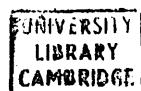




Dr J. Kirk, aged 25 years



THE  
ZAMBESI JOURNAL  
AND LETTERS OF  
DR JOHN KIRK  
1858-63

Edited by  
REGINALD FOSKETT

VOLUME I



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He had been short tempered for 24 hours, a sure sign with many others than with him.

[MANUSCRIPT VOLUME VI]<sup>4</sup>

*February 4th.* Return keys of Mr Baines boxes to Snr Tito. Having taken some writing paper and note books which I bought of Baines at the sea side,<sup>5</sup> I have taken also the small stool, the Nautical Almanack for 1860 and an empty box. Snr. Tito gave me a portion of what seems to be camwood rubbed down on stone and collected as it is in the market at Sierra Leone. It is said to be made by the Baniai and from a tree growing up the River Luangwa. Thornton seems to enjoy good health and says he has done so throughout the journey to Zumbo. The Portuguese are re-establishing themselves at Zumbo. No expedition should go out into countries such as this without packing cases for the return of specimens. I cannot see how to make a good job of packing my collections up.

*February 6th.* Very hot weather and little wind. The specimens left at Tette have kept quite well. The Portuguese have taken out about 50 tons of coal which cost them £10, for food for the men and they pay nothing for the work.

In travelling among the native tribes, the Portuguese traders pay for liberty to pass and seem to give in to absurd demands made by any powerful chief. The want of rain seems to be pretty general this year in all quarters. The Zambezi is very low. Dr.L. has determined on going down again to the sea coast to receive letters and to give time for the *Mishueva* to ripen. It comes on in three months, after sowing, while the *Mapava* or *Sorghum* needs six months.

*February 9th.* It has been impossible to pack up the specimens in a satisfactory manner at all. It seems better to get them home as they are, even without references. Thornton has determined on remaining

<sup>4</sup> The page is headed, "Private", Dr Kirk, Zambezi Exped."

<sup>5</sup> VOLS. XI(a) and XII are marked "Richard Thornton" on the back in gold lettering, but there is nothing to identify the notebooks bought from Baines.

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at Tette for some time. Called on Snr. Candido who is a very good man as far as we have seen. He has much knowledge of plants and medecines used by the people. He speaks of *Malachitu* coming from the kingdoms of Ourua. The chief's name is *Koninimba Kasonga*. To the South of Cazembe, the country is full of rivers and mainly the people build huts on piles and in war flee to the water. They have smaller herds, not oxen. The substance like camwood used by the people at the mouth of the Luangwa is from a tree growing in the Muchinga mountains. These commence a little above Zumbo. It is called *Mukuvu*. The round prickly fruit used near Zumbo as a charm for headache and similar to that in Shirwa is called *Madzungu* and grows on a bush. The *Trapa* is named *Quanguane*. Starch of *Tacca* is named *Dinde*, not *Oulanga* by Tito. He speaks of the mines of silver at Kabrabassa. They seem a myth. Lead and copper in small quantities above Kabrabassa. Dr L. found Malachite but in small quantity on our way down. On coming aboard, I find all my boxes of specimens down in the forehold, the place which has just destroyed all the magnetic instruments.

*February 10th.* Leave Tete at noon. The river is lower than when we came up. Stop a few miles below Tete to cut wood. Thornton comes down in a canoe with his letters. He remains in this country for a few months.

*February 11th.* Water fallen at Lupata  $\frac{1}{2}$  foot below what it was when we went up. Sent up to Thornton by Snr. Manuel a blanket coat and a box sextant.

*February 12th.* At the wooding station South of Lupata. porphyry rocks. two species of *Sansevieria* grow among the loose stones, the masculated leafed one is often found also in alluvial soil.

The Tsetse fly is abundant. Elephant and buffaloe both exist here. Mosquitoes become numerous on passing Lupata. Slight febrile attacks may be removed by Magnesia and Quinine, for the more severe [ones] active purgatives seem needed.

*February 13th.* Abundance of emasculated *Sansevieria* in the shaded forests among alluvial soil. The fibre is not of any great value, being devoid of strength and lustre and I suspect, easily rotted with wet. We

get off the proper channel and have a great deal of trouble finding the deep water. note *deep* means between three and four feet.

*February 18th.* The river has required a good deal of care in navigation. Our vessel had a hole made by a snag which was rather difficult to close. Opposite Senna, found the game down near the water and killed a *Kobus* female—no horns of course. There are two species of Zebra here—*Calese Bize* with white and black and *Bize Bizekiti* which has yellowish brown stripes. The *Quagha* is not known. The crested Guinea fowl is called *ghanga tove*. The *Mushueva* corn is now becoming ripe and with it and among the cucumber like fruits, the natives fill their bellies. Got a Black rhinoceros. This is the only species known hereabouts. The last of the Mangoes. In this part they have no showers in January and the crops are in good condition. Lost mail bag found. Take on board five boxes of specimens which have lain at Senna ready for going off for one year.

*February 19th.* At Shamwawa hill. The grass now is very long, no game, large *Buaze* bush with five rings of bark included.

