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978-1-108-08274-7 — A Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries

Duarte Lopez, Filippo Pigafetta, Edited and translated by Margarite Hutchinson, Preface by Thomas

Fowell Buxton

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A Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries

In this 1591 work, mathematician Filippo Pigafetta (1533–1604) explains that he was ordered by Pope Sixtus V to transcribe the account of Duarte Lopez, a Portuguese who had spent twelve years in the Congo. Lopez had hoped that the pope would give him support in his mission to the Congolese, but this was not forthcoming: he returned to Africa, and was not heard from again. The work was first translated into English by the English antiquary Abraham Hartwell: this translation with notes by Margarite Hutchinson was published in 1881. (It has not been possible to reissue the accompanying map.) Lopez's narrative gives a detailed account of his voyage on his uncle's ship and the history and geography of the kingdom and its six administrative regions under the rule of its king (named by Lopez 'Don Alvarez'). This fascinating account demonstrates the extent of Portuguese exploration across West Africa in the sixteenth century, of which later explorers were unaware.

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A Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries

*Drawn out of the Writings and Discourses
of the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, by Filippo
Pigafetta, in Rome, 1591*

DUARTE LOPEZ

FILIPPO PIGAFETTA

MARGARITE HUTCHINSON

THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON



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A R E P O R T
OF THE
KINGDOM OF CONGO,
AND OF THE
Surrounding Countries;
Drawn out of the Writings and Discourses of the Portuguese,
DUARTE LOPEZ,

BY FILIPPO PIGAFETTA, IN ROME, 1591.

Newly Translated from the Italian, and Edited, with Explanatory Notes,

BY
MARGARITE HUTCHINSON.

With Facsimiles of the Original Maps, and a Preface by
SIR THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON, BART., F.R.G.S.,
ETC., ETC.

“There lies the Congo Kingdom, great and strong,
Already led by us to Christian ways;
Where flows Zaire, the river clear and long,
A stream unseen by men of olden days.”
The Lusids, v. 13.

L O N D O N :
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1881.

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PREFACE.

THE last twenty-five years have seen the veil drawn back from a great part of the continent of Africa. The labours of many travellers following in the steps of Livingstone have combined to throw a light on the Dark Continent, of which we knew as little as the inhabitants knew of us. We have learnt much of the physical features of the country, and of the character of the tribes with whom explorers have made acquaintance, but we have also learnt that much that has appeared to us so new was, in fact, only rediscovered.

The maps of the 16th century fairly illustrate the knowledge of that time. If we compare them with the maps of the beginning of the 19th century, we cannot fail to observe how much of that knowledge was lost, although more recent explorations showed how much of truth was contained in them.

The translation that is now offered to the public will have its use in showing the kind of information that was to be had in Europe in the 16th century, and the character of the men who obtained it.

It may do more. It may stimulate research into this long-neglected portion of history; and possibly the investigation of libraries in Portugal and Spain may yet throw more light on the condition of Central Africa at that time, and on the nature of the Portuguese Government over it; and, perhaps, give us some answer to the questions how that government was formed, and how it came to be lost. Such questions

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could not fail to be of interest to any nation that possesses or has possessed authority in Africa. It would be information full of interest to us if it enabled us to know by what steps the authority was gained—whether in consequence of the deliberate intention of the Government at Lisbon, or by the efforts of Portuguese settled in the interior. Again, it was lost—utterly forgotten—leaving no traces behind it, unless the Indian corn and the tobacco plants are such. We should gladly welcome any information that showed whether the reins of government were drawn too tight, till they broke, or whether they fell from the hands of rulers who ruled without diligence.

The accounts of the travels of Pigafetta, as narrated by Duarte Lopez, give a valuable insight into the knowledge then existing in Europe. They also supply a further illustration of the activity then displayed by the Courts at Rome and Lisbon in sending out missionary expeditions to Africa; but they tell us nothing to explain how it is that the interior of the country to this day shows no signs of the results of those efforts.

The translation, and the notes that accompany it, make it unnecessary for me to allude to the laborious research and prolonged study which they have required. That labour has been willingly given, and will meet its reward if it contributes something to the materials for the History of Africa which has yet to be written.

