

The Nature of British Mapping of West Africa, 1749 – 1841

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Author's declaration

The work contained in this thesis is entirely my own.

The views expressed are entirely my own, and not those of the University of Stirling

Abstract

By focusing on the “nature” of mapping, this thesis falls under the category of critical cartography closely associated with the work of Brian Harley in the 1980s and early 1990s. As such the purpose of this research is to highlight the historical context of British maps, map-making and map-reading in relation to West Africa between 1749 and 1841.

I argue that maps lie near the heart of Britain’s interactions with West Africa though their appearance, construction and use evolved dramatically during this period. By beginning this study with a prominent French example (Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville’s 1749 “Afrique”) I show how British map-makers adapted cartography from France for their own purposes before circumstances encouraged the development of new materials. Because of the limited opportunities to make enquiries in the region and the relatively few people involved in affecting change to the map’s content, this thesis highlights the episodes and manufactured narratives which feature in the chronology of evolving cartographies.

This study concludes with the failure of the 1841 Niger Expedition, when Britain’s humanitarian agenda saw the attempted establishment of a model farm on banks of the Niger River and the negotiation of anti-slave trade treaties with nearby Africans. The cartography and geographical knowledge which supported this scheme is in stark contrast with what existed in the mid-eighteenth century. More than simply illustrating geographical and ethnographical information though, these maps helped inform Britons about themselves and I argue that much of what occurs here features prominently in national discourses about identity, civilization and the justification of British efforts to improve Africa.

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This PhD (like all others) has been one of many parts. It has had its ups and its downs, its successes and its set-backs. It has been a very personal journey to reach this point of submission and I cannot move forward without acknowledging those who have lent me their immeasurable guidance and friendship.

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Table of contents

List of Figures	6
Location Map of West Africa	9
Introduction	10
In the heart of Africa...	10
Mapping West Africa, 1749-1841; a study of contact	11
The “nature” of historic cartography	17
The Thesis	23
Chapter 1: Themes in cartographic history and Britain’s mapping of West Africa	28
Geographically imagining West Africa and the British reflection	31
Geographical Enquiry, Exploration and Mapping Discovery	40
Cartography and its audiences	53
The Discourse of Accuracy: Finding Purpose	58
Chapter 2: Britain and West Africa, 1749-1841	70
1749-1788: British use of French Cartographies	72
1788-1802: the “Age of the African Association”	85
1802-1818: the Government takes over	95
1818-1830: An Era of Diplomacy	104
1830-1841: Britain and the Niger	116
Chapter 3: sponsoring cartography and the mapped image of West Africa	123
Cartographic sponsorship?	126
Thomas Edward Bowdich: “I am going to Africa, use me as you please”	135
“The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy”	139
A controlled map: “under the Patronage of the African Association”	143
Exploiting the map: “the enterprize is great”	148
“I am not thoroughly master of the manner of calculating the Longitude”	151
Bathurst and Barrow triumphant	156
“I am anxious that in your case this evil should be avoided”	163
Chapter 4: Collecting the West African cartographic archive	172
The observer, focusing Britain’s enquiries	175
Instrumentation and observation: “I will measure Africa by feet and Inches”	184

Dressing for Africa: “why assume anything but the National Character”	192
“His Royal Highness has sent his followers and subjects”	198
African testimony: “unadulterated as it came from my Informants”	204
Chapter 5: Moulding the map of West Africa	218
Ancients and the Niger mystery, a modern answer? Part 1	221
The cartographer’s dialogue vs. the travellers’ experience	227
The problem of “Ocular Demonstration” and the traveller’s perspective:	
Alexander Scott and Lake Dobbie	236
Constructing the “graphic image”; naturalising West Africa	242
Ancients and the Niger mystery, a modern answer? Part 2	254
Chapter 6: Britain’s mapping of West Africa	265
“the destined instruments of their civilization”	258
Mapping ownership, mapping meaning	280
No more “fillings-up”: finding utility	292
Finding a purpose for the map	298
Conclusion	309
Britain and the map of West Africa	309
Evaluation and moving forward	313
The nature of British mapping of West Africa	320
Bibliography	322

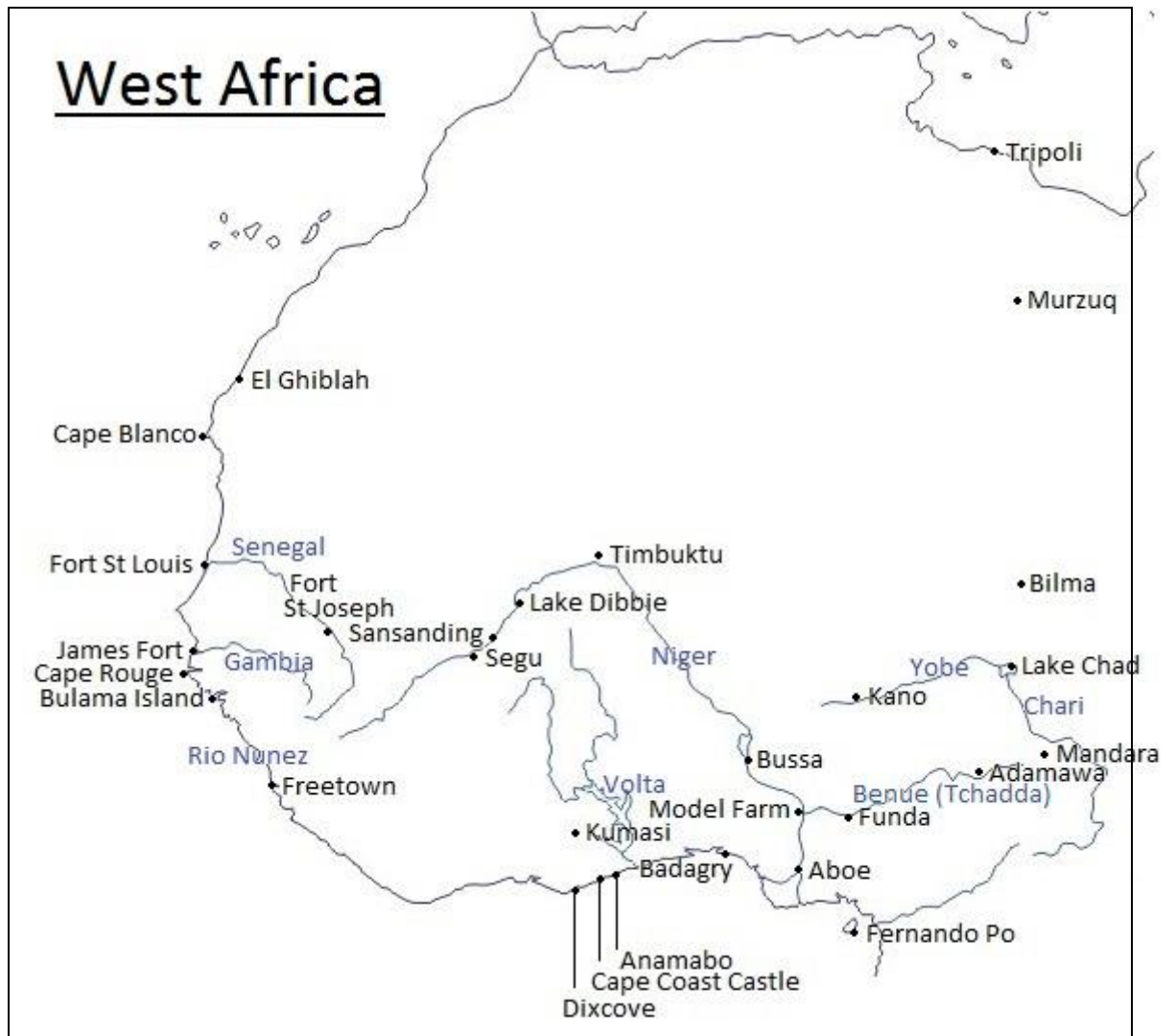
List of Figures

Figure 1:	Location map of places discussed in this thesis	9
Figure 2:	Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, "Afrique Publiée sous les auspices de Monseigneur le Duc D'Orléans Premier Prince du Sang" (1749)	13
Figure 3:	James MacQueen, "A New Map of Africa from the Latest Authorities" (1841)	15
Figure 4:	"Carte de la Barbarie de la Nigritie et de La Guinée" (1707) in Guillaume Delisle, Atlas de Geographie (1731)	30
Figure 5:	"Map of the Route travelled by M. Caillié to Jenne and Timbuctoo" and a sketched itinerary from Major Gray's travels in the headlands of the Gambia sometime after 1817 which shows the limited peripheral observations he and his party made.	62
Figure 6:	William Smith, "A New & Correct Map of The Coast of Africa, From Cape Blanco Lat. 20° 46N To the Coast of Angola Lat. 11° S." (1744)	74
Figure 7:	"Plan and Sections of Annamaboe Fort. Africa. Surveyed in February & March 1756 by Justly Watson" (1756)	77
Figure 8:	Thomas Jefferys, "The Western Coast of Africa; From Cape Blanco to Cape Virga, Exhibiting Senegambia Proper" (1768) and Jean B.B. d'Anville's "Carte Particulière de la Côte Occidentale de L'Afrique depuis le Cap Blanc jusqu'au Cap de Verga et du Cours des Rivières de Sénégal et de Gambie En ce qui est connu" (1751)	81
Figure 9:	Robert Sayer, "Africa, According to Mr D'Anville with Several Additions & Improvements, with a Particular Chart of the Gold Coast, wherein are distinguished all the European Forts and Factories, The whole Illustrated With a Summary Description Relative to the Trade & Natural Produce, Manners & Customs of that Part of the World" (1772)	83
Figure 10:	John Blankett, "Sketch of a Map of Africa, intended to shew the Route of the Caravan" (1789)	88
Figure 11:	Carl Bernhard Wadström, "Nautical Map Intended for the use of Colonial Undertakings on the W. Coast of Africa from Lat. 5°30' to Lat. 14°N. but more particularly those of Sierra Leona and the Island of Bulama" (1794)	90
Figure 12:	James Rennell, "Sketch of the Northern Part of Africa: Exhibiting the Geographical Information Collected by The African Association" (1790)	91
Figure 13:	James Rennell, "A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement, in the Geography of North Africa" (1798)	93
Figure 14:	James Rennell, "A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement in the Geography of North Africa: Compiled by J. Rennell, 1798. Corrected in 1802" (1802)	96

Figure 15:	Aaron Arrowsmith, "Africa" (1802)	98
Figure 16:	Joseph Dupuis, "A Map of Wangara... Its political Sections, Ancient & Modern kingdoms, the course of its Rivers & the Routes from Ashantee to the Joliba, Ghulby and Kuara rivers, compiled from Manuscripts and other information collected at Coomassy during a mission to that Kingdom" (1824)	108
Figure 17:	James MacQueen, "A Map of Africa North of the parallel of 7° South Latitude; Shewing the course & direction of the principal Rivers & Mountains, particularly of the Niger & of the Gir with their Tributary Streams, from the best Authorities" (1821)	111
Figure 18:	Hugh Clapperton, "Map of the Travels and Discoveries made in Northern & Central Africa, by Dr. Oudney, Major Denham & Capt. Clapperton R.N." (1826)	113
Figure 19:	John Arrowsmith, "North Western Africa" (1838)	119
Figure 20:	Thomas Walker, "A New and Accurate Chart of the Coast of Africa, From Cape Blanco to the River Sierra Leon. With the Navigation of the Rivers Gambia, Senegal &c. The Rocks, Sands, Soundings, Setting of the Tides, and Time of High Water on that Coast, from an Actual Survey made By the Sieur Lewis Lord Engineer, Who was employed seven Years in that Work." [undated – c.1760]	141
Figure 21:	Aaron Arrowsmith, "Map of the World on a Globular Projection, Exhibiting Particularly the Nautical Researches of Capn. James Cook, F.R.S. with all the Recent Discoveries to the Present Time" (1794)	146
Figure 22:	"Map to illustrate the Journal of Mungo Park's last Mission into Africa" (1815)	151
Figure 23:	Untitled sketch of Major Peddie's march up the lower Rio Nunez from "Kakundy" to "Tingalinta", [c.1816], "Carte du Rio Nunez. Le trait penetrié indique la route, que l'Expéditore Angloise a prise, au mois de décembre 1816" and "Map of the Routes pursued by the Expeditions under Majors Peddie and Gray" (1817-1825)	155
Figure 24:	John Barrow, "Sketch" (1820)	159
Figure 25:	Hugh Clapperton, "A Chart of the Route of the late Captain Clapperton, From Badagry to Soccatoo, and of his Servant Richard Lander, from Kano to the Niger, in a different and more Easterly Direction" (1829)	166
Figure 26:	William Allen, "The River Quorra, from the Town of Rabba to the Sea, and a small Portion of the River Tchadda, by Lieut. W. Allen R.N." (1837)	170
Figure 27:	Alexander Becher, "The Course of the Quorra, The Joliba or Niger of Park from the Journal of Mess.rs. Richard and John Lander, with their Route from Badagry to the Northward, in 1830" (1832)	189
Figure 28:	An untitled sketch of Dixon Denham's route from Sheikh al-Kanemi's capital at "Kouka" to the region known as "Mandara" c.1823	191
Figure 29:	"First day of the Yam Custom" (1819)	195

Figure 30:	Sketch of Hausaland from a Marabout interviewed by Frederick Hornemann (1802)	207
Figure 31:	William Faden, "Africa" (1803)	213
Figure 32:	"A Reduction of Bello's Map of Central Africa" (1826)	216
Figure 33:	James Rennell, "The World, as Known to Herodotus, on a Spherical Projection; and with its Parts in their just relative Positions and Proportions" (1800)	225
Figure 34:	James Rennell, "Sketch of the western part of the Sahara Shewing the Routes of Alexander Scott Between 1810 & 1816" (1821)	240
Figure 35:	One of two undated sketches of Mungo Park's route in West Africa attributed to the traveller himself showing his "intended Route to Tombuctoo & Houssa" and the "Routes of the slave merchants" (c.1797)	249
Figure 36:	George Francis Lyon, "Map of a Route through the Regency of Tripoli and Kingdom of Fezzan performed in the Years 1818-19"	251
Figure 37:	"Procession to Ibu" and "The Confluence of the Rivers Niger and Chadda" (1840)	255
Figure 38:	Thomas Edward Bowdich, "A Map shewing the Discoveries & Improvements in the Geography of Western Africa resulting from the Mission to Ashantee by T.E. Bowdich, Conductor, 1817" (1819)	257
Figure 39:	"Route of the Army under the Command of The Sultan of Fezzan which left Murzuk in the Spring of 1821 for the Negro Country" (c.1823)	261
Figure 40:	James Wyld, "Chart of the World Shewing the Religion, Population and Civilization of each Country" (1818)	277
Figure 41:	"Plan of the Colony of Sierra Leone" (1824)	286
Figure 42:	William Allen, "Part of the River Quorra or Niger" (1841)	291
Figure 43:	William Faden, "Africa. Engraved by Faden, and [Thomas] Jefferys Geographer to the King" (1777)	294
Figure 44:	William Fitzwilliam Owen & James Badgley, "A Plan of the Establishment of Clarence in the Island of Fernando Po" (1827)	301
Figure 45:	James MacQueen, "A Map of the Delta of the Niger constructed from the best Authorities and drawn August 1839" (1839)	307

Figure 1: Location map of places discussed in this thesis



Introduction

In the heart of Africa...

