



Mahommah Baquaqua Describes His Hometown in West Africa

Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, a Native of Zoogoo, in the Interior of Africa

by Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua & Samuel Moore

1854__EXCERPTS

Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua was born into a Muslim family in the late 1820s in the kingdom of Bergoo, in present-day Benin. As a young man he was enslaved in Africa for a time before being transported to Brazil in the 1840s. Working as a slave on a trading ship, he escaped in 1847 by jumping ship in New York City and, with the aid of Baptist abolitionists, settled in Haiti. He returned to New York in 1849, moved to Canada where he worked with editor Samuel Moore to publish his memoir, and then travelled to England in hopes of returning to Africa. After 1857, he disappeared from the historical record. In the first seven chapters of the narrative, Moore presents a political and cultural overview of Baquaqua's Bergoo, adding his commentary on Africa, Islam, and slavery.

__ CHAPTER I __

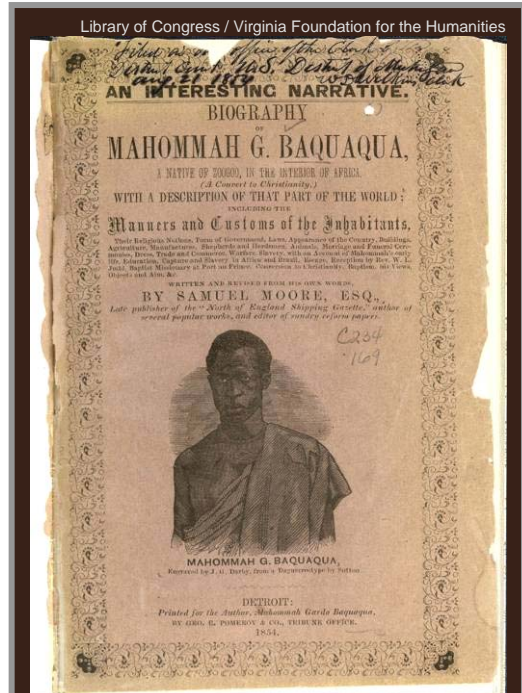
THE subject of this memoir was born in the city of Zoogoo in Central Africa [now Djougou, Benin], whose king was tributary to the king of Bergoo. His age is not known to the year exactly, as the Africans have altogether a different mode of dividing time and reckoning age, but supposes he is about 30 years old, from the remembrance of certain events which took place and from the knowledge he has lately acquired in figures [arithmetic]. But this not being a very important matter in his history, we here leave it to its own obscurity, not for a moment believing the narration will lose any of its interest from the lack of the particular figure.

He states his parents were of different countries, his father being a native of Bergoo (of Arabian descent) and not very dark complexioned. His mother being a native of Kashna and of very dark complexion, was entirely black. The manners of his father were grave and silent, his religion, Mahomedanism.

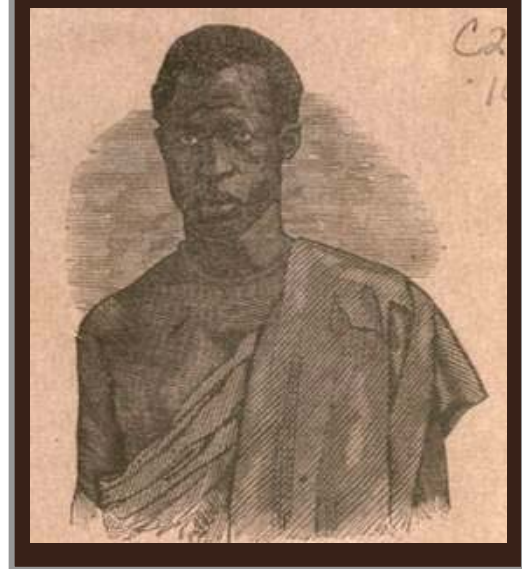
As the interior of Africa is comparatively little known, a brief sketch cannot prove but very interesting to most of our readers; accordingly we shall proceed with the details as set forth by Mahommah himself. Their mode of worship is something after the following style:

My father, (says Mahommah) rose every morning at four o'clock for prayers, after which he returned to bed; at sunrise he performed his second devotional exercises; at noon he worshipped again, and again at sunset.

National Humanities Center, 2009: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/. Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua & Samuel Moore, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, a Native of Zoogoo, in the Interior of Africa. (A Convert to Christianity,) With a Description of That Part of the World; Including the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants. . . . Written and Revised from His Own Words . . .*, 1854. Full text in Documenting the American South (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library) at docsouth.unc.edu/neh/baquaqua/menu.html. Bracketed comments added and some spelling modernized by NHC. Several cited footnotes from Allan D. Austin, ed., *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984); permission pending. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/imagecredits.htm.



