meagre details he left behind in his journal, while the gentlemen of the Universities Mission have surveyed the country more with the eyes of the missionary and philanthropist than of the geographer, although a great deal of most interesting and valuable matter has been collected by them. I need but mention the papers of Bishop Steere and the Rev. C. Maples.

I propose in the following paper to lay before the Society a few additional notes on this interesting region, made during a recent trip in search of the long-talked-of coal of the Rovuma.

The circumstances under which I undertook this quest are these. For some years back various reports of the existence of coal-fields on the Upper Rovuma reached the coast. Livingstone found fragments of it, and other samples found their way to Zanzibar. His Highness Seyed Barghash, naturally interested in this possible wealth, sent an Arab, and afterwards a Parsee engineer to examine into the matter, both of whom returned with glowing accounts of the great abundance of the coal and the ease with which it could be quarried or mined. Here surely was sufficient ground for the most brilliant expectations; but these fortunately were kept in check by prudent advice in high quarters at Zanzibar, and it was resolved that some reliable person should be employed to examine the coal before anything else should be done. I had the honour of being selected for this task, and as it chimed in with my ardent desire to see and know more of East Central Africa, I readily undertook the work, although I was sceptical of the existence of any coal of the slightest commercial value.

I arrived at Zanzibar at the end of June last, exactly a year after leaving it on the completion of the Society's East African Expedition. I had the pleasure of distributing, along with Dr. Kirk, the medals which the Council of the Society had directed to be presented to my faithful followers. They, along with Chuma and Makatubu, had just returned from the disastrous expedition of Captain Wybrants, and were ready to join me again.

A fortnight after my arrival saw us steaming out of the harbour of Zanzibar bound for Mikindany, notable as the place from which Livingstone started on his last journey. On the 13th of July we landed at our destination, and commenced our final preparations.

We found that Mikindany had prospered immensely since Livingstone visited it in 1866. Then there were few houses, no cattle, and but a small trade in orchilla weed and gum copal. Now there is a very large population of both Arabs and natives, a considerable colony of Banyans and Hindi, and large numbers of goats and cattle; while the trade has increased exceedingly, almost the entire produce of the Rovuma region finding its way there—gum copal, rubber, millet, rice, and other grains being the chief articles, though the trade in ivory and slaves from the Makua and Wahyao districts is by no means unimportant. South of Bagamoyo, Mikindany will now rank in importance next after Kilwa and Lindy.

The large trade in slaves, which goes on surreptitiously notwithstanding all the attempts that have been made to suppress it, still fosters the old feeling of exclusion which formerly so much troubled intending travellers on the east coast, and it was very clear to me that but for the Sultan's authority every possible obstacle would have been thrown in my way.

I had at first intended to have followed Livingstone's route along the Rovuma, but while at Mikindany I changed my mind and determined to proceed direct to my destination through the Makonde country.

Having completed all necessary preparations, we started on our journey on the 17th of July with a caravan of sixty men. Ascending the eastern escarpment of what we may here call the Makonde Plateau, which at this point faces the sea, and appears as a range of hills from 200 to 300 feet in height, stretching from the Rovuma to Lindy, we proceeded for 10 miles nearly south; thereafter our route lay nearly W.S.W. as far as Ngomano, where the river divides.

The special characteristic of the country we thus entered is indicated by its name "Makonde," which means the country of bushes and creepers, and no better name could be applied to it, for, from one end to the other it is one dense mass of tangled vegetation, so much so that a person might actually struggle along several miles without ever once touching the ground under him. The labour of pushing through such a country with a loaded caravan is simply enormous, and it is one of the

most painful experiences of the native porter, who has to tramp along with bent back under a load of from 60 to 70 lbs. The pathways are so many low tunnels through the dense thicket, where one is ever in danger of being tripped by trailing roots and creepers, or caught in the face by others at a higher level; and, to make matters worse, the road is studded with the sharp stumps of cut bushes, which wound and lame the feet of the men sadly.

With such a vegetable covering it may be understood that the aspect of the country is supremely monotonous. There are no large trees, and indeed trees of any description are only to be found in very favourable situations, such as along the nullahs which drain the country in the wet season, and usually retain a considerable quantity of water in the dry, from which the natives draw their supply of that necessary fluid. The soil is extremely fertile, and notwithstanding its apparent absence of water, large crops of various grains are raised by the inhabitants.

To the eye Makonde (the term is applied to both country and people) appears as a uniform level plain, without the slightest irregularity beyond the occurrence of an occasional shallow nullah; but although a plain it is not by any means level, as there is a regular rise in the altitude from 200 feet at the coast to 2572 feet at Kwamatola, 70 miles inland, and near the western edge of the plateau, where it suddenly dips down into the valley or plain of the Rovuma.