About nine o'clock on the morning of 27 February 1823, not far from the shores of Lake Chad, three members of the British expedition, there to explore the ancient Ghadames road south from Tripoli across the Sahara, were received by the powerful Sheikh al-Hajj Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Kanemi. Doctor Walter Oudney, Major Dixon Denham, Lieutenant Hugh Clapperton, and their retinue, had been respected guests of the Sheikh for little over a week and this was their second meeting. Anxious to fulfil their duty as ambassadors, they submitted the several gifts they had carried with them from Britain and were gratified by al-Kanemi's apparent pleasure in them. In return, the three explorers were asked several questions about their mission; where they wanted to go, what they wanted to see? And then, their published journal recounts, the Sheikh "wished that the nature of a map should be described to him."¹

At this meeting we witness a striking moment of contact between Britain and the African interior; between British scientific culture and a people new to European science. How do we address al-Kanemi's request in this context? What can we infer from the way this meeting was recorded and presented during this, one of the great episodes of nineteenth century exploration? How do we describe "the nature of a map"? And, more importantly, how would Oudney and his fellow ambassadors have answered the question – especially when their purpose in being there was, amongst others, to map? Certainly it was understood to be a map as recognised by Western European cartographic traditions. It is possible that al-Kanemi was simply enquiring what the purpose of viewing the world in such a way was. Yet maps were also a feature of Islamic culture

¹ Dixon Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824, by Major Denham, Captain Clapperton, and the Late Doctor Oudney, extending across the Great Desert to the tenth degree of northern latitude, and from Kouka in Bornou, to Sackatoo, the Capital of the Fellatah Empire* (London: John Murray, 1826), 74.

and despite the paucity of evidence that they were widely used in West Africa Clapperton would later meet with Sultan Bello of the Sokoto Caliphate who provided him with a chart of the Niger River. In this case then, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Sheikh was probably familiar with the concept.²

The “nature” of a map is understood now to mean more than its visualisation of geography. Per the traditions of cartographic scholarship to have developed in the twentieth century, Denis Wood and John Fels argue that the answer lies in the way maps manipulate the information they present and find meaning within the society of their creation.³ Simply put: maps are read and serve functions according to the intellectual culture that has established the rules of their construction and interpretation. It follows then that maps are representative of several themes particular to certain times and places. Indeed, Wood observes that “knowledge of the map is knowledge of the world from which it emerges.”⁴

Mapping West Africa, 1749-1841; a study of contact

The map of Africa, its content and reading, is rooted in historical context. Whilst its outline had been broadly fixed by the end of the fifteenth century and continued to improve as contact along the coast increased, its interior remained famously difficult to uncover.⁵ As Jeffrey C. Stone said:

A persistent characteristic of the cartographic evolution of Africa is the disparity between the accuracy and detail of the coast ... and the paucity of precisely locatable information inland.⁶

This study of British cartography begins intentionally with the printing of a French map: Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's 1749 “*Afrique Publiée sous les auspices de Monseigneur le*

² T.J. Basset, ‘Indigenous Mapmaking in Intertropical Africa’ in D. Woodward & G.M. Lewis (eds.), *The History of Cartography (Volume Two, Book Three): Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies* (London, 1998), 33-5.

³ D. Wood & J. Fels, ‘The Nature of Maps: Cartographic Constructions of the Natural World’ in *Cartographica* 43:03 (2008), 89-92.

⁴ D. Wood, *The Power of Maps* (London, 1992), 18.

⁵ F. Relaño, *The Shaping of Africa: Cosmographic Discourse and Cartographic Science in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002).

⁶ J.C. Stone, *A Short History of the Cartography of Africa – African Studies* 39 (New York, 1996), 20.

Duc D'Orléans Premier Prince du Sang" (figure 2). This predominantly blank map which was void of details d'Anville believed to be unverifiable has been celebrated by many, and labelled by Helen Wallis and Dorothy Middleton as the map which "transformed" African cartography.⁷ Such was its significance, it became the model upon which later maps were based on and established a quality which other map-makers hoped to emulate. In the absence of text and decorations typically found on contemporary examples which distracted from their inaccuracy, it was both a symbolic criticism of Europe's ignorance of the African continent and a challenge to those who would fill it. Yet, insofar as the extensive blanks of the map can be considered as an epistemic revolution typical of the Enlightenment period, d'Anville is now understood to have been following in a tradition already established in parts of northern Europe from as early as the sixteenth century.⁸ Whilst it may be argued then that he was not original in his aesthetic clearing of the artistic imagery and guesswork indicative of other map-makers, the meticulous nature of d'Anville's geography and the written memoirs which accompanied it proved especially influential in this context of African map-making.

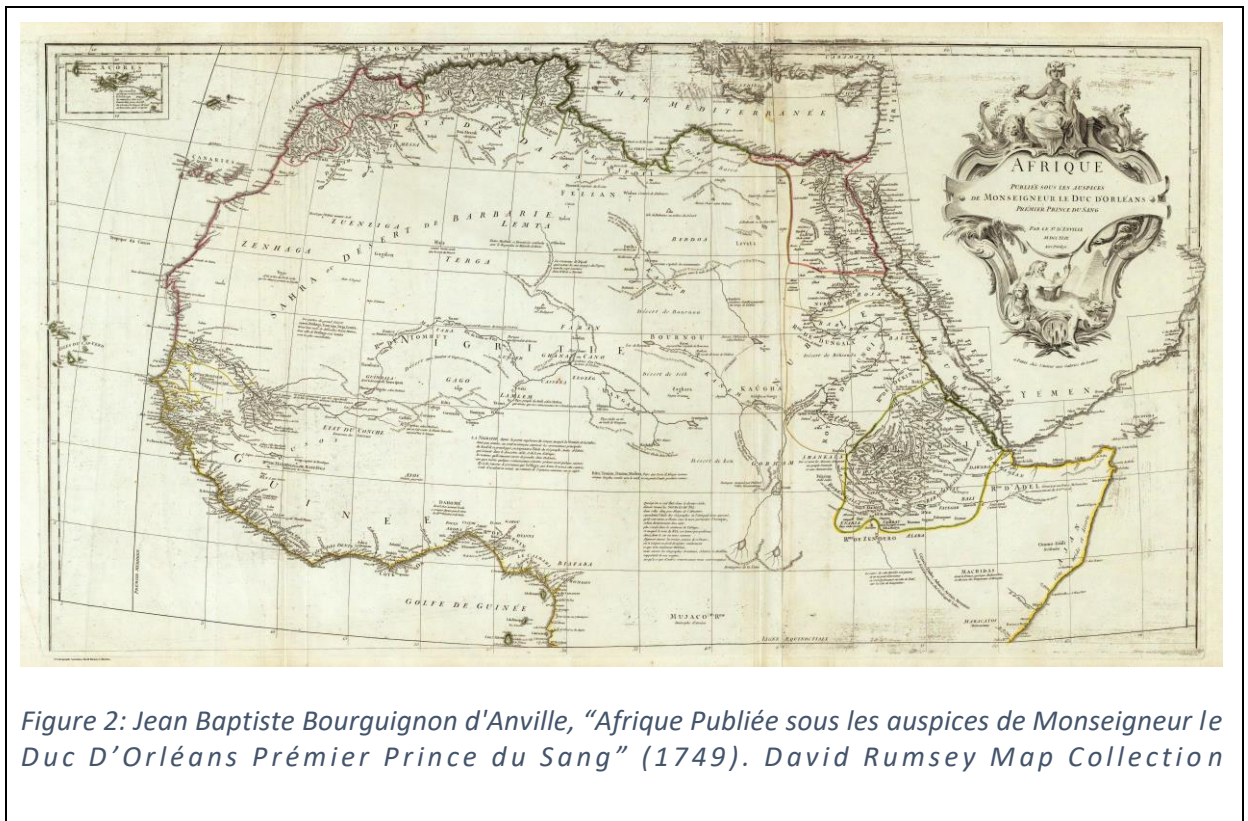
Histories of Britain's mapping of Africa usually take their cue from the establishment in 1788 of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa (the African Association) by the famous naturalist Joseph Banks and other notable individuals to direct travellers into the region on quests of geographical enquiry. The significance of the cartography produced in their name by Major James Rennell, a man whom one biographer referred to in 1895 as "the greatest geographer that Great Britain has yet produced" and whose legacy in the history of African cartography needs little introduction, relied heavily on d'Anville's example.⁹ In 1798 Rennell claimed: "We must regard the geography of M. D'Anville, as the most perfect of all, previous to the inquiries made by the African Association."¹⁰ To better understand how the British map developed in this period it therefore becomes necessary to investigate the cartographic and historical contexts

⁷ H. Wallis & D. Middleton, 'The Mapping and Exploration of Africa and Joseph Banks' in P.M. Larby (ed.), *Maps and Mapping of Africa* (London, 1987), 49.

⁸ Stone, *A Short History* (1996), 23-31.

⁹ C.R. Markham, *Major James Rennell and the Rise of Modern English* (London, 1895), v.

¹⁰ B. Edwards & J. Rennell (eds.) *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park's Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his*



in which the interests represented by that society took seed and flourished.

Defining any map as distinctly “British” is complicated by various historical circumstances and overlapping spheres of Africanist scholarship which appeared in Europe during this period. Suggestive of an emerging confidence in British cartography, however, Rennell once referred to d’Anville and another prominent eighteenth-century French map-maker Guillaume Delisle as his “predecessors” within an established tradition of African cartography.¹¹ The maps which developed through British agency thereafter arguably operate within a discernibly national discourse.

During this study which ends with the disastrous 1841 Niger Expedition, the British map of West Africa changed dramatically, as did Britain’s relationship with the whole region. This event stands as a distinctive watershed moment for the broader history of West Africa and its emerging place in the world prior to the formal onset of colonialism in the latter-nineteenth century. Efforts

own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park’s Journey, and of North Africa at Large (London, 1798), 59.

¹¹ NLS MS 19390, f.105, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 13 October 1821.

in 1841 to navigate the river to establish a Model Farm at the confluence of the Benue tributary, and the attempted negotiation of anti-slave trade treaties with African rulers in the interior, all demonstrate the huge revision of contemporary British knowledge and attitudes which occurred during this period. Philip Curtin defined the “Era of the Niger Expedition” in the broader context of abolitionist projects and the humanitarian agenda which rose to prominence within British politics after the discovery of the Niger Delta in 1830 and which continued until the early-1850s when the Atlantic slave trade was all but eradicated in West Africa.¹² David Lambert has recently written that the “coming together of commercial and humanitarian motives” for this failed venture, “was a forerunner of the later Victorian ‘civilizing mission.’”¹³ In many regards then, the Niger Expedition represents a turning point for the inspiration and public engagement behind British (and European) ambitions in West Africa.

Complementing the preparations for these ambitions, this examination will conclude with another map which emerged close to the heart of the venture. James MacQueen’s 1841 “New Map of Africa” (figure 3) ultimately serves as a fitting conclusion to this chronology, and represents the culmination of cartographic developments inspired by d’Anville’s challenge in 1749.¹⁴ Later celebrated by Roderick Murchison (President of the Royal Geographical Society) as the closest anyone had yet come to an accurate view of the interior, it confidently incorporated the history of discoveries that characterise this discussion and presented Britain with a highly detailed and scholarly view of the whole region.¹⁵

This thesis will not offer a comprehensive narrative of Britain’s discovery of West Africa. Classic examinations of British exploration such as A. Adu Boahen’s *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan: 1788-1861* (1964) and Edward William Bovill’s *The Niger Explored* (1968) contain far more detail than I could hope to present here. My intension is to build on more recent trends in

¹² P.D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Actions, 1780 – 1850 (Volume 1)* (London, 1973), 289-317

¹³ D. Lambert, *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen’s African Geography and the Struggle over Atlantic Slavery* (London, 2013), 3.

¹⁴ NA CO 700/AFRICA5.

¹⁵ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 1.



Figure 3: Detail from James MacQueen, "A New Map of Africa from the Latest Authorities" (1841). National Archives CO 700/AFRICA5

cartographic scholarship and provide a contextual view of the making and reading of British maps during this period. The developing cartography of Africa has come under renewed inspection in recent years by studies such as Dane Kennedy's *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (2013) and David Lambert's *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen's African Geography and the Struggle over Atlantic Slavery* (2013). Analyses such as these demonstrate the importance of treating maps within the broader circumstances of their history, and recognise a wide range of external pressures behind their construction.

Maps and mapping helped mediate between Britain and West Africa. Their relationship in this period was typically characterised by the traditions of contemporary contact between the European and the non-European world, as one of distinct, separate entities. This study will therefore discuss the role of maps, the act of mapping and associated attitudes at the heart of this division. The map's ability to engage with its audience is ultimately recognised as its most significant

power and Wood considers the “discourse function” of cartography that is not only given meaning by the culture of its creation but also has the capacity to influence the actions and understandings of its readers as they interact with the map’s content.¹⁶ The theme of contact cannot be avoided and I turn to Robin Hallet’s study of African exploration which begins with a note regarding the legacy of European encroachment into Africa:

This was in fact the story of the meeting between two worlds, a theme as dramatic as any that a historian could wish to handle. The actors make it impressive, for there are great and decent men, both African and European, who have a part in it. Nor, I would like to feel, is it a story without relevance to the needs of the present. We are all now, for the first time in history, citizens of one world; the destinies of Europe and of Africa, even in this post-Imperial age, still are linked. We must learn to understand one another better – and, heaven knows, there has been precious little understanding or respect shown for Africa in Europe in the past. The surest way of getting a grasp on the realities of the present is to have some comprehension of the heritage and the burden of the past. The historian may justify his work in many ways: by none better than that, in trying to reach the truth of things, he seeks to promote a better understanding between man and man.¹⁷

To revisit Wood’s argument that “knowledge of the map is knowledge of the world from which it emerges” the themes considered alongside cartographic development here include topics such as exploration, broader themes of contact between Europe and the non-European world, imperialism and trade.¹⁸ But whilst maps are often overlooked as simply the after-product of contact and discovery, the argument here is that they are interwoven within the history of British interaction with West Africa.

The “nature” of historic cartography

¹⁶ D. Wood, ‘The map as a kind of talk: Brian Harley and the confabulation of the inner and the outer voice’ in *Visual Communication* 1:2 (2002), 142.

¹⁷ R. Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa: European Enterprise and Exploration, Principally in Northern and Western Africa up to 1830 (Volume 1)* (London, 1965), xviii.

¹⁸ Wood, *Power* (1992), 18.

It is nigh impossible to discuss the development of Britain's cartography of West Africa without reference to the oft-quoted Jonathan Swift who famously highlighted the problem of map-makers' ignorance and cartographic practices in the early eighteenth century.