THOS. FOWELL BUXTON.

*Warrles,**Waltham Abbey.*

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INTRODUCTION.

It was in the summer of 1878 that my attention was first directed to the work of Filippo Pigafetta. I was assisting my husband in the preparation of a short work on Africa, which he has termed "The Lost Continent and its Rediscovery," and it became necessary to examine, as far as possible, into the records of the dealings with Africa of European nations. Mr. Major's work, "Prince Henry the Navigator;" Captain Burton's "Lands of Cazembe" and translation of "Dr. Lacerda;" and Captain Elton's translation of the "Chronicles of the Mozambique," have shown us the important part Portugal had played in tropical Africa. But our author, Pigafetta, we had not yet come in contact with.

Every student of African bibliography is, of course, acquainted with the work by name, but not many in these days have had the opportunity of studying the work for themselves. As may be seen, by reference to the Bibliographical Note, the work was, very soon after its publication, translated into English by Abraham Hartwell, Rector of Toddington, Beds, and dedicated to Archbishop Whitgift. This quaint dedication I have placed at page xxiii. Hartwell's translation forms the basis of some portion of "Purchas, His Pilgrims," and "John Ogilvy's Account of Africa." A still more interesting use was made of it by Daniel De Foe. A writer in Macmillan's Magazine, in the year 1878, gives an account of the remarkable "Travels of Captain Singleton," and

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expresses his surprise that the discoveries of Stanley and others seem to have been anticipated so far back as 1791. Apparently, unaware of the existence of our author's work, he supposes that Daniel De Foe had come in contact, personally, with Portuguese travellers. To any one who has read both works it is manifest that De Foe carries his hero, Captain Singleton, through the scenes, and surrounds him with the events which Lopez describes in the pages of Pigafetta. The last edition of the *Encyc. Brit.* states that, in a paper read before the Bombay Branch of the Asiatic Society, in 1863, Dr. Birdwood commented on the surprising anticipation of recent discoveries in Africa contained in the narrative of Captain Singleton. However, it is but fair to admit that the work of Pigafetta in the original Italian, and in the translation by Hartwell, is extremely scarce; and we were indebted to the kindness of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society for permission to make free use of the Italian copy belonging to them. So much of interest was revealed as the translation proceeded that, at Sir T. Fowell Buxton's request, it was resolved to translate the whole for private circulation. It was, however, thought that the book, with a certain amount of explanation and notes, would be interesting to a larger circle, and it is, therefore, given in its present form. Its preparation has involved an unexpected amount of labour in consulting and verifying authorities, and the translator asks the kind forbearance of the reader, for she feels that to do justice to her task, required a skilled and practised hand. It was manifest, on perusal of the work and study of the large map prepared by Lopez, that some considerable portion of information had been obtained from other sources, which our knowledge of Portuguese records was not sufficient to enable us to trace. Fortunately, however, at the very time that we were considering this question, the

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materials needed were being prepared by a most competent authority, and the following extracts from M. Luciano Cordeiro's "L'Hydrographie Africaine" show who the authors were whom Lopez must have studied.

The Lyons Geographical Society had written for information to the Geographical Society of Lisbon. M. Cordeiro's reply takes the form of an essay; he says:—

" LISBON.

" SIR,

"THE Geographical Society of Lisbon has been agreeably surpris'd in hearing that the Geographical Society of Lyons is occupied in the study of a globe which, for many years, has remained forgotten in the principal library of your city.

"This globe, according to your courteous letter of the 23rd of February, 1878, and to which our Society directs me to reply, places the African Equatorial Lakes in an approximate position to that made known by the latest modern discoveries.

"Being aware that the Portuguese, Duarte Lopez, had greatly contributed, by his voyages in Central Africa, towards furnishing the Dominicans, who made the Lyons globe (to which you give the date 1701), with the information which enabled them to construct it, you wish to have sent you the works of Duarte Lopez, or, better still, complete accounts of the Portuguese voyages, which, at the end of the 17th century, determined up to a certain point the theory which is in full vigour to-day, regarding the hydrographical system of Africa and of the sources of the Nile, a theory formerly forcibly combated on this last point by the French and other academies.

