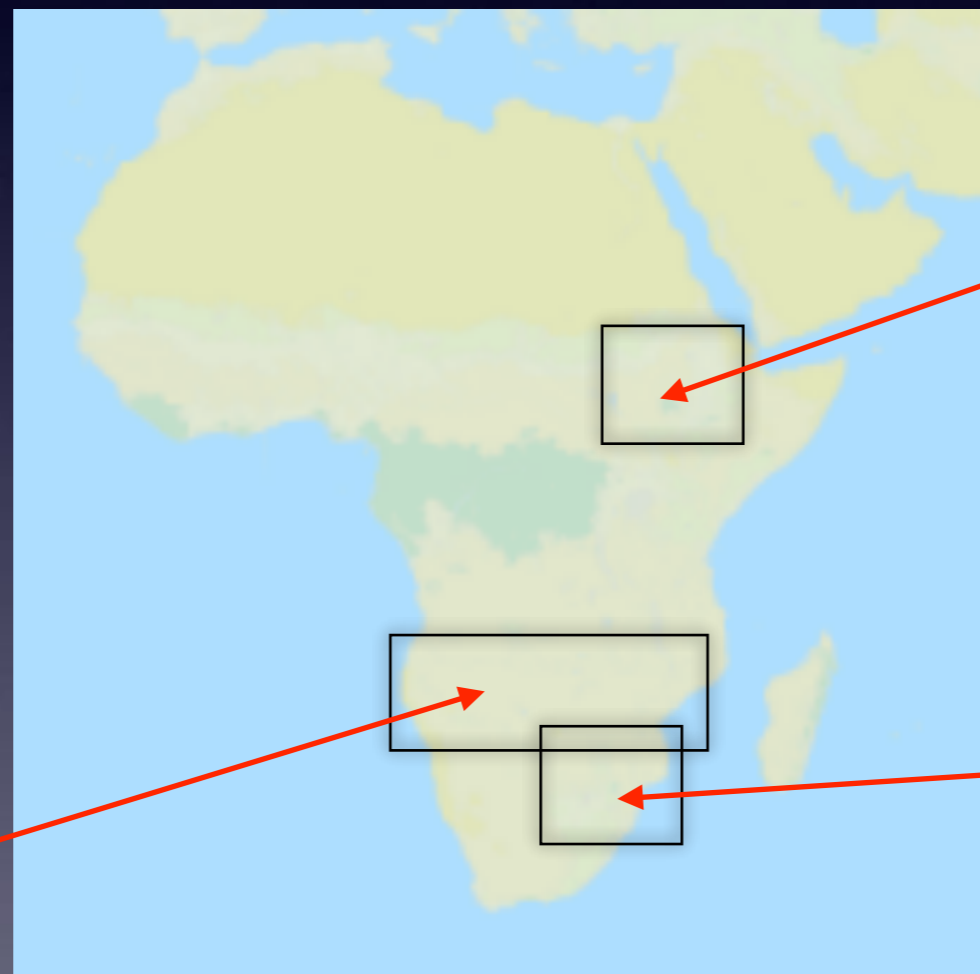


# “into the darkness”

the first European explorers into the African interior

300 years before Livingstone, Stanley *et al*



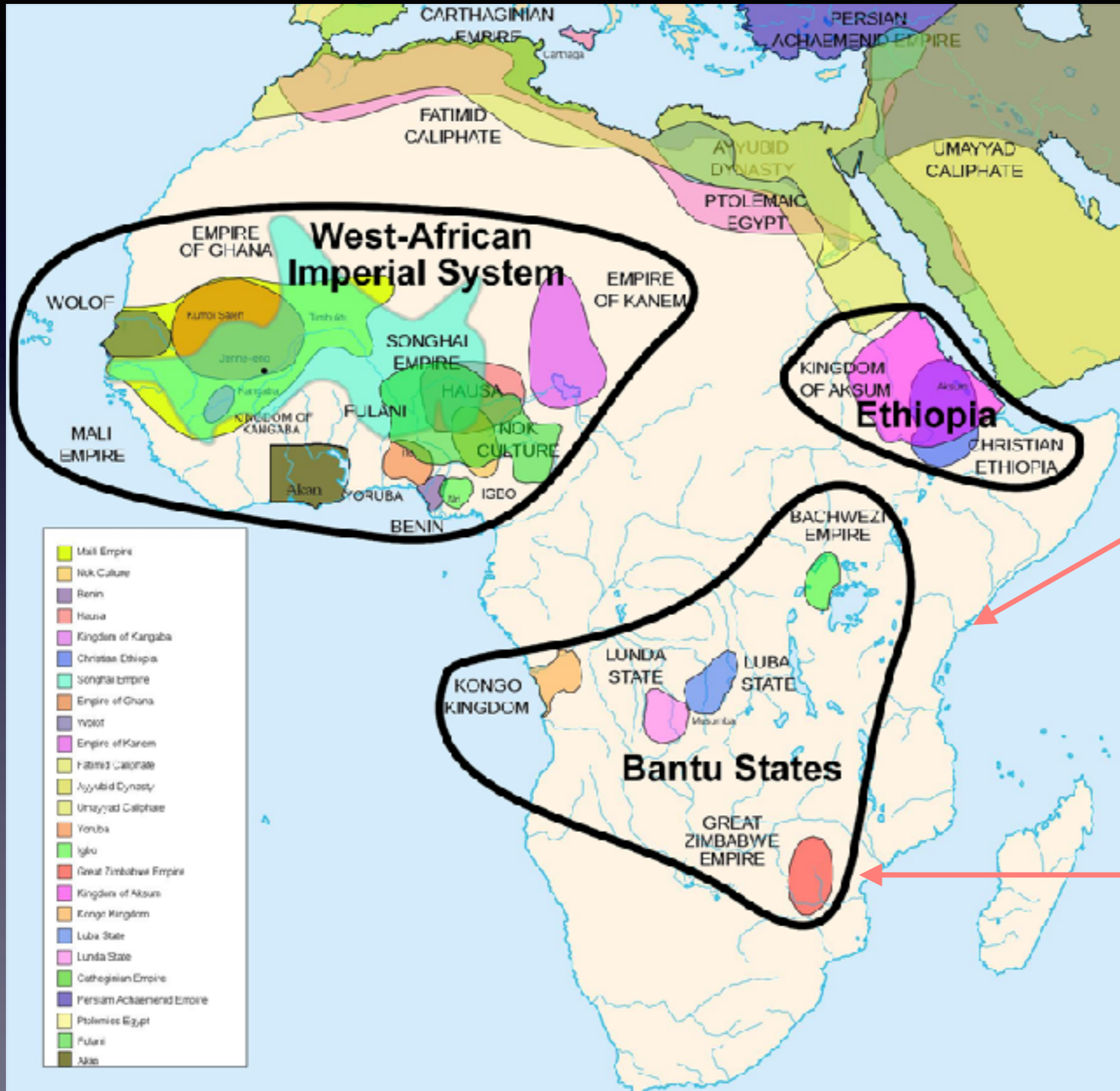
The Quest for Prester John  
1488 -

Monomatapa  
1514

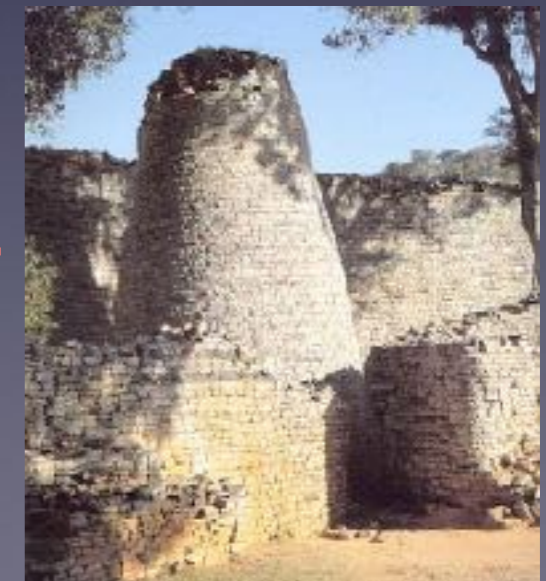
Crossing the continent  
1608 -

22nd January 2018  
23rd February 2018 (Africa Forum)