If, instead of traversing the top of the plateau, we had marched along the banks of the river, the skirting heights would simply have appeared as a very precipitous range of hills running W.S.W.; rising in altitude inland till reaching the meridian of 39°. From this point the high land turns suddenly north, then E.N.E., reappearing at the coast again at Lindy; it thus sharply defines the limits of the country of Makonde, and forms a small plateau 70 miles long and 30 broad.

The origin of this geographical feature is evidently to be ascribed to the denuding action of the Rovuma on the south side, its tributaries on the west, and the Lindy river on the north. Geologically, Makonde is formed of coarse red and grey sandstone, 800 to 1000 feet in thickness, resting unconformably upon metamorphic rocks.

With regard to the Makonde people I shall speak in the sequel, when I come to make some general remarks on the inhabitants of the basin of the Rovuma.

At the western confines of Makonde we suddenly emerged from the wretched jungle through which we had struggled for eight marches, and a magnificent and extensive view of the Rovuma valley and plain broke upon us. Away to the south, at a distance of 12 miles or thereabouts, a silvery streak, winding through yellow sands, with a margin of dark green, proclaimed at once the river Rovuma; away beyond an even plain of yellow hue tinged with green it stretches southward, till lost in the haze and smoke which at this season of the year limit all extensive views.

To the east the valley of the Rovuma, with its lagoons, marshes, and meadows, and its enclosing precipitous hills, extends in variegated colours and irregular outlines. To the west of our position this valley widens out, loses its defining hills, and spreads out as a great plain to the north, south, and west without other apparent boundary than the hazy distance. But the chief feature which attracts the eye in this plain is the number of extraordinary isolated hills which give variety to the otherwise monotonous landscape. They appear in every possible shape as peaks, domes, cones, needles, &c. They all rise abruptly from the surrounding country, and present a scene not easily forgotten.

From this point we make a precipitous descent of 767 feet to the village of Kwamatola, which lies at a height of 1845 feet. The inhabitants are mixed Wahyao and Makua, under a very intelligent chief called Matola, who gives his name to the village. The Universities Mission has a station here, and seems to have gained the complete confidence and respect of the people, a step not easily attained, but necessary before any good can be done.

On leaving Kwamatola, we make a further descent of nearly 300 feet, and enter the tract I have designated the Plain of the Rovuma. We here notice two important facts, namely, that we have now left behind us the sandstones, and that the metamorphic rocks now crop out at the surface, the sandstones having been denuded.

Coincident with the descent in altitude and the geological change, we observe also a botanical one. A thin open forest of mimosas and other trees takes the place of the dense tangle of Makonde, which is now only seen in small patches along the banks of streams. Gum copal and rubber also disappear, and I may here observe that I have not yet seen or heard of the former being ever found in soil directly overlying granitic or metamorphic rocks, and the same might almost be said of the latter.

Across this plain to the confluence of the Lujende and the Rovuma is a distance of 55 geographical miles in a direct line, requiring five hard marches. Except along the banks of the nullahs and streams, the soil is very barren, being shallow and stony. There are no inhabitants, except a few Matambwe hidden away on inaccessible islands, the few villages seen by Livingstone having since then been completely swept away by the raids of the Maviti.

The country thus converted into a desert is literally swarming with game, such as the water-buck, bush-buck, eland, koodoo, harris-buck, gnu, hartebeest, buffalo, quagga, zebra, pig, lions, leopards, hyenas, Cape hunting dog, and many other of the larger animals.

We first reached the banks of the river, in E. long.  $38^{\circ} 40'$  and S. lat.  $11^{\circ} 10'$ , where a large river named the Mbangala joins it. The altitude of the Rovuma at this point is only 370 feet.

Along the south bank at this part there is a low ridge, here and there breaking into curious hills. The river is about three-quarters of a mile broad, with great stretches of yellow sandbanks, glittering under a vertical sun. The banks are particularly charming, from the beauty and variety of the trees with which they are clothed, amongst which are many of elegant and many of grotesque forms. The yellow-wood tree of the Cape and the tamarind are prominent, and palms of various kinds, and grotesque baobabs, form a contrast and add variety of shape and hue.

On the 3rd of August we reached the confluence of the Lujende and the Rovuma. The altitude of the river at this point is 730 feet. The village of Ngomano we found had suffered the same fate as most other African villages, and no trace of it is now left.

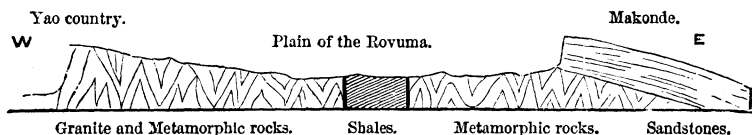
Our route from this point led us along the Lujende, nearly due south. Three marches along its banks brought us to the Maviti village of Itule, where the so-called coal was said to be found.

My worst fears were more than realised. Much to our disgust we discovered that the coal was nothing more nor less than a few irregular layers of bituminous shale, which when placed in a wood fire emitted a flame, but remained almost unchanged in bulk. It does not even burn alone. Accompanying the shale we found small quantities of a curious anthracite-like substance, which could be set on fire only with great difficulty, but left more than 50 per cent. of ash.