So Geographers in Afric-maps,
With Savage-Pictures fill their Gaps;
And o'er uninhabitable Downs
Place Elephants for want of Towns.¹⁹

Because of his reference to the cartographic traditions that had filled contemporary maps with erroneous details and disguised ignorance with decoration, it has become customary to regard Swift's criticism as symbolic of the pre-Enlightenment artistic map-making from which more accurate "scientific" practices developed.²⁰ Much has been written about the evolution of cartography from such origins, a distinction notably made by Leo Bagrow who ended his history of map-production in the late eighteenth century when "maps ceased to be works of art, the products of individual minds, and where craftsmanship was finally superseded by specialised science and the machine..."²¹

Such a distinct transition is indicative of a cartographic discourse which viewed historic map-making as divided into progressive phases of developing survey and production methods. Gerald Crone's 1953 *Maps and their Makers*, for example, was introduced with the assertion that the "history of cartography is largely that of the increase in the accuracy with which these elements of distance and direction are determined and in the comprehensiveness of the map content."²² The supposedly improved production of maps from the late seventeenth century is associated with the blank maps produced by d'Anville and others, and the emerging standards of empirical map-making that gained traction within European intellectual culture because of their appearance of reliability. In this context, d'Anville's "Afrique" was significant because it offered a view that suggested it was

¹⁹ Quoted in N.J. Thrower, *Maps & Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society*, Third Edition (London, 2008), 110.

²⁰ For example, see R. Rees, 'Historical Links between Cartography and Art' in *Geographical Review* 70:1 (January, 1980), 62.

²¹ L. Bagrow, *History of Cartography* (revised and enlarged by R.A. Skelton) (London, 1966), 22.

²² G.R. Crone. *Maps and Their Makers: an introduction to the history of cartography* (London, 1953), xi.

founded on known facts rather than the products of supposition and guesswork. Insofar as it is tempting to draw contrasts between artistic and scientific map-making, however, this view is now seen as somewhat misleading. The field of scholarship has since turned to the presence of maps in the world today and notes that the obvious roles they perform are so well established that the nature of their historic development and use are easily obscured, impeding their analysis as historic documents and confounding the study of their production.

The progress of critical cartography in the twentieth century is often addressed with particular attention given to the work of Brian Harley in the late 1980s and early-1990s which advocated a post-modern “deconstruction” of the map. Through a short career that was celebrated in 2001 by the posthumous publication of his most prominent papers under the title *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, Harley helped redefine the analysis of historic maps and the framed the questions we now ask of them.²³ The “nature” of maps takes its meaning from Arthur H. Robinson and Barbara Bartz Petchenik’s *The Nature of Maps: Essays towards Understanding Maps and Mapping* (1976) which appeared at a time when the discipline of critical cartography was being defined.²⁴ Out of a scholarly tradition which had focused on the historical content of maps, the new approach was one that highlighted the social and practical contexts of map-making.²⁵

The central theory of Harley’s analysis was that maps are incorrectly perceived as neutral representations of the world whose production has inexorably improved over time; a notion that he dismissed as a positivist myth. Rather than treat historic maps as simply illustrative of a changing intellectual culture, Harley’s own argument evolved from the different interpretive methods he applied to the map-making process designed to uncover the meaning and role of historic cartography. In doing so, he highlighted what he believed to be the most appropriate framework

²³ P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002).

²⁴ A.H. Robinson & B.B. Petchenik, *The Nature of Maps: Essays towards Understanding Maps and Mapping* (London, 1976).

²⁵ See M.H. Edney, ‘Putting “Cartography” into the History of Cartography: Arthur H. Robinson, David Woodward, and the Creation of a Discipline’ in *Cartographic Perspectives* 51 (2005), 711-728.

for analysing maps: not as images but as texts, man-made and inherently subjective.²⁶ Applying the metaphor of cartography-as-text has encouraged an inquiry into how that language has developed, what rules govern it, and how has our modern interpretation of maps been conditioned by historic use and exposure to them. By modifying methods of iconographical interpretation devised by Erwin Panofsky for the analysis of art, Harley proposed a study of the different layers of meaning contained within historic maps. In doing so, he demonstrated how maps and map-makers have laid claim to relative degrees of cartographic accuracy and reliability through a variety of rhetorical and visual conventions. Decoding such paratextual paraphernalia in this manner has the advantage of rendering historic maps as more complex documents, revealing much about the contexts of their making, and their function in society.

Several models have been submitted to help structure the analysis of cartography. Harley and Michael Blakemore subscribed to one proposed by David Woodward in 1974 that separated the study of how maps are constructed into a linear progression of “information gathering” – “information processing” – “document distribution” – “document use.”²⁷ What will prove particularly relevant during this study is the obvious (though unsurprising) parallels that can be drawn between the examinations of maps and the texts which accompanied Britain’s encounter with West Africa. A framework for discussing these written constructions, suggested by Ian MacLaren, follows a similar linear theme from raw observations – revised journal – manuscript – final print.²⁸ In place of the raw notes written by travellers, we see raw tables of coordinates from their astronomical observations; in place of reflective journals, we see hand-drawn itinerant routes, and sketches returned to Britain to be converted into more coherent images.

²⁶ M.J. Blakemore & J.B. Harley, ‘Concepts in the History of Cartography: A Review and Perspective’ in *Cartographia* 17:04, Monograph 26 (Winter, 1980), 45, 87-107; J.B. Harley, ‘Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion’ in *Journal of Historical Geography* 15:01 (1989), 80-91; J.B. Harley, ‘Text and Contexts in the Interpretation of Early Maps’ in P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002), 35-7.

²⁷ D. Woodward, ‘The Study of the History of Cartography: A Suggested Framework’ in *The American Cartographer* 1:2 (1974), 101-115; Blakemore & Harley, ‘Concepts in the History of Cartography’ (1980), 46.

²⁸ I.S. MacLaren, ‘Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author’ in the *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 5:1 (1992), 39-68.

Harley pushed the examination of cartography further by incorporating the philosophies of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to justify his classification of maps as symbols of power, to argue that maps were fundamentally a vehicle through which control could be exercised.²⁹ Having identified the detail on early modern maps as the product of intentional design, he concluded that areas with no information were equally deliberate and thus served a purpose. The traditional explanation of blank maps highlighted the epistemological demands of an evolving geographic archive that inferred a lack of knowledge. However, these “silences” were linked by Harley to a variety of political and economic agendas that intentionally distorted the map by suppressing certain types of information.³⁰ Ultimately, the argument followed that if knowledge was power, then the presentation of knowledge (such as the details on maps) or the rules defining its appearance indicated that they were subject to certain influences. That relationship between knowledge and power is understood to be either internal or external to the map. In the first instance, cartography manipulates readers through their understanding of its detail, giving maps the *internal* ability to influence perceptions of the world. Yet it is impossible to isolate cartography from various *external* controls also. Their production cost money, expeditions to acquire new information required the mobilisation of men and resources, the arrangement and representation of details adhered to established conventions, and new observations had to be processed by established authorities. Whilst the appearance, distribution and utility of cartography can be linked to the conditions of how they were read, their use implies power of the reader over its content.

The economy of European map-making has meant that the development of cartography is closely aligned with the West’s social and political history. Consequently, critical cartography is punctuated with assertions that maps are not the objective representations of the world that they claim to be but complicated images reflecting several influencing factors. The bulk of the historiography, however, has shied away from the blunt assertion that maps act solely as

²⁹ J.B. Harley, ‘Silences and Secrecy: The hidden agenda of cartography in early Modern Europe’ in *Imago Mundi* 40:01 (1988), 57-76.

³⁰ J.B. Harley, ‘Maps, Knowledge and Power’ in G. Henderson & M. Waterson (eds.), *Geographic Thought: A Praxis Perspective* (Oxon, 2009), 129-42.

instruments of power. Instead it has focused not on how cartography has been used to serve certain interests but how, by serving several purposes at once, the sweeping power/knowledge paradigm is rendered misleading.³¹ Thomas Basset's study of the cartographic practices which complemented European imperialism in Africa has consequently been criticised by John Pickles for treating maps as a "direct and unambiguous instrument of power."³²

In place of this problematic approach, cartography is understood to be a complex discourse between the map and the reader (Wood's "discourse function"); where power can be related to the construction of maps but not entirely to their interpretation or use.³³ As Michael Biggs has suggested, we would be better not to conceive historic maps as tools *of* power but as cultural artefacts that could influence the moulding of new ideas *about* power. Illustrated on the surface of the map was, he explains, "a confluence of power and knowledge" both of which served to "define the object of the other."³⁴ This particular dialogue has now reached a point where cartography is seen to have transformed from being merely an icon or reflection of certain types of power to being an essential instrument of the emergent enlightenment philosophy of empirical knowledge.³⁵ The influence of which is most readily perceived when political and intellectual authority was increasingly qualified by its appearance as neutral, measured and supposedly grounded in reality. In the context of this thesis, the ability of maps to encourage a national dialogue about power and its legitimacy in relation to West Africa is hugely important for changing attitudes towards that region and developing themes of interaction.

Addressing the broader issue of cartographic positivism rejected by Harley, Matthew Edney has suggested that it would be useful to consider the impulse behind mapping to be a combination

³¹ Wood, *Power* (1992), 4-27.

³² T.J. Basset, 'Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-century West Africa' in *Geographical Review* 84:3 (July, 1994), 316-335; criticism for Basset found in J. Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping and the geo-coded world* (London, 2004), 113.

³³ J. Black, *Maps and Politics* (London, 1997), 21.

³⁴ M. Biggs, 'Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:02 (1999), 374-6, 380.

³⁵ J. Black, 'Government, State and Cartography: Mapping, Power, and Politics in Europe, 1650-1800' in *Cartographica* 43:02 (2008), 95-105.

of social, cultural and technological factors at any given time.³⁶ In doing so, the historian is forced to recognise the influences of several external stimuli that impact on how information is gathered, arranged and interpreted. The analysis of cartographic history is now focused on the significance of time and place in the discourse of developing ideas about the world and its representation. The various examinations of the spatial turn have reinforced the importance of “place” both in terms of how knowledge is formed and how different locations acquire identities within their associated discourses. Places of knowledge and learning now feature in various studies, particularly those concerning the ontology of truth-making.³⁷ Robert Mayhew has termed this fascination with spatial theory that emphasises the importance of location for historical research as “geohistoriography” or “geonarrativization”.³⁸ These studies are duly supported by several detailed examinations into how contemporary ideas and thoughts about the world reflected the localities in which they were formed. It follows that African cartography, at a cultural level, may well have developed in parts of Britain such that it underpinned the progression of a uniquely British intellectual and practical engagement with that part of the world.

Harley’s “deconstruction” of cartography ultimately encourages us to read maps as both texts with rhetorical conventions and as symbols of power discourses which contradict their neutrality; he encouraged us “to read between the lines of the map... and through its tropes discover the silences and contradictions that challenge the apparent honesty of the image.”³⁹ What we are ultimately left with then is a tradition of critical scholarship that now regards the map as a convincing lie.⁴⁰ The scope of cartographic history has progressed from these foundations and now contributes to a multi-disciplinary field spanning histories of art, geography, literature, and science.

³⁶ M.E. Edney, ‘Cartography Without Progress: Reinterpreting Nature and Historical Development of Mapmaking’ in *Cartographia* 30:2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 1993), 54-68.

³⁷ C.W.J. Withers, ‘Place and the “Spatial Turn” in Geography and in History’ in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70:04 (Oct., 2009), 637-58.

³⁸ R. Mayhew, ‘Geography as the Eye of Enlightenment Historiography’ in *Modern Intellectual History* 7:03 (November, 2010), 611-627.

³⁹ J.B. Harley, ‘Deconstructing the Map’ in P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002), 153.

⁴⁰ See M. Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps (2nd Edition)* (London, 1996).

The thesis

This thesis focuses on the two accusations made of historical map-making in the aftermath of Harley's work: that maps are not neutral images of the world and that they find particular meaning in the cultures which created them. Since the map of West Africa was subject to such contextuality, and because it was so difficult to form a coherent image of that region, much of this discussion revolves around the minor details which conspired to dictate the content of British cartography. I have sought to piece together an understanding of how this cartographic discourse developed by looking beyond the public image of exploration and other forms of geographical enquiry; to correlate popular themes of critical cartography with the map record, archival collections and published works relating to the topic. My objective in doing so is to demonstrate that the developing map of West Africa, and the manner of its appearance to a British audience, was subject to the changing agenda of Britain's interests in that region and filled with the accidental products of troubled enquiries.

Because of the difficulties and obstacles which obstructed British agency in West Africa, the nature of their cartography became embroiled in a symbolic encounter between Britain and the unknown. Particularly in consequence of abolition in 1807 and the development of the contemporary humanitarian mission, the mapping of Africa emerged alongside a national consciousness that was morally invested in the eradication of the slave trade. As I will argue, the contemporary mission to fill the map contributed towards the developing character of their presence in the region and was similarly influenced by a conscious discussion of the function and identity of Britons in Africa. Complementing that changing narrative of personal and national identity, the land was similarly imbued with symbolic meaning which supported the civilized character associated with *the Briton*. In this, I take my lead from Edney's work on the British cartography of India, where he argues that the act of surveying and mapping became "thoroughly

implicated in the ideology of the British empire in South Asia.”⁴¹ Balancing between those efforts to produce a scientifically accurate map and the sentimental meaning that was given to it, we will witness a clash between historical geographic and cartographic traditions and the representational practices which mediated between the land and its audience.

This thesis is formed of six chapters divided into three broad thematic discussions: the map, the mapping, and the mapped. In many instances, different chapters will cover similar episodes from several different perspectives. This is intentional so that it can be illustrated how events are situated within multiple discourses during this period.

In the first instance, chapters one and two will engage with two separate fields of scholarship: that which pertains to the analysis of cartography and geographical enquiries, and that which deals with Britain’s activities in West Africa and the image of that region which appeared on their maps. Chapter one is therefore a discussion of several fields of scholarship, intended to introduce and analyse the circumstances of contemporary map-making and the production of geographical knowledge. In contrast, chapter two offers historical context for the developing map and prepares the groundwork for later chapters to build upon.

Following from the framework these chapters offer, chapters three and four focus on the practical and physical realities of mapping in West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter three looks to the sponsorship of cartographic enquiry, and the administration (or manipulation) of British interests. My intention is to trace how those investigations into the geography of the region were controlled or influenced by external forces, and how the final map reflected their input. Much of this study revolves around the relatively few individuals who were positioned to direct enquiries, make enquiries or interpret their discoveries. The discourse of power that Harley studied was one which existed over every step of the map-making process is highlighted here to reinforce the fact that maps are not objective but the product of historical and social

⁴¹ M.E. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London, 1997), 3.

circumstances. Chapter four then looks closely at the experiences of those who collected raw geographical information in the field. By treating the observer (or the explorer) as a tool of enquiry, the conditions of their observations reveal much about the development of the map. Moreover, it helps contextualise the role of indigenous information within the cartographic discourse which is itself a burgeoning field of study.

The final two chapters consider West Africa as it was mapped; that is, by recognising that the finished map was not necessarily a true reflection of the reality nor even a reflection of how it was recorded by travellers in the field. Chapter five consequently discusses the way cartography and geographical descriptions were moulded to assume specific conclusions, how travellers' observations were edited so that the images associated with the map took on new forms. This will be the first time in the thesis that the question of the Niger's course and termination will be discussed at length because of the pressures many map-makers faced when delineating that river to conform to various preconceived ideas. Understanding that the map is entirely compromised by the circumstances of its construction, chapter six then assesses how the cartographic discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries found purpose. This will be an examination of the map's utility and cultural meaning in response to an emerging geographical image of the region.

