

Letter to Roderick I. Murchison, 24 December 1854

Livingstone, David, 1813-1873

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[0001]

[1. Journey from the Confluence of [the] Leebea & Leeambye Loanda]

[Nº I. a Note][1.]

Pungo Andongo, Angola.

24th December 1854

Sir Roderick Impey Murchison

Sir

I have been in the of addressing my letters for the Royal Society to the care of Lieut^t Steele, but from some notices I have seen in the Newspapers since arrival in Angola, I conclude that, that has gone to the seat of war the East. On that account, and knowing interest which you take in such , I beg you will allow me the of sending my communications Geography to you.

In my last letter[,] dated ~~October~~[20th September,] 1853[~~See Journal vol xxiv page 291~~] reported my return to the town of Sekeletu the river Chobé after having visited country of the Barotsé, and the river

Leeambye or Zambesi as far North as confluence with the Leebea. I enclosed , a sketch of the river with the Latitudes Longitudes of the different points which I had made observations,

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[2] and mentioned my intention of proceeding Loanda in order if possible to open path whereby commercial intercourse be maintained with the West as a means of ameliorating the of the people in the Interior[.]

†[T]he present communication is intended convey a sketch of the journey from point at which my last terminated . the confluence of the Leebea and

Leeambye, Lat. 14° 11 3 South-[:] Long.

23° 40 30 East.~~This position is slightly altered from that in Vol XXIV p302~~ to Loanda, the of the Portuguese possessions Western Africa.

Sekeletu, who by the abdication of sister, now possesses the chieftainship[.] the principal men of the tribe[.] entered cordially into the project of a new road for commercial . [Insert][from sheet . 2^dSheet]Men, oxen and canoes were generously furnished. Also~~Four~~elephants' tusks were also entrusted to me for sale for the purpose ofby which to testing the difference betweenofthe prices ^givenbetweenby the CeCape traders, and other white tradersmen,; and which I subsequently disposed of ^themwith that object in view and for hisSkeletu's advantage at Cassangé Taking leave of the

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[3] chief and principal men on the banks of the

Chobé[.] my company consisting of none but

[men of] Zambesians and these chiefly Barotsé, we that tortuous river to its junction the Leeambye, then entering it[which] we [ascended,]

visited[visiting] Sesheké[.] and the different villages on banks, at each of which orders had been issued "that we must not allowed to become hungry". On reaching country of the Barotsé, we learned that foray had been made by one of the under-, and [^][that] several villages had been destroyed the very direction we intended to take. demanded the return of the prisoners the only means of ensuring our safety[.] succeeded in getting eighteen into my , [^][and] these were

restored to their relatives[,] we approached their different habitations our progress up the river. As we had seen, the Leeambye makes a bend away to the Eastward[,] from confluence of the Leeba, and comes[flows] the East to the West. But the Leeba comes from the North, so we that by ascending it we should the source of the Coanza. And descending [the latter]it might at last reach Loanda. We discovered afterwards

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[4] that the Portuguese map, which represents Coanza[as] arising in the East, is erroneous. the above impression however, we the Leeba[,] [for 40]forty or 50 miles.[:]

And[when] a cataract preventing farther progress canoes, we remained a few days for a party which had been at the confluence, before commencing journey on ox back. Tt[T]he party having left[was sent from] junction, with five captives belonging Masiko, a Barotsé chief who lives of that point, & proceeded in the direction during five days. But t[T]wo of the prisoners being little girls, marches than usual were [:] & the actual distance may be not more than eighty miles.

Tt[T]hough travelling Eastward thus far, y[party] did not again come near the Leeambye. this, and the fact that we could no more information about it the North, it may fairly be inferred this noble river [^][the Leeambye] holds an Easterly Westerly course for a considerable beyond where we left it.

