

Letter to Roderick I. Murchison, 16 October 1855, 3 March 1856

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

Published by Livingstone Online (livingstoneonline.org)
[0001]

Linyanti, on the River
Chobe, 16th October,
1855.

To ~~Sir Roderick Impey Muchison~~

Sir,

By a note dated
Cabongo in August last, I endeavoured
to convey an idea of the country between
Cassangé and that point, and if the
rough tracing enclosed reached its
destination, you will have remarked
that there was little absolutely new to
communicate. The path followed
is that usually trodden by native
Portuguese, ~~who are~~ [^] [[^][who are]] employed by the Angolese
merchants to trade with Matiamvo -
([^] ["the] Muata-yamvo["]of some) - the paramount
chief of the negro tribes called Londa
(Lunda) or Balonda. There is another
and straighter course situated a little
[0002]

farther North, and I suppose it is there the
scarcity of water mentioned by others is experienced.

We never found it necessary to carry a supply,
and almost always spent the night at villages
situated on streams or rivulets. A Portuguese
merchant and planter, Senhor Graça of
Monte Alegre, whose acquaintance I had
the pleasure of making, was once a visitor
of Matiamvo, and his notes having been
published in the Government Gazette or
"Boletim" of Loanda, might, I conceive, still

be found in Lisbon.[* Note] [- [** RGSvol xxvipages 124-128]][[*See R.G.S. Journal
Vol. xxvi, pages

123, 128. Ed.]] A severe and

long continued attack of fever, soon after
crossing the Quango, made me so very feeble
and deaf, [^] [that] I was glad to avail myself
of the company and friendly aid of

three native Portuguese, whose employer, Senhor Neves of Cassangé, very politely enjoined them by letter to forward my plans by every means in their power. the virtue of the Cheboqué (Cheebokwé) was thereby not exposed to temptation to take advantage of my weakness, - a temptation which often proves rather too powerful for the goodness of more enlightened specimens of humanity. The most then I could effect [0003] in the circumstances, was to put down the rivers with greater precision than any of my predecessors, who have uniformly been unfurnished with instruments[.]~~could accomplish~~

The rate of travelling of such traders may be interesting to those who examine their accounts of journies to [^] [otherwise] unknown regions. I found the average between a great number of regular sleeping stations to be seven geographical miles. the average time required was three and a half hours, and the speed two geographical mile an hour. The stoppages from all causes[,] amounted to 20 days monthly[:]- so that a month's journey means actually one of ten days, or seventy miles. The carriers are very unwilling to help each other[:]; hence the sickness of one man often stops the march of the whole party. When we parted with them, our own rate was ten and a half geographical miles per day. this required an average of five hours march at the rate of two geog [^] [raphical] miles an hour. and we travelled twenty days each month. The negro step was quicker than ours[,] but we generally overtook them [^] [while] resting [0004]

and arrived in equal times. If we kept going for six successive days, both men and oxen shewed symptoms of knocking up, ~~and this~~[al] though they were a most willing company and all [were] anxious to get home. It was therefore necessary to give another day weekly for rest, besides Sunday. The starchy nature of the food had[,] I believe[,] considerable influence on the rate of progress. In winding through forest[,] I could not make any approach to a reckoning of distance an observation was always necessary. the zigzag could not be much under twenty miles

in these cases.

I had indulged the hope of proceeding to the headquarters of Matiamvo[,] who ~~would~~ seems to be located nineteen days E.N.E. of Cabongo, or on Lat. 9° 20' South Long. 22° 32' East; (~~This is differently put in the sketch sent from Angola, but the latest is supposed to be the most correct,~~) [b] But the long delay had now made such an inroad into our stock of goods, [that] we saw clearly ~~that~~ by the time of our arrival there, we should be unable either to give a suitable present to the prince, or pay our way afterwards to the South. this alone would not have proved a barrier, for a branch of the Leeambye [ai] or Zambesi is [0005]

