

## Letter to Agnes Livingstone 3, March 1871

*David Livingstone*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org))

[0001]

Webb's Lualaba or Lacustrine River March 1871 Manyema

For Miss Livingstone

My Darling Nannie - I put down a few notes by way of being prepared in case of meeting any native traders from the West coast on Lake Lincoln the Western-most of the Riverine Lakes the native name of which [^] is [Lomame or] Loéki - é being sounded as e in wet set met - I hear that some come from the French settlementss [or Congo] to buy palm oil which is very abundant and cheap in all this region - a friend lately gave me another daughter in the shape of a young Soko or gorillah - she sits crouching 18 inches high and is most intelligent and least mischievous of all the monkeys I have seen - she holds out her hand to be lifted up & carried and if refused makes her face as in a bitter human weeping and wrings her hands quite humanly sometimes adding a foot or third hand to make the appeal more touching she walks by putting the backs of the four fingers on the ground - the space leaned on being that from the first to the second joint - the nails dont touch it nor do the thumbs [^] [or knuckles] - the arms are thus made into crutches & she hitches the lower limbs forward between the crutches - sometimes one foot after the other - sometimes she walks upright - a nasty fellow spat in her face she resented this bitterly and wiped the face with a piece of banana leaf - she loosed her cord in quite a business way using the thumbs opposed to the fingers not monkey fashion with fingers above and when one interfered with her she struck out with her hands shewing that an adult could giv[...]- [...] slap - she knew me at once a[...]- a friend and when plagued by any one always placed her back to me for safety - came & sat on my mat - decently made a nest of grass & leaves & covered herself with the mat to sleep = I could not take her with me though I fear that she will die before I return from people plaguing her Her fine long black hair was beautiful when tended by her mother who was killed It is now disheveled - I am mobbed enough alone - two sokos - she & I would not have got breath - I have to submit to be a gazing stock - I don't altogether relish here or elsewhere but try to get over it good naturedly - get into the most shady spot of the village and leizurely look at all my admirers - When the first crowd begins to go away I go into my lodging to take what food may be prepared as coffee when I have it or roasted maized infusion when I have none - the door is shut all save a space to admit light - It is made of the inner bark of a gigantic tree not a quarter of an inch thick and slides in a groove behind a post on each side of the doorway - When partially open it is supported by only one of the posts = Eager heads sometimes crowd the open space and crash goes the thin door landing a Manyema beauty on the floor - "It was not I" she gasps out "It was Bessie Bell and Jeanie Gray that shoved me in and" as she scrambles out of the lions den - "see they're laughing" and fairly out she joins in the merry giggle [too] To avoid darkness or being half smothered I often eat in public - draw a

line on the ground - They "toe the line" and keep each other out of the circle  
 To see eating with knife fork & spoon is wonderful "see they dont touc[...]-  
 their food = What oddities to be sure & some remarks are not complimentary but they think that they are not understood, and indeed many  
 are not comprehended - I always pay for my lodging and as the Arabs never  
 do in Manyema, the lady of the house brings water wood, and bless their motherly  
 hearts, often cook for me - a mess of porridge and boiled vegetables as a relish  
 with bananas are their best - They seem distressed if refused - a woman with  
 the white leprosy on her hands such as rose [^] [on] Miriam's forehead when she spoke against  
 her great brother, made dumplings of green maize which are sweet and having been  
 obliged by weakness to sleep at her village she watched to see if "I eat them "Eat"  
 she enjoined "you are ill & weak only through hunger"; I am always sorry if I  
 cannot take a mouthful or two - Many of the Manyema women are very  
 pretty - their hands feet & limbs [^] [& forms] are perfect - The men are handsome - compared  
 with them the Zanzibar slaves are like London door knockers which some  
 atrocious iron founder thought were like Lion's faces = The way in which these  
 same Zanzibar Muhamadans murder the men & seize the women & children makes  
 me sick at heart - It is not slave trade it is murdering free people to make slaves  
 It is perfectly indescribable - Kirk has been working hard to get this murderous system  
 put a stop [^] [to]. Heaven prosper his noble efforts - He says in one letter to me it is monstrous  
 injustice to compare the free people in the Interior living under their own chiefs  
 and laws with what slaves at Zanzibar afterwards become by the abominable  
 system which robs them of their manhood - I think it is like comparing the  
 [...]-nthropologists with their ancestral sokos - I have seen four sokos killed  
 [...]-peared in the back - It seems quite impossible to stalk them in front - they  
 have such sharp eyes - I saw a man who was overpowered by one - He yelled out  
 "Soko has caught me" and before his companions could rescue him soko,  
 as his custom is, had bitten off the ends of two fingers & two toes - He got clear off  
 some animals attack the throat - some the jugular veins - some the Tendo  
 Achilles - that is the tendon which enables you to tilt up the heel in dancing &  
 [madly] make yourself a whirligig - but soko invariably attacks the ends of the  
 fingers and spits them out - He does no harm to women but sometimes runs  
 up a tree with a native child - The women in these cases run for a bunch of  
 small bananas - He takes these & leaves the child - In the forest he is seen walking  
 sometimes with his hands on his [^] [head] - To me he is a potbellied bandy legged low looking  
 villain without a particle of the gentleman in him - His ugliness after  
 death is appalling - one of the Nineveh marbles intended to represent the  
 Evil one is not half so ugly - the only use I can see for Soko is to sit at  
 the Royal Academy for a portrait of the old beast Satan -

I am grieved to hear of the departure of good Lady Murchison. Had I known  
 that she kindly remembered me in her prayers it would have been great  
 encouragement - It pleases me to think that our friends know about us even  
 [...]- their state of bliss which in many [...]-pects must be like the present world [...]