# Kingdoms of Africa before the Arrival of Europeans



Swahili coast



## European knowledge of Africa prior to 1500



Ptolemy's *Cosmographia* (1482)

Sources of gold across the Sahara

Belief in existence of isolated Christian kingdom

# European knowledge of Africa circa 1500

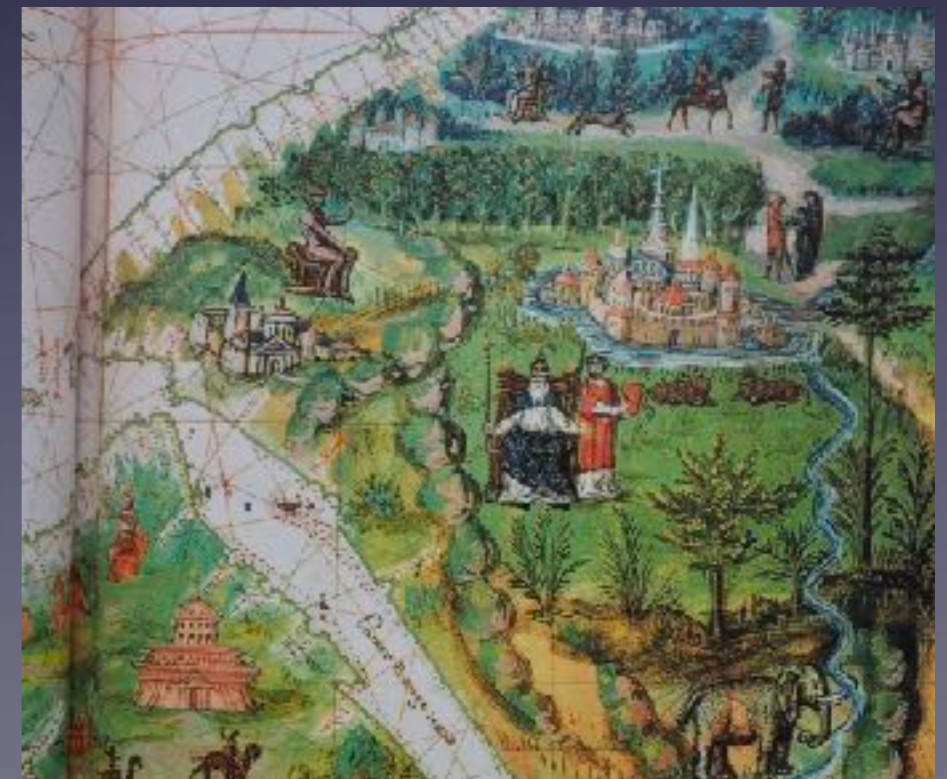


## The Quest for *Prester John*



- First mentioned in 1167
- Isolated Christian kingdom in the east
- Letter from the *King of the Three Indias*
- Popular European belief

- Crusading objective was to invade the Holy Land & recapture Jerusalem
- Just a few logistical matters to sort out first .....



