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JOURNEYS IN THE LINYANTI REGION.*

By PERCY C. REID.

On June 15, 1899, we left Kazungula, and, keeping along the right bank of the Linyanti river, headed nearly due west. At the end of about 7 miles we came to the Sebuba rapids, which were the only obstacle to navigation we met with on our trip. It is, however, only at seasons of low water that these rapids constitute any serious difficulty, and even then native canoes are able to pass up them. Our road had led most of the way along the foot of some low stony hills, which, at the rapids, come right down to the river's bank. From Sebuba we continued to march along the right bank of the river for about 25 miles. The same low hills, covered with dense jungle, were on our left hand all the way, and indeed continue for about 55 miles from Kazungula. The river meanders through a low flat plain at their base, which stretches away northwards as far as the eye can reach. While, of course, the hills hem in the river on the south and prevent its overflow, the plain to the north is for many months of the year flooded from 1 to 3 or even more feet deep.

On June 19 we arrived at a spot where the river, including its inundation, narrowed considerably owing to some rising ground on the north side. Here some natives informed us, though without any real truth, that the country ahead of us was impassable for our donkeys, owing to the thickness of the bush, and we therefore, with the help of a couple of canoes, ferried our goods and swam our donkeys over. Thenceforth we proceeded along the left bank. A march of about 3 miles through flooded country brought us to the village of

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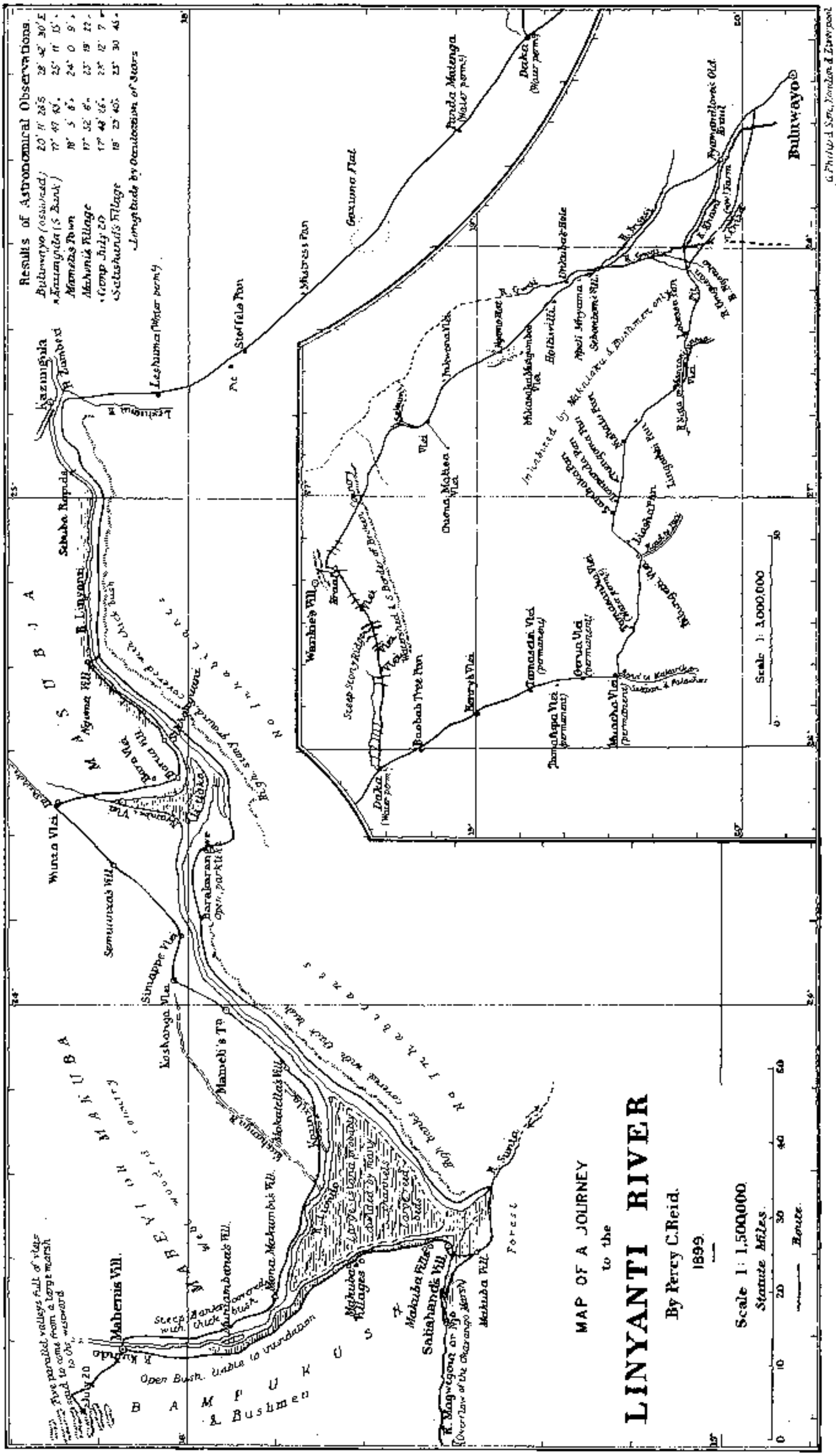
Ngoma, where we were able to purchase a little milk and butter, which we relished immensely.