Tt[T]he party having returned together an embassy of Masiko's principal , bearing a present and friendly

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2^d sheet[5] message, we left the river and proceeded .N.W. through a portion of the country Londa; the paramount chief of which well known to the Portuguese by the title Matiamvo. t[T]he inhabitants, æ[called]Balonda to the true wooly-headed negro race, differ remarkably from the Bechuanas other tribes in the South, in their treatment females, and [^][in the] practice of idolatry. Tt[T]hey swear by their mothers, and never desert &[: they] allow the women a place and voice their public assemblies, and frequently them to the chieftainship. Near village we observed an idol, consisting of an image formed of grass and , intended to represent a lion or alligator, a block of wood, on the top of which human face was rudely carved. In cases sickness or of non-success in hunting, are made and drums beat before m[se][^][idols,] during whole nights. Tt[T]he Bechuanas the contrary, swear by their fathers, - glory the little bit of beard which distinguishes from the sex which they despise, - And, they have some idea of a future , it exerts but little influence on conduct. Tt[T]heir supreme good is a cow, they never pray.

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[6] The first Londa chief of importance we visited[,] is called Shinté or Kabompo. His town stands on Latitude

13° South. [(13° 0 21)] We were recieved in what consider grand style. Tt[T]he old chief under a species of figus indica, on raised seat, having some hundreds women behind him, all decked out their best, and that best was a of red baize. Some drums primitive pianos[instruments] made of wood, powerfully beaten.[:] and different of men,- each numbering about 50 or 80 persons,- well armed with large and iron-headed arrows, short swords and guns,- rushed yelling us from different quarters. they all screwed up their faces so to look very savage and serious[^][fierce & savage][,] I they were trying whether could not make us take to our . But they knelt down and made obeisance to Shinté, which in this country consists in rubbing on the upper and front part the arms, and accross the chest. several hundreds had arrived, were delivered, in which my

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[7] history so far as they could extract it from companions, was given. "¶[T]he Bible containing message of peace", "the return of two captives Shinté",- "the opening of a new path for trade" &c. &c. were all described. "Perhaps he is fibbing, not"; they rather thought he was.[""]

"But as they were good hearted, and not all like the Balo-bale, or people of Sekeletu, had never done any evil to any one,

Shinté had better treat him well and send on his way". ¶[T]he women occasionally forth with a plaintive ditty, but could not distinguish whether it was praise of the speakers or of themselves. when the sun became hot, the scene .

Shinté came during the night and [around my neck] a particular kind of shell, which is valued, ~~tearound my neck~~, as a proof of greatest friendship, and [^][he] was greatly with some scriptural pictures which shewed him from a Magic Lantern.

¶[T]he spirit of trade is strong in all Africans, the Balonda chiefs we visited, all approved of our journey,-e[. E]ach an earnest hope that the projected might lead through his town.

Shinté~~having~~ facilitated our progress the next important chief, [^][named] Katema, & we

[0008]

[8] We ~~came~~ again to[reached] the Leeba in Latitude

12° 8 South and 22° 55 East Longitude. had assumed the same Easterly and Westerly as the Leeambye. After crossing it, were obliged to go almost due North, in of the plains of Lobalé on our , being flooded and impassable. It to be the rainy season, and did twenty-four hours pass without drenching showers. All the streams swollen so as to appear considerable [;] but as they were generally furnished rustic bridges, we may infer flow to be perennial. Several plains were crossed with the standing more than a foot deep-[:] broad vallies also, along which the flowed fast towards the Leeba, and enough to wet our blankets, which used as pads on the oxen, instead of . Both this and the water in rivers was so clear, that in using ~~rustic~~ bridges over the latter, though were submerged breast deep, we easily see the sticks on which place our feet. ¶[T]his clearness of water, which we observed in the

Zouga, Chobé and Leeambye, at the of inundation, is the result of rains falling on a mat of grass, so

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3^d sheet[9] thick, as to prevent the abrasion of the soil. As tropical rains cause the plains of Lobalé present a similar phenomenon, it may be unreasonable to conclude that the of inundation of the Barotsé-valley, and parts of the Zambesi, is supplied by rains in the North, and as the reported[,] comes chiefly from Lobalé.

