

Letter to Roderick I. Murchison, 13 February 1855

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[0001] N^o 2 [On the Province of Angola]

Cassange 13th February

1855

~~Sir Roderick I. Murchison~~

[Insert commencement from

page 4 Sheet 4 No 1]

~~Sir~~

As I have now had the advantage of passing through the Province of Angola twice, and have honestly endeavoured to obtain correct knowledge of the country. I venture to give you my impressions as not calculated to mislead any except those whose general views of the world are much more gloomy than mine.

As we proceed from the coast inland[,] the country[,] except in the vicinity of rivers[,] presents a rather arid appearance. ‡[T]here are not many trees[,] but abundance of hard coarse grass. But the low meadow lands of several miles width[,] lying a[d]jacent to the rivers, are sufficiently fertile, and yield annually fine crops of sugar cane, different vegetables and manioc[,]-([] the staff of life through all this part of Africa-[])[,]A[a]lso oranges[,] bananas and mangoes of excellent quality. Proceeding Eastwards we enter on a different sort of country about Longitude 14° East. It is mountainous, well watered with perennial streams, and mollified by fogs

[0002]

[2] deposited from the Western winds, which come regularly to different places at different hours every day. Near the Muria we enter dense forests whose gigantic trees, covered with scarlet or other coloured blossoms, and giving support to numerous enormous climbers with the curious notes of strange tropical birds, present the idea of excessive luxuriance and recall the feelings of wildness[,] produced when standing in similar sylvan scenery in the Interior of Brazil. the Palm

which yields the oil of commerce[,] grows everywhere. Pine Apples, bananas and different kinds of South American fruit trees first introduced by the missionaries[,] flourish in the woods[,] though apparently wild and totally uncared for. And most excellent coffee from a few seeds of the celebrated Mocha, propagates itself spontaneously in the forests which line the mountain sides. Cotton of rather inferior quality finds itself so well suited with climate and soil [^] [that] it appears as if indigenous. Provisions are abundant and cheap. Ten pounds of the produce of the Manioc plant[,] which under the

[0003]

[3]classical appellation "Revalenta Arabica" sells in England for twentytwo shillings[,] may in the district referred to be purchased for a [one] penny. Labour too is abundant and cheap[:]. Two pence per day is considered good wages by carpenters[,] smiths, potters &c &c[,] as well as by common labourers. The greatest drawback the population has in developing the resources of the country, is the want of carriage roads for the conveyance of produce to markets. the slave trade led to the neglect of every permanent source of wealth. All the merchandise of the Interior was transported on the shoulders and heads of the slaves[,] who equally with the goods were intended for exportation. And even since the traffic has been effectually repressed by our cruizers[,] human labour for transport has alone been available. this is a most expensive and dilatory system[:]~~for~~ [as] the merchants and persons of smaller means[,] on whose industry access to a proper market would have a most beneficial effect, possess no stimulus for exertion in cultivation. Some use is made of the river zenza by means of canoes[,] and considerable trade is carried on between the districts on the Coanza and Loanda by the same means[:] but the bars

[0004]

[4] at the mouths of both rivers present serious obstacles to speedy transit.

the country still farther inland becomes gradually more open. Ambaca presents an undulating surface with ranges of mountains on each

side in the distance. It possesses a great number of fine little rivers [streams][,] which might be turned to much advantage for water power and irrigation. Both it and Pungo Andongo abound in cattle. The latter seems more elevated[,] for as we cross the Lotete[,] the boundary between the two districts[,] we enter upon the same vegetation and trees which characterise Luinda. Wheat, grapes and European vegetables grow in nearly the same spots with bananas and other tropical fruits. Indeed by selecting proper localities[,] cotton, sugar, coffee and other products of hot climates might be raised to any amount in this fine and beautiful country. together with many of the grains and fruits of colder countries. No attempts have hitherto been made to develop the internal resources of the country. It is but lately that coffee plantations were turned to as a source of wealth. Some were discovered during my progress through the country, and

[0005]

[5] the actual extent of the tree is still unknown. I saw it at Tala Mungongo[,] nearly 300 miles from the coast. * Insert

* Different kinds of gum abound, as gum elemi, India rubber &c. And among metals, very superior iron all through the country. Rich copper-ore exists in the Interior of Ambriz & there are indications of coal.