Biography title page, 1854



Once a year a great fast is held¹ which lasts a month. During this time nothing is eaten during the day, but in the evening, after some ceremonies are performed, eating is allowed. After eating, worship is permitted in their own homes, and then assemblies for public worship are held. The place of worship was a large and pleasant yard belonging to my grandfather, my uncle was the officiating priest. The oldest people arrange themselves in rows, the priest standing in front, the oldest people next to him, and so on, arranging themselves in order according to age.

The priest commences the devotions by bowing his head toward the earth and saying the following words: “Allah-hah-koo-bar,” the people responding “Allah-hah-koo-bar,” signifying “God, hear our prayer, answer our prayer.”² The priest and people then kneel and press their foreheads to the earth, the priest repeating passages from the Koran, and the people responding as before. After this portion of the ceremony is over, the priest and people sitting on the ground count their beads, the priest occasionally repeating passages from the Koran. — They then pray for their king, that Allah would help him to conquer his enemies, and that he would preserve the people from famine, from the devouring locusts, and that he would grant them rain in due season.

At the close of each day’s ceremonies, the worshippers of the prophet go to their respective homes, where the best of everything is provided for the evening’s repast. This same worship is repeated daily for thirty days, and closes with one immense mass meeting. The king comes to the city on this occasion and great multitudes from the country all round about, who together with the citizens, collect at the place appointed for worship, called Gui-ge-rah, a little out of the city. This place consecrated to the worship of the false prophet,³ is one of “God’s first Temples.” It consisted of several very large trees, forming an extensive and beautiful shade, the ground sandy and entirely destitute of grass, is kept perfectly clean. Many thousands can be comfortably seated beneath those trees, and being upon high ground, the appearance of such a mighty assembly is imposing in the extreme; the seats are merely mats spread out upon the ground. A mound of sand (this sand differs from the sand of the desert; it is a coarse red sand



Colton's illustrated & embellished steel plate map of the world, 1854, detail of west Africa; rectangle indicates area of detail below



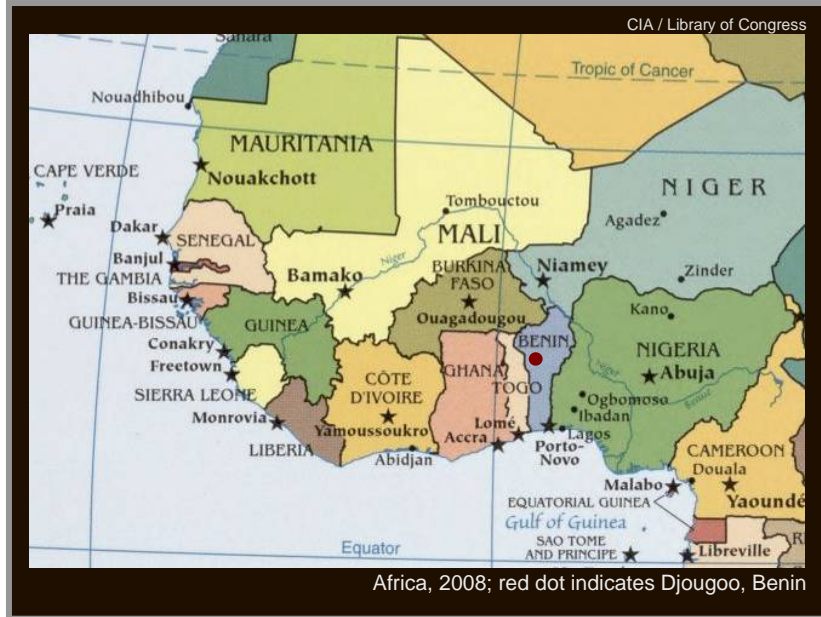
Oval indicates kingdom of Borgou

¹ The Muslim holy period of Ramadan.

² “Allah Akbar is usually translated as ‘God is most great.’” [Austin, ed., p. 646]

³ Moore’s comment on Mohammed, most likely.

mixed with earth and small stones and can easily be formed into a substantial mound) is raised for the chief priest to stand upon whilst he addresses the people. On these occasions he is dressed in a loose black robe, reaching nearly to the ground, and is attended by four subordinate priests, who kneel around him, holding the bottom of his robe, waving it to and fro. Occasionally the chief priest will “squat like a toad,”⁴ and when he arises, they resume the operation of waving his robe. These ceremonies concluded, the people return home to offer sacrifice (sarrah) for the dead and living. Thus ends the annual fast.