"Our Society will endeavour, with much pleasure, to aid you in your interesting research, as well as to furnish you with all the information, historical and geographical, which

can be procured regarding the points to which you refer. Nevertheless, I regret being unable to send you the works, or, rather, the work of Duarte Lopez, or, more correctly, of Philip Pigafetta, in consequence of its being so scarce, that I hardly know of two copies in Portugal, and those incompletely printed, and belonging to the Government. . . .

“The full information you require, respecting Portuguese travels in Africa before the 18th century, would necessarily involve too much labour. In order to satisfy your immediate wants on the subject, I shall confine myself, therefore, to giving you hastily gathered details on the point occupying your attention at this moment. . . .

“Certainly, I can only attribute to entire ignorance of our language, and of our African geographical literature, the unjust assertion of the eminent geographer, Monsieur Petermann, which says, ‘that the work of the Portuguese in the exploration of Africa is almost nil, and their information incomplete and inaccurate.’ . . . You doubtless know, sir, that it was in Portugal, in the 14th century, the long and arduous campaign commenced for opening up Africa to science, civilization, and commerce, and that with an ardour which has, perhaps, never been surpassed. If the Infante Dom Henrique inaugurated the discoveries, King Dom João II. (1481—1495) was the real initiator of geographical exploration in the interior of Africa. It was, indeed, one of his chief designs to make known the interior of the dark continent, to open a passage across Africa as far as the Indian Ocean, and to find, in fact, in those vast regions what was then called the Empire of Prester John. To this end, numerous expeditions were sent out, so that the Portuguese might discover new parts of the coast, and establish themselves there; and trustworthy men were to remain, by order of this illustrious prince, amongst the natives, to cultivate

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friendly relations with them, and to push on into the interior under their guidance, so as to collect information of the people and country of those parts. With this design, the king put in action the unceasing desire and zeal he had for the propagation of the Christian religion, and gave preference to those missionaries who had mathematical knowledge. But before that, our nation had already furnished modern African history with the first European explorer—*João Fernandes* (1445). Amongst other expeditions, I will specially refer in passing to those of *Pero d'Evora* and of *Gonçallo Eannes* to *Tucoral* and *Tumbuctoo*, of *Mem Rodrigues* and *Pero d'Astuniga* to Timbuctoo and to Temala, King of the Foulahs; of *Rodrigo Rebello*, *Pero Reinel*, *João Collaco* first, and afterwards, in 1534, by command of the historian, *Barros*, of *Pero Fernandes*, to the interior of Senegambia, where the country is called *Mani-Manfa*—the *Mani-Mana* which Lopez places on the Upper Niger; of *Rodrigo Reinel*, *Diogo Borges*, and *Gonçalo d'Antas* to *Huadem*, in Adrar; of *Lucas*, an Abyssinian, on the east coast, in the country of Mofes, which was supposed to be the frontier of Abyssinia, or Nubia; of *João Lourenço*, *Vicente Annes*, and *João Bispo*, and of others to *Songo*, and to various parts of the interior of the country of the Mandingas and Foulahs. And at this point I may add, we possess very old and most interesting works relating to expeditions across Senegambia and in the interior of Africa. One of these, written by the clever explorer, *Captain Andre Alvares d'Almada*, dates from the second half of the 16th century. . . .

“If to some extent the serious events of the reign of João II., and, later, the discovery of India, somewhat weakened interest in African discoveries, on the other hand, the growing settlement of the Portuguese on that continent gave rise, under commercial and religious influence, to wonderful ex-