[0002]

Those who like work here will get work there - our saviour eat a piece of a  
 broiled fish and of a honey comb - and fish & bread - after he was risen from  
 the dead & became as we hope to be - even like him - Luther believed that people  
 would feast above just as I do - When St John fell down to worship the angel he  
 forbade him because he was his fellow servant and one of the prophets - We have  
 not enough to enable us to speak positively but I like to think of all my friends

being still friends who will welcome us as old acquaintances into the mansions  
above - I sympathize with the Youngs - From what you say she does not seem to  
have known that she had  
arrived at the climax of  
life - The most dangerous  
crisis that women experi-  
-ence - she thought lightly  
of it for want of knowledge  
which every woman ought  
to possess Had she been  
guided over that period  
she would have lived to old  
age for she had a sound  
[...]-nstitution & no bad habits -  
I have not recieved a line  
from Sir Paraffin Young  
since I left England and  
I wrote to Sir Roderick &  
him by every occasion -  
but he must have written  
and letters from both may  
be in the box at Ujiji -  
The men sent by D<sup>r</sup> Kirk  
are Muhamaddans that is  
unmitigated liars - Musa  
and companions are fair  
average specimens of the  
lower classes of Moslems  
The two head men remained  
at Ujiji to feast on my  
goods & get pay without  
work - seven came to Bam-  
-barre and in true Moslem  
style swore that they were  
sent by D<sup>r</sup> Kirk "to bring  
[...]- back" not to go with  
[...]- if the country were  
bad or dangerous "forward  
they would not go" I read  
D<sup>r</sup> Kirk's words to them to  
follow wherever I led - "No  
by the old liar Muhamad  
they were to force me back to  
Zanzibar"- after a super-  
abundance of falsehood it  
turned out that it all meant  
only an advance of pay  
though they had double the  
Zanzibar wages - I gave it -  
but had to threaten on the  
word of an Englishman to

shoot the ringleaders before  
I got them to go - They all  
speak of the English as men  
who dont lie - The Sultan  
who knows his people  
better than anyone else  
cannot employ his men  
even of the highest class to  
manage any branch of his  
revenue - He says they would  
purloin it all - He entrusts  
all his customs & money to  
Banians from India and  
his father did the same before  
him - It suits Burton to blabber  
about Moslems though he had to part with all his following at Ujiji for  
stealing and lying My two headmen refused to send me my own goods  
though a man there had my written orders to open the box mentioned &  
take out medicines and letters if he could not send the box entire - "No"  
said the Muhamadan slave we are to bring him back and he sent  
only a few beads out of over 500 lbs of them - a little cloth out of loads  
a little quinine and no wine - Quinine nauseates me if take alone -  
no clothing or paper or books and but a few letters - It was a mercy  
he let me have a little coffee and sugar - I could have put matters to  
rights only by going back 150 miles to eject this drunkard, but 150 miles  
back again - These 300 miles would have taken 4 or 5 months - with  
contingent sickness half a year so I chose rather to go short of every  
thing and possibly finish all I have to do in exploration - our high  
wages and truthfulness are an inconvenience for the low liars say  
[...]- shall get pay no matter whether we work or not - Lying is safety with them  
I have travelled more than most people and with all sorts of followers - The christians of  
Kuruman and Kolobeng were  
out of sight the best I ever had - The Makololo who were very partially christianized were next  
best honest truthful & brave -  
Heathen Africans are far superior to Muhamadans who are the most worthless one can have -  
My liberated slaves did  
fairly except laziness will we came into close contact with Muhamadans again - there had been  
their masters in infancy & now  
they swung back to the lying & stealing of the low class again - they were connived at and  
aided by an Arab who got his freedom  
from Cazembe after being long a prisoner by my Sultan's letter - They absconded to him - and  
he sold the favours of his  
slaves for goods which he knew were stolen from me - Before me he scolded them behind my  
back he encouraged them to desert  
and he lied till I was like to vomit - Yet judged by the Moslem standard and not by ours he is  
a good man and he and I are  
friends - I have learned to keep my own counsel - I protest loudly against the deeds of blood  
and they admit that I am  
right - lying I denounce in the abstract and they agree to what I say Von Der Decken could  
not hold his tongue but told  
everyone "You Moslems lie" true enough was his word but he wanted command of himself &

got into a rage per-  
[...]-tually - I think my wo[...] may have some affect on some

Affectionately Ever

David Livingstone

Please to take good care to whose hands my letters come  
Thieves eagerly catch them and make pamphlets which low book  
sellers buy and palm off as if from me - Four spurious books  
and pamphlets were sold all over the world as mine after my  
great journey across the continent = I am not very sorry  
at my 40 letters being lost I gave full information - did  
my duty like a Briton though so weak I could not walk 50 yds  
and now they are gone by [...]e Governors villainy I am not to  
blame - No one could protect my property when Prout stole and  
sold it - "It is an ill wind that blows no body good" Thanks to the  
Governor I am safe so far - Tom and Oswell's letters never  
came to hand but may be at Ujiji I did not know that D<sup>r</sup> Kirk  
was married till he sent a letter to him in which you congratulate  
him on the birth of a daughter - Waller is woefully behind hand in  
telling me what I insisted on in 1858 /60 - /61 /62/63 that nothing can  
be done till slave trade is abolished but better late than never