From Ngoma we marched south-west for 13 miles to the village of Sikhonguani, and then 3 miles west to the village of Boruha. The road was good and dry, except for one or two small patches of inundation, the country on the whole being somewhat higher than to the east of Ngoma. At Boruha we were just on the edge of the first of the big reed-beds of the Linyanti, as a reference to the map will show. This is known to the natives as Li-tlaka, or The Reeds. Leaving Boruha, we had to march very nearly north to circumvent a large arm of the river, called Nyambez, which of course is the same word as Zambezi. The Nyambez is full of deep clear water nearly 2 miles wide, I should say, at its southern end, and surrounded by a fringe of reeds. Where we crossed it near its head, it was merely a swampy reed-bed about 200 yards wide with a couple of small rivulets running through it. We camped, after crossing, at a vley called Wunza, and were now on the path from Shesheke to Mameli's village. This path we followed in a south-westerly direction, through a pleasant open park-like country, the Linyanti being some miles away on our left.

At the end of 10 miles we came to Semuanza's village, and the next day moved on a further 13 miles to Sinieppe vley. Here the Linyanti was about 3 miles away to the south. Between 4 and 5 miles to the west from Sinieppe we came to Kashanga vley, from which place a journey of 6 miles south-south-west brought us to Mameli's. Major Gibbons, in the paper he recently read before the Society, has fully described Mameli and his village, which is a good mile or more from the banks of the river. Mameli was certainly a very fair specimen of a native, and full of protestations of his wish to assist us. The main traits of his character that I saw were his love of native beer (which, as he eats absolutely nothing, constitutes both his food and his drink), and his love for his youngest child, a dirty little imp of about two years old. The inhabitants of the village must number about 2000, and it is by far the most important place we came across.

As usual, when, after a two days' halt, we prepared to move on again, all sorts of difficulties were discovered by Mameli to have cropped up. There was no food along the road in front; the bush was too dense for our donkeys; we should never get across the river at the spot we wished; there were no boys, as promised, who would take our letters back to Kazungula; and there were no guides, as promised, to show us the way. It would be much better, Mameli said, that we should stay another day, and then cross to the south side of the Linyanti river. Of course we declined to listen to his arguments, and marched off to find our own road and overcome all the pictured difficulties. But perhaps I must not be too hard on Mameli, for, as we afterwards discovered, a meeting of Barotse chiefs was even then being held at


MAP OF A JOURNEY
to the
LINYANTI RIVER
By Percy C. Reid.
1899.
Scale 1: 1,500,000
Statute Miles.
Route.
Results of Astronomical Observations.
Scale 1: 3,000,000
Bulawayo
G. Philip & Son, London & Liverpool.

Shesheke to discuss the advisability of turning us back by force from this part of the country, which is looked on by Lewanika as his special preserve. Luckily wiser counsels prevailed, but my friend and I could not help smiling when we heard the story, at the idea of a miserable set of men like the Barotse trying to turn us back.