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plorations, which have continued, almost without interruption, to our own day. I may specially refer to that of *Père Gonçalo da Silveira* to the interior of Monomotapa, in 1560; of *Francisco Barreto* and *Vasco Fernandes* to Chicova and Manica (1570—1573); of *Lopez* to the interior of Congo; and of *Rebello de Aragão* to the Kingdom of Angola, of which he was one of the first conquerors. In the 16th and 17th centuries, another important source of information on the interior of Africa is to be found in our extensive navigation of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and from the large number of shipwrecks which occurred on the African coasts. Frequently the shipwrecked sailors remained for years amongst the natives, accompanying them in their far-off expeditions. We find the King of Portugal already, in 1521, sending an explorer—*Gregorio de Quadra*—to Congo, to go to Abyssinia across the continent; and in 1526, a Portuguese, *Balthasar de Castro*, who had lived for some time in Angola, sending news to the King of Portugal from Congo, of an expedition being formed for the discovery of the principal source of that river, and begging to be entrusted with the conduct of it. In 1537, another Portuguese, *Manuel Pacheco*, who evidently knew the country of Congo well, wrote on an identical project. . . . Two things should be noticed—one is, that from 1516, the King of Congo became subject to Portugal; the other, that at the time of the Portuguese settlement at Congo and Angola, the former kingdom extended much farther south and east than the actual territory bearing that name.

“Let us return to our subject, and see how Portuguese geography of the 16th century understood and taught the chief elements of the hydrography of Africa, or what were the views on this subject which it enunciated.

“On a map, ‘*L’Infularium illustratum Henrici Martelli*

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Germani,' which shows the Portuguese discoveries on the western coast of Africa up to 1489, the hydrography of the Nile retains the position Ptolemy gave it, but the *Rio Poderoso*, which falls into the Atlantic with a large mouth, near the *pôta de padron*, recedes from, and approaches one of the central lakes of the Nile. These lakes are fed by streams of water from the Mountains of the Moon, situated in the middle of the continent.

"In the celebrated portulan of Juan de la Cosa (1500) we see a great lake, south of the equator, giving rise to the Nile, which flows direct north, having no communication with two lesser lakes to the E. and N.E. of the other. *Duarte Pacheco Pereira*, who is supposed to have written in 1505, and who went to India, in 1503, with *Affonso de Albuquerque*, says, in an interesting nautical treatise, that the Zaire has its source in some mountains 50 leagues from the coast, but that it becomes very large from other rivers flowing into it. He says that the Nile rises to the south of the equator, that it forms two lakes near its source, and divides into two branches, which join again, forming the Island of Meroe. He says, also, of the Niger, that its course is long and its source unknown, but that it was believed to rise from a lake of the Nile, near Tombouctoo.

"In the middle of the 16th century, when the colonization of Africa by the Portuguese had greatly extended, the map of *Diogo Homem* (1558) has on it the Nile flowing by three principal branches from three lakes, two of which are in the middle of Ethiopia, between the Tropic of Capricorn and the equator, and almost in the same parallel of latitude; the third is under the equator to the N.E. of the others, and near the coast of Melinde, and on the frontier of the empire of Prester John. . . .

"On one of the maps of the interesting atlas arranged in

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1563 by the Portuguese, *Lazaro Luis*, one sees a large lake as high up as the Kingdom of Quiloa, from which the Cuama, or Zambesi, flows towards the S.E. by two arms; towards the S.E., the River Manhife; and towards the S., another river, without name, falls into False Bay. . . .

“On the beautiful map of the world of Fernão Vaz Dourado, made at Goa in 1571, the same features are represented to a certain extent, with some modern modifications.”

The next map to which M. Cordeiro draws attention is that of *Duarte Lopez*, which is described in the “Note.” He passes now to the text of the geographers.

“One of the oldest and most interesting sources of information we possess relating to the East of Africa is, doubtless, that given by *Francisco Alvares*, chaplain to the King of Portugal, and a native of Coimbra, who went to Abyssinia, in 1520, with the embassy of *Dom Rodrigo de Lima*. . . . Already, before this, *Pero da Covilhan* had penetrated farther, and, according to Alvares, he had even been to the sources of the Nile in the Kingdom of *Goyame*. Some who accompanied Alvarez—*Jorge d’Abren*, *Diogo Fernandes*, *Affonso Mendes*, and *Alvarenga*—followed Prester John in an expedition to the Kingdom of *Adea*, and almost got as far as Mogadoxo. . . .