CH. II: *Government in Africa.*

IN Africa they have no written or printed forms of government, and yet the people are subject to certain laws, rules and regulations. The government is vested in the king as supreme, next to him are chiefs or petty sovereigns, there are also other officers, whose titles and office cannot be explained very well in English.⁵

The king of Zoogoo, as before stated, is tributary or subservient to the king of Bergoo. Theft is considered the greatest crime in some parts of Africa, and the thief frequently receives the punishment of death in consequence. When anyone is suspected or charged with theft, he is taken before the king, where a sort of trial is given him. If found guilty, he is either sold or put to death; where the latter sentence is carried into effect, anyone is allowed to stone or otherwise abuse and maltreat him, when he is finally led to the top of a small hill in the city and either stoned or shot to death. Murder is not considered so great a crime, and a murderer does not receive capital punishment, but is mostly sold as a slave and sent out of the country.

The crime of adultery is severely punished, but the heaviest punishment is inflicted upon the man; a case in point is thus described by Mahommah, he says: “I remember an individual that was severely punished for this crime. The king’s brother had several wives, one of whom was suspected of incontinency. Both were brought before the king — I was with him at the time. The king ordered me to get a rope, which was fastened around the man’s arms, behind his back and tied, then a stick was placed in the rope, which had been wetted so as to make it shrink, and then twisted around until the poor creature was forced into a confession of his guilt, when he was released and given away as a slave. The woman received no other punishment than that of witnessing the torture inflicted upon her guilty paramour.

The farmers have their crops secured in this way. — The farms not being fenced in, the king makes a law that every man who owns a horse, donkey, or other animal, must keep them from his neighbors’ premises. If any animal strays upon the neighbors’ premises, and does the least damage, he is caught and tied up, and the owner obliged to pay a heavy fine before he can recover the animal. This is the style of impounding in Africa.

⁴ “Surely this is one of the least sensitive similes possible for the posture of Muslims at prayer. Was it Moore’s, who seems to have known nothing about Muslim practices?” [Austin, p. 646]

⁵ “Part of the problem of explaining African political and social life is the confusion created by using Western political and social nomenclature.” [Austin, p. 646.]

Debts are sometimes collected in the following manner, viz: [namely] — If a person in one town or city is indebted to a person residing at a distance and refuses or neglects to pay such a debt, the creditor residing in such distant town or city may seize upon any of his neighbors, whom he may happen to catch in that town, and if he has any money or thing valuable, the creditor is allowed to take it from him and tell such stranger to get it from his fellow townsman when he returns home again. If he has no property about him, he is allowed to seize upon his person and detain him until the debt is paid. Such a law in this country would have very great effect in keeping the citizens pretty much confined to their own homes, as the danger of traveling would be very great; the chances of return to an anxious and affectionate wife would in most civilized countries be very small indeed. Supposing the rambler to be destitute of property, and supposing him to be a man of means, there is no doubt of his means being considerably reduced, ere his return to his happy home.

The soldiers are a privileged class, and whatever they need either in town or city, they are allowed to take, and there is no redress from any complaint made against them. If a slave becomes dissatisfied, he leaves his master and goes to the king and becomes a soldier, and thereby gains his freedom from his master. No “fugitive slave law” can touch him. These are some of the principal matters which are brought before the king for adjustment, which he disposes of, according to the laws of the land.

CH. III. *Appearance and Situation of the Country*

It is rather difficult to give a very correct account of the geography of that part of Africa, described as the birthplace of Mahommah, but it must be situate[d] somewhere between ten and twenty degrees north latitude, and near the meridian of Greenwich. It is situated in the peninsular formed by the great bend of the river Niger.

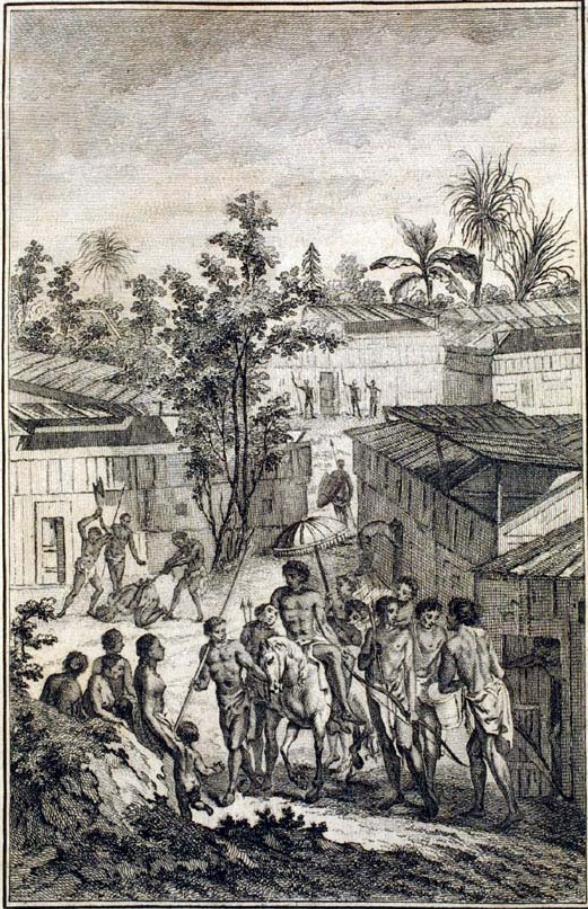
Up to the time that Mahommah was “forced from home and all its pleasures,” the foot of the white man had not made its first impress upon the soil; therefore the facts, matters, and things hereby related will be the more interesting to all those whose hearts and souls are turned toward the wants and woes of that portion of the globe.