Cassange is at present the farthest inland station of the Portuguese. It may be called the commercial capital of the Interior. Trade in ivory and wax is carried on with great vigour and success. And ~~very~~ large quantities of English cotton goods are sent into the country beyond[,] by means of native or half blood Portuguese. the merchants treat their customers with great liberality. At the time I write Captain Neves is preparing presents[,] consisting of cloth, beads, carpets[,] furniture &c. of upwards of £50 value for Matiamvo, the most powerful potentate East of this. this chief lives about Long. 24° and monopolizes the ~~the~~ trade which[,] but for him[,] might pass to tribes called Kanyika beyond him. [22] [Transfer to No 1 22] My present intention is to proceed to ~~his~~ [Matiamvo] town before turning Southward. ~~And~~ [T]aking it

for granted that I shall come into his
good graces[,] our progress through his country
will be comparatively easy[,] and the route[,]
upon the whole[,] not much longer than
the zigzag ~~one~~ [way] we were forced to adopt
in coming here. The only thing which may

[0006]

[22 No 1 continued] hinder the execution of this plan[,] will be the
wishes of my companions to return as speedily
as possible by the path we already know. It
is the first time they have gone into other lands
except for plunder[:]; And they have followed
my wishes so implicitly hitherto[,] it would not be
right in me to thwart theirs. [6 No 2]~~After this long~~
~~digression I may add that~~[T]he deep valley of
Cassange is wonderfully fertile, but success
in trade prevents the merchants from paying
any attention to agriculture. The soil, so far
as present experience goes, would place M^r
Mechi's pipes for liquid manure at a
discount, for it requires nothing but labour[:]
The more it is worked[,] the more fruitful
it becomes.

[Insert section &c]the Government of the country may be
described as a military one[,] and closely resembles
that which Sir Harry Smith endeavoured in
vain to introduce among the Caffres. The
imposts are exceedingly light[,] consisting of
a tax of eight pence on each hearth, and
sixpence on each head of cattle. something
is also levied on gardens near the coast and
on weavers and smiths. The population is
large, between five and six hundred thousand
souls being under the sway of the Portuguese.
And of this large number[,] the majority are free-

[0007] [7]

born. In those districts, to the statistics of which I
had access, the slaves did not form 5 percent of
the entire population, and a very large proportion
was dependant on agriculture alone. There are
very few whites comparatively, and from the polite
way in which persons of colour are addressed and
admitted to the tables of the more affluent, it might
be inferred that there is as little prejudice against
colour as in any country in the world. Nothing
struck me as more remarkable than the change
produced on convicts by their residence in this
Colony. No sooner do they arrive[,] than they
are enlisted into the 1st Regiment of the Line

and perform similar duties to our Foot Gaurds in London. the eleven thousand inhabitants of Loanda go comfortably to bed every night[,] although they know that the citadels and all the arms of Loanda are in the hands of convicts, many of whom have been transported for life. the officers are not supposed to have been guilty of any offence against the laws of their country and probably they may have considerable influence with the men; but their testimony even is that the men perform their duty well, and are excellent soldiers. Some ascribe the remarkable change to the utter hopelessness of escape[,] - the certainty of detection and punishment of any crime[,] - and the fear of being sent to the deadly

[0008]

[8] district of St Jose de Encage (something like our Norfolk-island, but not so bad)[,] but however accounted for, the beneficial change in the men is unquestionable.

Another pleasing feature in the population is the ability of many to read and write. It is considered a disgrace in Ambaca for a free man of either colour to be unable to write. this general diffusion of education is the result of the teaching of the Jesuit missionaries, who were expelled the country by the Marquis of Pombal. If the results of their teaching have been so permanent, without anything like a supply of books, we may be allowed to indulge the hope that the labours of Protestants of all denominations[,] who endeavour to leave God's word behind them, will be not less abiding.

[Insert from Sheet 4 and 5 of No 1] this is accompanied by a map intended to replace that lost in the "Forerunner". I have sent all my observations to Thomas Maclear Esq of the Royal Observatory at the Cape, and beg that my positions may be considered sub judice[,] till he gives his opinion.

I am Sir. Your most obedient Servant
David Livingston