From Itule we proceeded other two days up the river to a place called Kwamakanja, inhabited by Manyanja, from near Nyassa. Here the coal was said to be specially abundant. I, however, met with no better success, and as the series of beds containing the shale finishes abruptly at this place, as it had commenced abruptly at Itule, it became clear to me that the coal-beds of the Rovuma had no existence. These bituminous shales occupy a curious position geologically. They occur in a very restricted area, a sort of hollow or pocket, stretching from Itule to Kwamakanja, a length of nearly 20 miles, and nowhere more than a third of that in breadth. The enclosing rocks are gneiss and granite. These shales and sandstones must either have been deposited *in situ* in a small tarn or lake, or have been let down by some great fault from a formerly higher level, the sandstones already mentioned having at one time extended over this area, and been subsequently denuded completely by the Lujende and Rovuma.

This latter theory is the more probable of the two, and is supported by strong evidence—thus the shales and sandstones are much altered and broken along the line of junction with the granites, and secondly the anthracite-like substance occurs alone near the junction, and in such a manner as to suggest the idea of its having been distilled or fused out of the bituminous shale. The accompanying diagram will give some idea of the geology of this region.

At Kwamakanja where the shales and the gneiss come in contact, a fine cataract has been formed by the more rapid wearing away of the softer rock, and over the gneiss by many channels the river roars with great violence. On the almost inaccessible bare rocks the Manyanja of the district live during the dry season.



Up to the cataracts the Lujende lazily winds its way nearly due north and south, between wide tree-clad banks, and amid great stretches of sand; beyond that point the river takes a turn south-west, then nearly due west, for several days' journey, sandbanks are less abundant, long still reaches more common, separated by rocks and cataracts, while the bed contracts in breadth. Of the origin of the Lujende I could hear nothing from the people, who seemed to be absolutely ignorant of its course beyond an important Yao chief named Mtarika.

Having completed my work, I now set about my return to the coast, but before doing so I visited the important Makua village and district of Kwanantusi.

One of the strange isolated mountains, named Lipumbula, was here specially conspicuous, and I resolved to ascend it. The task proved to be much harder and more dangerous than I had bargained for, and it was only after three different attempts that I succeeded, at the cost of skinned hands and trousers worn out at the knees. Lipumbula rises like a huge broken column from the surrounding plain, and proved to be a perfectly compact mass of granite, almost without a single flaw or joint, except on one side, where a joint had proved a line of weakness, giving scope for the insidious action of various weakening agents, by which the otherwise unvarying outline of the solid mass had been destroyed, producing a precipitous ravine, and a talus at the bottom, by which we were enabled to make the dangerous ascent. Except along this line there was hardly a trace of vegetation, beyond a few tufts of a curious wiry grass. The total height of Lipumbula is 1805 feet, and its height above the plain 970.

The view presented from the top was that of a great plain dotted with the most fantastic hills, resembling from our elevated position so many curious ant-hills. At the foot of the hill the Lujende could be discerned, winding away to the west, as far as the eye could reach, with a very dark green border of trees, here and there breaking into different channels, enclosing tree-clad islands, or widening out into beautiful pools.

Lipumbula is simply a counterpart of all these strange hills, being



marked by exactly the same characteristics except that of shape. They are evidently the result of the denudation of the surrounding country—the less compact and more decomposable schists, &c., which form the greater part of the rocks, having been weathered, levelled down, and washed away, leaving the solid and compact bosses of granite or gneiss standing out in relief, and having neither flaw nor joint, bid, as it were, defiance to the elements.

The height of the Lujende at Kwanantusi is 835 feet. I had hoped to have followed it further up, but finding there was no hope of discovering anything connected with the object of the expedition, I reluctantly gave up my intention.

Not to return by the same route, I determined to cross to the Upper Rovuma, and descend thence to Ngomano. Four hard marches through an uninhabited country, covered with thin forest growing on a stony barren soil, brought us to the considerable village of Unde, situated on a small island for greater security. The people are a mixed race of Makua, Matambwe, and Manyanja.

The height of the Rovuma at this point is 1198 feet, being 363 feet higher than at Kwanantusi, showing how much more rapid is the rise of the Rovuma than the Lujende. The country on leaving the latter river begins gradually to lose its plain-like character, becoming more undulating and rugged, and breaking here and there into low ridges of hills. From Unde the Rovuma flows for a short distance east, then north to a short range of hills, where it turns east again through a wonderfully picturesque gorge, with cataracts and deep pools, and having granite mountains on both sides. The scene at this place is grand and weird in the extreme—the immense rocks and boulders which fill the bed of the river, the smooth and symmetrical dome-like hills, with scarcely a crack or irregularity, and exhibiting only a few stunted leafless bushes, rendering the general absence of vegetation all the more conspicuous. The surrounding country partakes of the same strange and barren aspect, so much so that but for the heat, we might have imagined ourselves in the Arctic regions, examining a tract of country newly emerged, polished and shaped, from beneath some great glacier.