The city of Zoogoo is in the midst of a most fertile and delightful country; the climate, though exceedingly hot, is quite healthy. There are hills and mountains, plains and valleys, and it is pretty well watered. About a mile from the city there is a stream of water, as white as milk and very cool, and not far from that there is a spring of very cold water, also quite white. The residents often go from the city thence for water.

It is not in the midst of a wilderness, as some suppose, but there are some quite extensive plains, covered with very tall rank grass, which is used by the people to cover their houses, after the fashion of thatching. On these plains there are but few trees, but what there are, are of great size. And here also roams the elephant, the lion, and other wild animals, common to the torrid zone. There are two kinds of elephants, one very large, called Yah-quim-ta-ca-ri, the other small, called Yah-quin-ta-cha-na. The teeth of the elephant lie scattered about in abundance all over the plains, and can be collected in any quantity. The natives use the teeth to make musical instruments, which they call Ka-fa.

The city itself is large, and surrounded by a thick wall, built of red clay and made very smooth on both sides. The outer side of the wall is surrounded by a deep moat or ditch, which in the rainy season is filled with water. Beyond this, the city is further protected by a hedge of thorns, grown so thickly and compactly together that no person could pass through them; it bears a small white blossom, and when in full bloom looks exceedingly beautiful.

The king’s palace (if it may be so called) is within the city wall, at some little distance from the principal part of the city, surrounded by (what in some countries would be called) a park, on a most extensive scale, at the back of which is a dense thicket, precluding the necessity of any protecting wall on that side of the royal domain. A broad avenue leads from the city to the king’s house, with an extensive market on either side, beautifully shaded with large overhanging trees. The people of America can have



MAISONS DE BENIN, avec leurs Exécutions
et leur maniere de Monter à Cheval.

"Houses of Benin, with their executions and their manner of riding horses," in M. De La Harpe, *Abrégé de l'histoire générale des voyages*, Paris, 1780

no idea of the size and beauty of some of the trees in Africa, particularly in the cities, where they stand a good distance apart, by that means having the best chance of attaining their full growth. There is a tree called the Bon-ton, which grows to a very great height, but the branches do not spread so wide as some others; it is very Beautiful.

The entrance into the city is through six gates, which bear the names of their respective keepers, something similar to the city of London and most of the old fortified towns in England, and indeed of most parts of the old country. These gate keepers are chosen for their courage and bravery, and are generally persons of rank. It may perhaps, instruct as well as amuse our young friends, who may read this work, to know their names, and on that account we will give them. 1. U-boo-ma-co-fa. 2. Fo-ro-co-fa. 3. Bah-pa-ra-ha-co-fa. 4. Bah-too-loo-co-fa. 5. Bah-la-mon-co-fa. 6. Ajaggo-co-fa. The word cofa means gate, and Bah, means father. Ajagga is the name of a woman whose son was noted for his valor. In times of war, these gates are strongly guarded, hence the necessity of having chosen men of known valor and courage to keep them.

The houses are built of clay, low and without chimneys or windows.

The following description of one of the dwellings will give a pretty accurate idea of the generality of the houses of the city. A dwelling is composed of a number of separate rooms built in a circle, with quite a space

between them; within the outer circle is another circle of rooms, according to the size of the family to occupy them. These rooms are all connected by a wall; there is one large or main entrance in front of the others, in which to receive company. Each family is surrounded by their own dwelling, so that when they are in any apartment, they cannot see any other dwelling, or any one passing or repassing. In consequence of this made of building, the city occupies a very large space of ground.

There is a regularly appointed watch to the city, who are paid by the king, he also acting as chief magistrate over the watch.

CH. IV. Agriculture, Arts, &c.

