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Entry Nr. 409 'Okiri

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Aaron Spencer Fogleman and Robert Hanserd (eds.), *Five Hundred African Voices: A Catalog of Published Accounts by Africans Enslaved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1586-1936* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2022).

Catalog number: **409**
Name(s) of African providing account: **‘Okiri = Andrew Parker**
Date account recorded: 1854
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Source: Account printed on p. 14 of S. W. Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana*. London: Church Missionary House, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, 1854.

Comments:

Koelle’s remarks (p. 14) –

“‘Akuara, the Babete capital, is situated on the river Lebame, which can only be crossed in canoes even in the dry season, comes from the east, and is called Nyali in Batere. Bimbete is west of Bumbi, east of Bambamba. Also ten days’ journey from Ndambom, with the same language; one month from Batere; three weeks from Lesewe. ‘Okiri also said, that at a great distance from Bumbete there is a people called ‘Mirrgando,’ who are yellow from the navel upwards and black downwards, and have each a tail of about two inches in length. They wear the skins of animals for clothing.

The account of ‘Okiri’s, as it stands, seems to be fabulous; but as similar accounts have been received from different quarters, some suppose that it may have had its origin in a real anomalous protuberance, improperly called ‘tail.’”

Text of Account:

p. 14

“Bumbete.*-- From ‘Okiri, or Andrew Parker, of Lomley, born in the town of ‘Akuara, where he lived to about his sixteenth year, when he was sold, because his mother had run away with him from his father. On his way to the sea he stopped in various countries, and was thus seven years before he reached Loargo, on the coast. He has been in Sierra Leone twenty years, with three countrymen remaining.”

* Referring to the language 'Okiri spoke.

(See original scans below.)

2 Būmbéte.—From 'Okiri, or Andrew Parker, of Lomley, born in the town of 'Akūára, where he lived to about his sixteenth year, when he was sold, because his mother had run away with him from his father. On his way to the sea he stopped in various countries, and was thus seven years before he reached Lōángo, on the coast. He has been in Sierra Leone twenty years, with three countrymen remaining.

Remarks. — 'Akūára, the Būmbéte capital, is situated on the river Lebáre, which can only be crossed in canoes even in the dry season, comes from the east, and is called Nyáli in Bātéte. Būmbéte is west of Būmbi, east of Bambámba. Also ten days' journey from Ndámbom, with the same language; one month from Bātéte; three weeks from Lēšéwe. 'Okiri also said, that at a great distance from Būmbéte there is a people called "Mirgándo," who are yellow from the navel upwards and black downwards, and have each a tail of about two inches in length. They wear the skins of animals for clothing.

This account of 'Okiri's, as it stands, seems to be fabulous; but as similar accounts have been received from different quarters, some suppose that it may have had its origin in a real anomalous protuberance, improperly called "tail."

six miles from the river Pióka, which can be crossed on foot in the dry season, where he was sold by his relatives in about his twenty-third year. After stopping one year in Lónda, he was brought to Sierra Leone, where he has been twelve years, with three of his countrymen.

Remarks.—Kilúa is about one month's journey from the river Ndáde, and about three months from the sea. Musentánda is west of Mákúta and Mbúla, which have the same language; east of Mukiwárgila, also with the same language. It is one day's journey from Mantúmba, with the same language; one month from Ndsánda, with a different language; one month from Lamúfna, with the same language; and one month from Masárgi.

4. Mbámba or Babámba.—From Binsála (*i. e.* famine), or Thomas Pratt, of Lomley, born in the town of Mukórgomórgúe, where he grew up, and had been married four years when he was sold on account of adultery, and carried to the sea-side, a journey which occupied five months. He has been in Sierra Leone for fifteen years, with five countrymen and as many countrywomen.

Remarks.—Mukórgomórgúe consists, as all other towns of the country, of only two rows of houses, forming a single road, but it is of the length of a day's journey. It lies three miles from the river Bámáye, which can be crossed on foot even in the rainy season, and is nine hours' journey from Band-šúmbo, the Bámámba capital. Babámba is situated west of Šáke, where the people (*i. e.* Shagga?) wear their hair so long that a stranger might be frightened, supposing at a distance "they are baboons;" east of Mpáu; also near Bákéle, Baúmbó, Wušéba, Ndámbo, Búr-šómo. "By walking one month's journey towards the sea, Bátéke is reached; and by walking five days towards the east, Bámbéte is reached."

5. Kanyíka.—From Mútšmp, or William Francis, of Freetown, born in the town Mámunykáyint, where he was brought up, and had one child which could not walk when he was sold, on account of bad conduct, to Kambúnda slave-dealers, who sold him into the Kásánda country, from whence he was sold to Bága and the Portuguese. He stopped one year in Kásánda, one year in Bága, and one month on the coast; and he has now been in Sierra Leone twelve years, with only one countrywoman.