We suffered less detention, than might be from the swollen state of the rivers; though we had to swim some of them, all except two boys knew the art; and we stopped to dry our clothes, unless it in the afternoons. We got drenched either rains or rivers, two or three times everyday; the sun was hot and we suffered no . If however, we arrived at sleeping place damp, or got our blankets , intermittent fever was sure to follow.

the more important rivers, or those we in canoes, were the Lokaloeje-[,](the village Soanamolopo about 3 miles N.N.W. of the , stood in Latitude 11° 49 42 South, and 22° 52 East.):-] The Lotembwa, upwards of

100 yards broad, [^][and] one of the principal feeders the Leeba, was crossed in 11° 40 S. Lat.-
¶[T]he town of Katema stands a short distance in 11° 35 37 S. Lat. and 22° 47 East . ¶[T]he Lake Dilolo, from which Lotembwa takes its rise, is 3 or 4 North

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[10] of Katema's town, [^][and] consequently may [^][be] reckoned nearly the same Longitude,

and between

11° 30' and 11° 32' S. Lat. We went round Western or smaller end of this Lake, ~~there~~[where] was not 1/2 a mile broad, but the other is said to [^][be] broader (perhaps 6 miles), and it has large waves, it is probably deep. contains many fish, and we saw marks many hippopotami on its banks. Repeated of intermittent [^][fever] had [^][at length] made me so weak giddy, [^][that] I could with difficulty stick on the ; and as Katema did not appear very to let me sleep at the broad [^][part,] I did feel much inclined to press the subject.

¶[T]he giddiness and confusion of mind were[, combined] the excessive cloudiness of the weather, annoyances in making observations; I took as many as possible at important point. After crossing water-covered plain beyond Dilolo, came to streams flowing in a totally direction from those we had . ¶[T]hese were the feeders of the Casai

(Kasye) or Loké, which we found flowing .E. and E.N.E. ¶[The][^][Casai] is about 120 broad, and flows in a deep valley, wooded and beautifully green. ¶[T]he of the ford was 11° 17' South. [The] confluence of the Chihune and Chihombo-(by the Longe) small streams, the latter however had on it, is 10° 57' 31" [S. Lat.][Long. 20° 29' 30" E. [Long.]

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[11]The Chikapa[(Lat 10° 38')] about 60 yards wide, flowing Nor-West; and when entering upon Portuguese , the Quango or Coango about 150 yards ~~and flowing[s]~~ nearly due North. ¶[T]he of the ford was 9 ° 50' 28" . I waited days for a lunar observation, but in vain[,][as] sky was always covered with clouds. To may at present be added Cassange, the inland station of the Portuguese-[,][Here][where] had a clear sky, and made many observations,- . 9° 37' 29" South, [Long.] 17° 43' 30" East.

¶[T]he country of the Balonda through we passed, was both fertile and beautiful forests alternate constantly with open covered with grass resembling fine Hay[meadows]. the general surface, though , seems covered with waves disposed from N.N.E. to S.S.W. ¶[T]he of each of these earthen billows, is covered with forest, four or five miles ; while the trough about a mile wide, generally a stream or bog in the centre

~~and~~[with] the habitations and gardens of the inhabitants on the sides. ¶[T]he forests consist lofty evergreen trees, standing close together interlaced with great numbers of climbers. ¶[T]he trees covered with , and the ground with mosses and , indicate a much more humid , than is to be found in the South.

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[12]the only roads through these [^][dense] thickets are small foot-paths-[:] And as an attempt to an ox suddenly, only makes him rush , we were frequently caught [^][by the overhanging climbers,] and came the ground, ~~crown of the~~ head foremost.

¶[O]n this account , I never trusted to the alone for longitudes -[NP.][New Para]¶[T]he streams which the country is well supplied, differ in the directions in which they . ~~Man~~[M]any were flowing southwards; but distance of about 20 miles brought us streams running North East, and in deeper vallies. I suspected that we travelling on an elevated table-land, the current of the Zambesi and rivers was rapid, and we had large -Heaths and Rhododendrons, which grow elevated positions [^][together with a wonderful lack of animal life.]¶[This proved to be the fact for] when we were 40 miles E.S.E of the Quango came upon a sudden descent [^][perhaps of about 2000 feet,] which me seemed about the same height as

¶[T]able Mountain at the Cape. Ninety or one miles [^][west] from this descent, appeared[ed] it were a range of mountains, but is only the edge of ~~another~~[similar] table-land, with that on the margin of we stood. ~~And~~¶[T]his presents the mountainous appearance to a person from the West.- ¶[T]he intervening is call Cassange, and through flows the Quango and other rivers.[Let part of letter dated 20 August 1854 follow here at the 2nd page as marked.][13]