From Mameli's we marched 12 miles through open forest, slightly west of south, and then debouched on to an open plain which bounds the river, the trees on the opposite bank of which we could see over the beds of reeds, some 2 miles away. Turning nearly west, we marched on for another 25 miles, with the forest on our right and the open plain on our left. Soon after starting we had to cross a small spruit or river-bed, and here I noticed that the water was flowing out of, and not into, the Linyanti. It was my first introduction to the winter or dry season overflow of the Linyanti. We were now, of course, travelling along the northern side of the second and largest of the swamps and reed-beds of that river. Some 3 or 4 miles further on we bore slightly more to the northward, and, entering the bush country, we crossed and afterwards travelled along a distinct river some 20 to 30 feet wide, also flowing strongly out of the Linyanti. Its name was Kazinzila. I am inclined to think that it is not really a river or affluent of the Linyanti, but rather that it is the ancient bed of the river itself, or possibly of a loop. Away on the flat to the south of us was pointed out the position of Livingstone's old house, and of Sebituane's grave, near the old town of Linyanti, but, owing to the floods, we were not able to approach. In a fortnight's time, we were told, Mameli would come to hunt here. The lechwee, situtunga, and reed-buck would then be driven by the increasing floods from their usual haunts in the reed-beds, and forced to take refuge in the patches of wood on the numerous raised "islands" with which the plain is clothed. These islands are then surrounded by the natives in canoes, and the game is speared as it is driven out into the waters.

A few miles farther on we came to another river-bed, the Kashanga, now still dry, but which in excessively wet seasons contains much water. Indeed, on occasions, as for instance in a memorable year about 1880, "when the Mokwai, Lewanika's sister, came down to Kazungula to hunt," the Kashanga was so full that the water came right past Kashanga vley (our camp to the north of Mameli's), and flowed there again into the Linyanti. From about here the Linyanti changed its direction; the big swamp was finished, and we marched north-north-west for nearly 40 miles, when we arrived opposite to Maheni's village, where we proposed to cross. During the greater part of this distance the valley had narrowed to some 3 or 4 miles, through which the river twisted and turned in all directions, the left bank, on which we were, being considerably the higher, and in consequence dry and covered with thick wood.

By the way, I must mention that here the river is known as the Liondo, evidently the same name as Kwando farther up. Maheni's village is generally on the same bank as we were, but just now this part of the country was depopulated, owing to the presence of a man-eating lion. He had eaten several natives, and one night tried to abstract one of the sleeping porters from our camp. As a consequence, all the inhabitants had moved either across, or into the marshy islands, of the river. But of course the cultivated lands of the villagers were still in their old position, and, to show you how childish the natives are, the women refused to come over to cultivate the fields unless accompanied by two men with guns, regardless of the fact that both the

GETTING DONKEYS OVER RIVER.

guns were broken, and that there was not a single charge of powder or lead in the whole district.

Arrived opposite Maheni's, we turned sharply to the west, left the high ground, and with much wading arrived near the river's bank. Maheni soon came over to visit us. He was one of the best natives I have ever met—a youngish man of perhaps thirty-five, kind, straightforward, and obliging, and above all outspoken and truthful. In answer to our request to be taken across the river, he said he had two canoes which were at our disposal, and would take our men and goods across, but he urged that he had never seen donkeys before, and that, though he would do his best to cross them safely, we must not hold him responsible for accidents. True to his word, the next morning he

arrived with his men and canoes, and a few hours' hard work landed everything on the far side. Nothing got wet, except myself, for I managed to overbalance a canoe I was in, and though the donkeys had a long swim, and a still longer march through swamps up to their bellies, they all arrived safely at the village. When all were over, and the canoes returned to fetch Maheni, my friend, and myself, Maheni stepped forward, and, shaking each boatman by the hand, thanked them warmly for the trouble and care they had taken. I certainly think I may couple Maheni with Khama, the Bechuana chief, as two notable examples of nature's gentlemen.