From this point eastward the country gradually assumes its plain-like character.

Arrived once more at the confluence of the two rivers, I crossed to the south side, and continuing my way to the coast, passed first E.S.E., then E.N.E. through a great uninhabited desert, in which we found but one Makua village, named Mkomolo, where I came upon the tracks of the Rev. C. Maples and his companion on their way from Masasi to Mozambique, through the Makua country.

In this desert, which is the counterpart of the country we passed north of the river, water is very scarce, and we were several times in great straits for want of it. At Mkomolo we were glad to pay an

enormous price for sufficient liquid mud to stave off our thirst after a very hard day's march.

It may be remarked here that the time of my visit was the middle of the dry season, the whole country being dried up. During the whole of our trip we only crossed four running streams, two being on the Upper Rovuma, having their source in some distant hills, and the other two from the Mawia Plateau.

Four hard marches from Ngomano brought us to the base of the latter, which is simply the southern extension, cut off by the Rovuma, of the Makonde Plateau, and rising like the latter abruptly from the plain of the Rovuma to a height of 2400 feet.

This plateau is properly the country of the Mawia, Maviha, or Mabiha as they have been more commonly called, who have, however, of late years retired from the line of traffic, partly owing to their exclusive habits, and partly by being ousted by Makua, Wahyao, and Matambwe, who have cut them off completely from the Rovuma.

From the western escarpment of the Mawia Plateau, our course lay along the edge facing the Rovuma, of which we had occasionally excellent views. The country descends in altitude westward evenly though rapidly. Along our route we were fortunately not troubled by the tangled vegetation which so retarded our movements in Makonde. Further south, however, in the region now occupied by the Mawia, the bush is quite as bad.

As we approach the sea the country is marked by the absence of watercourses, and by the abundance of curious little lakes and ponds, which appear to me as having been hollows in an ancient sea-bed, now raised out of the water.

On the 10th of September, I reached the coast, a little south of Cape Delgado, having been occupied only seven weeks on the trip, during which we tramped over from 600 to 700 miles roughly calculated.

One word as to the accompanying map, and I have done with the geographical part. The latitudes are, in almost every instance, from observations of the stars or the sun, while the longitude is by dead reckoning, not then having chronometers. The heights are from aneroid and boiling-point thermometer observations, corrected for pressure and temperature at sea-level.

Let me now conclude with a hasty sketch of the tribes inhabiting the region of the Rovuma, without which a paper on its geography would hardly be complete.

In this restricted area we find seven tribes, or at least the remnants or representatives of that number, as some of them can hardly be said to exist as distinct tribes. These are the Makonde, Matambwe, Maviti, Manyanja, Makua, Mawia (Mabiha), and Wahyao (Wayao).

The district inhabited by the Makonde I have already described as being the plateau between the Rovuma and Lindy rivers.

They are about as ugly a set of people as are to be found in East Africa, and certainly occupy a very low grade, a fact to be accounted for to some extent by the peculiar nature of the country they inhabit. The women are especially ugly, with short squat figures, and faces of a most repulsive aspect.

Not content with their natural ugliness, they have resorted to the strangest possible means to enhance it, and with every success. They cover their faces and bodies with the most inartistic tattooing in what we may call the bas-relief style, forming zigzag lines, various geometrical figures, such as squares, triangles, &c., and figures with a faint resemblance to trees.

The process must be extremely painful. They first make the required pattern by a series of short cuts with a knife, rub charcoal into the wound, and leave it to heal up. If now left alone it heals up, and only shows the pattern by the colour; but that is not what is wanted, so the process is repeated a second time, and then a third, on which the pattern is shown not only by the black colour, but also by the raised skin. It is thus that the negro lover delights to stroke the skin of his mistress and praise the beauty of her markings, when the moon is bright and pombe and the dance have made his heart glad within him.

The most extraordinary ornament of the Makonde women, however, is the *pelele*, which is a circular piece of wood variously carved and adorned, worn in the upper lip. They are commonly two inches in diameter, and when sticking straight out suggest the idea of a duck's bill. As the women advance in age, and the *pelele* increases in size, the lip and *pelele* hang down over the mouth, and actually cover the chin, extending in many cases below, until they resemble the snout of the American tapir, all the more so owing to the flatness of the nasal organ and the thickness of the lips. These *peleles* are always made by the husband in early life, and the lover and the Makonde ladies would no more think of disposing of these presents than an English lady her marriage-ring. When a woman dies the *pelele* is always kept most religiously by the husband, and when he goes to water the grave with pombe—not his tears—he carries it with him to show the departed one that he is still faithful to her memory.