In terms of this discussion, West Africa is defined loosely within the context of the contemporary quest for the Niger River. The geographical extent of West Africa is recognised today as that portion of the continent from Senegal to Nigeria on the coast, and including Mali and Niger in the interior. Britain's efforts to identify and chart the course and termination of the Niger, however, included expeditions to and from Tripoli in the north and the Congo River to the south. Of course, many sought to prove its connection with the Nile but Lake Chad operates as the easternmost concern of this examination.

A last note on map-makers. Throughout this thesis, reference is made to cartographers, geographers, map-makers and so on. Harley observed the complication of attributing a map to any one individual because of the several stages involved in its production, each of which were

susceptible to influences which could dictate the appearance of the final product.⁴² For the purposes of this study, I am referring broadly to the people who were responsible for the intellectual decisions that most affect the drawing of features upon the map.

Harley's "deconstruction" of the map was intended to do three things: address the false positivism of cartography, find their historical context and significance, and place the map within a broader discourse of knowledge.⁴³ This study concerns almost a century of events and myriad circumstantial activities occurring in Britain and West Africa. My attempts to discuss certain themes through detailed yet isolated examples cannot account for the sheer volume of influencing factors which put pressure on the final appearance of the map. Furthermore, I cannot presume to successfully demonstrate a universal interpretation of cartography in Britain during this period as there are socio-political and economic factors too broad to discuss here which hindered distribution and consumption patterns. Nor is there any certain way to define precisely what the contemporary reader's interaction with the map was when it was so inherently personal to individuals.

Cartographic history, like historical cartography, is ultimately open to changing speculation and shifting trends of examination. As J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder wrote in their introduction to the historical atlas of Africa:

There is nothing fixed, or final, about a historical map. Maps are not simply a means of displaying historical evidence. They are interpretations of that evidence, often bringing into sharp focus the author's or editor's assumptions concerning the nature of the phenomena, process, or events under consideration.⁴⁴

What I hope to achieve in the following chapters is a detailed analysis of the map-making and interpretive traditions that were applied to West Africa between 1749 and 1841, and situate the developing map in its historical context.

⁴² Harley, 'Text and Context' (2002), 38-39.

⁴³ Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map' (2002), 168.

⁴⁴ J.F.A. Ajayi & M. Crowder, *Historical Atlas of Africa* (Longman, 1985) quoted in Black, *Maps* (1997), 20.

* * *

Chapter 1: Themes in cartographic history and Britain's mapping of West Africa

How should we consider cartography as a historical record? When examining the use of historic maps of West Africa in post-colonial scholarship, René Baesjou highlights several complications within the cartographic archive that make it difficult to ascertain their value as documents of the past. He argues that not only were maps of Africa often compromised by the manner of their construction and inconsistent content, but that there were few improvements to the map-making process in the pre-colonial era which rendered the final product a useful resource; neither then nor today.⁴⁵ Critical cartography today is summarised by Denis Cosgrove as alternating between two areas of interest: the processes of a map's construction and its final appearance.⁴⁶ The underlying contention here is that the content of the British map of West Africa was inherently subject to the circumstances of the mapping process. The analysis of historical cartography now considers maps as windows into several contemporary circumstances which, once deciphered (or deconstructed), offer contextual information of a different, potentially more valuable sort. That historical relativity is a theme which is implicated in the construction of any archive and the people who make them; as John Schwartz and Terry Cook have said:

...the individual document is not just a bearer of historical content, but also a reflection of the needs and desires of its creator, the purpose(s) for its creation, the audience(s) viewing the record, the broader legal, technical, organizational, social, and cultural-intellectual contexts in which the creator and audience operated and in which the document is made meaningful, and the initial intervention and on-going mediation of the archivists.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ R. Baesjou, 'The Historical Evidence in Old Maps and Charts of Africa with Special Reference to West Africa' in *History in Africa* 15 (1988), 1-5.

⁴⁶ D. Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London, 2008), 156.

⁴⁷ J.M. Schwarz & T. Cook, 'Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory' in *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 3.

Jeffrey Stone observes a scholarly tradition of considering the eighteenth century to be an era of new beginnings for the map of Africa, commencing with the contributions of Guillaume Delisle whose series of maps between 1700 and his death in 1726 made significant changes to the content of African cartography. In particular, French activities in the region had encouraged his separation of the Senegal and Niger rivers in defiance of established geographical belief. Reflecting the growing number of accounts generated by Europe's expanding mercantile interests along the coast, much of the surface of maps like Delisle's 1707 "Carte de la Barbarie de la Nigritie et de La Guinée" (figure 4) were covered in textual details. Stone notes that to a certain extent, the distinctive blank spaces which characterised Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's cartography were simply a product of his having transferred much of those features from his own maps to his accompanying memoirs.⁴⁸ The blank map of Africa (d'Anville's and others') is more than a milestone in the history of visual authority, however; it marks the conceptualisation of map-making as an empirical project by the mid-eighteenth century, one which could be added to and amended by successive enquiries.

In the period between d'Anville's "Afrique" in 1749 and the mapping which accompanied Britain's disastrous Niger Expedition in 1841, what is considered here to be the cartographic discourse underwent significant evolution, affecting both the production and utility of maps. The character of British enquiries as they took their lead from the French, their geographical understanding and representations of the region, and their quest for cartographic accuracy were each subject to great instances of change. In this regard, I argue that to fully appreciate the impact of cartography during this study it is important to expand the analysis beyond maps themselves. As Denis Wood and John Fels say: "map study suffers when it is restricted to maps."⁴⁹ To emphasise the correlation of cartography to broader concerns, I have looked especially to its relationship with texts because "maps were illustrative of texts".⁵⁰ By acknowledging literary conventions and the

⁴⁸ Stone, *A Short History* (1996), 24-28.

⁴⁹ Wood & Fels, 'The Nature of Maps' (2008), 195.

⁵⁰ Stone, *A Short History* (1996), 27.



ability of Britons to engage with those descriptions and their accompanying geographical illustration, I hope to present this discussion of West African mapping in terms not just confined to their construction and their reading, but the role (both practical and intellectual) of mapping during British contact with that region.

The purpose of this chapter is to navigate a path through several historical themes and their associated historiographies. I have drawn together various branches of scholarship into four broad headings which I believe offer the greatest insight into what best represents the nature of Britain's mapping of West Africa in terms of their historical context: geographical imagination, geographical enquiry, cartographic-literacy, and the quest for cartographic accuracy. The intention here is to demonstrate how each theme developed during this period, and to justify why we should view the cartography considered in this study as subject to those changing discourses. Because many of

these themes are rooted in intellectual, cultural, economic and socio-political trends they offer a point of reference for later chapters.

Geographically imagining West Africa and the British reflection

Maps provide a means for making sense of the world. They present a distorted reality through their manipulation of space and utilization of cartographic signs and symbols. They reduce a three-dimensional world to a two-dimensional representation by applying rules of scale and global projection.⁵¹ Since the recovery, translation and publication of Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography* in the fifteenth century, the emphasis of cartography has been to present a detached and objective view of geography from a god-like perspective. Through western cartographic practices the world has been drawn within a grid matrix of latitude and longitude, allowing map-makers to mathematically fix geography to known places with relative degrees of accuracy.⁵² Maps which thus homogenised space and illustrated features in relation to a graticule allowed Europeans greater control over the world as they encountered and recorded it. Cartographic practices also helped contemporaries visualise the geographical distribution of different themes, they complemented and stimulated the Newtonian mechanics which emerged in the late 1600s, and facilitated the taxonomic projects of the eighteenth century. By the period under scrutiny here, maps and the language of mapping were inseparable from contemporary dialogues concerning the world.

The hermeneutic analysis of cartography in the tradition of Harley provides useful language-metaphors for the discussion of maps; if they are to be regarded as a form of text then there must be similar issues of grammar and punctuation at play which govern their appearance and interpretation. By adhering to certain rhetorical and presentational rules, cartography presents

⁵¹ For a brief introduction see R.W. Karrow Jr., 'Introduction' in J.R. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 1-18.

⁵² D. Cosgrove, 'Mapping the World' in J.R. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 82-85.

itself as believable.⁵³ What has been called the “paramap” by Wood and Fels, consisting of the peritext (included within the map) and the epitext (that influence the interpretation and circulation of the map from without), contribute to the reading of maps and focus their purpose to certain audiences.⁵⁴ In the first instance, the addition of features such as titles, illustrations, texts, legends, and other recognisable cartographic attributes instruct readers how the maps is to be understood and what information it claims to show. As for external influences on their reading: the appearance and distribution of explanatory texts, adverts, or any material related to their construction not present on the finished article appeals to readers to interact with their content.

The various elements of the paramap and other discursive media matured in concert with evolving scientific methodologies, allowing contemporary cartographers means to present their work as authoritative. Michael Bravo has observed that the appearance of features such as coordinates or tables included within texts or on the surface of a map indicated to a discerning audience that its contributing observations had conformed to rigorous study.⁵⁵ The desire for reliable cartography and the various conventions designed to imply precision therefore helped map-makers disguise the limitations of their geographical knowledge. By producing cartography which had the appearance of reliability, Britain was thus provided with the tools to engage with West Africa even when the geography was flawed.

John Pickles recently sought to complement Brian Harley’s textual discourse of maps as ideological constructs and in doing so coined the term “cartographic gaze”. His aim was to illustrate how contemporaries of the early modern period viewed and understood the world through a developing matrix of cultural and intellectual narratives that were anchored to their appearance on

⁵³ D. Wood & J. Fels, ‘Designs on Signs/Myth and Meaning in Maps’ in *Cartographia* 23:02 (1986), 54-103.

⁵⁴ Wood & Fels, ‘The Nature of Maps’ (2008), 192-193.

⁵⁵ M.T. Bravo, ‘Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel: James Rennell and the Orientalist Geography of the New Imperial Age (1760-1830)’ in J. Elsner & J. Rubiés (eds.) *Voyage & Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London, 1999), 166.

the map. The result was his recognition that carto-literate societies learned to conceptualise the world within the mathematical terms of the map; literally “*To map was to think.*”⁵⁶

My principal interest in the analysis of cartographic history has been the contemporary discourses within which it operated, and the congruent ideas and images which influenced the character of Britain’s engagement with places like West Africa. Studies such as Cosgrove’s examination into the influence of geographical concepts and knowledge in western society, for example, acknowledge that people understand their place in the world by being exposed to ideas and images of other places.⁵⁷ Yet there is a significance attached to how they view the strange and unknown, and what is distorted in the retelling of far-away sites irrespective of any efforts at precision. The implications for how foreign places were interpreted by cartographic and geographical traditions complements Edward Said’s seminal analysis of intellectual and literary practices inherent in the West’s reproduction of the East. Through the analysis of various discursive traditions, Said’s *Orientalism* charted the development of literary and rhetorical conventions that contribute towards how non-Europeans, or “others”, were defined (or invented) in accordance with fear and distrust of the unfamiliar. These are the repercussions of what he termed “imagined geographies”: culturally-defined representations of strange lands and people that were projected across different parts of the world and often persisted in the face of contradictory evidence.⁵⁸ For the evolution of the geographical imagination, maps are grouped alongside other visual tools that operated in concert with descriptive texts, helping to popularise and transport “geographic images” of other places in a similar fashion.⁵⁹

Geoff King begins his study of what he called “cultural cartography” by observing that the framework of western mapping practices provided a means by which knowledge of the wider world could be easily incorporated into and communicated within a growing archive of conceptual

⁵⁶ Pickles, *A History of Spaces* (2004), 13-4, 75-91.

⁵⁷ D. Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, 2001), ix-xii.

⁵⁸ E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003), see Introduction, 49-73.

⁵⁹ Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision* (2001), 3-7.

information. Mapping became integral to the cataloguing projects of the Enlightenment by providing a means by which the entire world could be understood and “known”.⁶⁰ King’s inference, however, is that not only was the world defined and hence identified in terms dictated by European traditions, but that awareness of a place was intertwined with how it was mapped and subjected to related cultural agenda. The historiographical attention paid to European mapping of non-European lands (albeit where there was more of a colonial agenda), for example, often draws attention to the ability of western observers to overwrite indigenous landscapes with more attractive images.⁶¹ Cartographers have been found guilty of transplanting familiar nomenclature to the geography of distant lands as a form of “spatial punctuation”; labelling features such as “forests” to evoke a particular understanding which often did not relate to conditions on the ground.⁶² Even the Eurocentrism of Atlases presented a view of the world which emphasised Europe as the centre of the world.⁶³ As the argument follows, when Europeans encountered “others” for the first time, it was usually on land that had already been conceptually mapped and incorporated into western cartographic assumptions and rhetorical generalisations of the world.⁶⁴

Efforts have been made to follow Philip Curtin’s study into how the popular image of Africa changed over time and embraces a range of scholarship which examines the consequences for interaction when the characters of all parties concerned were so heavily entrenched in representational traditions. Of course, Curtin’s argument that popular representations had little in common with the physical reality ultimately holds true.⁶⁵ In his study of contact, Urs Bitterli sought to redefine the history of colonial contact as one of cultural rather than imperial significance and so acknowledged the importance of visual and written representations for contextualising how Europe learned to interact with the non-European world. In doing so he compliments the discussion

⁶⁰ G. King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartography* (Wiltshire, 1996), 26-8, 184.

⁶¹ For example, see J.B. Harley, ‘New England Cartography and the Native Americans’ in P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002), 170-195.

⁶² King, *Mapping Reality* (1996), 61-2; J.B. Harley, ‘Power and Legitimation in the English Geographical Atlases of the Eighteenth Century’ in P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002), 136-46.

⁶³ Black, *Maps* (1997), 30.

⁶⁴ King, *Mapping Reality* (1996), 141-6.

⁶⁵ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 318-342.

of what has been referred to as the “contact zone” of imperial expansion: the spaces in time and place where distinct cultures met for the first time and proceeded together, irreparably altered in some manner from their encounter.⁶⁶ Where such an analysis tends to fall short, however, is its failure to appreciate the ability of cartography to anticipate and later legitimise that interaction and any subsequent relationships (such as trade, colonization or conflict).

Historically, the imagining of West Africa has been subject to several efforts intended to make sense of a region that was hard to access and afforded limited observations beyond the coast. Onto the empty surface of blank cartography which had been stripped of unverifiable features and ethnographic detail it was possible to project any number of realities derived from available descriptions of the region. Cartographic traditions rendered the world manageable and knowable, yet where d’Anville’s blank map had removed unverifiable geographical information, impressions of the region continued to draw inspiration from a very broad range of sources. Ancient texts, Arabic geographies, and assumptions about the barren wilderness of the Torrid Zone continued to influence popular images. Even echoes of traditional descriptions based on Christian texts contributed significantly to the confused discussion of that region.⁶⁷ The blank map of West Africa was curiously subject to contemporary knowledge of the Sahara Desert, where the reality on the ground appeared to correspond with the extensive empty spaces of popular cartography. Trade and contact along the African coast, however, exposed Europe to varying images of tropical exuberance that dispelled the enduring idea of the continent’s interior as simply a torrid wasteland. In place of one label though, another emerged and experience of the high mortality that plagued

⁶⁶ U. Bitterli & R. Robertson (ed.), *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800* (Cambridge, 2003); M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), 1-6; D. Outram, ‘Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Enlightenment’ in M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf & I. McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Oxon, 2007), 551-65; see also P.J. Stern, ‘Exploration and Enlightenment’ in D. Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: the West in the World* (Oxford, 2014) 54-68.