[0013]4th sheet

[16]This country as compared with [^][that to] the South is peopled. We came to villages, every few and often passed as many as ten in a . s[S]ome villages were extremely neat; others so buried in a wilderness of weeds, [^][that] though on the ox in the middle of the village, could see only the tops of houses. Tt[T]here no lack of food, Manioc or the Tapioca is the staff of life, and requires but labour for its cultivation. Tt[T]he seasons to allow of ~~their~~ planting or reaping the year round. Tt[T]he Balonda were all kind, and indeed, had they been , we should have starved; for there no game, and all the goods which I had from the Cape, were expended before started, except[ing] a few beads. [N.P.]When ~~however~~, we came near to the Portuguese , the tribes altered very much the worse: [^][and the Chiboqui so annoyed us by] heavy fines were levied the most frivolous pretences, [that we changed course from N.W. to N. This did not relive us long for when we came Cassange, we found our route obstructed by the M'bangala who demanded]and at length among the Cheeboqui, payment of "a man, an ox, or a gun" was demanded leave to pass at all. A refusal on part was [^][sometimes] followed by the[a] whole tribe us, brandishing their swords, arrows, guns, and tumultuously vociferating demands. Tt[T]he more we yielded, the

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[17]the more unreasonable the mob became, till last, in order not to aid in robbing , we ceased speaking after telling that they must strike the first blow. men who were inured to fighting by Sebituane, quietly surrounded the chief and . Tt[T]hese felt their danger, and became more amicable. Tt[T]hey disputed the proposition that the they cultivated, alone belonged them, and all the rest of the country God. Tt[T]his being the idea in the native , they readily admitted, that they had right to demand payment for on the soil of our common Father. they pleaded custom; slave traders, gave them a slave. [^][But] My companions all, the free subjects of Sekeletu, had good a right to give me, as I had give one of them,[^]; and] the affair usually by our agreeing to give each food in token of friendship. I had part with an ox; and their part the contract was sometimes fulfilled sending [us] two or three pounds of the of our own animal, with ~~so~~ expressions of regret at having else to give. It was impossible avoid laughing at the coolness

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[18]of the generous creatures. I had paid away razors, shirts and everything I could dispense [with], but though I shewed these extortioners the instruments all we had as being perfectly useless to them, oxen, men and guns [^][still] remained. "You may well give what we ask for [^][as]we shall get whole tomorrow, after we have killed you";- "you must go back from whence you came say we sent you";- were some of the witticisms, , with hunger, were making us all sulky savage. If Sekeletu had allowed my to bring their shields, I could not restrained them; but we never came actual collision, and as far as we are , the way is open for our return. Oe[O]n the last occasion [^][on which] we parted with an ox, were raised against one which lost his tail, because they imagined a had been inserted in the stump, which injure them, [and] the remaining four ~~which we still~~ [^][in our] possessed[ion] very soon exhibited same peculiarity of[in] their caudal extremities. [Attempts have frequently been made by the Balonda & other distant tribes to up commercial intercourses with the Portuguese and these have always been rendered by the borderers]

In order not to tire you with a longer ~~deliberation~~[account] of vexations, which were making misanthropic, and more anxious to pass visit a tribe, I may mention, that, in the beginning of April reached banks of the Quango,

which was

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[19] swollen and its muddy waters flowing rapidly, had [^][at length] made up my mind to part with my and coat to the ferrymen for a . But a young Portuguese sergeant, Cypriano De Abreu made his appearance, enabled us to enter Portuguese territory farther annoyance. Senhor Neves Cassange performed a brother's part to in the time of need-[,]~~And~~[and] indeed, the everywhere exhibited the greatest all the way to Loanda

[Insert 20,21,22,23,24]

~~I shall not attempt in this letter to give any account of~~[T]he Province of Angola ~~farther than, except in parts near the coast it is one of~~[possesses] great fertility and beauty; [and] its capabilities both agriculturally and commercially of a very high order. Indeed I do not contradiction in asserting it to be the in resources in[of] Western Africa. The[Begin No.2 with this]

[The] commerce of Angola has been remarkably by the English for though the city of Loanda contains a population of eleven thousand clothed chiefly in the produce of looms, and though in many parts the Interior cheap Glasgow And Manchester constitute the circulating medium, is not a single English house established the capital. For this anomaly various are assigned, the most cogent