# Three Portuguese Embassies to *Prester John*

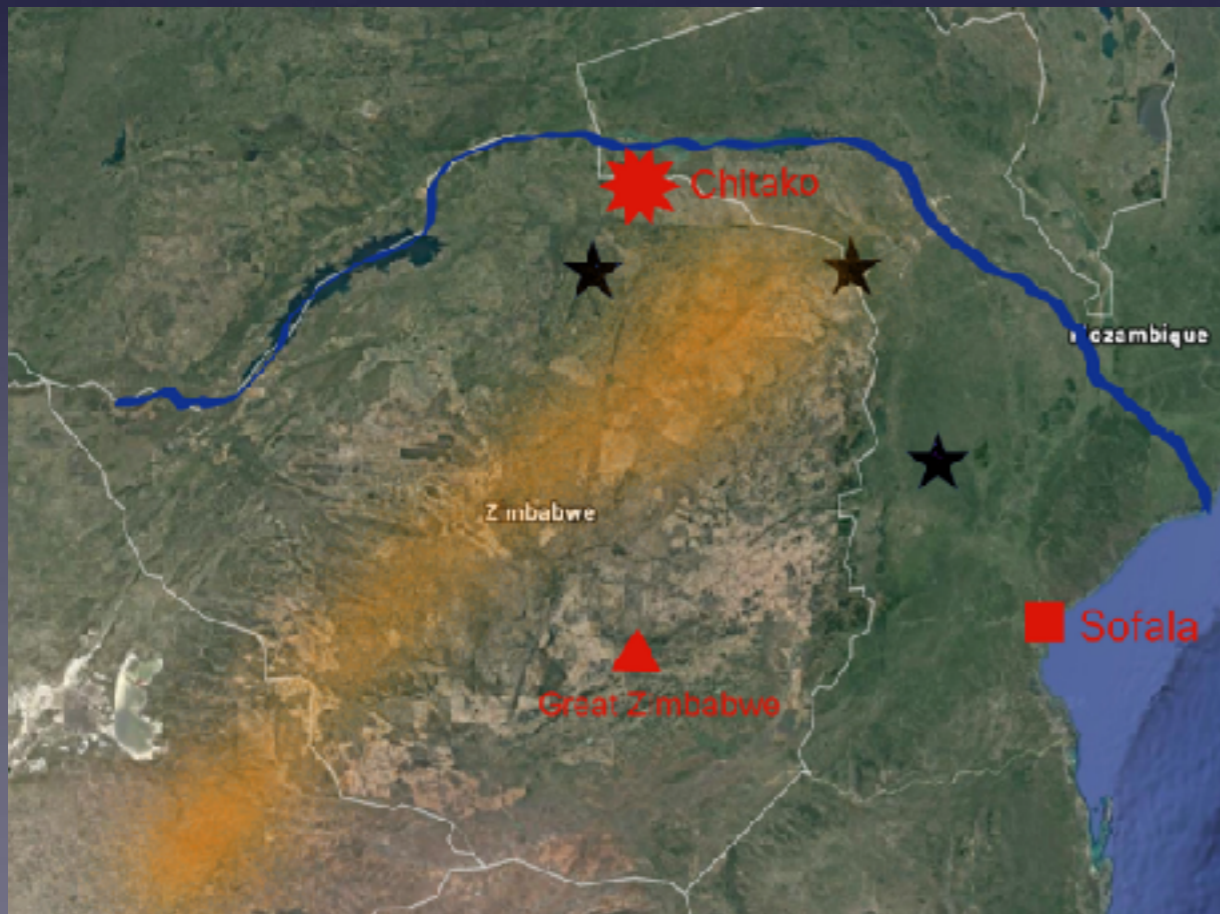


1482 stalled in Cairo

1488 Pedro de Covilha  
& Antonio De Paiva

1520 Fr. Alvares *et al*

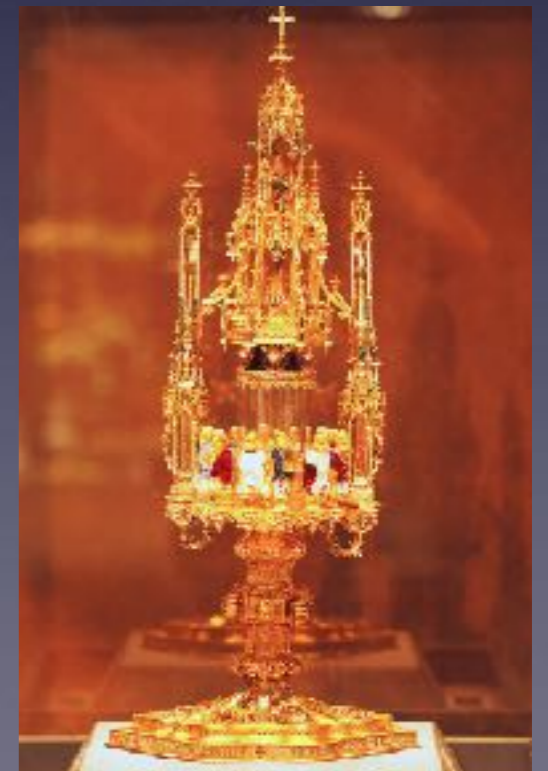
# Monomatapa



- Monomatapa kingdom fragmented
- Great Zimbabwe abandoned
- Established Muslim trade network
- *freiras*
- Trade route through Sofala to Kilwa and beyond

