

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

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MS 22
Tete, on the Zambesi
East Africa,
25th March 1856
His Excellency, José R. C. do Amaral,
The Governor of Angola and its Dependencies
May it please your Excellency

As 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 as well
appreciated as could have been expected

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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 shewn 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 friendship 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 Merchants for when I asked afterwards what I should say in my letter the same expressions were 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

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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 by Pitsané, 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 liquore at home. Other tribes as those of Katema and Shinté promised to send men with them for the same purposes, and I believe

if no untoward event transpires a brisk

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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 made 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.

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But something else must have prevented
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 Sebituane
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

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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 percieve its 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 *
and if it still appears desirable I may
suggest the way from Pungo Andongo
to Bihé. From Bihé 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
* 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

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a suggestion at present. And I mention
Pungo Andongo and Bihé because of
the well known public spirit of S^r
Pires who has trade relations with all that
country. There would be more difficulty
in the return from Mpololo to Bihé.
I need scarcely add that any service
I could render not involving an
actual outlay of my small salar^{ry}
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

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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, José R. C. do Amaral
The Governor General
West Coast of Angola &c. &c. &c.
of Africa Loanda

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