Both men and women wear the simple loin-cloth, not from want of material, but to show off their beauty-marks, for the mutual purpose of ensnaring each other. They wear a large amount of large beads and thick brass wire. Their huts are circular with a conical roof.

Owing to the large amount of rubber and copal which they are able to collect each year, they have become exceedingly saucy and difficult to deal with. We found it almost impossible to buy food from them, as at that time they did not choose to dispose of their surplus grain and, indeed, prefer to turn it into native beer, of which they are inordinately

fond, whole weeks being sometimes given up to a village debauch. When any one dies the grain he leaves behind him is at once converted into pombe, and the whole neighbourhood invited to wake him right royally.

They have many curious customs. When a woman bears a child she lives completely apart from her husband till the child is able to speak, as otherwise it is believed that harm, if not death, would come to the infant. When the latter is able to speak it is taken to where two roads meet, and at the angle the child is washed and rubbed with oil, and then handed over to the husband, who may thenceforth cohabit with her. There are many peculiar superstitions connected with the angle formed by two cross-roads all over Eastern Africa. When any one dies, the water used in washing the body and the ashes of the house are carried thither and deposited along with other things, such as eggshells and broken pots. The Makonde appear to have an unusually high moral standard. Offenders before marriage are punished severely, and any offence after marriage still more so, the women being frequently driven from the village. The marriage ceremony is somewhat different from the usual one prevalent in East Africa; no presents to the bride or her parents being required, and the girl is left to decide for herself. Having done so, she enters the bridegroom's hut, sweeps and cleans it out; that completed, the happy man arrives, leaves his gun at the door, and enters; and this completes the business.

There is no tribal chief among the Makonde, each headman of a village being totally independent of all others.

During the Maviti raids at, and subsequent to, the time of Livingstone's visit, the whole country through which we passed was quite deserted, the people taking refuge among the coast people, or else retiring to the small islands in the Rovuma. Six years ago the Sultan of Zanzibar interfered and stopped the further ravages of these marauders, and caused them to "make brothers" with the Makonde, who were thus able to return to their homes in peace.

Of the Matambwe little need be said, as they differ but little from the Makonde. As a tribe they can hardly be said to exist, the Maviti having completely broken up and scattered them, till now only a few are found living in small islands in the Rovuma, or scattered among the Makua and other tribes, the rest being killed and made slaves of. Their country proper is that region which I have described as the plain of the Rovuma, at least, that part more immediately surrounding the point of confluence of the Lujende and the Rovuma.

Under their hard fate they have become exceedingly retired and timid, except when they are under the protection of a powerful friendly chief of another tribe. They are rather lighter coloured and better formed than their Makonde cousins, but differ from them in no other respect. Notwithstanding the fact that slavery has been their ruin,

the system is so thoroughly engrained in them, that kidnapping, buying, and selling slaves, is quite as among the worst tribes.

The Manyanja are only represented by a few people scattered here and there among various other tribes. They are closely allied to the Matambwe, though properly they do not belong to the region under consideration. There are a considerable number located at Kwamakanja, near the cataracts of the Lujende.

The dreadful Maviti, of which so much has been heard at various times, deserve our special notice. Maviti, Mavitu, and Mangone, are the East African names for the Zulus, who have found their way north of the Zambesi in their war raids. The people who bear the name of Maviti on the Rovuma have, however, not the slightest right to bear the name, beyond the fact that they have to some extent copied the mode of warfare practised by the Zulus. They belong to a tribe called Waninde, who inhabit a district west of Kilwa, and who also gave origin to the Mahenge tribe now living in the angle formed by the Ruaha and the Uranga.

Like the latter, the Maviti originated in a great Zulu raid, which swept over the country many years ago, and when even Kilwa itself was threatened with destruction. According to their usual custom they retired to their own country, but leaving behind them the germs of a much greater and more widespread evil than a temporary raid. The Waninde, who seemed to have had cooler and more calculating heads than the majority of their neighbours, had observed and probably felt themselves, the paralysing terror which took possession of every one on the mere sight of a Zulu headdress, or the sound of their war cry, resolved to take advantage of this feeling, and hence adopted the dress and mode of warfare so characteristic of the Zulus.

Looking about for the most suitable fields for their destructive genius, one party pitched upon the Rufigi, and another on the Rovuma, where the people are numerous and by no means brave. The result did not belie their foresight. They swooped over these populous and fertile districts, like a destructive plague, and though few in number, yet carried everything before them. Thousands upon thousands were killed, and unknown thousands found their way into the coast slave markets. Tribes were scattered to the four winds of heaven, and large areas of the most fertile and productive land in East Africa were laid utterly waste. Those, indeed, were palmy days for the slave trader, when negro humanity was a drug in the market, and men and women could be got for two or three yards of cotton. It was a matter of small consequence to the trader how many died on the slave path. There were always plenty to fill their places, and in these great newly-made jungles frightful forced marches had to be made, and no delay could be tolerated. If a man became lame, and could not get on, or sank down from starvation, disease, or ill-treatment, the best way for both the trader and the