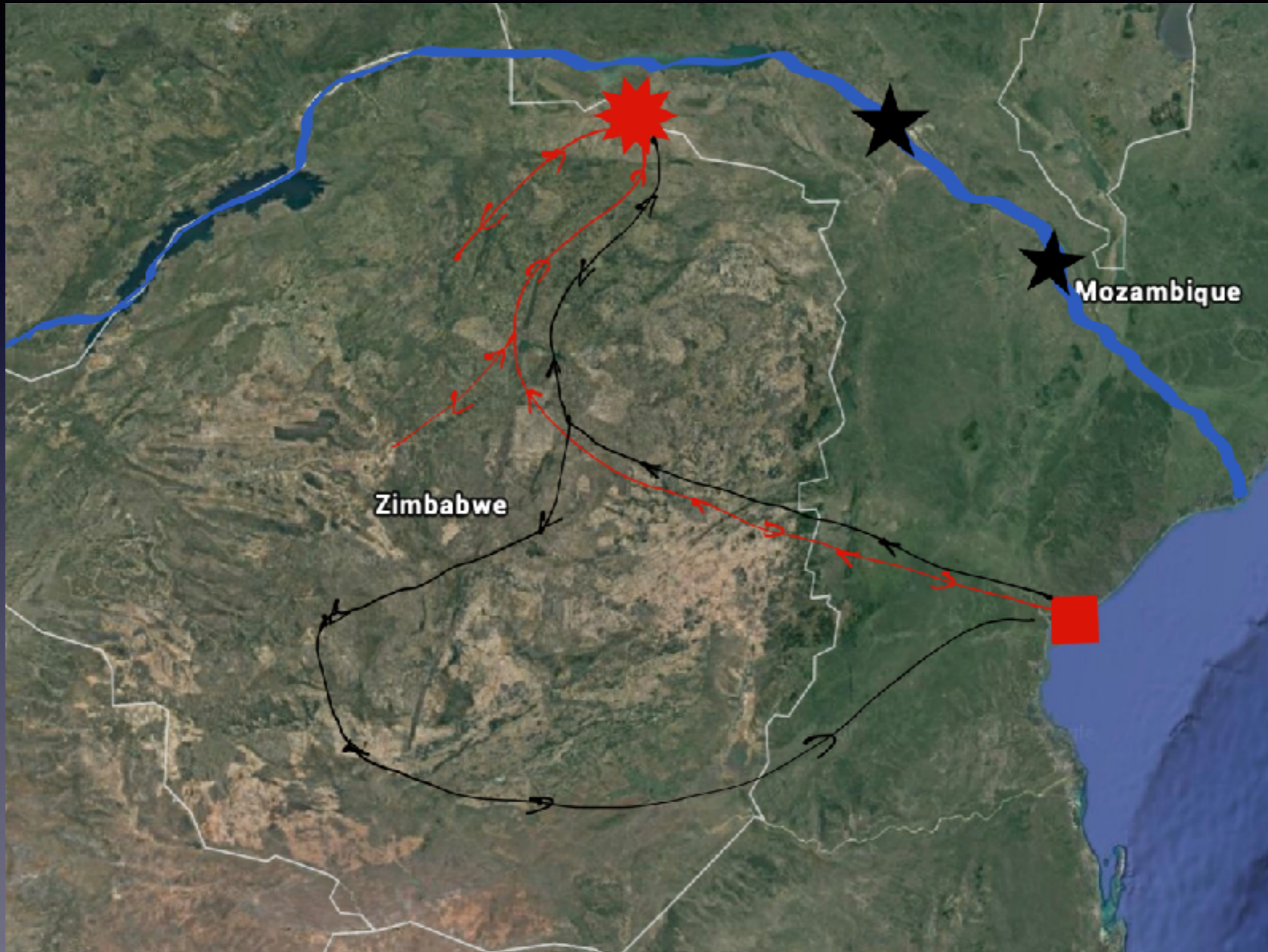
# The Gold of Monomatapa

- The commercial imperative
  - trade goods for India
- Trickle of gold from interior
- Portuguese ambition to control gold trade
- Use of *degradados* as emissaries