[Continued 5th Sheet No 1]

[0017] 5th sheet[Continued from 4th No 1 & to be inserted with it No 2 page 8 together with next page] of these appears to be, that those who first attempted develop a trade, unfortunately accepted bills Rio Janeiro in part payment of their , at a time when the increased numbers vigilance of our cruisers, caused the of many houses, both in Rio Loanda. Heavy losses were sustained Angola got a bad name in the mercantile in consequence. No attempt has ever made since. Still, with the same difficulties burdens as the English encountered, the carry on a flourishing trade with

Loanda.[* note][Note * The Americans it is said do not hesitate to with slavers, while the traders cannot. Ed.] And as a very large proportion the goods imported in other ships are manufactures, taken in exchange colonial produce which has gone by the and circuitous route of Lisbon, .e. produce on which the expense of port dues, , commission &c. is paid from Loanda Lisbon, and again thence to London. as the same round of expenses is incurred English manufactures, a British merchant merchandise direct to and from England dealing in Loanda in a liberal spirit, almost certainly establish a lucrative

In connection with this subject I may be to call your attention to the Rivers Casai and Quango. these are reported by natives, who profess knowledge of the country

[0018] ~~it is~~[are] believed by Portuguese traders ~~that they~~[to] join North of Cassange and form the

Congo or Zaire of Captⁿ Tuckey. the directions which I saw those rivers flowing[,] appear favour the idea. ¶[T]he Casai[,] according to report of Matiamvo's people whom we [,] flows East Nor[th]-East even beyond the of their chief[,] and as that is a month 300 miles from the ford, if it really makes large bend round to the N.W. after that we form an idea of the great importance the attempts of Commander Bedingfield others[,] to establish licit commerce in the Congo. It is scarcely possible to estimate ultimate effect which success in [t]his laudable efforts would produce. rivers drain such a vast extent of slave producing territory, [^][that] they features of peculiar interest. ¶[T]he of the English squadron on the is powerfully felt throughout the . Of this I have observed ample , and no wonder this is the case[,] it makes one proud of his countrymen witness the zeal and energy with which officers of our cruisers apply themselves the suppression of the trade in slaves.

[The above to No 2 see preceeding page.]

[0019]

~~My present intentions are to return to the Zambesi by nearly the same route I followed in coming here. And~~[23]a[A]fter making any arrangements [^][with Sekeletu] that be deemed necessary, ~~try~~[^][I propose] to descend the Leeambye to Quilimane. It may be advisable order to avoid the waterfall of Mosio[^][a]tunya, cross overland from Sesheké to the river Maninché or Loengé (Bashukulompo R.)[,] buy beg a canoe[,] and descend [^][in] it to the Leeambye.

†[T]he confluence of the Chobe is only two days from the waterfall[,] but the river is rocky and dangerous before reaching point.[20 follow

19, sheet 4]I reached[approached] Loanda labouring ~~disease~~[^][severe illness] and extremely anxious as to I should do for the support of my who without exception are the I ever travelled with[,] and who bravely me[,] though told by the blacks of village West of Cassange[,] that "the white was taking them down to the coast for [,] and they would all be taken on board , fattened and eaten"Insert from "Extracts" 14 Jan 1855 -- 21 I was laid prostrate for a long time by severe indisposition, and owe my life, under God, to H. M. Commissioner Edmund Gabriel Esqre, the only Englishman whom I know in the city. His unwearied kindnesses and generous hospitality to both me and my companions, enable me now to return to my duty with renewed health and spirits.[24]In order that, should succeed in reaching Mosambique or

Quilimane, I may not ~~have~~[suffer] the same of spirits in my approach[,] presume to request that any of our who may be on that coast, be to make enquiries respecting my [^][towards the end of 1855]. I am known to some of subjects of the Imaum of Muscat the name of "Naka" (Doctor)

In conclusion I cannot omit , the very great courtesy of the Authorities; and as their habitual was in strict accordance with wishes of the Government of Portugal, is of the greater value.

Begging to be excused for to make an Alternative you in the absence of my friend[Colonel]

I am Sir,
Your Most Obedient Servant
David Livingston