slave was for the former to send an axe through his skull, and hurry on. Such was the Kilwa route in those times, when it would take about a dozen slaves to make the value of a sheep or goat. Now matters are changed. The slave has become a valuable animal, for which a considerable sum is given, and on which an immense profit can be realised. He is therefore moderately well treated, better fed, and rarely killed when he should happen to commit the crime of being too ill to move on. Philanthropists at home are given to make it appear that the land traffic is as bad as ever, though the sea traffic may be practically stopped. But they forget the effect that the latter fact has upon the former, raising their value, and in various other ways compelling the trader to treat his human live-stock with as much consideration as possible. It should, therefore, not be forgotten that the stoppage of the sea traffic has also to a large extent stopped the horrors of the land transit.

To return, however, to the Maviti. The ravages of this tribe are now, however, practically things of the past, though still a hazy undefined feeling of fear hangs over the country, living as the people do in a chronic state of belief that the Maviti are always preparing for a renewal of their raids.

His Highness the Sultan sent an embassy to the Maviti, and made them understand that their doings could not be tolerated any longer. Since then they have returned to their original occupation of cultivating the soil.

These Maviti or Waninde do not tattoo themselves or wear the pelele. They are very dark and of a low type. Their dress usually consists of a small piece of cloth held up by a waist-band. Their arms are the stabbing-spear, assegais, knobkerry, and shield. Their houses are built in all sorts of East African styles. They do not aggregate together, but prefer to live in small villages, long distances apart. As far as we were concerned they were quite friendly.

The Wahyao next require our notice. I have adopted Burton's original spelling of this tribal name as better conveying the pronunciation most in vogue than Wayao, which has been of late adopted. This tribe occupies the country surrounding the Upper Lujende and bounded on the west by the southern part of Nyassa. It has at one time been a very populous and powerful tribe, but is now like other tribes in this region, shorn considerably of its original proportions by the irresistible onslaughts of the Maviti and of the even more dreaded Makangwala, from the mountains to the west and north of Nyassa.

The Wahyao are perhaps without exception the most industrious and energetic people to be found in East Africa, rivalling the Wanyamwesi in these particulars and excelling them in intelligence and trading capabilities. The best Wangwana or Coast free porters have originally been brought as slaves from the Yao country. Nearly all my best men, with Chuma at their head, are Wahyao, and the experience of many

other travellers has been the same. Physically they are superior to any of the other Rovuma tribes. They do not wear the pelele or tattoo themselves. They are cleanly in their habits and tend generally towards the adoption of Coast customs. Their houses are large, clean, and unusually well built. In customs, language, and manners, they differ from all the neighbouring tribes with the exception of the Makua, who in some respects resemble the Wahyao, though different in others. Their most promising trait is their eagerness to trade and their love of visiting the coast. Their business capabilities are very high, and they may be said to be to Nyassa what the Wanyamwesi are to Tanganyika and Victoria Nyanza. Unfortunately, however, their country is not blessed with any natural wealth, so that they have to depend entirely upon ivory and slaves, which they gather from the greater part of the Nyassa region. Indeed, this desire to trade has made them the greatest slave producers we now have in the Nyassa and Rovuma districts.

The slaves are chiefly obtained by wars among themselves, or with neighbouring tribes, and an extensive system of kidnapping. Each year every village, great or small, sends its caravan of slaves to the coast, and in the months of July, August, and September, the traffic is still very great. At a rough guess I should say nearly 2000 are every year brought down from the Wahyao alone. Three caravans I met averaged 150 slaves each, and I heard of a number of smaller ones. What, however, impressed me much was the evident absence of the dreadful cruelties usually supposed to accompany these caravans. It is true, however, that the slave stick for the men and refractory women is still a necessity of the trader.

Perhaps few better places could be found than the Rovuma basin for studying the frightful effects of the slave system; tribes scattered to the four winds of heaven, and almost annihilated, remnants of such compelled to live miserable lives on rocks and wretched little islands, continued civil war, the absence of all confidence between the various villages, immense tracts of country laid waste, and other evils of equal magnitude.

There are many colonies of Wahyao all along the Rovuma, and wherever they have settled they have become the chief power of the district.

The Makua are another tribe of considerable importance. They occupy the country between the Lujende and Mozambique, having the Mawia and the Matambwe on the north and the Wahyao on the west. They have always been considered a dangerous and exclusive tribe, but evidently on mistaken grounds. I was everywhere received cordially, and the Rev. Chauncy Maples and A. C. Goldfinch, whose tracks I crossed, marched right through the country from the Rovuma to the Mozambique coast without hindrance or trouble. The Makua do not tattoo themselves so lavishly as the Makonde, though their women wear the pelele.

Their distinguishing characteristic is a horseshoe-shaped mark on the brow, over the bridge of the nose.

