

1830 At the Village of Godome (Africa)

Don Francisco, or as he is called by the blacks, Shush Shee is a man fifty five years of age a Brazilian by birth of Bahia or Salvador. He has resided in Africa 33 years and understands the African language and customs. He receives great favor from the King of this section of country, which is called the Kingdom of Dahomey. His chief residence is at Whidah, of which he has the whole control, the forts there not being occupied by the English, French and Portuguese as formerly. He is a man of a swarthy complexion and pleasing countenance and address, and has a wife and many Concubines. The situation of our habitations are in an enclosed square of about an acre, with a bamboo fence 8 feet high. There is the House for Don Francisco and servants, in which we get our meals. A bamboo fence partitions it off from one for Capt. Anibas and Don Romauldo, and another fence partitions that, from the one Don Andres & myself occupy. The houses or huts are built of bamboo sticks stuck in the ground, and united together with withes of stripped Palm leaves. The roof is thatched with Palm leaf. The negro servants of Don Andres employed in the afternoon making a bedstead for me, which is done with the legs of sticks of wood, stuck in the ground, and stout bamboo for the frame. These bamboo sticks about 4 feet long laid across makes the bedstead. One hut consists of two rooms of about 10 by 16 feet Don Andres occupying one and I the other. There is no floor but the ground, which is the sandy earth, trodden down. Have a Mosquito Net to my bed & every thing as convenient as the place affords. Capt. Anibas belongs to Havana and has been out here some time. He is Master of the Brazilian Schooner in the trade belonging to Don Francisco. He makes a pleasant companion, as he speaks English fluently. Don Romauldo is the Son of a rich & respectable family in Bahia, speaks no English is 25 years of age & quite agreeable.

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1830 Thursday July 22. I find the weather of an agreeable temperature, the Village prettily situated, surrounded with many large trees which give an agreeable shade and the Palm, Cocoa Nut & Guava trees in abundance. Assisted Don Andres in making of some cloths, that have been drying, having been wet in landing. The Kings son, whose name is Guppon is here and came to pay his respects. In saluting, they grasp your hand, and repeat the word Okoo three times, snapping your middle finger with things. He is a thick set, stout negro, with his head stuck full of gold ornaments of the size of large bosom pins. He is very good natured and carries a continual cheerful smile on his countenance. He always travels with a retinue of fifty or sixty slaves, about twenty of which are armed, with just coats, muskets, with Powder horns and Bullet pouches. The lochs are carefully preserved from the weather, with Black Monkey skins. In the afternoon two negroes were brought before Don Francisco and Guppon, charged with having broken two Demijohns Rum, by throwing them at each other in a spiteful manner, at Badagry. This was truly a novel spectacle for me to witness, there being collected about two hundred negroes to witness the proceedings, and it would have made a fine picture for the pencil of Hogarth. They all squatted round in a circle, Don Francisco & Guppon being in the center, and the culprits & witnesses were then brought forward, and when separately called forth, first knelt and kissed the ground and then the examination went on. As near as I could understand it, after coming up and receiving three or four switches, when they knelt and took from Guppon across their backs and a reprimand, the multitude dispersed with huzzas. The wives of the criminals during the trial, were in an almost frantic state, wringing their hands, and pulling their wool. Guppon resides in a hut of the Kings near the Celebraria or Mayor of the Village to which he went his way at Sundown. After Supper we were all collected in Don Andres & my apartments, when we sat conversing til 9 PM and retired.