2^d Sheet

is reported to flow southwards from a part a few days East of his town (23° or 24° E.L.?) and it would have been of great importance to [^] [have] discovered water conveyance all the way down to the country of Makololo. But it is universally [asserted] [&] believed [^] ~~[and asserted]~~ that Matiamvo will on no account [^] [permit] any white man[,] or even native trader, to pass him in that direction. It is his own principal resort for ivory. the tribes living there kill many elephants and bring the ivory to him as tribute. (they are called Kanyika and Kanyoka or Banyika & Banyoka) Having but slender acquaintance with the Londa dialect[,] we felt that neither pay nor persuasion could be effectively employed to secure permission to follow our object; so we decided, on leaving Cabongo to proceed South East to our friend Katema and thence down the Leeba. [0006]

the people among whom we now travelled being Balonda only, we got on very comfortably except in one instance in which a chief named Kawawa who had heard of our treatment by the Chiboque on going North, presumed on his possessing the fords of the Casai, so far as to demand tribute from the "white man". Nothing could exceed the civilities which passed between

us on the Sunday of our stay in his town. But when we offered to cross the river, he mustered all his forces to compell payment of a "gun an ox, a man, a barrel of powder - a black coat! and a book which would tell him if Matiamvo had any intention of sending to cut off his head" Unless we had submitted to everything, as the Mambari do, and given a bad precedent for all white men afterwards, we were obliged to part with "daggers drawn". the canoes were all concealed [0007]

among the reeds, but my men were ~~more~~ [better] of sailors than ~~they~~ [his,], and having taken the loan of one by night, ~~and~~ in order to shew how scrupulously honest we were, we left it and a few beads on their own side of the river, and thanked them next morning for their kindness, amidst shouts of laughter.

[Read]

The route we ~~new~~ followed to Katema being considerably to the East of that by which we went to Loanda, a curious phenomenon which then escaped our notice[,] was now discovered, viz. - that of the river Lotembwa(~~Lotembwa~~) flowing in two ~~and~~ nearly opposite directions. By the tracing sent from Angola[,] you will see it as if rising in the small Lake Dilolo. Such is [seemed] the fact[,] as far as the southern portion of the river is concerned. Our former route having led us to the Casai, at some distance West of the Northern portion, we were not aware of its existence In returning however, we were surprised [0008]

~~to-be~~ [at being] obliged to cross the Lotembwa before we reached [^] [Lake] Dilolo. It was more than a mile broad, three or four feet deep and full of Arum Egyptiacum, Lotus, papyrus, mat-rushes and other aqueous [atic] plants. Not being then informed of the singular fact that it actually flows N.N.W. into the Casai, I did not observe the current simply concluding it was a prolongation of the Lotembwa beyond the Lake, and that

it rose in a [^] [long] flat marsh as most of
the rivers in this quarter do. But we
were positively informed [^] [afterwards] that the flow
was to the Casai and not into Dilolo.
I have no reason to doubt the [^] [correctness of this] information
I could not ascertain whether [^] [Lake] Dilolo gives
much water to the Northern Lotembwa,
but had there been a current of one
fourth the strength of that which flows
into the Southern Lotembwa, I must have
observed it: that is converged into it by [The Northern Lotembwa proceeds from]
an arm of the Lake, one half [^] [a] mile broad
and at the part where the most of [^] [the] water
flows, it is chin-deep. We then crossed
the rivers
[0009]7th Sheet

The Makololo wished to put a stop to their visits
by force, but a hint to purchase all the
ivory with hoes was so promptly responded
to [^] [that] I anticipate small trade for the Mambari
in future. If any one among the tribes subject
to the Makololo, sells a child now, it is done in
secret[ly]. The trade may thus be said to be
pretty well repressed. A great deal more
than this however is needed. Commerce
is a most important aid to civilization[;]
for it soon breaks up the sullen isolation
of heathenism, and makes men feel their
mutual dependence. Hopes of this
makes one feel gratified at the success,
which has attended the [my] little beginning.
But it is our blessed Christianity alone
which can touch the centre of the wants
of Africa. the Arabs, it is well known,
are great in commerce, but not much
elevated [^] [thereby] above the African in principle[.]thereby.
My Arab friend Ben Habib now gone to
Loanda,[,] was received most hospitably
by an old female chief called Sebola mokwaia,
and she actually gave him ivory enough to
set him up as a trader. Yet he went with
[0010]
with the Makololo against her to revenge some
old feud with which he had no connection.

David Livingstone
[0011]

Please excuse this wretched Yankee paper

from Loanda. Rags are scarce it
seems now a days. but the Papyrus
plant abounds through all intertropical
Africa. Surely our paper manufacturers might
equal the compeers of old Jannes
and Janbres.

Tette or Nyunghe on Zambesi
3^d March 1856

Reached this yesterday morning
pretty well tired from marching
through a rough stoney jungle
for some time past. I cannot
copy the whole of the foregoing
as a post goes off to Quillimane
tomorrow morning, but perhaps
early intelligence will be appreciated
[0012]

more than later and better written
would be. N^o III refers chiefly to the
people of the Interior. Both it and tracing
will be sent in time. the Portuguese
are remarkably kind. And I am
in good health and spirits.

David Livingston