*February 20th.* Sunday. After service, steam down to Shupanga to cut wood. The deep green water of the Shire keeps the left bank of the river even down to Shupanga. It contrasts with that of the Zambezi at this season which is turgid and bringing down mud and sand. Singular that the two waters should keep so long distinct, seeing that the river makes many bends and is full of islands and shoals. Heavy clouds, the sun hot when it comes out. Last night, thunderstorm with rain which came in on some of the bundles of plants I had arranged for packing up.

*February 21st.* We were lying close against a grassy bank last night, so with mosquito and the confined air, it was a bad time, seeing that the vessel was about 6 or 7 inches down on one side, which is always the port side and comes on at night. At Shupanga meet the Governor. Rain almost every day since January, a contrast to the Tette district—abundance of food. Packing plants, before getting into the sea air. Reach the Kongone river and anchor about 6 miles from the sea. Guavas growing wild everywhere. The people bring them for sale. Sugar cane not ripe, rice still green. Heavy showers at night. Rowe

sick. He has very frequent attacks of vomiting, ever since we were down last time.

*February 22nd.* Find the houses we left in December now in part taken away by the sea which has encroached very much and swept away about 15 paces of high sand cliff on which they were built. The Doctor's house is gone entirely and the place where we buried many things such as spare brasses is now part of the slope washed by the tide. Took a walk by the sea side on the West, but got no game. Saw a large herd of waterbuck consisting of females with two large males. It seems to be the rutting season now as they could be known a long way off by the smell.

Dr L. crossed to the island and found two bottles of beer cast up. Natives whom I found gathering the seeds of the Cowitch for food have not heard any guns fired at sea.

*February 23rd.* New house commenced. Rae and I quarter together. In the afternoon, when looking after game, come on a very large leopard which I had mistaken for a bush buck, but the beast walked off quietly.

*February 24th.* The change of air and the sea bathing make us sleep much better than in the hot still air of the delta.

*February 25th.* House finished. fine situation, only it may be washed away in a few months. Hippopotamus after having taken the use of our well, had made it very disagreeable to drink.

Fine weather, constant sea breeze, a few showers occasionally. We bathe daily and have seen no sharks as yet.

*February 26th.* The tides since we came here have been high and there is no change in that respect, although the new moon has passed for several days. The rise and fall is 14 feet. The time of high water has continued nearly the same for three days. There is some slight irregularity in the tides on the coast at certain seasons. Dr L. does not expect the Government to take the examination of the Nyassa in hand but hopes that a few friends may do so. If not, he will do it himself, but he will have no officers with him, except those required for the vessel. He wishes Rae to come out again as engineer and I am sure he will find it difficult to get a better man.

The sea is very rough, rain last night.

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inches unless she is indifferent to being on sand banks. Perhaps if we had a more powerful engine, we should not get off the banks so well, and a heavy vessel is bad to play with. I fear [to be] aground 6 or 7 time daily would not suit. Perhaps there is a proper channel but I neither know it nor have seen the man who could point it out. Therefore I dont believe in it, with all due deference to superior opinions. Last season, when the river was lower than now, I could get nothing deeper at one place than 14 inches. It is wonderful what this ship comes through, condemned as dangerous more than a year ago, here she works. The bottom is full of holes and we float by keeping the water out with plugs and where very large, by green canvas and some good weight atop. Constantly new holes form. As to the engine, I know nothing but if it is not well worn out, it ought to be, but I am no engineer. The pinnace has been a nuisance, keeping us back and dragging us on banks but then it has to take the blame of all our grounding. However it is useless. Long ago I said it was full of Teredo but got the engineer down to see. But as he knew nothing about it, from the nonsense he talked, I stuck to what I had said, and very soon shewed the truth of it by demonstrating the cutting jaws of the animal with ligaments attached.

Now that she is broken up, the whole outer planking is found bored in the length of planks as far up as the water mark. Both lengths of planks at the bottom are gone and the foot may be kicked through. Being no use, as a stand by we broke her up, the planking is quite gone—full of Teredo.

December 7th. This day we made in all about 200 yards. By afternoon, we were so tired of dragging the vessel over the sand by the anchor that we rested as the prospect in front seemed very bad. On Shiva, I killed a wild pig, an ugly beast.<sup>14</sup> Came, while going inland, on a large lake about 3 miles wide at the broadest point and 4 long.<sup>15</sup> Near this lake there is said to be a hot fountain. It seems that a river comes in from the North East corner but I had no time to explore. Probably the River Njobuo empties here. I was told it went to Nyanja, not to the Zambezi. I then understood the marsh in the Shire, this is more likely.

<sup>14</sup> A drawing of a wild pig.

<sup>15</sup> A diagram of the Lake.

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December 8th. Daily we see the consequences of Mr C.L.'s disgraceful conduct in wantonly kicking the Makololo headman. The unexpected manly behaviour of Lishove too, in completely restraining himself from revenge on account of Dr L. renders it still more difficult with such cases as those here. Sometime ago one of the Bashubea seized Rowe, the acting-Engineer, by the throat. Today another man was to strike him for giving a push. We got him to obey Dr L's orders to go to the other side of the vessel. They have seen one of our number kick the representative of their chief and think it cannot be much to defy those under us.

