

**NARRATIVE OF A
JOURNEY TO MUSARDU,
THE CAPITAL OF THE
WESTERN MANDINGOES**

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Narrative of a Journey to Musardu, the Capital of the Western Mandingoes by Benjamin Anderson

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BENJAMIN ANDERSON

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BENJAMIN ANDERSON.



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INTRODUCTION.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, January, 1870.

It had long been considered important by the friends of Liberia that an exploration should be made of the country east of the Republic. The only difficulty in the way was to find the proper man for the enterprise. President Warner had for a number of years been seeking for such a one, when the author of the accompanying narrative volunteered to undertake the exploration. He is a young man, educated in Liberia, of pure negro blood, and had previously served as Secretary of the Treasury under President Warner. The narrative is printed without correction from the original manuscript, and the principal portion of the edition has been presented to the Smithsonian Institution by Mr. H. Maunsell Schieffelin, for distribution.

JOSEPH HENRY,

Secretary Smithsonian Institution.

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A JOURNEY TO MUSARDU.

THIS account of a journey to Musardu, the capital of the Western Mandingoes, is the result of a proposal made by Mr. Henry M. Schieffelin, of New-York, through President D. B. Warner, of Liberia, who for six or eight years had been endeavoring, till now without success, to induce the inauguration of an expedition from Liberia, to explore the interior as far as possible. Mr. Schieffelin and Caleb Swan, Esq., of New-York, furnished the means necessary to carry on the exploration.

No especial point was indicated by the promoters of this exploration; only the general direction was given, east and north-east. The especial point, however, agreed upon by my friends in Monrovia, was Musardu, the capital of the Western Mandingoes. This is the portion of the country of Manding which our citizens Seymore and Ash attempted to visit; but their travels were unfortunately interrupted in a manner that nearly cost them their lives.

The Mandingoes have always excited the liveliest interest on account of their superior physical appearance, their natural intelligence, their activity, and their

enterprise. No one has passed unnoticed these tall black men from the eastern interior, in whose countenances spirit and intellect are strongly featured.

Their diligent journeys from Tallakondah have allowed no sea-coast town north-west of the St. Paul's to remain unvisited. Their avidity for trade has drawn them from their treeless plains to the Atlantic ocean. Their zeal for Islam has caused the name of Mohammed to be pronounced in this part of Africa, where it otherwise would never have been mentioned.

Musardu can, by easy journeys, be reached from Monrovia in twenty-five or thirty days. I was obliged, however, from the delays and inconveniences incident to interior traveling in Africa, to occupy thirteen months.

Sometimes I was compelled to spend considerable lengths of time in one place. I have not on that account burdened this report with insipid recitals of what, every day, nearly repeated itself. Whatever struck me as descriptive of the country, or illustrative of the manners of the people, that I have recorded.

I am sensible that the regions through which I have traveled are capable of yielding vaster stores of information, in a scientific point of view, than what I have afforded; but I shall be satisfied if this humble beginning succeeds in encouraging others in the same direction, and on a more extensive scale. I shall now proceed to narrate the journey from Monrovia to Musardu; but especially from Boporu to Musardu.

I shall rapidly march through the two grand divisions of the Boozie country. I shall first make the reader acquainted with the Domar Boozie; introduce

him at once to the populous and thriving towns of Zolu, Zow-Zow, Salaghee, Fissahbue, and Bokkasaw. Leaving the Domar country, we shall enter the Wymar country, give time to rest at Ziggah Porrah Zue, in latitude $8^{\circ} 14' 45''$, its capital, the vast and noisy market of which takes place every Sunday, upon the banks of the same river on which Clay Ashland, Louisiana, Virginia, and Caldwell are seated—the St. Paul's. We shall then cross that river upon a suspension bridge of wicker-work, elevated twenty-five feet from its surface, and come into the territory of one of the most warlike kings in the Wymar country, the bloody Donilnyah. We shall not tarry long in his presence; but, hastening away, nothing shall stop our progress—not even the Vukkah mountains, a boundary acknowledged to divide the fertile hills of Wymar from the almost treeless plains of Manding. Crossing these with the tramp and speed of a soldier, we shall quickly descend into the country of the Western Mandingoes; visit their principal cities; and, finally, take up our abode in their very capital—Musardu.

The instruments with which observations were made were: One sextant, by E. & G. W. Blunt, New-York; one aneroid barometer; two thermometers—1st, 133° ; 2d, 140° , by B. Pike, New-York; two small night and day compasses, by H. W. Hunter, New-York; one tolerably good watch; one artificial horizon.

As for the accuracy of these calculations of latitude and longitude, whatever painstaking and the instruments enumerated above could do, has not been neglected.

I have not been able to calculate the profile of the

route according to the usual methods, because it was impossible to procure the proper instruments, with which a contemporaneous register ought to have been kept at Monrovia, during my absence.

Even the barometer with which I was furnished was an aneroid, an instrument that has to be referred from time to time to the mercurial barometer for adjustment.

I can not say that the indications of the instrument were material departures from the truth. It certainly indicated the rise and fall of land in a satisfactory and unmistakable manner, both in going to and returning from Musardu.

At Totoquella, in latitude $7^{\circ} 45' 24''$, and Boporu, June 9th and 13th, it ranged 29.36, 29.34. Upon my return in March it ranged from 29.14 to 29.24. This difference may be ascribed, partly to difference of seasons of rains and dries, and partly to want of accuracy in the instrument itself.

I was not even able to ascertain directly the several heights of land by means of the boiling point of water, because my thermometers ranged only from 133° to 140° Fahrenheit. The highest rise of land was indicated by the aneroid at 27.61 inches; the boiling point of which would have been 208° Fahrenheit. See Davies & Peck's *Mathematical Dictionary*, page 338, "Table of barometric heights corresponding to difference of temperature of boiling water." It is from these tables that I have made approximate estimates of the elevations of land.

Taking the indications of the aneroid at the several places, and ascertaining from the tables the boiling