From Maheni's we went away on a fortnight's shooting trip about 7 or 8 miles north-west, where we enjoyed excellent sport with rhinoceros and other big game. The configuration of the country hereabouts was most peculiar. Five shallow valleys, nearly parallel with one another, ran east and west, varying in distance apart from 1 to 3 miles. Each was from a quarter to half a mile wide, was free from trees and almost from bush, and contained numerous vleys of water along the line of lowest level. They were separated from one another by sand-belts covered with forest. The two northern ones did not extend far to the west of our position; the two southern ones seemed to extend some distance westwards, while the central one was the most distinctly defined, and, if followed many miles to the west, led, the natives told me, to a large lake full of reeds and hippopotami, evidently the Okavango marshes. I hardly know whether to regard these five valleys as so many distinct channels down which at different times a river has flowed; but I am inclined rather to think that the central one alone represents the old river-bed, while those on either side of it formed rather a sort of delta, as one sees at the mouth of so many rivers, where it debouched into the Cuando near Maheni's village.

Returning to Maheni's, we left there on August 5, on our way back to Kazungula by the right or south bank of the Linyanti river. A march of about 50 miles in a south-south-easterly direction brought us to Salishand's village. On the way we passed a few Makuba villages. The country we traversed was flat, open, and parklike, and a good deal of it near the river was inundated; but, although there was no marked rise anywhere in elevation, the floods did not extend any great distance to the west, and the amount of forest and undergrowth showed that we were really well above water-level in most places.

Arrived at Salishand's, we found him away, but his wife advised us to halt the night, as there was an awkward river to cross in front, and she promised to send for her husband to come to help us. It is the only case I have met with where an African woman has ever come forward in our dealings with natives. As a rule, they keep at a respectful distance and refrain from giving any information. Perhaps Mrs. Salishand represents the rising generation of ladies in search of woman's

rights. I should certainly not be surprised if her next visitor finds her clothed in a pair of breeches—a second-hand pair of which I regret I did not supply her with.

Salishand, another very fair specimen of a native, on his return led us away for some 2 or 3 miles in a westerly direction, and brought us to the banks of the Magwegena spruit. This spruit, or river, Salishand informed me, led into, or higher up was known as, the Njo—I could not quite understand which meaning he intended to convey. He further told me that canoes could go from his village the whole distance to Lake Ngami. Strangely enough, I find that, in the map published with Anderson's 'Lake Ngami' in 1856, the river Dzo is marked as bordering the Okavango marshes on the east. This becomes the Machabe river lower down, and flows into the Tamalakan river, which in its turn enters the Botletlie just east of Lake Ngami, but whether these details are correct I am unable to say.

After continuing our journey for 5 or 6 miles south, we came to a couple of small Makuba villages, near the south-western corner of the Linyanti marshes. Here we turned sharply to the east, but soon left the river, which trended away northwards, and struck due east through the forest for some 3 miles, when we reached the Sunta, an affluent or effluent of the Linyanti, as you may please to regard it. No doubt at certain times it carries water into the big river; just now the big river was overflowing, and its waters were flowing *up* the Sunta.

After striking the Sunta we followed up its course for about 5 miles, when we reached its waters' end and crossed dryshod. Striking north-west, we arrived back at the Linyanti, and following its banks for about 45 miles we found ourselves again near Mameli's village, but separated from it, of course, by the river. We had to keep close along the river's edge, as the banks were high and clothed with thick, almost impenetrable bush. Leaving Mameli's drift, and making a slight *détour* through the bush for 7 miles, we then struck the river again. Here it turned away north of east, and we found ourselves in open but well-wooded country, through which we marched for a couple of days, when we again approached the river, which had turned and was running southwards. Separating us from it was an enormous area of high reeds. We were back again at Li-tlaka, or rather on its western edge. Thence we travelled about east for a few miles, when we reached the range of stony hills which, as I have said, stretches all the way to Kazungula. The open country we had been travelling through is called Barakarangwe. Twenty miles from here in a north-easterly direction along the foot of this range, brought us opposite to Ngoma village, and thenceforward we followed our old route back to Kazungula.

And now to deal briefly with the geographical and ethnographical results of the trip.