To call this part of the river, at this season, navigable to a vessel drawing two feet six inches of water is a myth. We get through by going over banks with the anchor and chain. It is not navigating but land transport. Fortunately there is little to take us up. But vessels, I doubt not, might be made, drawing 18 inches and such would pass most of the season, even in the dry years.

Reached about 2 miles this day, landed at the clump of trees with palms, found it an island with a deep band of water on the other side. Met a native who said that the Lake I reached yesterday was Rafumba. I could not make out whether the Njobuo came into it or not but anyhow this river joins the Zambezi some distance down yet. These last two days have been oppressively hot. This afternoon a storm of lightening and rain passed over us and the air is somewhat cooled.<sup>16</sup>

December 11th. Yesterday we progressed about two miles with much hauling and heaving. It is very dangerous on the shoals where full three quarters of our time is spent on the sand. The ship is not constructed for steaming over land and the feed pipe gets choked up with sand and down the pump has to come, twice a day sometimes.

But before that, the water is low in the boiler. I dont know where the tubes are but the water is sometimes cut off both cocks and even of the steam guage cock. Its a wonder she dont burst.

From an accidental word, I fear it is meant to send that miserable

<sup>16</sup> At the bottom of the page Kirk has added: "Nenje. big pike fish. Bokimio Ducking fish. Kashao sawfish. Fish caught at Shigogo. There are the ordinary ones also."

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fellow up with me, overland. Truly if after his former conduct, he is to be continued, the Commander should keep him by himself for he is utterly unsafe—not to mention his mischief making qualities. If he is to be my companion, I shall wish I had kept my former design and gone home by Natal. In this part of the river, the grassy plains abundantly supplied with moisture, are fine pasture grounds for cattle and would be good sugar cane plantations.

*December 12th.* Ship full of water all over—one hole closed, another opens.

*December 13th.* Rain last night. This morning, as usual, ship full of water.

*December 14th.* We are detained all day mending the bottom.

*December 15th.* Steam on in a sea worthy state, only one compartment full up to the water level. It being hopeless, it must remain full. The river is falling again. It just rose in time to take us out of Shigogo. Reaches Shiramba near the big Baobab tree, about three miles below. Had a run on the bank, as the water made so fast in the cabin. Landed and found plenty of game in the country but the new Enfield rifle, my own being lost in Kebrabassa, fired about 8 inches to the right at 100 yards, so I got nothing, nor yet a *Lemawa*, a sort of Jackal, not a Ratel, which went off near to me. The latter is dangerous from making at once for *tends Achilles*, which it cuts across.

*December 16th.* Rain and thunder. The river is falling again. In the afternoon land and shoot a Stein buck. This animal is like that of the colony but the one of Secheke is very different in colour. The Secheke one is of a light colour, this one of a red. On the way home we found a rhinoceros eating branches, spooed it and came up to it in a Mopane bush. On seeing us at about 30 yards, it turned head on and seemed to begin to charge but as it opened its shoulder a little I struck it and broke the fore leg. We followed the spoor a long way. It soon became tired and walked but the sun was down and we had to return.

*December 17th.* We made about 6 miles. The run still very bad. At night rain continuing until the morning.

*December 18th.* This was a very difficult day among sand banks and by evening we seem to have wandered. If this had been a new ship, she

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would not have been worth much after this voyage along from Tette. This river is not navigable in the usual acceptation, in such seasons as this, to a vessel drawing between two and three feet.

*December 19th.* Heavy rain set in in the evening. The rain [came] into the cabin through the roof.

*December 20th.* Rain over an inch, the Barometer very high. This seems a usual thing here. After a storm, when fairly set in the Barometer, it begins to rise rapidly although within Latitudes, the rise only reaches as far as a few tenths of an inch. Fortunately I have brought no specimens with me. They would have been utterly destroyed before this time. Everything is damp.

*December 21st.* Started soon after dinner. We only got a short way when the vessel grounded on a bank—that was no unusual occurrence. The sand seemed to make a way on the weather side with the current and that lay over the 2 star rooms [which] being full of water, kept them down aft, and the manner in which the chain pulled in, trying to get her off helped her over to starboard. The water began to rush into the cabin and soon it was evident that she was gone. We got the things out but mostly quite wet as boxes floated about in the cabin and I was working for a couple of hours up to the middle, getting all I could out. Soon the whole vessel went down, shewing only the gunwale masts and funnel and uppermost part of the house above water. We had then got most of our private property off and some of the things of the ship but the engine and all gear remains. Camped on a sand bank, but the water is rising fast.

*December 22nd.* The water was pretty near us in the morning. The vessel down over all but the house and awning ropes. The whole hull is under water and the engine useless unless the river falls. Shift over to the island near, as it is unsafe here from the rising of the river. It is only what could be expected when we went with an utterly unworthy boat long ago considered by the engineer as unsafe. At Tette, I preferred going down in canoes but the expense seemed to frighten the Doctor.

*December 23rd.* I was sent off this morning in a canoe to Senna, to hire canoes to take down the baggage. Reached there about 1.p.m.