The Makua women seem to occupy a very independent position, and advocates of women's rights might take a few hints from them. Thus, each wife has her own hut, with everything she possesses, at her own absolute command. She has her own plantations, and the food she cultivates she may sell or do what she pleases with, and it is only of her own good pleasure if she gives or cooks her husband any of the produce of her plantation. If she is divorced she retains all her property and all her children. It will thus be seen that the husband is here the principal object of pity, occupying, as he does, only the position of father of the family. Next to the Wahyao the Makua occupy the first position in industry, intelligence, and business capacity.

A few words on the Mawia, and I have finished. This tribe is better known as the Mabiha, but I fail to understand why, as it is a term I have never heard among the Rovuma natives, who invariably speak of the Mawia. I therefore adopt the latter as the more correct. They are specially distinguished by the fact that the men as well as the women wear the pelele. They tattoo themselves like the Makonde. They are remarkable for the extreme slenderness of their well-made figures. Their only dress is a single strip of cloth.

They are noted as the most exclusive tribe in East Africa, as even the Arabs have as yet been unable to penetrate beyond the outskirts of the country. Their country is like Makonde, and the demand for rubber and copal is slowly breaking down the barriers which exist, and gradually bringing them into communication with their neighbours. Occasionally a few of the tribe find their way to the coast to trade. On my way to the coast I saw them frequently, and was even able to photograph one of the chiefs.

They are said to live apart from each other, not forming villages. There are few roads, and these hardly passable. They are described as being very treacherous, and difficult to deal with.

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*Makua Land, between the Rivers Rovuma and Luli.*

By the Rev. CHAUNCY MAPLES, M.A.

(Read at the Evening Meeting, January 16th, 1882.)

Map, p. 128.

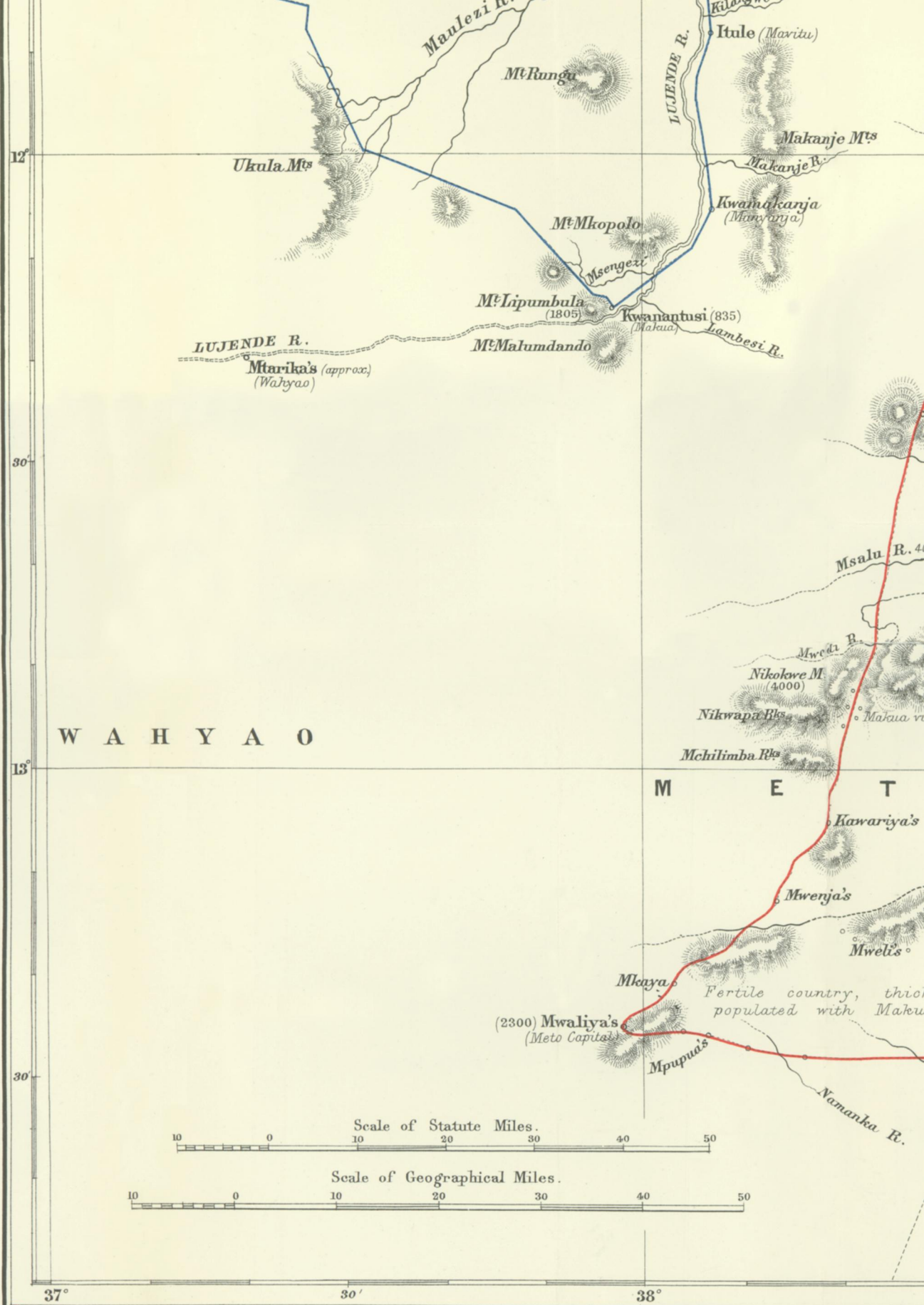
NEARLY two years ago I had the honour of reading before the Society a paper on "Masasi and the Rovuma District"; I now desire to give some account of a journey I have since made, for missionary purposes, in the unexplored country lying between Masasi and Mozambique, a wide tract at present almost an uninterrupted blank on our maps. The





