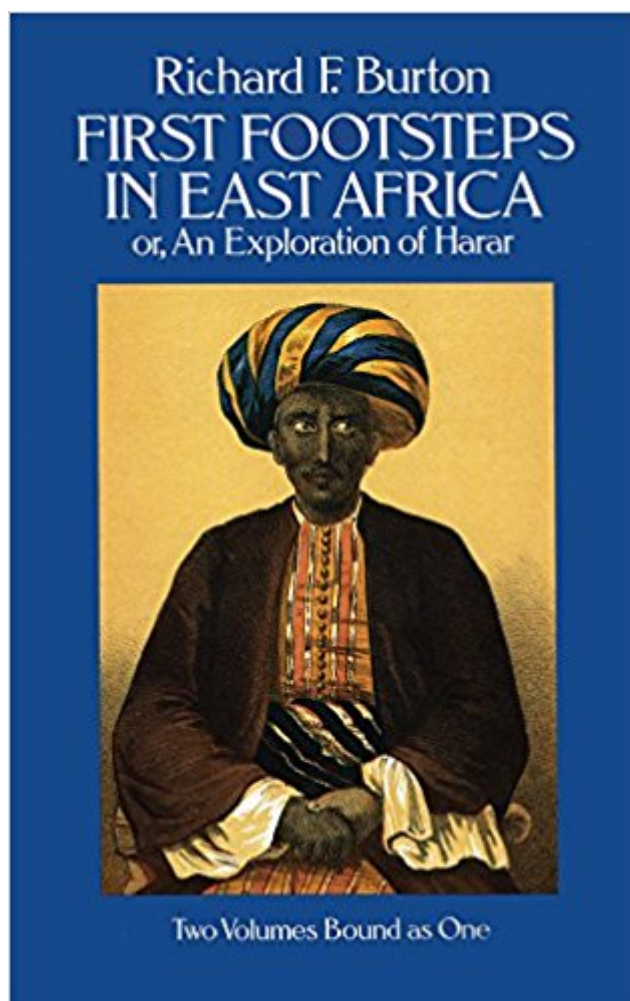


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# First Footsteps In East Africa; Or, An Exploration Of Harar (v. 1 & 2)



## Synopsis

One of the great adventure classics. Victorian scholar-adventurer's firsthand epic account of daring 1854 expedition to forbidden East African capital city. A treasury of detailed information on Muslim beliefs, manners and morals; plus pleasures and perils of the desert. A wealth of geographic, ethnographic and linguistic data.

## Book Information

Paperback: 544 pages

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## Customer Reviews

In this book, published in 1856, the British explorer Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) recounts his journey to Harar, notorious for its slave trade. Burton's visit was believed to be the first by a European, and it resulted in this fascinating glimpse into a then unknown city and culture. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Richard Burton's account of his trek from the Red Sea coast to Harar and back in 1854-55 is a genuinely enjoyable read that demonstrates Burton's powers of observation, vividly descriptive language and genuine interest in the customs, beliefs and day-to-day activities of peoples very different to himself. To a greater extent than most literature of the great era of exploration, Burton offers a real insight into the beliefs and way of life of the people he meets, and I am afraid I must disagree with the reviewer who suggests that Burton has an excessively Eurocentric and class-conscious perspective. Burton can certainly write from a lofty and detached perspective, but his observations appear to owe a bit more to a well-developed eye for the absurd combined with an ability to see things as they really are. I expect the only thing preventing him from making similar

observations on European society would be the likelihood that he would find it too uninteresting to comment on. As far as formatting and readability goes, insert my usual complaint about the lack of maps (especially as the place names Burton uses have largely changed over time and are hard to find on modern maps), and the otherwise interesting and informative footnotes break up the main body of the text a bit too much for my liking. Given the price, however, I feel quite churlish even mentioning these minor irritants, and I look forward to reading a lot more of Burton's work.

## A great read

Lost in time, many people know of Sir. Richard Burton and quite a number have read one or more of the fine biographies now available. (I was first completely hooked on the life of this man when years ago I read Fawn M. Brodie's, *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton*. I have read several biographies since that time, but Ms. Brodie was the one who started it for me). Anyway, while many know of Burton, I am sorry to say that not many of us (myself included) have not read many of the works of one of the most fascinating individuals ever to live. In this work, *First Footsteps in East Africa*, we quickly find that among Burton's other many accomplishments that he was a very, very good writer and in particular, a great travel writer. I have to be honest with you and say that I enjoyed every word of this one. I was leery of the fact that this was a free Kindle edition and that it was not illustrated. I should not have feared. The lack of illustrations was of little consequence and the Kindle format was quite well done in this case...I encountered no problems as we often do with these old books. Burton's writing can be lyrical at times but there is always the edge of the professional observer, linguist, and scientist lurking in the background. The reader needs to be aware, as another reviewer here has already said, that Burton's writings are indeed extremely Eurocentric and by today's standard simply not politically correct. No, no, no! Burton can be downright racially bigoted at times and has a rather sharp pen in writing his assessment of his Arab and African companions and the people he meets and observes. This is acceptable though as long as one remembers that Burton was merely reflecting the times he lived in and his social, racial and cultural background. Burton was a Victorian writer so it is not surprising that his writing is Victorian in style and syntax. If you are not used to this it can be a bit trying at times but it is well worth wading through the convoluted sentence structure and archaic (by our present standards) vocabulary. Which by the way, I found to be much easier to read on the Kindle than a regular printed book; the wonderful dictionaries provided by Kindle saved me much shuffling to my dictionary and back. At times some of the references Burton makes in his work can be quite obscure; they were not at the

time he wrote this work, but they most certainly are now. Fortunately, at the end of each chapter there are a number of very informative footnotes where the author has explained much. Between the footnotes and google, I got along fine and learned much. This work is most certainly a treat. If you are a Burton fan I would highly recommend it. If you are a fan of Victorian travel literature (and who isn't?) you will be delighted. Don Blankenship The Ozarks

The book has no chapters. It is one long essay. I don't know where the seller got this sort of edition.

Though I was aware of Burton before reading this text, I had no idea how much I would enjoy his writing. His language is eloquent, with an almost stereotypically dry British wit, especially as he describes his companions. At times, Burton seems to lose himself in the aesthetic response to Africa's environment, allowing his writing to swell to almost purple prose in his descriptions. I also enjoyed reading this text through the lens of Edward Said's notions of Orientalism. Burton certainly falls prey to the Eurocentrism typical of his era, and at times his descriptions of the rationale of his Arab / Somali companions is borderline offensive. However, what I found most interesting in this text is Burton's own critique of Europeans. In *First Footsteps*, one could argue that Said's Orientalism isn't driven by culture but class. Burton is just as disgusted by the English working class as he is by Somali nomads. The Kindle version contains no illustrations; I would highly recommend referring to a map while reading *First Footsteps*. Also, the footnotes are not linked, but I didn't find that particularly bothersome.

Amazing how difficult travel in this area was only 170 years ago. More maps (and pics) would have been very useful.

Very good read. Give a great insight into what was involved in travelling in africa at this time..  
Selous was a pioneer

If you read this tome from the mid-1800's and are expecting it to be about hunting game in the Dark Continent pick another title. The content of this book is to give you a view into the Mid-East and travels to Eastern Africa during the English Colonization. It would seem not much has changed in that region in some places over the last two centuries or so. Likely much longer. Reading this in e-book format is not recommended as you lack illustrations and footnotes are difficult to utilize as they appear at the end of each chapter therefore difficult to reference.

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