The instruments which I had with me for determining the positions

of various places were a 6-inch sextant, an astronomical telescope, and two half-chronometer watches with Greenwich time. Before leaving Buluwayo I was enabled to get the error of my watches on Greenwich time by signal from Cape Town; but, unfortunately, on my return to Buluwayo the wires had been destroyed by the Boers, and I had therefore to wait until I arrived in London before I could again get Greenwich time. I was, however, successful in observing stellar occultations on July 21, August 16, and September 17, and thereby to compute with very fair accuracy the rates of my watches. As a result, I fixed the following positions:—

Maheni's village	lat. 17° 52′ 6″ S.,	long. 23° 19′ 22″ E.
Salishand's village	„ 18° 30′ 0″ S.,	„ 23° 30′ 45″ E.
Mameli's village	„ 18° 5′ 8″ S.,	„ 24° 0′ 9″ E.
Ngoma	„ 17° 51′ 10″ S.,	„ 24° 40′ 15″ E.
Kazungula	„ 17° 46′ 40″ S.,	„ 25° 11′ 15″ E.

The country from Kazungula westwards, along the north side of the river, is inhabited by Basubia as far as a point slightly west of Mameli's. Westwards again from this, and still on the north side of the river, come the Baheyi. Mameli is the head chief of the Basubia of this district, and Maheni of the Baheyi; but most of the more important villages have Barotse headmen appointed by Lewanika himself. The villagers pay tithes to their headmen, and the latter, after presumably deducting a percentage, hand them over to indunas sent down by Lewanika to collect them. These tithes or taxes consist chiefly of skins, such as pookoo and lechwee and situtunga among the antelopes, jackals, and various species of herpestes or mungoose among the smaller mammals. Most of the headmen own a few cows, although these, I believe, are really the property of Lewanika, who allows the headmen to retain the milk and butter and a small percentage of the calves, as remuneration. No fowls are kept by either tribe, and eggs or chickens are therefore unobtainable, except at Mameli's village, where we saw pigeons and heard cocks crow, though we were unable to purchase either. The principal diet of both tribes is corn and fish, eked out by an occasional buck. The women and children, of course, do all the cultivation, and therefore the man who can buy most wives and has most children is the one who can till most land, and so soon becomes the most wealthy and important. The people are quiet and inoffensive, but shy. The majority live under shelters of grass which they call huts, but in the principal villages the houses are more substantial.

Periodically, what one may almost term slave-raids are made by the Barotse chiefs from Lialui, when young men and girls are carried off to become their serfs and wives. In Batokaland, to the north-east of Kazungula, this has been carried to such an extent that you can see no one in the villages but worn-out old people and infants. The Basubia and Baheyi are wilder by habit, and shyer, and consequently

these slave-raids are not so successful. Force, too, is not infrequently used on both sides, and this the Barotse do not like. I am glad to say that this question is receiving the deep attention of the officials of the British South African Company. Although both the Basubia and Baheyi understand and speak Serotse, they each have also their own language. They, however, not infrequently intermarry.

Roughly speaking, the whole of the right bank of the river from Maheni's to Kazungula may be said to be uninhabited. It is true that from Maheni's to the south-west corner of the swamp, just beyond Salishand's, there are a few villages. The inhabitants of these are emigrants from the north bank—not, as a rule, originally from pleasure

BUSHMAN'S CAMP.

but because of the slave-raids I have mentioned. They are called Bakuba by the Bechuana, Baheyi by the Barotse. They owe a divided allegiance, or rather they have to pay taxes both to Lewanika and to Sekhomi, the chief of Lake Ngami. Living in this district, but away back from the river, are the Bampukush, who own allegiance to Lebebe of Andarra. They trade with the Bakuba, and are often to be found near their villages, but they fly into the bush at the first whisper of the arrival of a Barotse. The Bampukush are good hunters, and very plucky; some eight or ten of them will even spoor up to a rhinoceros while asleep, and spear him, after which they follow him for miles, stabbing him as opportunity occurs, until at length they kill him. Among the Bampukush are a few nomad bushmen, the lowest of

the low. All along the south side of the Linyanti, from the Sunta to Kazungula, the country is absolutely uninhabited, though the natives from the north side visit it occasionally to take game by pitfalls or traps.