The agriculture of the country is in but a very rude state. The few implements used are made by the country people and consist of a large kind of hoe to dig up the ground, and small ones to plant and dress the corn, or whatever is to be raised. This process of preparing the ground is very laborious and tedious, but the richness of the soil compensates in some degree; for one acre well tilled, will yield an immense crop. Corn is raised, sweet potatoes and Harnee, which very much resembles the American broom corn in appearance, and is there used as an article of food. Harnebee, which is a very fine grain,



"An tisserand (weaver)," in Alexandre d'Albécia, *La France au Dahomey*, 1895

grows on a very large stalk, and is unlike anything in this country; it is roasted in the ear, and the grain rubbed out with the hands and eaten as the American people do parched corn; it is very good. Rice is raised in large quantities, and of an excellent quality; it is planted in rows, and one planting will serve two or three years, as it will come up of itself without any attention. It grows very luxuriously. Beans are also cultivated. Fruits grow in great abundance and variety, spontaneously. Yams are cultivated and grow to great perfection. Pine Apples grow spontaneously, but are not eaten,

as the natives fear they are of a poisonous quality, but that is only fear, from the want of knowing better. Peanuts are plentiful and of good quality; and there is also a great variety of grain and fruits of other kinds; and supposing they had the means of cultivation, the same as they have in more civilized countries, Africa would be capable of supporting within herself an immense population.

The manufactures of Africa are very limited; they consist of farming utensils, cotton cloths and silk. Silk is but little manufactured, but might be much more, as silkworms are to be found in abundance, and might be increased to any extent. The cotton tree there grows very large, and the cotton is of good quality.

The women do the spinning by a very slow process, having to twist the thread with their fingers; the men do the weaving; they weave the cloth in narrow strips, and then sew it together. Women also grind the corn. The process of grinding is this: They take a large stone and fix it in the ground, they then have a smaller one prepared, so that it can be easily handled; it is pecked on one side after the manner of our mill stones; the women then put the grain or whatever they wish to grind on the large stone and take the other and rub the grain until it is fine; if they wish to make it very fine, they take another stone prepared for the purpose, and by patient labor they succeed in making it as fine as the finest American flour. They grind dried yams by pounding them in a mortar and a fine kind of grain called Har-nee, before named, mixed together; of this mixture they make a kind of stiff pudding, and eat it with gravy made of greens and a variety of vegetables, seasoned with pepper and onions. No kind of food is ever eaten without onions.

The *Shepherds and Herdsmen of Africa* are a distinct and subordinate class of people, and belong to the government. They have long, straight hair, and are as light complexioned as the inhabitants of southern Europe; they are nearly white; they take care of the flocks and herds, supply the city with milk, butter and cheese (the butter is quite good and hard, which is an evidence of its being cooler in this locality than in most other parts of the torrid zone.) They are Mahomedans in their religion, and strictly adhere to the rites and ceremonies of that class of religionists. They speak the Arabic and Flanne languages, hence it must be inferred that they are of Arabian descent, but of their further history, we are in ignorance.

The Domestic Animals of Africa are much the same as in this and other countries, consisting of the horse, cow, sheep, goat, donkey, mule and ostrich. Birds are abundant, such as geese, turkeys, peacocks; guinea hens and barn fowls; the latter are very large and are in great abundance. They are, together with their eggs, used as the common food for the people in the forests. Besides these, there are abundance of swans in the river, and a variety of wild fowl; there is also a kind of water fowl that is very beautiful, and

whose plumage is as white as snow, and about the size of an ordinary dove — they congregate in large flocks. Parrots are quite common, and singing birds are very numerous.

The rivers abound with the river horse, the crocodile, &c.

CH. V. *Manners, Customs, &c.*

Great respect is paid to the aged; they never use the prefix mister or mistress, but always some endearing term; such as, when speaking to an aged person, they say Father or Mother, and an equal, they call brother or sister. Children are brought up to be obedient and polite; they are never permitted to contradict or sit in the presence of an aged person, and when they see an elderly person coming, they immediately uncover, and if they have shoes upon their feet, they immediately remove them. They bend their knee to the aged, and the aged in turn bend their knee to them, and request them at once to rise; and in every respect a deference is paid to age. The best seat is reserved for them, and in their places of worship, the place next to the priest is reserved for them. Should not these facts put to shame the manners of the children in this country towards the aged? How painful it is to witness the disrespect shown to grown up people by the rising generation of this country, and in many cases the shameful behavior of children towards even their own parents, and that without a single check of censure or rebuke!

It is here that the great moral regeneration of our land must commence. Children should be early taught to render obedience and respect to their superiors, and they will then be prepared to render to all, equal rights, when they become men and women, and will in turn be prepared to govern well their own households.

The reader will please pardon this digression. It has been made with a view to draw attention more powerfully to the subject, as it is of vital importance to the well-being of any community, that the young should be properly trained “in the way they should go,” so that when they grow up they should “not

depart from it.” And if this contrast in the behavior of the poor African children, with that of those of our own enlightened nation, may be the means of but one step in the march of improvement and reform in this respect, the compiler of these pages will feel amply repaid for the little exertion bestowed upon these few extra lines. This is one good, nay one of the best features of Africa; another is the law of kindness, which everywhere prevails in the mutual intercourse of those of the same ranks; whatever a person has, he freely divides with his neighbor, and no one even enters a house without being invited to eat.