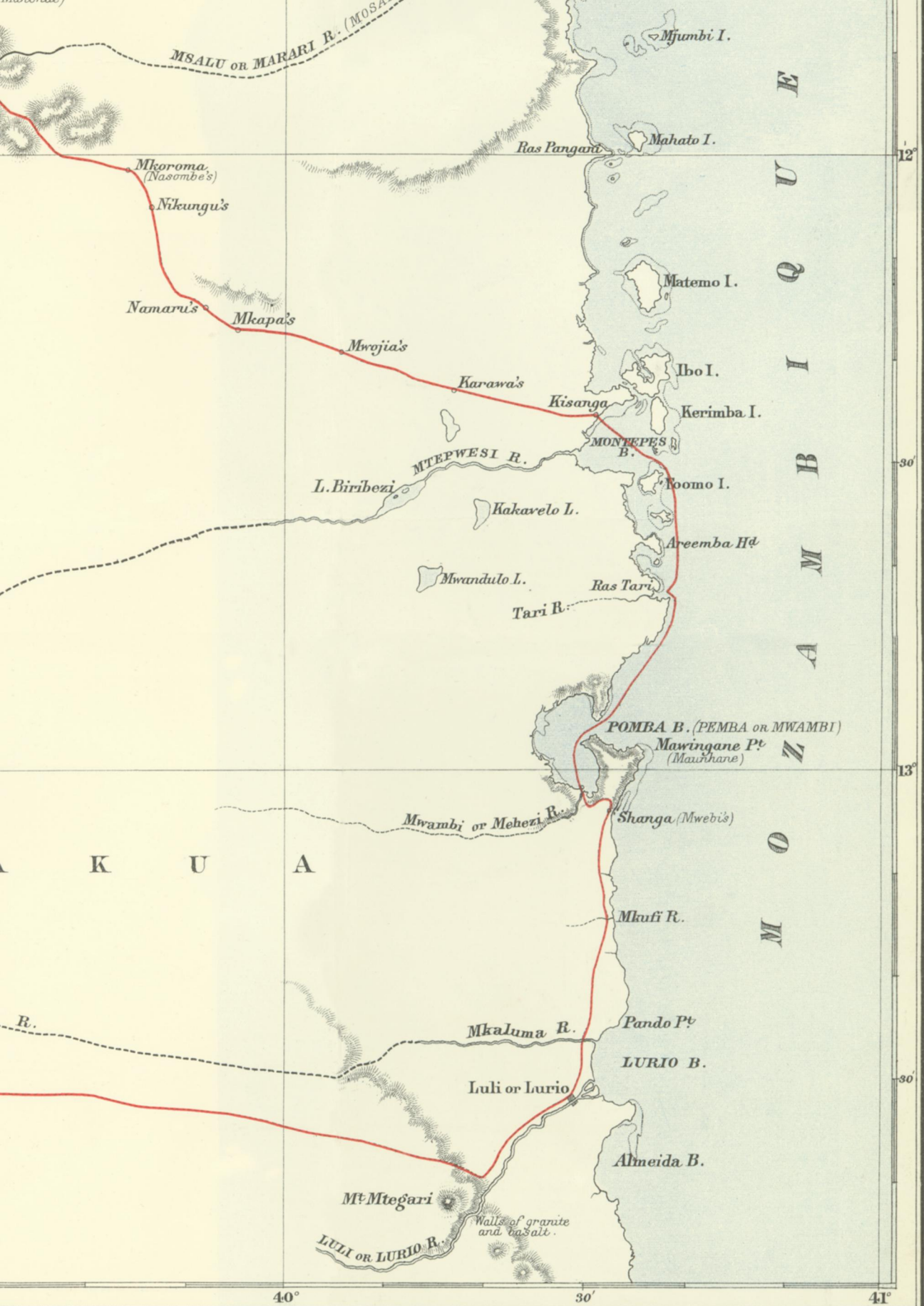






H. Sharbat, R.G.S. del.





Edw<sup>d</sup> Waller. Lith.