And now to deal with the geography of the district. Anything like an accurate survey of the river is impossible without a lengthened sojourn and a free use either of canoes or, better still, of a small steam-launch, on which to traverse and explore the various arms and branches. And even then it must be remembered that what appears to be an island to-day is part of the main land in a few months' time, when the floods have subsided. These floods occur twice annually—the one in January, February, and March, caused by the rains; the second in July, August, and September, caused no one at present knows how, though Mr. Arnot has offered a very probable explanation in a letter published in the *Geographical Journal* for March, 1900, to which I refer you. But, be the cause what it may, an overflow not only of the river Linyanti, but of the Okavango also, takes place in the middle of the driest season of the whole year. At this time, not only does the Linyanti come down in flood and fill up its own swamps, but the Okavango actually overflows down the Njo or Magwegena into the Linyanti. Evidently, then, the level of the Okavango is above that of the Linyanti. This dry-season overflow does not, as a rule, affect the Linyanti below Mameli's, but in certain years it can be seen as far as the village of Ngoma. The natives unanimously agreed that the inundations were decreasing in volume, and were not nearly so large as formerly; but, of course, it may be only that their minds are impressed with recollections of occasional years of great overflow which they have known in the past, and which do not happen to have recurred recently. I, however, saw disused dams erected to catch fish, and also quantities of shells of water-snails far away from the river, where I was told the water never came now. Again, Dr. Livingstone, in 1853, mentions that in lat. 18° 4′ 27″, long. 24° 6′ 20″, he came to the Sanshureh river, a branch or loop of the Linyanti, and found it an impassable barrier, with the whole country between it and the latter flooded. Selous, in 1874, speaks of the district as an island, yet I was able to traverse the whole of it dryshod, and had only one or two small pieces of shallow water to cross, which represented the Sanshureh in 1899. It is improbable, though still possible, that 1853 and 1874 were years of heavy overflow; but, looking at the fact that the floods of 1853 were larger than of 1874, and those of 1874 larger than those of 1899, it does seem likely that there is a regular and persistent decrease in the volume of water. The only evidence against it—and this is really only negative—is that some twenty years ago the Kashanga was very full. Of course, twenty years is a long time, but evidently in that year there was a very high dry-season flood.

As to the regular wet-season inundation, I could obtain no direct

evidence of its volume now as compared with former years. Dr. Livingstone, however, does say that between the Sebuba rapids and Kazungula the country between the Zambezi and Linyanti is split up into numerous islands: while to-day there is, I believe, only one island, and that the triangular piece of land that runs actually down to the confluence of the two rivers. It must be remembered that the dry season flood has never reached so far, and therefore the change in the aspect of the country there must be owing to diminished wet-season volume of water.

Before I leave the subject of the geography of this district, let me quote the remarks which Baines, the well-known explorer, makes in

CROSSING SWAMP.

reference to the name Chobe, under which the Linyanti river appears in most maps. He says, "Erroneously called Chobe, Chobe being merely a petty headman living on it, as Zouga, who seems now to be forgotten, did on the Botletli." And yet the Zouga, like the Chobe, is still on the maps, although Baines discovered the mistake so long ago as 1862.

The fauna of the district is represented by numerous animals. The elephant is now nearly extinct; the rhinoceros is not to be found east of Maheni's. Buffaloes and most sorts of antelopes have been sadly thinned by the visitation of rinderpest in 1896. Lions are plentiful, but rarely seen; hyenas, wild dogs, and the smaller mammalia are

common. Birds are in great numbers and variety. The quantity of guineafowl and francolins in some places along the south bank surpasses all imagination. With the decrease in the larger game, the tsetse fly has practically vanished, and while I saw millions in 1895, in 1899 we saw only some half-dozen, and the majority of these were away to the west of Maheni's.

A last remark as to the name to be applied to the country. Major Gibbons in his recent paper stated that the word Barotse as representing the ruling tribe did not exist, and that Marutse and Marutseland should be substituted. I can only say that Dr. Livingstone, than whom there can be no higher authority, speaks of them as Barotse. Selous the same. Mr. George Westbeech, who had lived for twenty years among them, and was actually an induna or headman of the nation, I knew well in 1885 and 1888. He always called them Barotse. One of Westbeech's old Hottentot hunters still living at Kazungula does the same. The language of the tribe is Sesuto, and in Sesuto language, as in Sechuana, Ba is the personal pronoun plural signifying "they." The people who speak Sechuana are the Bechuana, the people who speak Sesuto are the Basuto, the people who speak Serotse, and who are a branch of the Basuto, are the Barotse. I think the evidence I have adduced is sufficient to prove that Barotseland is the correct way of designating the country.

