

Letter to Robert Moffat 1, [1?] October, 12 October 1849

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)

[0001]

[Part of letter from D^r Livingston
to Robert Moffat Oct 1849]

Kolobeng October 1849

My Dear Father

I wrote a note to you when at the Batasana
& informed you that the Latitude was 19° but we had made
the calculation without the Nautical Almanack & when
we reached the waggon it was seen to be no more
than 20° 20' South & about 24° Long. The distance
travelled might be about 600 miles, as we went North
& then a long way to the Westward. After this correction
I do not feel inclined to say much more for you
will soon have Oswel & Murray who will commun-
icate all particulars viva voce. the Bakolia [(slaves)] as
they are called by Bechuanas or Bayeiye [(men)] as they
call themselves were the most interesting people we
saw. they are darker in complexion than Bechuanas
& speak another language. Many of them however have
learned to speak sitchuana fluently. I derived more
pleasure from sailing along the river Zouga in
their canoes and addressing them in their little villages
among the reed than from all the journey. besides
they seemed fine frank fellows, and understood the
message delivered better than any lot I ever addressed
For the last time Oreeja is the name they give to
the Deity. they mentioned the names of the first
man & woman & if I mistook them not had some
tradition respecting the flood. they catch fish
by means of nets. I shall send a list to you
the fish are very fine. some are said to be as long

[0002]

as a man. the longest I saw was about three feet
they kill hippopotami by means of harpoons attached
to ropes. their canoes are poor things generally made
of single trees & flat bottomed. some of them take
the form of the tree though that may have been like the
letter S. the Batletli are a small tribe and the
Bakurutse are divided into three. they are a branch
of the Bakurutse and split off about 3 generations
ago. the Batasana is a large tribe but the chief

a mere boy is an unfavourable specimen. He prevented us going on to Sebitoane. the latter [chief] took all the cattle from the Batletli and Bakurutse and now they have nothing but the produce of their gardens & fish to live on. none of them ever heard of the sea or saw a European before. they were afraid or distrustful of us at first but in returning were more frank & open. the Zouga is a noble river, & remarkable for its periodical rise & fall. the rise was taking place when we were there and the water perfectly pure & cold & soft gave the idea of melting snow It runs to the N.E but does not derive its waters from the Lake although it appears to do so the Batoka told me explicitly that the water came from the North by a river which flows into [^] [it] the Tamunakle (T a m u n a k l e) & this is connected with other large rivers all in the North & all navigable. they seem to me to form a highway into a large section of

[0003]

country. the prospect of this being opened up for missionaries makes the discovery of the Lake dwindle into nothing. the natives asserted that the rise in the river was not caused by rains. A man in a hilly country called Mazyekua kills a man annually and throws his body into the river after which the water comes As the water became softer the nearer we approached the junction with the Tamunakle & the air was remarkably keen & cold I could only conjecture that snow must be melting in some region the North. I never had such a keen appetite before & we were all alike. this, although our altitude was not much above 2000 f^t. a great deal lower than Kolobeng. the disease called "holsetse" seems inflammation of the lungs. we heard more coughing than among Bechuanas. and immense clouds of very fine dust arise from numerous salt pans adjacent when the wind blows the whole country seems enveloped in a mist and as it irritates the eyes it may act like the same [^] [very fine dust] thing among the grinders in Sheffield. the symptoms mentioned are more like those of pneumonia than fever I found a new kind of flint on the opposite bank of the Zouga. M^r Oswel will shew it you Although this is dated Kolobeng, I am still 150 miles off. I note a few things to save time when by the goodness of God I reach there. His kindness has been continually bestowed on us through the

[0004]

whole journey, and I feel most thankful for his
abounding mercies. the time has been much longer
than I anticipated. It was reported to be 10 days
from the Bamangwato But that was not the
Lake it was only the Noka ea Batletle or river
Zouga. We had to travel 300 miles beyond before
we saw the Lake Ñami or as the Bechuanas
call it Mghabi. Ñami means water or great water
in the Bakoba language. ami is water itself - serapo is
the paddle - añkaslu the boat hook - mero fishhook & wotu canoe
I shall give you some words when I have time only 21
in about 300 resemble sitchuana. We were full
of conjectures before we reached the Lake.
When 200 miles off we were speculating on the
dew on the grass shewing the vicinity of the Lake
clouds in the distance were sure to be hovering
over it &c &c

12 October - Reached home two days ago thankful
to find though all had been ill & much disease &
death had been in the town my family were
in pretty good health. We were more troubled
for want of water in coming out than in
going in. Sekhomi filled up the wells we
dug. Mr Oswel remains at Lopepe 100 miles
from this. M^r Murray gets the spare oxen in
order to push on - I endure here on horseback
to get oxen to bring M^r Oswel out.