

## Letter to Jose R. Coelho do Amaral, 25 March, [25 June 1856?]

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[0001]

Tete, on the Zambesi

East Africa

His Excellency Jose R. C. do Amaral, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1856

The Governor of Angola and its Dependencies

May it please your excellency

I was entrusted  
with certain presents and a letter from the  
Government of Angola for Sekeletu the  
chief of the people called Makololo living on the  
Zambesi near the centre of the continent, it  
is my duty to give your excellency as full  
an account of the manner in which the  
bounty was recieved as possible. I wrote  
a hasty letter to the Right Reverend Lord Bishop  
of Angola immediately after my arrival  
at the town of Sekeletu and sent it by the  
Arab Ben Habib of Zanzibar who was  
appointed to head another party with ivory  
for Loanda. This letter may appear as  
a repitition of the information contained  
in that, but such is the case only because  
of my earnest desire to be certain that  
the government ~~should~~ [had] recieved precise  
intelligence that its kind treatment of  
Sekeletu and his people has been well  
appreciated as could have been expected  
[0002]

from a savage nation. The presents of both  
the Government and merchants of Loanda  
were delivered in presence of a large concourse  
of people including some strangers, and  
translations of the letters to Sekeletu read aloud  
so as to make the matter as public as  
possible. The General's dress, sword, sash,  
epaulettes and cocked hat, were all exhibited  
to the admiring gaze of the crowd. And the tail  
of the horse which unfortunately died at  
Golungo Alto was shown in evidence of the  
fact by my companions. Every article  
too sent by the merchants was fully  
examined by all. And Sekeletu with his  
principal men expressed repeatedly great

satisfaction at the result of our journey  
thankfulness for the frienship of the head  
of the Provisional Government, and joy  
in prospect of being able to trade with  
Loanda expressed over and over again  
must be considered as the answer  
to the letters of Government and the Merchants  
for when I asked afterwards what I  
should say in my letter the same expression  
was made use of. I consider the  
prompt dispatch of another party with,  
it is said, forty tusks for Loanda,  
as more valuable evidence of confidence  
[0003]

than any expressions of the tongue, And my  
opinion was asked whether presents for the  
governor and merchants ought to be  
sent now or by my late companions  
Not having entire confidence in the Arab  
who has unlimited power over the ivory  
the party being ordered only to "look and  
learn", I gave my opinion that it would  
be better to send them via Pitsane, As  
both the Government and merchants  
would estimate their value not by the  
amount, but as shewing proper feelings  
of respect and gratitude. The fact of  
Sekeletu asking spontaneously the  
above question, will no doubt be  
considered as so far satisfactory. My  
late companions are allowed to rest  
some time and it is intended that they will  
then return as independent traders. They  
all express joy at the prospect, and this  
is more than I expected from men who  
underwent so much hunger and fatigue,  
for they have all plenty of food and liquor  
at home. Other tribes as those of Katema  
and Shinte promised to send men with  
them for the same purposes, and I believe  
if no untoward event transpires a brisk  
[0004]

trade will in a few years be formed  
between the interior and the coast.

In coming Eastwards lately I found  
the navigation of the Zambesi obstructed  
by a large rent from bank to  
bank of the rocky bottom. This rent  
is one hundred feet down and its  
lips are from 60 to 80 feet apart. It is

made first from bank to bank  
and then prolonged from the left bank  
away through thirty or forty miles of  
hills. Into this the Zambesi of a thousand  
yards broad rolls and is compressed at  
the bottom into fifteen or twenty yards  
the enormous compression it suffers  
from the force of its own fall down  
100 feet, causes the formation and  
ascent of columns of vapour which  
like steam ascend 300 or 400 feet high,  
then lose their steam colour, become  
dark and descend in a constant  
shower. These columns of vapour  
may be seen, (when the river is full)  
and the sound heard, ten or twelve  
miles off.

It is evident that this remarkable  
rent must always have been a barrier  
to canoe navigation up the Zambesi  
[0005]

But something else [5] must have prevented [ms 22]  
European commerce from entering the  
great valley in which Sekeletu lives.  
The settlement of Zumbo is not far  
distant, not more than 200 miles,  
and the Portuguese of those days in  
which Zumbo flourished were not  
wanting in energy. But I believe the  
savage customs of the tribes around  
the falls were sufficient to account  
for the want of intercourse. The crania  
of strangers were considered ornamental  
and assassination frequently resorted to,  
to procure them. I counted between  
fifty and sixty such mounted on  
poles in one village. It would have  
been impossible to have made a way  
through such a people, but Sebituana  
the father of Sekeletu, conquered them  
all, and thereby rendered a good service  
both to humanity and commerce.  
The only use formerly made of ivory  
in this region was armlets and  
gravestones. On the island called  
Kalai, 8 miles above the falls  
I saw seventy large tusks planted  
round the grave of a late chief and  
[0006]  
there were thirty more over the resting

places of his relatives. I imagine no more ivory will be wasted in that way now that the people percieveits value.

I intend to proceed to England now, but on my return, there may not be very much difficulty in establishing a communication between the Western and Eastern possessions of the Portuguese. This has I understand been the wish of different governors \* [ *Note: \* The want of such a path may now not be so apparent as in former*

*times when there was no communication by the Red Sea and Egypt*] ]

and if it still appears desirable I may suggest the way from Pungo Andongo to Bike. From Bike to the nearest Makololo on the Zambesi, say to Mpololo the uncle of Sekeletu who lives at Naliele (Lat 15° 24' South and Long 23° East.) The Makololo would send any letters or dispatches safely down to my future dwelling place which will probably be near the falls (Lat 15° 57' South. Long. 26° 6' E.)

And as we hope to have water communication with Tete, this would complete the only difficult part of the continent. It is only [0007]

a suggestion at present.[7] And I mention [ms 22]

Pungo Andongo and Bike because of the well known public spirit of St Pires who has trade relations with all that country. There would be more difficulty in the return from Mpololo to Bike.

I need scarcely add that any service I could render not involving an actual outlay of my small salary<sup>ry</sup> would be cheerfully and gratuitously rendered. I mention this because the society to which I am attached, does not pretend to give a salary, but only enough for subsistence and it varies according to the expence of living in different countries.

I have found the Portuguese here as kind as in Angola, and that is saying a great deal, for I shall ever remember the hospitality and good will of the Angolese both official

and private, with gratitude and affection  
some how or other, I had imbibed a  
sort of prejudice against the Portuguese  
probably on account of some few  
sticking most pertinaciously to the slave trade. But the uniform kind  
[0008]  
treatment and politeness completely removed  
all prejudice and now when I make  
use of expressions of gratitude they are  
really those of the heart.

Believe me  
Your Excellency's most  
obedient servant

David Livingston

To His Excellency Jose R. C. do Amaral  
the Governor General  
of Angola &c. &c. &c.  
West Coast  
of Africa

Loanda

Reached Quilimane on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1856  
and forwarded this letter to the Governor General  
of Mosambique His Excellency Vasco Guedes  
Carvalho e Menezes on 25<sup>th</sup> June. D. L.