Remarks.—The Kásánda country is one month's journey from Kanyíka, and Mámunykáyint is five days from the river Lóaláp, which can only be crossed in canoes even in the dry season. Kanyíka is one day's journey from Múnyimukánt, and four days from Kómasér.

6. Ntére, or Ntéke, or Batére.—From Ndsúmu, or William Fergusson, of Freetown, born in the town of Léséri, where he was sold in about his seventeenth year. He has now been in Sierra Leone for seventeen years, and is the only representative of Ntéke.

Remarks.—Léséri is one day's journey from the river Lékúri, which can only be crossed in canoes even in the dry season, and five days from 'Ošira, the Bátéke capital. Ntére is situated west of Bábárgi, east of Bantsáye; also near, Bándšénéra, Balále, Báyága, Bákúyi, Bantsintšere, Bákúta, Bándúmbo. Ndsúmu thinks that it is six weeks' journey from his country to the sea, in the journey to which the following places are passed:—1. Bándšénéra, 2. Bantsáye, 3. Bákúyi, 4. Báyómbe, and 5. Bávili.

7. Mutšáya or Batsáya.—From Tút, or Charles Wilhelm, of Lomley, born in the town of Mólép, where he was kidnapped in about his twentieth year, and then hurried to the sea. He has been in Sierra Leone seventeen years, with twenty country-people, of whom his wife is one.

Remarks.—Mólép is two and a-half weeks' journey west of Bátéke and six weeks from the sea. Mutšáya

is west of Mbómo or Babómo, and Bátéke east of Batsánga.

B. Second Group—

1. Babáma or Mobáma, called "Mandórgo" by the Bágúfo, *i. e.* Korgós.—From Dšingo, or James Job, of Freetown, born in the town of Gílibe, where he was seized and sold for debt, when his eldest child was ten years old. He has been in Sierra Leone twenty years, with five countrymen.

Remarks.—Gílibe is one and a-half days' journey from the river Mobále, scarcely fordable on foot in the dry season, and uniting with the Nyále in the Mássé country. Babáma is considered by Dšingo to be six months' journey from the sea, and situated west of Bádšindšag and Babále, east of Bayámbe; also near Pánra, N'gúana, N'gandšága, Tánge, Ndsáie, and Babám. In coming to the sea he passed through, 1. Tánge, with a language allied to Mobáma; 2. Mpóni, where they speak similarly to the Bákúo, *i. e.* Korgós; 3. Báyága; 4. Bákui, where he crossed the Nyále, which separates Bákui and Bayómbe; 5. Bayómbe; 6. Bapfili, on the coast. Three months' journey to the east of Babáma is the country N'gábádšúmu, where the people clothe themselves in black monkey-skins.

2. Bámbéte.—From 'Okiri, or Andrew Parker, of Lomley, born in the town of 'Akúára, where he lived to about his sixteenth year, when he was sold, because his mother had run away with him from his father. On his way to the sea he stopped in various countries, and was thus seven years before he reached Lóárgo, on the coast. He has been in Sierra Leone twenty years, with three countrymen remaining.

Remarks.—'Akúára, the Bámbéte capital, is situated on the river Lebáre, which can only be crossed in canoes even in the dry season, comes from the east, and is called Nyáli in Bátére. Bámbéte is west of Bámbi, east of Bámámba. Also ten days' journey from Ndámbo, with the same language; one month from Bátére; three weeks from Léséwe. 'Okiri also said, that at a great distance from Bámbéte there is a people called "Mirgándo," who are yellow from the navel upwards and black downwards, and have each a tail of about two inches in length. They wear the skins of animals for clothing.

This account of 'Okiri's, as it stands, seems to be fabulous; but as similar accounts have been received from different quarters, some suppose that it may have had its origin in a real anomalous protuberance, improperly called "tail."

3. Kásánda, by the Šórgos and N'gólás called "Kásándaš."—From N'góngá, or John Wilhelm, of Freetown, born in the town of Yórk, where he was kidnapped in about his twenty-eighth year. Afterwards he was two years in the hands of the Portuguese, and thirteen years in Sierra Leone, where he has five countrymen.

Remarks.—Yórk is two days' journey from Kílšmp, the Kásánda capital, and four hours from the river Lui, a tributary of the Kóángo. It comes from the Nóngu country, and flows down to Hól. Kásándaš is west of Šindš and Lónda, *i. e.* Ruúnda, with different languages; east of Mbóndo, also speaking a different language.

4. Nyómbe, or Bayómbe, or Mayómbe.—From Kúmbu, or Thomas Parker, of Wilberforce, born in the town of Bashedšóntse, but removed when a little boy to the town of Baskasáde, where he grew up, married, and had a child about five years' old, when he was sold because his sister had been accused of witchcraft. He has been in Sierra Leone eighteen years, with about twelve countrymen.

Remarks.—Bashedšóntse is nearly a days' journey from the river Lóárgo, and two days from the sea; and Baskasáde is two days' journey from Bashedšóntse and three days from the sea. Bayómbe is west

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