But the same as in more civilized countries, if a person rises to wealth and honor, he is sure to be envied, if not hated; they do not like to see one of their own number rise above them. A person who has always been rich, they esteem more highly. This seems to be pretty well the case all over the world, go where you will, like seems to produce (in cases of this kind) like. We see the very same thing manifest amongst us every day of our lives, here in our very midst, so that it does not appear that we are greatly removed from the benighted African, with all our wisdom and learning, with all our boasted institutions; truly the whole world is a strange compound of “black, white and gray, and the ways of all mankind are turned every way.”

Fighting is of very common occurrence, and is by no means considered disgraceful, there is a place in the city



where the young men meet together for that purpose; and as elsewhere, there are two parties who never agree; each party occupies different portions of the city, and they meet for personal combat which often ends in a general fight, but they never kill each other.

CH. VI. *Marriage Ceremonies, &c.*

When a young man wishes to marry, he selects a choice fruit called Gan-ran, and sends it by his sister or some female friend to the object of his choice. If the fruit is accepted, he understands that he will be favorably received, and remains at home for about a week before he pays her another visit. After some time spent in visiting and receiving visits, arrangements are made for the marriage ceremony. They do not have a particular day set, and a wedding at the bride's father's, but she is kept ignorant of the time; the arrangements are made by the bridegroom and her parents. At the time appointed, the bridegroom sends a number of young men to the house of her father at night; they remain out of doors very still and send a child in to tell her some one wishes to speak with her. She goes to the door and is immediately surrounded and carried off by the young men, to a place called Nya-wa-qua-foo, where she is kept six days. During this time she remains veiled and has a number of female friends with her, who spend their time in play and amusements. The bridegroom in the meantime confines himself at home and is attended by his young friends, who also spend their time in feasting and merriment until the seventh day.

Whilst they are thus confined, a general invitation is given to the friends of both parties. The invitation is made in this way: It will be said that My-ach-ee and Ah-dee-za-in-qua-hoo-noo-yo-haw-coo-nah, which signifies that the bride and bridegroom are going out to-day. They all meet at some convenient place named for the purpose. The friends of the bridegroom conduct him there, and the friends of the bride, conduct her also; both bride and groom having their heads covered with white cloths. A mat is prepared for them to be seated; the friends advance and salute the bridegroom, at the same time handing him some money. The money is then placed before the couple, who are thus considered man and wife. Money is likewise scattered for the drum king and his company; also for the children of the populace to pick up. After this, they are conducted to the house of the bridegroom. The ceremonies are thus brought to an end. It ought to have been stated that the favor of the lady's father is obtained by presents.

Polygamy is practiced to a great extent, and sanctioned by law. A man's property is sometimes estimated by the number of wives he has. Occasionally a poor man has a number of wives, and then they have to support him. When a rich woman marries a poor man (as is sometimes the case) he never has more than one wife. Mahommah's mother was a woman of rank and wealth. His father had been a wealthy man; he was a traveling merchant; carried his merchandise on donkeys, and had slaves to accompany him; but by some means he lost the greater part of his property, and at the time of his marriage was comparatively poor; he consequently had but one wife. This is another reason why it is supposed he was of Arabian birth, as many of the Arabs travel in this way to gain property.

The women in Africa are considered very inferior to the men, and are consequently held in the most degrading subjection. The condition of females is very similar to that in all barbarous nations. They never eat at the same table with the men, or rather in their presence (they having no tables) but in separate apartments.

When a person dies, they wrap the body in a white cloth, and bury it as soon as possible. After the body is laid out facing the east, the priest is sent for, and a religious ceremony performed, which consist of prayers to Allah for the soul of the departed.

The manner of burying is to dig a place in the ground, several feet deep and ten or twelve feet horizontally, in which they deposit the body and close up the entrance with a large flat stone. Other ceremonies are also performed by the priest over the grave.

Great lamentations are made for the dead, by loud and bitter cries and wailings, which continue for six days. The friends of the departed, shut themselves up for that space of time, holding meetings for

prayer every night. The seventh day, a great feast is held and the term of mourning ends, when the family appear as usual.

The Africans are a superstitious race of people, and believe in witchcraft and other supernatural agencies. Bodies of light, something after the manner of *Ignus Fatuus*, or Will o' the Wisp, are often seen on the hills and high places, which move fitfully about. These phenomena are supposed to be evil spirits; they have a strange appearance from a distance, and with less ignorant people than the Africans, might be taken for a very different object. They are much larger in appearance than the Jack-o'-Lantern of Europe, and seem to proceed from the extended arms of a human being.

