

## Letter to John Kirk 2, 14 February 1865

*Livingstone, David, 1813-1873*

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

[0001]

Newstead Abbey

14 Feby 1865

My Dear Kirk

D<sup>r</sup> Peters might as  
well come down gracefully  
and to help him you might  
say that on employing  
a native whose language  
I knew as well as any  
Portuguese knows the  
dialects of Tette, to enquire  
the name of a mountain  
he replied "They call it  
Kaia or as D<sup>r</sup> Peters  
spells it caiia - and I  
put that down as the  
name of the mountain  
referred to.

[0002]

It is no disgrace to a man  
to make a mistake of the  
kind. M<sup>r</sup> Moffat has  
been collecting words  
in the Sechuana language  
for the last 43 years -  
and finds new ones  
every week. In eight  
years I had upwards  
of seven thousand and  
I rejected many hundreds  
either as uncouth or  
to me quite useless.

Who but a mad philologist  
would collect at least  
a score for the different  
parts or modes of  
walking as erect - stooping  
leaning backwards

[0003]

- sideways - from side to  
- side - wriggling- lifting  
the feet high - or very

straight - slouching  
swaggering. I think  
there were eleven  
names for a lion -  
and no end of words  
meaning different  
shades of fools. D<sup>r</sup>  
Peters vocabularies  
are wonderful on  
account of their gross  
inaccuracies and  
the ability displayed  
by D<sup>r</sup> Bleek in making  
so good a use of such  
a jumble as they con-  
tain. there is scarcely a  
page but contains as gross

[0004]  
mistakes as this and one sees the  
mistakes are  
made by the  
Portuguese element  
employed  
The D<sup>r</sup> makes a bad  
shot with pēnu, seeing  
it is never pronounced  
painoo - and does not  
mean (except inferentially)  
"I dont know." the e is  
the same as in our word  
hen - and the word is  
used as we do the words  
perhaps - it may be -  
possibly - Is this the  
way, or is this right,  
panic - perhaps it is -  
inferentially of course  
it is, I dont know -  
The majority of Tette  
fouls live in the huts  
of the people & not on perches

[0005]  
I cannot recollect two  
aá's in any native  
word but penu, they [may] exist  
You will see whether  
it has been a misprint  
by consulting Bleeks  
book.

Mr Webb gave me yours  
to answer about the  
words - and you may  
quote me if you like -

I remember the hill  
very well - I say a  
conical hill from which  
a large piece had peeled  
off granitic fashion  
like a portion of the  
flake of an onion - but  
I dont know the proper

[0006]

word for flake

Mosambique wont  
do but Bambatook  
bay would I think -  
and as soon as I hear  
from Sir Roderick  
will write to Lord  
Russell and make  
use of Col Playfairs  
absence as an argument  
I think you had better  
write to Dalhousie too

Thanks for your  
thoughts about Tom  
I send Dr Loudons  
letter and write a note  
today to Dr Watson