“When, in 1552, Barros published his *Asia*, our empire already extended along all the African coast, from Guinea to the entrance of the Red Sea, and the centres of Portuguese colonization and exploration on the Ethiopian continent were already numerous and in a great state of activity. Intercourse with the interior was also carried on from the coast far inland, and the information thus directly, or indirectly gained, necessarily constituted an important basis. In whatever else they might differ, these accounts seemed to agree persistently on one point, and that was, the existence of a great inland lake, or, rather, of a chain of great lakes,

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giving origin it might be to the Nile, or to the Zaire, or to the Zambesi. . . .

“On the south-east side, the idea of a great inland lake, with several rivers flowing out of it, and falling into the sea on that coast, dates from the first relations of the Portuguese with the natives of the Bay, which, after its exploration by Lourenço Marques, received the name of that navigator, instead of Bay of Lagoa, which the English have preserved under the odd name of Alagoa Bay. . . . We find stated in a work of the 16th century, the relation of the course of the Upper Nile to that of the Blue Nile, and, also, the origin of this last (Lake Tzana). This is the short history of *Miguel de Castanho*, who was with the famous expedition of *Dom Christovão da Gama* in Abyssinia. A contemporary of Castanho, *Dom João Bermudes*, and who was in those regions at the same period (1565), says, ‘The Moorish king (of *Zeilah*) lives in a kingdom called *Dembia*, which the Nile crosses, and where it forms a lake 30 leagues long, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ leagues broad. In this lake are several islands.’ This is the Lake Tzana. Bermudes says of it, ‘And this lake is not the one from which the Nile issues, as that river comes from much farther off; even more than 200 leagues above Damute.’ It should be remarked that Bermudes lived in Damute, in his calling as a missionary. . . . In 1578, a Portuguese went to Africa, who, by his cultivated intellect, his boldness in refuting the geographical prejudices of his day, and the zeal he carried into his study of the interior of the great continent, was not so much an adventurer as a real explorer, animated with a desire to know and to unveil the mysterious heart of Africa. That Portuguese was Duarte Lopez.

“His revelations naturally caused less astonishment in Portugal than in the rest of Europe. Only a short time

before the publication of “Pigafetta,” *João dos Santos*, for example, had travelled over Eastern Africa, and actually corrected some of the matters contained therein. Yet the fact remains, that the observant talent of Lopez has given us one of the most remarkable maps of Africa. To all who have seen that map, the actual contour of African cartography, having regard to its central hydrography, is admirably laid down in its general features. . . .

“From what has been said above, it would seem that the several notions of Portuguese geography in the 16th century might be summed up as follows:—

“1. The lacustrian and general origin of the great African rivers—the Zaire, the Zambesi, and the Nile; identity of origin by the simple supposition of the connexion of these rivers, or the lakes from which they flow, by a central stream flowing in the direction N.S., like the Lualaba in modern maps.

“2. Correction of Ptolomean geography; assertion of two great central lakes in a relative position N.S., besides other lakes on N.E., near or under the equator; sources of chief branches of the Nile, and others also on the N.S. and W., which explain the formation of the Niger, and of the Kaffai, or Guango.

“3. Lengthened course of Zaire towards equator and southwards, its first source in a southern lake, or its identity with the central river S.N. (Lualaba).

“4. Approximate position of Nile basin, extinction of the Nile of the Blacks, or of its connexion with Egyptian Nile. In looking at Lopez’s map, one is inclined to say, ‘This northern lake, under lat. 12° S., is the Bembe (Bangeweolo); this farther N. Tanganyika; Colve is the Ukerewe; Abiami the Abiad, or White Nile—as Barcena is Bahr Tfana; and Abagni, the Abavi, or Blue Nile; Tacuy, or the Nile, which flows from one to the other of the central lakes, is the

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Luapala, or Lualaba, which Livingstone also thought was the principal course of the great Egyptian river; the lake Chinonda, near Linzama, is the Tchad, &c.' Can all this destroy, in any degree, the glory of the great explorers? Not in the least degree. . . ."

We believe that Mr. Major, one of the Hon. Secretaries of the Royal Geographical Society, was the first who drew attention to the work of Pigafetta, in a paper read by him, in June, 1867.

The above list of authorities, quoted by M. Cordeiro, is sufficient to show that Portuguese travellers have penetrated the continent in almost every direction.