When they suppose any person is bewitched, they consult their astrologer, who consults the stars, and by that means trace out the supposed witch, which generally happens to be some poor decrepid old woman, whom they take and put to death. This practice seems to be very similar to what was formerly practiced in the eastern states, in most parts of old England, and indeed generally throughout Europe "in days gone by." Indeed in many parts of old England, in small isolated towns and villages, the same thing is done at the present day. Of course all such notions have their origin in the grossest ignorance, hence the necessity of educating the masses of the people in every part of the world.

There is a class of men called medicine men, whom the people suppose nothing can hurt; these men have the office assigned them of putting to death these supposed witches. They are called Unbabs and are scattered all about the country; go in a state of nudity; eat swine's flesh, and are considered by the Mahomedans as a very wicked people.

It is customary for the Mahomedans to wear a loose kind of trousers, which are made full at the bottom and are fastened round about the hips by a cord. A loose robe is worn over this, cut in a circular form, open at the centre, sufficiently large to put over the head, and allowed to rest on the shoulders, with loose sleeves, the neck and breast being exposed. The women wear a cloth about two yards square, doubled cornerwise, and tied around the waist, the tie being made at the left side. The king's dress is made in a similar style, but of more costly materials. Children do not wear much clothing.

The trade carried on between Zoogoo and other parts of the country, is done by means of horses and donkeys. Salt is brought from a place called Sab-ba. They exchange slaves, cows and ivory for salt. This journey occupies about two months generally. Occasionally European goods are brought from Ashantee, but they are very costly. Most of the articles used are of home make. Earthenware is made out of clay, they have a nice red and white clay, but the articles they make are very coarse, as they know little of that kind of manufacture, indeed hardly of any other.

They have strange notions concerning the white man. Their notions are very vague and dreamy concerning them. They suppose they live in the ocean, and that when the sun goes down, it warms the water, so that the white people cook their food by it. They consider the white people superior to themselves in every respect, and fear to make needles, as they imagine that the white men can look through an instrument and see all that's going on; and they believe the white man is very angry with them for making needles; they fear very much when thus occupied, and would not be seen by the white man at such a time, could they help it, for all the world. When they are busy at needle making, they of course imagine that they are being looked at; of course this arises from the belief that they are wrongfully engaged, and the same as throughout the whole human race, when a *supposed* wrong is being perpetrated, fear takes possession of the mind. This is but natural to all mankind; they imagine, for making needles, the whites have the power to put out their eyes. On account of such notions prevailing, of course needles are not made to any great extent, but still some are found hardy and daring enough to make them notwithstanding. From whence such nations sprang, we cannot very well explain, but the all-seeing instrument, is no doubt our telescope, which at some time or other has been exhibited likely by seamen, who have traveled in some parts of Africa, and the story circulated by the wonder-mongers of the sable tribe.

Wars in Africa are very frequent, the country being divided into so many divisions or petty kingdoms. The kings are continually quarreling, which quarrels lead to war.

When a king dies, there is no regular successor, but a great many rivals for the kingdom spring up, and he who can achieve his object by power and strength, becomes the succeeding king, thus war settles the question.

Slavery is also another fruitful source of war, the prisoners being sold for slaves. The weapons used, are bows and arrows, guns, and a kind of knife or short sword, of home manufacture. This knife or sword is worn in time of peace as side arms, as well as in time of war. The Africans never go unarmed.— Sometimes great numbers are killed in the wars, but never so many as in European and other countries. Their prisoners are treated very cruelly; they flog and otherwise abuse them, until an opportunity occurs of disposing of them as slaves. They drink considerably before going to battle, in order to strengthen them and instill them with courage and daring; (of course this has no reference to those professing Mahommedanism, as they use no kinds of intoxicating drinks on any occasion.) Sometimes whole cities are destroyed and the country round about laid waste, when famine ensues.

CH. VII. *Mahomah's Early Life, &c.*

We shall now proceed at once to the more important portion of the work, describing the early history, life, trials, sufferings and conversion of Mahommah to Christianity; his arrival in America; his journey to, and sojourn in Haiti, and return to this country again; his views, objects and aims.

His parents, as before stated, were of different tribes or nations. His father was Mahommedan in religion, but his mother was of no religion at all. He states: "my mother was like a good many Christians here, who like to be Christians in name, but do not like to worship God much. She liked Mahommedanism very well, but did not care much about the worshipping part of the matter." Mahommedans are much greater worshippers than Christians, and worship with more apparent zeal and devotion.