⁶⁷ See F. Relaño, ‘Paradise in Africa: The History of a Geographical Myth from its Origins in Medieval Thought to its Gradual Demise in Early Modern Europe’ in *Terrae Incognitae* 36:01 (2004), 1-6.

European endeavours contributed towards the definition (by the 1820s) of West Africa as the “White Man’s Grave”.⁶⁸

For the purpose of analysis, Mike Hulme has argued that the European relationship with the tropics is best understood by reviewing historical understandings of extreme environments.⁶⁹ Contemporary efforts to define and explain the African climate, one that was different in every regard to that found in Britain, had a profound influence over the character of British activities there. This was partly because its contrast to temperate norms made it a place to be feared and so David Arnold warns that the tropics existed “as a conceptual, and not merely physical, space.”⁷⁰ As Felix Driver and Luciana Martins have commented, the multi-media construction of the tropics in European world models follows a similar course to Said’s thesis and reflects contemporary efforts to define something which was categorically alien.⁷¹ The developing map of Africa that increasingly sought to delineate the different climates and account for the physical landscape was, therefore, related to broader concerns with what those conditions meant for European activities there. In conjunction with texts and discursive traditions, the “Climatic imagining” as David Livingstone calls it, was complemented further by the museum exhibitions and botanical collections that were established to demonstrate the alien appearance of places such as the tropics.⁷²

Popular interest in West Africa and its inhabitants encouraged discursive engagements with its geography and local cultures to emphasise the contrast between Europeans and the realities of those places. Contact between Britain and West Africa ultimately found a greater breadth of expression in the burgeoning literary market of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than on the surface of British cartography. Published accounts sought to engage an ever-growing readership

⁶⁸ P.D. Curtin, “‘The White Man’s Grave:’ Image and Reality, 1780-1815’ in *Journal of British Studies* 1:1 (Nov., 1961), 94-110.

⁶⁹ M. Hulme, ‘The Conquering of Climate: the discourses of fear and their dissolution’ in *The Geographical Journal* 174:1 (March, 2008), 5-16.

⁷⁰ D. Arnold, ‘The Place of “the Tropics” in Western Medical Ideas since 1750’ in *Tropical Medicine and International Health* 2:04 (April, 1997), 303-313.

⁷¹ F. Driver & L. Martins, ‘Views & Visions of the Tropical World’, in F. Driver & L. Martins (eds.), *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (London, 2005), 4.

⁷² D. Livingstone, ‘Tropical Hermeneutics and the climatic imagination’ in *Geographische Zeitschrift* 90 (2002), 65-88.

with the experiences of travellers overseas and thus represent an important tool for promoting new ideas and images. These texts were legitimised by accompanying cartographies which fixed their descriptions to specific locations. As Linda Colley has noted in the context of literary genres which appealed to popular sensibilities, the atmosphere of enquiry, imperialism and colonisation from the eighteenth century was one that affected society in ways that are no longer the case today, and which made the images and stories of encounters with strange landscapes and inhabitants more relevant.⁷³ Contemporary Britons were invested in these constructs as they viewed the possibilities and opportunities which the broadening horizons of the British empire presented.

European contact with the non-European world generated a vast archive of information which has since been associated with the development of Enlightenment thought. Much has consequently been written regarding the emerging debate about the African's place in nature and the development of stadial theories of human evolution and society.⁷⁴ A correlation was formed between people and certain places; contributing towards what the West recognised as naturally occurring civilization and its attendant practices of art, commerce and science. Livingstone's examination of the tropics as a textual tradition pursued what he called the "moral discourse of climate" because the associations made between land and people during contemporary geographical investigations were easily applied to a Eurocentric model of morality, providing rhetoric which accounted for the apparent low state of tropical cultures and which was increasingly called upon in ethnographical studies to rationalise the perceived physical and mental differences of Africans.⁷⁵ The nineteenth century was then characterised by an attitude towards Africans which often assumed their state of being to be a reflection of their geographical situation.⁷⁶ As such, Europeans increasingly adopted the explanations offered by geography to define their own cultural superiority and justify their moral arguments for humanitarian projects in Africa.⁷⁷ The culmination

⁷³ L. Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600 – 1850* (London, 2003), 12-17.

⁷⁴ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 28-57.

⁷⁵ D.N. Livingstone, 'The moral discourse of climate: historical consideration on race, place and virtue' in *Journal of Historical Geography* 17:04 (1991), 413-434.

⁷⁶ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 227.

⁷⁷ Livingstone, 'Tropical Hermeneutics and the climatic imagination' (2002), 65-88.

of these enquiries was, Livingstone argues, intended to promote a Eurocentric view of intellectual, moral and physical attributes that were superior to those found elsewhere.⁷⁸ Pseudo-scientific practices of the mid- to late nineteenth century are observed to have built on these foundations in their racial stereotyping and attitudes towards groups such as Africans.⁷⁹ The popular conclusion then, is that detailed studies of the unfamiliar entrenched ideas about the importance of the familiar, contributing towards discourses of identity and the evolution of Western society.⁸⁰

Britons made mental and personal connections with the land and inhabitants of West Africa, and positioned themselves accordingly by using the map as a mediator. If the written accounts which accompanied exploration and studies of foreign places can be regarded as a mechanism for defining one's self in opposition to "the other", cartography and cartographic traditions can similarly be related to efforts to define the map-reader's relationship to the land and peoples mapped. Popular tropes of Africa as the "Dark Continent" and Africans as "Noble Savages", for example, are linked by Edna Steeves to contemporary criticism of materialism and industrialisation, the moral dialogue of abolition, and literary fashions that idolized nature and the natural world.⁸¹ There is no great leap from the associations made about the African interior illustrated on British cartography when it appeared as a great unknown, filled by a complexity of assumed images, to that cultural and literary label of the "Dark Continent". This was obviously a form of ethnocentrism (or Eurocentrism as it may be) which Katherine George believed reflected a "dynamic operating in the homeland environment of the traveller, and which is essentially extraneous to the data he observes..."⁸² Colley's definition of the form of British national identity to have emerged at this time observes the unification of "internal differences" within different parts

⁷⁸ D.N. Livingstone, 'Tropical climate and moral hygiene: the anatomy of a Victorian debate' in *The British Journal for the History of Science* 32:01 (March, 1999), 93-110; D.N. Livingstone, 'Race, space and moral climatology: notes towards a geneology' in *Journal of Historical Geography* 28:2 (2002), 159-180.

⁷⁹ F. Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford, 2001); For a similar discussion of the French perspective, see M.S. Staum, 'The Paris Geographical Society constructs the Other, 1821-1850' in *Journal of Historical Geography* 26:2 (2000), 222-238.

⁸⁰ D. Outram, *The Enlightenment: new approaches to European history* (Cambridge, 1996), 63-79.

⁸¹ E.L. Steeves, 'Negritude and the Noble Savage' in *the Journal of Modern African Studies* 11:01 (March, 1973), 91-104.

⁸² K. George, 'The Civilized West Looks at Primitive Africa: 1400-1800 a study in Ethnocentrism' in *Isis* 49:1 (March, 1958), 72.

of Britain “in response to contact with the Other.”⁸³ The map and its reading by a contemporary audience, and the images it invoked arguably revealed something within British culture that needed contrast to help its self-identification.

The question then, turns to what the act of mapping entailed for the British idea of their role in West Africa, particularly when knowledge of the land was so inherently bound up within the culture of European cartography and what that knowledge represents within contemporary discourses? As Anne Godlewska has shown in the case of Egypt after Napoleon’s invasion in 1798, subsequent French cartography which accompanied the publication of the *Description de l’Egypte* (1809-1822) helped foster an artificial view of the country. Through its imagery and symbolism, the resultant series of maps promoted an ideological triumph of the European Enlightenment over the perceived ignorance and superstition of indigenous culture. In doing so, they legitimised the excesses of the campaign and fostered a sense of national pride around the notion that French enterprise had returned order to the cradle of civilization.⁸⁴ The geographical imagination promoted by that mapping was, therefore, one which complemented a broader cultural interaction with the land.

Britain’s contact with West Africa as a broadly unknown landmass (and its inhabitants as unknown variables of the landscape) during this period encouraged a reappraisal of what it meant to be British; particularly in the context of its ongoing humanitarian activities around the turn of the nineteenth century. If the image of Africans generated after instances of contact involved such personal reflection, however, Patrick Brantlinger has noted the ability of abolitionist literature to foster a morally-righteous identity for Britons which excused their nation’s slave-trading past.⁸⁵ In doing so, discussions of African society then increasingly sought to explain slavery as a product of indigenous culture. Over time, Matthew Mason has argued that Britain’s geopolitical stance on

⁸³ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 2005), 6.

⁸⁴ A. Godlewska, ‘Map, text and image. The mentality of enlightened conquerors: a new look at the *Description de l’Egypte*’ in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 20;01 (1995), 5-28.

⁸⁵ P. Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans: the Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent’ in *Critical Inquiry* 2:1 “Race,” *Writing, and Difference* (Autumn, 1985), 166-203.

abolition was influenced, to varying degrees, by the desire to appear morally superior to other former slave-trading countries.⁸⁶ Explanatory mediums like texts and maps which accompanied the “scientific” discovery and description of the land and its people contributed towards this dialogue of national qualities and political policy, centred on the humanitarian agenda.⁸⁷

The difficulties faced during the production of West African cartography in this period is typically attributed to the numerous obstacles which restricted the activities of Europeans there. As the hurdles faced by map-makers rendered the accuracy of their cartography problematic though, their efforts to overcome them encouraged increasing attention towards how their enquiries could be adapted to West Africa. Because of the techniques which emerged to address these problems, K.M. Barbour has concluded that African maps were defined by – and contributed to – the “practical and theoretical” development of European cartographic practices in general.⁸⁸ Whilst the geographical imagining helped explain the identities of Britons and West Africans then, it was the ability to discover the truth of African geography which fuelled assumptions of superiority.

Geographical Enquiry, Exploration and Mapping Discovery

Enlightenment geography has traditionally been understood as an encyclopaedic activity of collecting relevant data for inclusion within a growing archive of knowledge.⁸⁹ In his examination of the role of geography in history, Robert Mayhew refers to a contemporary definition of the fledgling science by Thomas Salmon in whose *New Geographical and Historical Grammar* (1749): it was considered “a Description of the surface of the natural Terraqueous Globe, consisting of Earth and

⁸⁶ M. Mason, ‘Keeping up Appearances: The International Politics of Slave Trade Abolition in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World’ in *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 66:4 *Abolishing the Slave Trades: Ironies and Reverberations* (Oct., 2009), 809-832.

⁸⁷ See also R.A. Austen & W.D. Smith, ‘Images of African and the British Slave-Trade Abolition: the Transition to an Imperialist Ideology, 1787-1807’ in *African Historical Studies* 2:1 (1969), 69-83.

⁸⁸ K.M. Barbour, ‘Africa and the Development of Geography’ in *The Geographical Journal*, 148:03 (Nov., 1982), 317.

⁸⁹ C.W.J. Withers, ‘Encyclopaedism, Modernism and the Classification of Geographical Knowledge’ in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* 21:02 (1996), 275-298.

Water, which is represented by the artificial Globe.”⁹⁰ In this manner then it was a cataloguing project of physical places, their descriptions, and the establishment of their precise locations.

Charles Withers offers a more succinct definition:

Geography was understood as theoretical and practical: scales of measurement and trigonometry as well as narratives of discovery in the first sense, and the making of celestial and terrestrial globes, sea charts, and land maps in the second.⁹¹

The map then was a product of geographical study and inherently bound to its popular practices. Considering Europe’s increasing contact with the wider world during this age of oceanic discovery, Withers concludes that the enquiries of travellers, and natural historians in the eighteenth century, and their collecting and classifying of various forms of data, were thus the means by which the world was “put in place”.⁹² As an increasingly disciplined science though, geography encouraged confidence in its ability to offer scientific explanation in a way which made it easy to overlook the limitations of its archive. In the context of somewhere like Africa therefore, Withers urges caution and observes that the “globalization” of European enquiries during the Enlightenment was in fact often confined to the margins of landmasses.⁹³ Yet traditions of cataloguing and contrasting geographic and ethnographic research encouraged what Mary-Louis Pratt has called “planetary consciousness” which she argues was particularly important for contextualising the meeting between Europeans and non-Europeans, and its representations to western audiences.⁹⁴

The so-called “culture of science” which had taken hold of British society by the eighteenth century stimulated investigations into the workings of the world and the mechanics of nature. As Roy Porter says: “Science’s growing prestige broadened horizons and bred hope: all was open to inquiry, measurement and analysis.” The significance of such broad enquiry in the context of Enlightenment intellectual thought was, he notes, its ability to complement contemporary desires

⁹⁰ R. Mayhew, ‘The effacement of early modern geography (c.1600-1850): a historiographical essay’ in *Progress in Human Geography*, 25:03 (2001), 387-388.

⁹¹ C.W.J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (London, 2007), 196.

⁹² C.W.J. Withers, ‘Geography, Natural History and the Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment: Putting the World in Place’ in *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring, 1995), 136-163.

⁹³ Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (2007), 87.

⁹⁴ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), 15-35.

for progress.⁹⁵ In terms of cartography then, the advancement of survey and production methods placed greater pressure on the accuracy of geography, and stimulated a demand for reliability which map-making practices often struggled to meet. In this context we see the quest for accurate measurement of longitude and the creation of John Harrison's chronometers in the 1760s and 1770s.⁹⁶ Mapping traditions which emerged to address the faults of European ignorance have been identified by Matthew Edney as ultimately serving to "establish and legitimate Enlightenment's ideological self-image as an inquisitive, rational, knowing, and hence, empowered state."⁹⁷ The development of "Mathematical Cosmography" by the latter-1700s has consequently been labelled as an activity which embraced the studies of both astronomy and geometry in an effort to produce an accurate, measured view of geography.⁹⁸ The language of progress and development were therefore never far from the cartographic discourse.

The nature of these epistemic shifts reflects a myriad of contextual, circumstantial, and in many cases geographical occurrences that put pressure on any data which contributed to the archive. There are however two broadly defined events within this period which account for particularly significant changes in the manner of European enquiries: what Livingstone has termed the "Kantian Turn" of the latter eighteenth century and what Susan Cannon has identified as the advent of "Humboldtian science" by the early 1800s.⁹⁹ Although it is important to remain sceptical of distinct phases of scientific thought, together they illustrate the extent to which the European investigations into the wider world were subject to significant developments in terms of scholarly and methodological trends.

⁹⁵ R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2001), 149-155.

⁹⁶ See D. Sobel, *Longitude: the True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time* (London, 1998); G.R. Crone. *Maps and Their Makers* (London, 1966), 142.