The map of Lopez shows, as a result of *their* observations, those general features with which we have become familiar, as the result of *modern* travel.

The imperfect scientific knowledge of these earlier travellers, however, prevented their determining with accuracy the position of their various discoveries, and led them into errors with regard to the hydrography of the continent, which are apparent on their maps, and have led many to suppose that the information professed to be given was largely drawn from their own imagination.

A general review of the travels and observations of the Portuguese in Africa, supports those who consider that the work of modern travellers may be correctly termed the "Re-discovery of a Lost Continent."

M. H.

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ERRATA.

Page 15, line 10, *read* “south” *for* “south-west.”

Page 20, line 15, *read* “shells” *for* “pigs.”

Page 28, line 20, *omit* “even.”

Page 29, line 1, *omit* “except.”

Page 29, line 10, *for* “like the Africans” *read* “according to African custom.”

Page 32, *read* “João” *for* “Joan.”

Page 33, *read* “Dom João” *for* “Don Juan.”

Page 33, line 16, *read* “de Novaes” *for* “di Novais.”

Page 33, line 18, *read* “Dom” *for* “Don.”

Page 41, line 23, *insert* “it” *before* “in.”

Page 44, line 19, *omit* “they buy from.”

Page 44, line 20, *insert* “buy” *after* “year.”

Page 89, line 17, *read* “banishment of” *for* “dissensions among.”

Page 98, line 14, *read* “Govea” *for* “Gova.”

Page 114, line 24, *read* “horns” *for* “a horn.”

Page 115, line 10, *read* “is” *for* “was.”

Page 120, line 15, *read* “from India to Europe” *for* “to Europe from India.”

To the most Gracious and Reverende Father in God, John by the providence of God, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate and Metropolitaine of all Englande, and one of the Lordes of her Majesties most honorable Privie Councill.

Most Reverend Father, my singular good and gracious Lorde: In all humble dutie I do offer to your grace this poor and slender present, in auspiciū nascentis armī, which I doe most hartely pray, may be as happie and prosperous both for your health and quiet government as (thanks be to God) your latter yeares have beene. It is a description of a certain Region or Kingdome in Africa, called Congo, whose name is as yet scarce knownen to our quarters of Europe, neyther is there any great or solemne mention of it in any bookes that have beene published of that Third parte of the old World. And because this treatise doeth comprehend not onely the nature and disposition of the Moci-Conghi, which are the naturall inhabitantes and people of Congo, together with all the commodities and trafficke of that countrey, very fitte and pleasaunt to be reade, but also the religion which they professed, and by what meanes it pleased God to draw them from Paganisme to Christianity, I thought good thus to make it knowen to my countreyemen of England, to the end it might be a president for such valiant English, as do earnestly thirst and desire to atchieve the conquest of rude and barbarous nations, that they doo not attempt those actions for commodity of Gold and Silver, and for other transitorie or worldly respectes, but that they woulde first seeke the Kingdome of God, and the salvation of many thousand soules, which the common enemy of mankinde still detayneth in ignorance: and then all other thinges shall be put in their mouthes abundantly, as may bee seene by the Portingalles in this narration. Written it was by one Philipppo Pigafetta, an Italian, and a very good Mathematician, from the mouth of one Lopez a Portingall, together with two maps, the one particular of Congo, the other generall of all Africa, and especially of the Westernne Coast, from 34 degrees beyond the Æquinoctial northwardes, downe along to the Cape of Good Hope in the South, and so upwardes againe on the Easternne Coast by the great Island of Madagascar, otherwise called the Isle of S. Laurence, til you come to the Isle of Socotora, and then to the Redde Sea, and from Ægypt into the inland Southwards to the Empire of Presbiter-John. I beseech your grace to accept of this my poore travell, and I will not cease to pray to Almighty God, according to my dutie, that hee will multiply many good years upon you, under the happy government of our most gracious and Sovereigne Lady Queene Elizabeth: whereunto the Church of Englande is bound to say, Amen. From your Graces house in Lambehith, the first of Januarie 1597.

Your Graces most humble Servant at commaundement,

ABRAHAM HARTWELL.