The family consisted of two sons and three daughters, besides twins that died in infancy. The Africans are very superstitious about twins; they imagine that all twins are more knowing than any other children, and so with respect to the child born next after twins. They are considered to know almost everything, and are held in high esteem. If the twins live, an image of them is made out of a particular wood, one for each of them, and they are taught to feed them, or offer them food whenever they have any; if they die, the one next to them by birth has an image of them made, and it is his duty to feed them, or offer them food. Mahommah was the next born after twins, and these little duties he faithfully performed. It is supposed the image keeps them from harm and preserves them in war. He was consequently highly esteemed on account of his birth; it was supposed he never said anything wrong, and everything he wished was done for him on the instant. This no doubt was the reason his mother so fondly loved him, and was the cause of his youthful recklessness. They never crossed or controlled him, his mother was the only person who dared to even check him; his love for his mother was exceedingly great. His uncle was a very rich man, who was blacksmith to the king, and he wanted Mahommah to learn that trade, but his father destined him for the mosque, intending to bring him up as one of the prophet's faithful followers. For that purpose he was sent to school, but not liking school very much, he went to live with his uncle and learned the art of making needles, knives and all such kinds of things. His father afterwards replaced him at school, but he soon ran away; he did not like the restraint that his brother (the teacher) put upon him. His brother was a staunch Mahommedan and well learned in Arabic.

Mahommah did not progress very well in learning, having a natural dread of it. The manner of teaching is rather different to other countries, the Africans having neither books nor papers, but a board called Wal-la, on which is written a lesson which the pupil is required to learn to read and write before any other is given; when that lesson is learned, the board is cleaned and a new one written.

Scholars are not permitted to be absent without special leave from the teacher; if truant is played, punishment follows. No fees are due until education is completed. School inspection is made in the following manner: A large meeting house, generally a mosque, is selected, whither the pupils repair together with the teachers, who must read twenty chapters of the Koran, and if the pupil reads the whole

twenty chapters, without missing a single word, his education is considered finished and the fees of instruction are immediately paid.

Mahommah's uncle had property in Sal-gar, whither he would repair to buy gold, silver, brass and iron for the purposes of his business. The gold and silver he made into bracelets, for the arms, and ear rings and finger rings, the Africans being very fond of such kinds of ornaments.

The needles in Africa are made by hand, the process is very tedious; in the first place the iron is hardened or converted into something like steel, it is then made into fine wire, by a process of hammering, and cut into suitable lengths as required, when it is again beaten and made sharp at the point by filing, and finally polished by rubbing on a smooth stone with the hand. From this description of needle making, it may be clearly seen how much labor has to be bestowed upon all branches of manufacture, for want of better tools and machinery.

An African bellows deserves some notice. It is said "necessity is the *mother* of invention." Whoever doubted this fact, let him attentively read the following, and if they deny that position, they surely cannot but say that the invention of the bellows in Africa, certainly had a "*father*."

The bellows is composed of a goat skin taken off whole, a stick passes through from the neck to the hinder legs, where it is fastened, and by an ingenious contrivance. The legs are moved up and down by hand, an old gun barrel being used for the pipe.

Whilst his uncle was at Sal-gar on business he died, and left his property to Mahommah's mother. He then worked a short time with another relative.

It is laborious work, manufacturing farming implements and tools. Machinery is greatly needed in Africa, the want of which is a great drawback to the manufactures of that country. The iron is of first-rate quality, very much superior to the iron of America. Iron, copper and brass are twisted into rings, which are worn as ornaments about the ankles and arms.

There are hundreds and thousands of men in the world who rejoice to do good, and who are seeking means to employ their time and their talents. To such as these who peruse the pages of this work, the hint here thrown out may not be lost. A wide field of usefulness presents itself in that much neglected part of the world, where men are to be found, who only need the teaching to make good citizens, good mechanics, good farmers, good men and good Christians. To those who would direct their efforts in the behalf of such a nation, no doubt remains but that God would bless their works; their deeds would praise them, and millions yet unborn would called them blessed. Go then, ye philanthropists, and Christian men and women, to these benighted people, offer them the hand of assistance and raise them to the standard of their fellow-men, and give all the countenance you can to their endeavors to usefulness and goodness, never caring for the scoffs and frowns of a cold and callous world; let your works be of such a nature as all good men will speak well of you, and your own consciences approvingly assent.

Africa is rich in every respect (except in knowledge.) The knowledge of the white man is needed, but not his vices. The religion of the white man is needed, but more of it, more of the spirit of true religion, such as the Bible teaches, "love to God and love to man." Who will go to Africa? Who will carry the Bible there? And who will teach the poor benighted African, the arts and sciences? Who will do all this? Let the reply be prompt, let it be full of life and energy! Let the Savior's command be obeyed. "Go ye out into all the world and preach the gospel." Save all those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, for the lack of that knowledge, you have the power to impart. Hesitate no longer, for now is the time, the accepted time, "the night cometh when no man can work," and the day (our day) is fast waning. Oh, Christian friends, up and be doing.