⁹⁷ M. H. Edney, 'Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map Making: Reconnaissance, Mapping, Archive' in D.N. Livingstone & C.W.J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Enlightenment* (London, 1999), 173.

⁹⁸ M.E. Edney, 'Mathematical Cosmography and the Social Ideology of British Cartography, 1780-1820' in *Imago Mundi* 46 (1994), 101-102.

⁹⁹ D.N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford, 1992), 113-119; S.F. Cannon, *Science in Culture: the Early Victorian Period* (London, 1978), 73-110.

In the first instance, Immanuel Kant's (1724-1807) support of secular Enlightenment thought stemmed from his belief in the powers of human reason to identify the truths of the natural world without recourse to theological explanation.¹⁰⁰ Livingstone notes that in the context of geographical studies and the world's physical features, it was "the geographer's duty to investigate them rather than speculating on their supposed role in the divine economy."¹⁰¹ This rationale encouraged the analysis of the world as complex natural system created by God that was nevertheless shaped by measurable and predictable events. This meant that unknown lands such as West Africa could be rationalised by referring to their known peripheries. Similar developments occurred across the academic spectrum leading to the study of human society being conducted in the same discursive manner as the flora and fauna of the world, complementing the groundbreaking taxonomic model devised by Carl Linné (Linnaeus) and natural historians such as Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) who encouraged the examination of human nature.

Geography provided an explanation for the physical appearance of the land and, as we have already seen, its rhetoric was often deployed to rationalise the observable differences between people and places. Indeed, as Robert Wilson's *General Atlas* (1809) claims, it had several applications:

[Geography must] be allowed to be, of all the Sciences, one of the most pleasing, and, at the same time, the most useful; it is of almost universal concern; persons of every rank and situation in life are more or less interested in it, and reap advantages from an acquaintance with it; while it is indispensably necessary to the statesman, the merchant, the mariner, and the traveller, it likewise furnishes abundant matter for investigation to the philosopher; assists the divine in understanding and explaining many parts of holy writ, that, without its aid, would be obscure and uninteresting; is necessary to the reader of history; and, indeed, to every one who peruses the daily accounts of the events that are taking place in the different parts of the world, or even in our own country; the serious mind will hereby discover unnumbered proofs of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the great Creator; while the moralist will have his attention engaged by the different appearances of human nature in situations abundantly varied; and to the naturalist it opens sources of amusement that are inexhaustible.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Outram, *The Enlightenment* (1996), 2-3.

¹⁰¹ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (1992), 116-117.

¹⁰² R. Wilkinson, *Wilkinson's General Atlas of the World. Quarters, Empires, Kingdoms, States &c. with Appropriate Tables. Second Edition* (London, 1809), introduction.

The cartographic reproduction of West Africa contributed to many discussions but the image of the land that featured in these discourses was intimately joined to how its geography was understood by British scholarship. That understanding and the scope of geographical science changed as more was learned about the unknown landscape.

Where Kant proves indicative of the temporal Enlightenment, Alexander von Humboldt (1766-1859) has been the subject of various studies because his influence on the world of science and cartography was particularly far-reaching. Referred to by Pickles as a “transitional figure from classical to modern episteme,” his synthetic reports of the Amazon rainforest were compiled from studies covering several fields of what would now be independent disciplines of astronomy, various earth and life sciences, and mapping, with a particular focus on the accuracy of recording.¹⁰³ Godlewska even credits him with developing a “new kind of map” in light of his experimentation with thematic cartography to illustrate the spread of natural history in relation to the geography of the region.¹⁰⁴ Although he appeared during his lifetime to be a controversial figure for his reliance on personal observation through travel and experience instead of the sedentary scholarship preferred by many of his peers, Humboldt remains hugely important for the study of exploration and representation of the tropics.¹⁰⁵

Livingstone’s work on the geography of Enlightenment thought highlights the variation of knowledge and its representation across countries (radiating from focal-points such as universities or geographical societies) meaning that information and ideas often overlapped and assumed

¹⁰³ Pickles, *A History of Spaces* (2004), 121.

¹⁰⁴ A. Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographic Science from Cassini to Humboldt* (London, 1999), 251; Alexander von Humboldt’s cartography was not entirely unique in terms of his development of thematic mapping to illustrate the tropical world. In addition to his own work, the contributions of Carl Ritter are notably important. See M. Friendly & G. Palsky, ‘Visualizing Nature and Society’ in J.R. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 221-222.

¹⁰⁵ M. Dettelbach, ‘Alexander von Humboldt between Enlightenment and Romanticism’ in *Northeastern Naturalist 8 Special Issue 1, Alexander von Humboldt’s Natural History Legacy and its Relevance for Today* (2001), 9-20; M.F. Robinson, ‘Science and Exploration’ in D. Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: the West in the World* (Oxford, 2014), 28; D. Outram, ‘On Being Perseus: New Knowledge, Dislocation, and Enlightenment Exploration’ in D.N. Livingstone & C.W.J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Enlightenment* (London, 1999), 281-92; A. Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: the Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science* (London, 2015).

unique forms within broader discourses.¹⁰⁶ Dorinda Outram has similarly discussed the significance of “spaces” such as academic institutions and places of dedicated study where knowledge was legitimised.¹⁰⁷ Analyses such as these emphasise the respective roles of sedentary scholars and travellers who left the boundaries of academic space to acquire new information. They demonstrate that the processes by which observations became facts was an issue of authentication, that the acceptability of knowledge made in the field versus its interpretation in the controlled environments of the metropolis was a complicated affair.

These “places” of knowledge can be thought of in two ways, as either physical spots or abstract spaces. We must therefore acknowledge that the site where geographical knowledge was acquired was more than the physical spot where it was observed but the controlled environment where it could be replicated for a discerning audience by rationalising it within a broader archive. Place” as abstract space is a concept which helps explain how contemporary society comprehended a particular location of knowledge that could not be pinpointed in one site. For the traveller, following an un-mapped route, their entire path was a location of potential observations but one that necessitated interaction between the observer and the unknown. It was a dialogue between “here” and “there”, which was often coloured by pre-existing discursive traditions and geographical imaginings. It is useful then to recognise that instances where Britons made contact with the West African landscape and its people involved exchanges occurring within a culturally-constructed framework of interacting spaces.¹⁰⁸ Particular significance is thus associated not only with the observation of new information, but where, when, and by whom it was recorded as David Lambert has found in the case of British investigations of the Niger in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ These

¹⁰⁶ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (1992); see also C.W.J. Withers & D. Livingstone, ‘Introduction: On Geography and Enlightenment’ in D.N. Livingstone & C.W.J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Enlightenment* (London, 1999), 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ D. Outram, ‘New spaces in natural history’ in N. Jardine, J.A. Secord & E.C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), 249-264.

¹⁰⁸ Mayhew, ‘Geography as the Eye of Enlightenment Historiography’ (2010), 611-627.

¹⁰⁹ D. Lambert, ‘Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River’: Towards an Historical Geography of British Geography and Atlantic Slavery’ in *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009), 44-65.

pressures are understood to have significant consequences for the intellectual practices of observing, recording and publishing of new discoveries.

The contemporary concern regarding the legitimacy of geographic observations made in the field has been linked by Withers to the literary practice of correspondence that was adapted to act as a reliable intermediary between the reader and the first-hand observations of travellers.¹¹⁰ Enlightenment traditions that encouraged the exchange of information were grounded in a network of scholars who wrote to each other.¹¹¹ Distance between writers, combined with the unlikelihood of meeting, stimulated the emergence of detached literary traditions which travellers in the field often sought to imitate as they recorded their observations for the benefit of a domestic audience. The eighteenth century “quest for impartiality in relationship to others,” Lorraine Daston has argued, contributed to the evolving “quest for objectivity” in the nineteenth.¹¹² That issue of “objectivity” became the crux around which sciences such as geography converged as a means of attributing value to contributing information. Consequently, Mayhew has noted the compilation of English geographical texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries increasingly overlooked sources of information that were deemed less valuable in favour of those which conformed to these changing standards of the geographical discourse. Significantly, the expectations of geography’s intended audience appear to have been borne in mind as descriptions of foreign lands were written with reference to sources which would be received as the most appropriate by readers; that is, geographers recognised the “spheres of interests” which dictated their market.¹¹³

There are various themes within the contemporary quest-for-knowledge relating to the discourse of external powers such as market interests (as Harley recognised) which cannot help but influence the appearance, content and distribution of cartography. “The contextual approach to

¹¹⁰ C.W.J. Withers, ‘Travel, *en route* Writing, and the Problem of Correspondence’ in M. Hvattum, B. Brenna, B. Elvebakk & J.K. Larsen, *Routes, Roads and Landscapes* (Surrey, 2011), 85-93.

¹¹¹ D. Bleichmar, ‘The Geography of Observation: Distance and Visibility in Eighteenth-Century Botanical Travel’ in L. Daston & E. Lunbeck (eds.), *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago, 2011), 373-395.

¹¹² L. Daston, ‘The Ideal and Reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment’ in *Science in Context* 4:2 (1991), 383.

¹¹³ R. Mayhew, ‘Mapping science’s imagined community: geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600-1800’ in *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38:01 (March, 2005), 73-92, 87.

the history of geography,” Driver writes, “is thus more concerned with mapping the lateral associations and social relations of geographical knowledge...”¹¹⁴ Mayhew has sought to address the evolving textual traditions of geographical science by examining the several written conventions to have emerged by the turn of the nineteenth century, and the distribution of published work. He observes that historical geography was bound to both the academic and market pressures of its day, taking on new characteristics in response to influences from its audience and the traditions of formal education.¹¹⁵ As contact with West Africa increased and accounts of the land and its inhabitants were circulated in Britain, Withers has demonstrated that the production and distribution of African geographies were changed depending on which national and international readers they were marketed to. He concludes with reference to the publication of Mungo Park’s first journal in 1799, that:

...a picture emerges of altogether “messier” Enlightenments, of locally situated practices and values, of social worlds overlapping and of connections across geographical and cultural space apparent in the shared purchase of a book that engaged different reading publics.¹¹⁶

If forms of knowledge were embedded in certain localities, however, how did it find similar understanding in other locations? The answer lies in the expanding culture of scientific literacy, and as Steven Shapin has noted, the key is found in how sciences (such as geography) were institutionalised and standardised.¹¹⁷

Whilst geographical descriptions were increasingly written to account for the tastes of its audience, there remains a question of how information collected from unscientific or problematic sources was presented or overwritten. There is then a developing study of the contributions made to European travel and exploration by Africans. Of particular interest is the incorporation of African

¹¹⁴ F. Driver, ‘Geography’s Empire: histories of geographical knowledge’ in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (1992), 35.

¹¹⁵ R. Mayhew, ‘The character of English Geography c.1660-1800: a textual approach’ in *Journal of Historical Geography* 24:4 (1998), 385-412.

¹¹⁶ C.W.J. Withers, ‘Geography, Enlightenment and the Book: Authorship and Audience in Mungo Park’s African Texts’ in M. Ogborn & C.W.J. Withers (eds.), *Geographies of the Book* (Surrey, 2010), 191-220.

¹¹⁷ S. Shapin, ‘Placing the View from Nowhere: Historical and Sociological Problems in the Location of Science’ in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23:01 (1998), 5-12.

testimonials, what has been called the “hidden histories” of exploration, which promoted a hybrid of cartographic knowledge fixed in place by European mapping practices.¹¹⁸ R. Bridges has estimated that two thirds of cartographic detail on nineteenth-century maps of Africa was derived from native sources, though little has been done to substantiate such a statement.¹¹⁹ Driver has consequently invited a new generation of historians to consider more carefully the contribution of Africans to the process of map-making.¹²⁰ His own analyses of exploration and the presentation of discovery has demonstrated the manner in which literary conventions developed to overwrite indigenous participation in favour of a view which promoted the role of the European traveller.¹²¹ Efforts to uncover a more precise image of discovery now highlight those textual conventions which developed to obscure African knowledge, and addresses the logistical roles performed by indigenous peoples in the course of exploration.¹²² There is, however, much scope for a broader analysis concerning the development of Britain’s knowledge of West African geography which also considers the participation of African sources.

Considering the changing nature of geographical enquiries wherein increased accuracy was desired, Barbara Belyea has proposed that the eighteenth century witnessed a collision between two intellectual archives, that of the theoretical geographer with that of the empirical scientist. In the first instance, unknown continental interiors could be filled by logical assumptions from peripheral data, whereas in the second, preference was given to information that was observed and properly recorded.¹²³ Yet, where Belyea suggested that there was a distinct shift from one to the next, Edney disagrees, citing the continued overlap of cartographic practices which relied on logical deductions to make sense of a broad and disorganised array of geographical sources.¹²⁴ It

¹¹⁸ F. Driver & L. Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: researching the RGS-IBG collections* (London, 2009).

¹¹⁹ R. Bridges, ‘Nineteenth Century Exploration and Mapping: the Role of the Royal Geographic Society’ in P.M. Larby (ed.), *Maps and Mapping of Africa* (London, 1987), 12.

¹²⁰ F. Driver, ‘The World and Africa: Rediscovering African Geographies’ – *Royal Geographical Society* (2011), 1-6.

¹²¹ F. Driver, ‘Intermediaries and the archive of exploration’ in S. Konishi, M. Nugent & T. Shellam (eds.), *Indigenous Intermediaries: New Perspectives on Exploration Archives* (Acton, 2015), 12-14.

¹²² For example, see D. Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (London, 2013)

¹²³ B. Belyea, ‘Images of Power: Derrida/Foucault/Harley’ in *Cartographia* 29:2 (1992), 1-9.

¹²⁴ Edney, ‘Cartography Without Progress’ (1993), 58-64.

was only through the slow standardisation of cartographic practices in the nineteenth century, and more rigorous treatment of problematic sources, that cartography could gradually build on an archive that was the product of direct survey rather than logical deduction. “The stress of the new, modern ideology,” Edney concludes, “was on correct and proper observation rather than on Enlightenment’s correct and proper reason.”¹²⁵ The continued legacies of a rationalised archive, however, prove to be a recurring feature of Britain’s mapping of West Africa during this period.

The desire for reliable first-hand knowledge evolved into and alongside a “Culture of Exploration and Empire” which supplied Europe with much of its geographical knowledge of the West African interior from the late eighteenth century. If geography had developed a tradition of synthesis, wherein multiple sources were referred to for rationalised conclusions, it was the era of Humboldt, the “Geography Militant” (as termed by Driver), which reflected contemporary desires for a more accurate archive. In the context of blank maps and contemporary demands for precise information, the explorer was ostensibly driven by the challenge of the unknown in a manner which separated him from the sedate scholars of the metropole.¹²⁶ The distinction of what would become known as “exploration” was that it was purely a “knowledge-producing enterprise” in which the traveller was not concerned with anything beyond the ascertaining of raw facts.¹²⁷ It was for others to determine their significance. Outram’s various studies of European enquiries into the non-European world, however, highlight the several demands made of new information to conform to changing forms of academic orthodoxy. In this context, she draws attention to the status of facts and the contemporary discussions of travellers’ truth and testimony from the field that were disputed and codified within institutional, scientific and representational practices.¹²⁸

Because of the pressures exercised over geographical writings, it is no surprise that the presentation of texts relating to newly discovered lands and cultures of West Africa should succumb to similar influences. The development of travellers’ narratives has been identified by Ian MacLaren

¹²⁵ Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map-Making’ (1999), 190-193.