Prof. J. W. Gregory, making some remarks at the conclusion of Major Gibbons' paper, said that he had formed a theory as to the origin of the Victoria falls, but to be perfect it required evidence of a much larger flow of water than now occurred. Many years ago Livingstone formulated the theory of large pre-historic lakes in the district. He says, "The whole country between this (the Victoria falls) and the ridge beyond Libebe westwards—Lake Ngami and the Zouga southwards—and eastwards beyond Nchokotsa was one fresh-water lake."

I think no one who knows the country, no one who sees how even to-day the water-systems of the Okavango and the Linyanti are united, and no one who has wondered at the great Makari-kari salt lakes, can doubt the probable correctness of this theory. Whether the volume of water in this huge lake, bursting its way eastwards, would fulfil the requirements of Prof. Gregory's theory, I do not know; but without doubt it must make almost certain the former connection of the Okavango and Linyanti rivers. For as this lake emptied, the flow of water must necessarily have scored channels in what was then its bottom, but is now dry land. And these channels must have been cut approximately from west to east. We find even to-day the Magwegena still in existence, and still carrying some of the Okavango waters into the Linyanti; and further north, as I have told you, are the old river-valleys near Maheni's, which, there is little doubt, at one time carried still more of the Okavango, and more directly too, into the Linyanti.

These then were probably connecting channels, cut, as I have suggested, by the flow of the diminishing waters of the lake. Whether the natural changes which have altered them from permanent streams into the condition they are in to-day, are prehistoric or comparatively recent, I am unable to surmise. And all the evidence that I have been able to obtain (and at best it is second-hand) is contained in a statement in Baines's 'Explorations in South-West Africa,' published in 1864, where he states, on the authority of C. J. Anderson, that Libebe informed the latter that the Makalolo under Sekeletu, when they made a raid on Libebe, came all the way from Linyanti in canoes. So that there was water connection of some sort in those days. But even without this evidence, the existing connection by the Magwegena, coupled with the undoubted drying up of all this portion of Africa, as has been noticed by every traveller since Livingstone's time, does indubitably point to a far more complete connection in even comparatively recent dates. The subject is to me a most interesting one, and if any remarks which I have made to-night should act as an inducement to any one to go and study the question scientifically on the spot, I confess I shall be more pleased.

Before the reading of the paper, the Chairman, Sir T. H. Holdich, Vice-President, said: Once more I appear before you as I fear a most inefficient substitute for our President, who is unavoidably absent. To-night we have to turn our attention once again to Central Africa. Mr. Reid will take us into the little-known regions of Linyanti.

After the reading of the paper, the following discussion took place:—

Major Gibbons: Mr. Reid has thrown down the gauntlet to me in no unmeasured terms. I hope, however, to prove to his satisfaction before I sit down that he has not got such a good case as he appeared to have. First of all, I must set him right on the question as to who the Marotse are. He seems to think they are in some way mixed up with the Basutos; that is not the case at all. I have taken a very considerable interest in this matter, spent a great deal of time in Marotseland, and have traced their history back for the last 250 years. Before that they came from the Kabompo, presumably *en route* from the north. But there is a link between the Basutos and the Marotse, although they have not a particle of blood in common. I think, if Mr. Reid had read Livingstone's or M. Coillard's book, or even my own, he would have found that the Makololo, an offshoot of the Basutos, worked their way through the desert, and settled, first of all, in the very country he has been talking about to-night. They arrived there in about 1828, and about 1840 went up into Burotse, and conquered the Marotse. In 1864 they were absolutely wiped out almost to a man—one or two escaped, and, with the exception of one or two women, there was no Makololo blood left in the country. So much for the blood relationship. Now as regards the language. The difference between the Marotse and the Basuto language is about the same as the difference between chalk and cheese—there is no connection between them. Livingstone calls these invaders *Ma*kololo, and Mr. Reid himself calls them *Ma*kololo, thus his rule falls to the ground on his own showing. Now as regards Sekololo, the language spoken, which was introduced by the Makololo, and is used, generally speaking, by all the upper Zambezi river tribes at the present time. I have a list of witnesses to prove my contention, most of whom, curiously enough, have been cited by Mr. Reid in