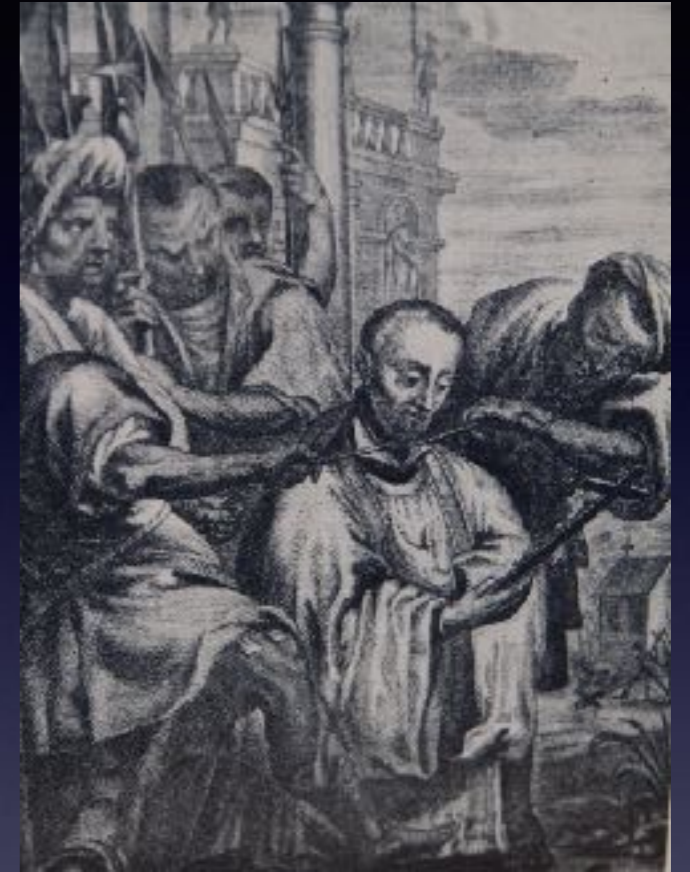


# The Journeys of Antonio Fernandes, 1514



# The Coming of Christianity & War

- 1560 Jesuit, Goncalo da Silveira, arrives in Monomatapa
- Initial success with ruler and locals
- Moslem & spirit leaders conspire against him
- March 1561 become first African martyr



- 1569 Avenging army despatched, under Francisco Barreto
- Much diminished by tropical diseases
- Approach up the Zambesi
- September 1572 first battle
- Portuguese victory, not consolidated
- Fragile treaty, trade and mining

# Connecting Portuguese territories across Africa



- 1480s positive relations with Kongo
  - King and court baptised
  - First African bishop in 1518
  - Shifting alliances & Jaga threat
  - Supported Ndongo against Kongo
- 
- Rumours of silver mines in interior at Chicós

# Contra costa



1608 Balthazar de Aragao

1798 Francisco de Lacerda

1802 -1811 *Pombeiras*

## The Retreat from the East & Geopolitical Re-alignment

- Alcazar & annexation by Spain in 1580
- Spice Trade comes under attack from Dutch & British
- Eastern empire becomes unsustainable
- Resources shifted towards Brazil
- Only assimilated Portuguese left in southern Africa after 1600

# Reflections of First Wave of Exploration

- Neither strategic objective achieved:
  - crusading alliance with Prester John
  - dominate interior mineral resources
- Logistic challenges of journey, diseases and climate
- Reliance on unproven information & guides
- Some astonishing achievements & characters
- A few remarkable documents have survived
- First histories only written in 1550s



## Further Reading

- G Casely-Hayford (2012) *The Lost Kingdoms of Africa* (Chapters on Ethiopia & Great Zimbabwe)
- J Dos Passos (1969) *The Portugal Story* (Accessible overview of the Portuguese maritime empire)
- *Narrative of Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia during the years 1520 - 1527* by Fr. Alvares Hakluyt Society, 64