¹²⁶ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 3-4.

¹²⁷ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 1.

¹²⁸ Outram, ‘On Being Perseus’ (1999), 281-92.

as the “complex of factors that impinge upon the process by which words and sketches written and made in the wilderness evolved into the publications by which explorers secured their fame and by which they are known, studied, admired, and esteemed today.”¹²⁹ Producing a reliable account of West Africa not only built upon the status of the observer, but also on the manner in which their observations were presented and the character of its narration. Much of the historiography has consequently been focused on the methods by which travel narratives inspired confidence in themselves.

The study of exploration and the Enlightenment are ultimately intertwined according to Philip Stern; both developed as a cultural response to the frustration of ignorance, and both projected European powers of observation and interpretation across the globe.¹³⁰ Travel in the Enlightenment was understood as a necessary act for acquiring certain types of knowledge, yet there is almost a paradox to be found in the contemporary discussion of exploration. Whilst it was the traveller’s experiences that made their information so valuable, it was those experiences that were perceived as compromising their claims to objectivity or reliability upon their return.¹³¹ Great care was subsequently taken to present their accounts and narratives as truthful in a manner which supported the view presented in their accompanying cartographies. Developments within geographic and cartographic culture typically built upon epistemic and textual traditions, and were encouraged by improving standards of survey and measurement in response to the contemporary quest for precision. “Precision,” in this context of historic map-making from reports made in the field, has been identified by Bravo as a challenge which “added a new, crucial, and sometimes polemical, dimension to the language of travel; it made space for making differential judgements about the reliability of observations.”¹³² To overcome the complicated status of travellers’ journals, writers and their editors conformed to various literary conventions that were referred to by Shapin

¹²⁹ I.S. MacLaren, ‘From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Artic Narrative’ in *Arctic* 41:1 (March, 1994), 51.

¹³⁰ Stern, ‘Exploration and Enlightenment’ (2014), 54.

¹³¹ Outram, ‘On Being Perseus’ (1999), 281-286.

¹³² Bravo. ‘Precision and Curiosity’ (1999), 163.

as “epistemological decorum”; a general literary form within scientific writing which helped standardise the presentation of explorers’ accounts.¹³³ A formula of rhetorical style, paratext and association with extant authoritative sources thus developed to inspire faith in a publication’s content, contributing towards the evolution of an entirely new genre of travel writing during this period.

“By the mid-nineteenth century,” Innes Keighren *et al* have said in their recent study of John Murray and the commercial world of travel writing, “the genre of travel writing had come to adopt and adapt stock methods of narrating and illustrating the experience of travel as a narrative form.”¹³⁴ Within that model, they have discussed the inclusion of maps embedded in texts as an overlooked (though significant) part of the paraphernalia of authenticating narratives. For individuals returning from the field of discovery, cartography was a valuable means of legitimising their enquiries and highlighting the advances they had made to the unknown portions of the map.¹³⁵ The illustrious character of the “explorer” is seen to have materialised within these publications by building on earlier tropes of travel narratives and the maturation of scientific and commercial writing. It became such a powerful cultural icon that it was swiftly applied retrospectively to any former traveller who had exposed themselves to foreign places in search of knowledge. What has been called the “pilgrimage model” of travel writing, with its historic roots in the West’s telling and re-telling of journeys to holy sites, provided a model which encouraged readers to sympathise with the traveller as they journeyed into the unknown.¹³⁶ The formulae for that emerging phenomenon in the nineteenth century, according to Berny Sébe, built on the expanding roles of print culture in contemporary society and the manufactured image of foreign

¹³³ S. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1994), chapter 5.

¹³⁴ I.M. Keighren, C.W.J. Withers & B. Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859* (London, 2015), 4.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 155-165.

¹³⁶ J. Elsner & J. Rubiés, ‘Introduction’ in J. Elsner & J. Rubiés (eds.) *Voyage & Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London, 1999), 1-56.

lands which contrasted with its industrial normality.¹³⁷ “Explorer”-status was therefore an accolade that was constructed in the aftermath of discovery and a target for would-be celebrities.

The genre of exploration emerged triumphantly and textualized the image of West Africa, contributing to the public understanding of Britain’s relationship with it. However, the “culture of exploration” ultimately built upon that principle of distinction noted by Said, wherein Europe was separated from the wider world in terms of its civilization, religion and ethnography; “the West and the rest” as Porter quips.¹³⁸ In this manner, the traveller operated as a representative of one world whilst they travelled into and encountered another, providing the metropole with the raw data its cartography and other sciences demanded.

That myth of the explorer as missionary of science or a philosophical geographer has proven to be so influential that studies of this era have long been characterised by subscriptions to those dated interpretations. Dane Kennedy has highlighted the tendency of writers such as Curtin whose seminal *Image of Africa* (1964) references the products of discovery (such as published journals and maps) extensively with little consideration given to the realities of those exploratory activities and the constructed nature of their descriptions.¹³⁹ Something of a post-colonial revision has consequently occurred to redress several issues identified with popular images of discovery, encouraging a wider investigation into the culture of exploration. Anthony Kirk-Greene observed in 1971, for example, that exploration was not a “monolithic phenomenon” and African explorers were not “solitary heroes”¹⁴⁰ The field of enquiry has since opened up to the significance of print culture, forms of representation, the logistics of travel, and the vulnerability of travellers which

¹³⁷ B. Sébe, ‘The Making of British and French Legends of Exploration, 1821-1914’ in D. Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: the West in the World* (Oxford, 2014), 110-111.

¹³⁸ Porter, *Enlightenment* (2001), 354.

¹³⁹ D. Kennedy, ‘British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey’ in *History Compass* 5:6 (2007), 1880.

¹⁴⁰ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, ‘West African Exploration: Africans, Auxiliaries and Also-Rans’ in Centre of African Studies, *The Exploration of Africa in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries – Proceedings of a Seminar held on the occasion of the Mungo Park Bi-Centenary Celebration at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh, 3rd and 4th December 1971* (Edinburgh, 1972), 37.

influenced the conduct and products of exploration.¹⁴¹ My concern now is that the historiographical focus is too concerned with the authority cartography lends to problematic texts at the expense of considering how maps develop in response to problematic descriptions and how they were interpreted.

We have seen how written descriptions helped create false realities (the geographical imagining) which were associated with the spaces drawn on maps. These constructed images impacted upon many elements of the British engagement with West Africa once they were presented to the private and public audiences. It is that exposure that we turn to now.

Cartography and its audiences

The emergence of an increasingly carto-literate society in the eighteenth century does not necessarily suggest that map-making practices materially improved in that time; rather that maps were becoming more commonplace within western society. Unquestionably the expansion of printed material and literary culture had an enormous impact on the exposure of the British public to cartography, yet it was the market value of maps which ultimately defined their appearance. Diane Dillon identifies a close relationship between cartography's intended audience and its appearance, and defines different map forms that were characterised by external economic and social concerns: luxury maps, commercial maps, and maps for public display. She concludes that the production and distribution of maps reveal much about the culture in which they were created.¹⁴² Considering the social realities of map-consumption, Edney therefore considers cartography to be an "intellectual resource akin to economic resources".¹⁴³ As such they reflect not

¹⁴¹ D. Kennedy, "Introduction" in D. Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: the West in the World* (Oxford, 2014), 1-15.

¹⁴² D. Dillon, 'Consuming Maps' in J.R. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 289-343.

¹⁴³ M.H. Edney, 'Mapping Parts of the World' in J.A. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 118-119.

only myriad of historical contexts, they also served different functions when read by different audiences.

The exposure of Britons to cartography in this period was constantly increasing. Popular interest usually followed the course of Britain's encounters with the wider world and Mary Pedley has found that the British market for cartography enjoyed particular attention and benefaction during instances of warfare as the public were encouraged to learn about the far-flung places their armies and navies were fighting over.¹⁴⁴ In addition to the traditional output of new cartographies in response to patronage, notable publications such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* began to include maps from the late 1730s thanks to arrangements between the paper's editor Edward Cave and notable map-makers such as Thomas Jefferys (the Royal Geographer).¹⁴⁵ *The Universal Magazine* also began including maps to accompany its articles from 1747.¹⁴⁶

By the early nineteenth century, technological improvements in the printing process and the growing tradition of illustrative cartography alongside popular journalism, ensured that maps were progressively naturalised within the public sphere and increasingly present within contemporary discussions.¹⁴⁷ Lambert has argued convincingly, for example, that debates in the early 1800s regarding the settlement at Sierra Leone and the prospect of a new one on Fernando Po in the Bight of Benin effectively deployed maps in support of competing arguments during a public literary campaign. The presentation of an accurate view of the region was one element of the "war of representation" which characterised that discussion.¹⁴⁸ As maps appeared more frequently, several periodicals also established scholarly positions for themselves on subjects relating to global enquiries, affording them enormous power as mediators between ongoing

¹⁴⁴ M.S. Pedley, *The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-Century France and England* (London, 2005), 1-4, 200-203.

¹⁴⁵ E.A. Reitan, 'Expanding horizons: Maps in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731-1754' in *Imago Mundi* 37:1 (1985), 54-62.

¹⁴⁶ Dillon, 'Consuming Maps' (2007), 320.

¹⁴⁷ The development of lithographic printing occurred in Bavaria in the 1790s. By the early nineteenth century, presses were established across much of Europe. See A.G. Hodgkiss, *Understanding Maps: a systematic history of their use and development* (Folkestone, 1981), 67.

¹⁴⁸ D. Lambert, 'Sierra Leone and Other Sites in the War of Representation over Slavery' in *History Workshop* 64 (2007), 103-132.

investigations and the public. *The Quarterly Review* which the John Murray publishing house began printing in 1809, for instance, was especially influential and acted as a mouthpiece for vast numbers of contributors to voice their opinions on several topics (African geography included). Although its articles were not often accompanied by maps, it dealt with geographies that were presumed by then to be common knowledge. The *Review* remained, however, subject to enormous pressures from its editors, associates and audiences, meaning that those who hoped to find recognition in its pages supplied an unreliable quality of information.¹⁴⁹

The burgeoning market for travel literature and geographical and ethnographical texts similarly encouraged the production of relevant cartographic material. Although printed works still represented something of a luxury item, the growing popularity of libraries (a consequence of improving standards of education) facilitated the exposure of a greater portion of the British public to these texts.¹⁵⁰ One summary of borrowing patterns in northern European and American libraries at the close of the eighteenth century observes the rise of novels and travel narratives in place of traditional religious or philosophical works, illustrating their power as vehicles of descriptions and images.¹⁵¹ The production of maps to feed that demand stimulated, as Outram explains, the social context of Enlightenment thought and global attitudes, motivating public engagement with published presentations of foreign lands.¹⁵²

Maps, journals and travel narratives thus appeared in response to demands by people wishing to understand the changing world around them. The cartography which accompanied these various publications served to guide the reader, not only through the text, but on their own mental voyages through mapped lands; a point that James Akerman has made with regards to the cartography of Captain Cook's published exploits which memorialised his sacrifices.¹⁵³ Within that

¹⁴⁹ J. Cutmore (ed.), *Conservatism and the Quarterly Review* (Oxon, 2007), 1-18.

¹⁵⁰ P. Kaufman, 'Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1784: a unique record of reading vogues' No.4 in *Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia* (1960).

¹⁵¹ Outram, *The Enlightenment* (1996), 21.

¹⁵² *ibid*, 14-30.

¹⁵³ J.R. Akerman, 'Finding Our Way' in J.R. Akerman & R.W. Karrow Jr. (eds.), *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World* (London, 2007), 58.

sphere of audience-engagement, Adriana Craciun has argued that public pressures grew to influence the culture of exploration and travel writing at a very fundamental level. She writes:

In the nineteenth century it would no longer be the authorization of state or commercial institutions that seemed to propel would-be Explorers into the unknown, but rather the power of commercial authorship, visual spectacle, and costumed public performance, which drew a heterogeneous group of voyagers toward the profitable display of autonomy, discovery, and identity.¹⁵⁴

The presence of the reader was, therefore, hugely significant and cannot be overlooked. Book publishers recognised the popularity and marketability of illustrating geographical discoveries to accompany the latest travel narratives. Consequently, as demands for high quality cartography grew, it became regular practice to commission professional map-makers to work with travellers' notes, off-setting the publisher's expenses through reciprocal arrangements that allowed the cartographer to print and sell their own copies.¹⁵⁵

The commercial realities of map-production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries exercised considerable influence over map-makers and the consequent development of cartoliteracy within the British public. Several studies have shown the detrimental effect that market pressures had to the quality and precision of British mapping through much of the early part of this study; such that Geoff Armitage and Ashley Baynton-Williams have referred to certain forms of map-making as a "triumph of appearance over substance."¹⁵⁶ In this instance, they were referring to the production of two-sheet double-hemisphere world maps that were particularly popular in Britain in the 1700s. Due to the excess marginal space created by two circular maps on large rectangular sheets, it was possible to include a wide range of attractive illustrations, scientific annotations and explanatory details that were popular with buyers. As it was not customary for British maps to be accompanied by a descriptive text before the late 1700s, the associated data was generally printed directly onto the map's surface. Armitage and Baynton-Williams believe that

¹⁵⁴ A. Craciun, 'What is an Explorer?' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45:01 (Fall, 2011), 45.

¹⁵⁵ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 155-165.

¹⁵⁶ G. Armitage & A. Baynton-Williams, *The World at their Fingertips: Eighteenth-Century British Two-Sheets Double-Hemisphere World Maps* (London, 2012), 11.

these features demonstrate how cartography was marketed specifically to feed the contemporary desire for maps which appeared reliable and entertaining. Whilst their commercial value was based on their decorative appearance, however, there was little incentive to ensure that cartography reflected the latest discoveries. The significance of such ornamentation is of more importance than simply their attractiveness as items for sale though. Cosgrove argues that the inclusion of paratextual and illustrative details represents key elements of the total world-view revealed by the map and, as such, directly influenced readers' understanding of foreign lands.¹⁵⁷

The expense of map-making in general encouraged a culture of copying within the trade that hindered the development of British cartography prior to the 1750s. It is evident from the bankruptcy of Jefferys in 1767 after he personally financed a new survey of various English counties which failed to excite much market interest, that it was dangerous for cartographers to experiment with the production of new materials themselves.¹⁵⁸ Symptomatic of the culture of recycling information was *The African Pilot* which had first been published in 1701 but which was not updated until 1807 when the very nature of the British relationship with West Africa was undergoing seismic changes, indicating a correlation between demand and supply.¹⁵⁹

A survey by A. David of British efforts to improve their African maritime charts suggests that little was done to improve the content of nautical maps before the late 1700s following the establishment of a Hydrographic Office by the Royal Navy in 1795 under Alexander Dalrymple.¹⁶⁰ This analysis does not, I think, appreciate the circulation of French materials that had been "improved" by English cartographers but those cannot strictly be labelled as the product of British agency. Yet even after the Admiralty's charts were made publicly available in 1821, the British market continued to favour those produced by independent map-makers who often retained dated printing plates. Cartographic practices which had cleared maps of unverifiable information and

¹⁵⁷ Cosgrove, 'Mapping the World' (2007), 103.

¹⁵⁸ J.B. Harley, 'The Bankruptcy of Thomas Jefferys: An Episode in the Economic History of Eighteenth Century Map-Making' in *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* 20 (1966), 27-48.

¹⁵⁹ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 200.

¹⁶⁰ A. David, 'Charting the Waters' in P.M. Larby (ed.), *Maps and Mapping of Africa* (London, 1987), 21-23.

decoration (such as those printed by the Hydrographic Office) had also rendered them bland and unattractive. Susanna Fisher's analysis of the maritime trade observes that commercial map-makers produced charts that were both better advertised and decorative so as to be more appealing to buyers.¹⁶¹ This simply illustrates that even as British cartography was broadly seeking to improve, popular consumption patterns did not necessarily change accordingly.

Despite the market limitations which hindered the development of map-making practices in Britain during the eighteenth-century, advances were made. It was the expansion of links between map-sellers and map-makers in Britain with those on the continent that ultimately exposed the British market to the quality of work produced in Europe (whilst also providing material to continue feeding the culture of copying).¹⁶² The "maturing" of Britain's cartography by the early nineteenth century reflected increasing critical engagement with cartographic traditions and demands for reliability that were met by map-sellers who controlled enough of the trade to affect change.¹⁶³ In the context of the map of West Africa, its development and content were ultimately tied to popular trends within the marketplace. As the culture of carto-literacy improved, the demands made of map-makers changed. In place of the map's commercial attractiveness, it was its claims to "accuracy" which defined its value.

The Discourse of Accuracy: Finding Purpose

The cartographic discourse which presumes the purpose of a map is to be authoritative is argued by Wood and Fels to exist alongside other mediums "for the creation and conveyance of authority

¹⁶¹ S. Fisher, "More Attractive and Useful": the Popularity of Privately Published Blueback Charts in the Nineteenth Century' in *The Cartographic Journal* 40:01 (June, 2003), 79-88; C. Koeman, 'The Chart Trade in Europe from Its Origin to Modern Times' in *Terrae Incognitae* 12 (1980), 49-64.

¹⁶² M. Pedley, 'Maps, War, and Commerce: Business Correspondence with the London Map Firm of Thomas Jefferys and William Faden' in *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996), 161-173; an article by David Bosse illustrates the popularity of British maps in the Americas before and after the Revolution: D. Bosse, 'Maps in the Marketplace: Cartographic Vendors and Their Customers in Eighteenth-Century America' in *Cartographia* 42:01 (2007), 1-52.

¹⁶³ L. Worms, 'The Maturing of British Commercial Cartography: William Faden (1749-1836) and the Map Trade' in *The Cartographic Journal* 41:01 (June, 2004), 5-11.

about, and ultimately over, territory.”¹⁶⁴ Map-making developed various conventions which allowed itself to be presented as “natural”, as a realistic view of geography; thus objective and neutral. This is the positivism which Harley and others have objected against, claiming that cartographic accuracy was merely a symbolic act intended to render the world “knowable” through the legitimisation of a map’s scientific appearance.¹⁶⁵ Wood has addressed the problem of “accuracy” in these circumstances by noting that it is ultimately a discourse which exists only from the cultural perspective of the map-maker:

Accuracy ... is not a measure that stands outside our culture by which other cultures may be evaluated but, rather, is a concept from within our own culture that may be irrelevant in another.¹⁶⁶

To reconcile the problems inherent to the maps of this study that were presented as reliable, it is simpler to view the quest for cartographic accuracy in terms of the reader’s interaction with its content; emphasising the “discourse function” of the map that Wood refers to.

Traditionally, the usefulness of a map is related to the accuracy of its detail which is why contemporary map-makers and travel writers emphasised the reliability of their work. As King says: “Enlightenment thinkers tended to believe in the existence of a single, transcendent truth and reality to which their maps corresponded more accurately than any others.”¹⁶⁷ Reflecting the confidence of cartographic and geographic study, Daniel Defoe’s description of the well-read Gentleman is often highlighted as indicative of the eighteenth-century mindset and the opportunities presented by descriptions of foreign places:

“[H]e may make the tour of the world in books, he may make himself the master of the geography of the Universe in the maps, atlases, and measurements of our mathematicians. He may travell by land with the historian, by sea with the navigators... He may make all distant places near to him in his reviewing the voiajes[sic.] of those that saw them...”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Wood & Fels, ‘The Nature of Maps’ (2008), 192.

¹⁶⁵ Harley, ‘Maps, Knowledge and Power’ (2009), 141.

¹⁶⁶ Wood, *Power* (1992), 41.

¹⁶⁷ King, *Mapping Reality* (1996), 141.

¹⁶⁸ D. Defoe & K.D. Bülbring, *The Compleat English Gentleman* (London, 1890), 225 – partially quoted in M.H. Edney, ‘The Irony of Imperial Mapping’ in J.R. Akerman (ed.), *The Imperial Map* (London, 2009), 24.

As a metaphor for a particular kind of knowledge, maps demonstrate how enquiries into the world and its inhabitants fit into a constantly changing cultural discourse of knowledge. For example, Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert famously compared their *Encyclopédie* (1755 – 1772) to a “map of the world” which David Adams likens to John Locke’s philosophy of the human mind remaining blank until filled with knowledge and experience.¹⁶⁹ It follows that to know something properly and to understand its place in the natural order of things, allowed the informed to use that knowledge for their own ends. Particularly as Britain identified a paternalistic role for itself in Africa, its efforts to engage with the region were characterised by the notion that their actions were calculated as the best possible considering the information they had accumulated.

The practical utility of the cartography under consideration in this study is a confused subject though, and one that is limited by the problematic nature of its contributing geographical data. These themes of accuracy and utility are complicated further by trying to define what functions a correct map of West Africa might serve, especially when the obstacles preventing European enquiries made such a thing impossible? In an effort to shed light on the problem, it is worth examining two of the more significant uses associated with cartography in greater detail: its ability to serve as a guide through familiar and unfamiliar lands, and the cultural implications of drawing boundaries between places.

Throughout the Early Modern Period, cartography developed to fulfil a variety of functions, most commonly the illustration of geography and one’s physical relation to it. Maps are therefore often associated with navigation similar to the charts that had been developed for use at sea and travellers increasingly adapted instruments developed for maritime purposes to their needs on land.¹⁷⁰ In terms of continental travel, however, Catherine Delano-Smith argues that maps found more use during the planning of routes rather than actual guidance until the late nineteenth

¹⁶⁹ D. Adams, “The *Système figuré des connaissances humaines* and the Structure of Knowledge in the *Encyclopédie*” in D. Donald & F. O’Gorman, *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century* (Palgrave MacMillan UK, 2006), 202-203.

¹⁷⁰ See G.R. Crone. *Maps and Their Makers* (London, 1966), 143.

century.¹⁷¹ Akerman's analysis of way-finding maps in western society notes their emergence at times when precise directions to certain places were deemed both necessary and feasible.¹⁷² In this respect, map-making adapted to the needs of its consumer, though the previously highlighted instance of *The African Pilot* illustrates how problematic such productions could be. Therefore, whilst popular maps of West Africa might have illustrated the routes of significant expeditions of discovery, there was no possibility that they could lead later travellers on the same path. It was only towards the end of this period and the discovery of the Niger Delta that charts were prepared to instruct vessels how to navigate its swamps in search of commerce.

Way-finding as a cartographic theme is inherently associated with travel and the description of routes. As such "itineraries" which illustrated a line of movement with little concern for areas beyond their peripheries often followed in the wake of an expedition into West Africa or were projected across the region based on local information (figure 5). Itineraries have a close relationship with oral traditions of discussing routes over familiar and unfamiliar landscapes using distance and direction between known points. When explorers and travellers recorded African geographies, it was normally in the format of a verbal itinerary. The universal similarities of recording linear directions allowed British map-makers a means of contrasting European and African information alongside each other to create a hybrid geography which saw the grounded mental-maps of Africans being made to conform to the mathematical cartography of Britons. Problems have been noted though, regarding contemporary reliance on indigenous information and Robin Law has discussed the confusion of nineteenth century cartography which tried to reconcile the inconsistencies between British and African methods of recording physical landscapes.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ C. Delano-Smith, 'Milieus of Mobility: Itineraries, Route Maps, and Road Maps' in J.R. Akerman (ed.), *Cartographies of Travel and Navigation* (London, 2006), 16.

¹⁷² Akerman, 'Finding Our Way' (2007), 19-33.

¹⁷³ R. Law, "'Central and Eastern Wangara': An Indigenous West African Perception of the Political and Economic Geography of the Slave Coast as Recorded by Joseph Dupuis in Kumasi, 1820' in *History in Africa* 22 (1995), 281-305; See also I. Wilks, 'On Mentally Mapping Greater Asante: A Study of Time and Motion' in *The Journal of African History* 33:2 (1992), 175-190.

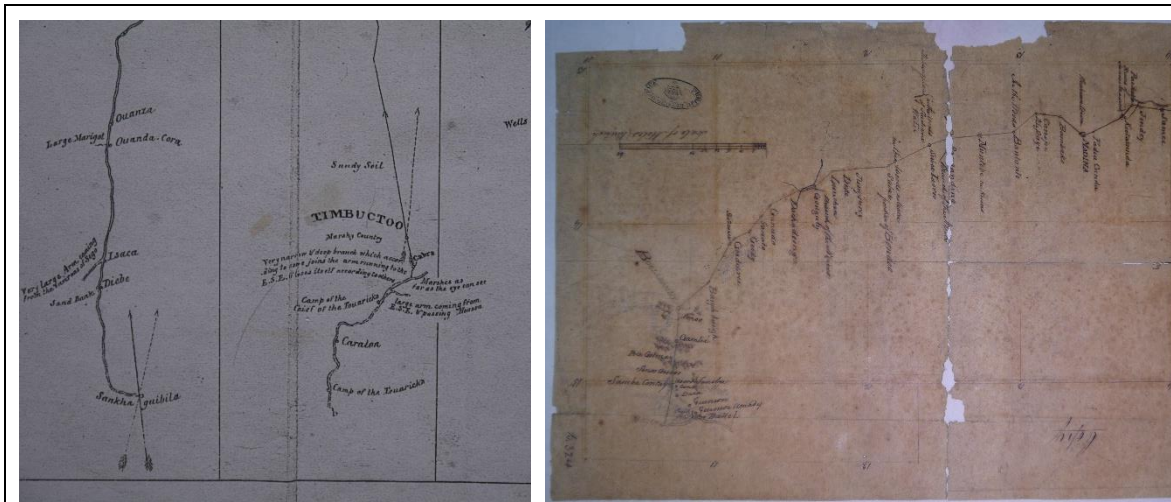


Figure 5: As a mapped form, the linear shape of itineraries made them awkward and they did not offer the broad regional views which the proponents of exploration desired. A review of popular cartographies and texts from the period shows that no British map-maker thought it necessary to draw African discoveries in this manner; the most prominent example is the “Map of the Route travelled by M. Caillié to Jenne and Timbuktoo” (left: detail showing Timbuktu) which had been translated from the French and was accompanied by a fold-out linear map detailing the itinerary of his journey. Yet even this was accompanied by a more general map of the region so that Caillié’s perspective might be better understood. See R. Caillié, *Travels Through Central Africa to Timbuktoo* (London, 1830). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland. (Right) is a sketched itinerary from Major Gray’s travels in the headlands of the Gambia sometime after 1817 which shows the limited peripheral observations he and his party made. National Archives MPG 1/324

By appearing in a manner which suggested their ability to guide travellers, however, maps contribute towards a much more significant conversation about *why* contemporaries might wish to navigate somewhere like West Africa rather than *how* they could do so. Moreover, in the context of West Africa, appearing to overcome the obstacles which had long prevented an accurate view of the region supported a narrative of cultural superiority that was made evident by the expansion of geographical knowledge. Akerman concludes his study of maps for navigation by observing what their improvement means for national (and personal) dialogues about distant places:

New types of these maps also reflects shifts in our perception of where and who we are and where we are going – that is, shifts in our imagination of the world, our reasons for travel, and what destinations are possible... [D]edicated travellers know that finding our way through the world is as much a journey of the spirit, a means of defining our personal and cultural identities, as it is a navigational challenge.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Akerman, ‘Finding Our Way’ (2007), 63.

Maps developed to give contemporaries the tools for making sense of the world at a time when the idea of objective science was being normalised within educated society. Even as they helped to guide readers mentally and physically over different landscapes, maps were also a visualisation of the world as it was understood to be and, therefore, also capable of showing the world as it could be.

The consequence of carto-literacy in response to the increasing presence of maps within European society encouraged what Pickles refers to as “map consciousness” which promoted the arrangement of people and spaces for religious and administrative purposes using maps.¹⁷⁵ The cartographic discourse is thus inherently recognised during the development of European political thought in a manner which then lends itself to the mapping out of imperial claims. If power in the guise of state control is seen to have developed a close relationship with the forms of cartography which emerged in the Early Modern Period, it follows that the nature of that authority should take on characteristics which reflect the world as it appeared on the surface of a map. This is what Jordan Branch has argued recently in his study of political thought which built on a nexus of cartographic traditions.¹⁷⁶

Cartography ultimately supported the consolidation of political authority by helping to define ownership. The well-known Cassini survey of France in the eighteenth century revolutionised the concentration of governmental authority over mapped territory by incorporating mathematical and technological advancements in the fields of instrumentation and map-production. From 1750, specialised cartographic departments and personnel were appointed to ensure a level of centralised administration in Paris that was established around the largest growing map archive in Europe.¹⁷⁷ State patronage (a legacy of the seventeenth century) ensured that France enjoyed a tradition of cartographic excellence which Monique Pelletier shows complemented the

¹⁷⁵ Pickles, *A History of Spaces* (2004), 96-106.

¹⁷⁶ J. Branch, *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty* (The Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1-8.

¹⁷⁷ J.W. Konvitz, *Cartography in France, 1660-1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft* (Chicago, 1985), 32-38.

establishment of its authority across domestic and foreign lands.¹⁷⁸ A similar expansion of that “map-mindedness” in Britain during the eighteenth century became intertwined with military education and enlightenment philosophies of investigation and understanding. Accordingly, the Royal Military Academy for engineers and the Royal Military College were established in 1741 and 1799 respectively which trained officers in mathematics and surveying techniques.¹⁷⁹ The Cassini survey was so successful that it inspired similar projects in Britain, such as Roy’s military survey of Scotland (1747-1755) and the Ordnance Survey from 1791 which supported efforts to consolidate political power.¹⁸⁰

Mapping the land contributed towards contemporary dialogues about Britain as a national and geographical entity. The issue of national identity is itself a complex theme but what Benedict Anderson has called “imagined communities” (the sense of shared language, religion and culture that unified people disconnected by space) was complimented by developing cartographic projects such as state-sponsored national surveys.¹⁸¹ Maps which distinguished between the familiar and the unfamiliar helped entrench the respective geographical limitations of different groups, whereas the increasing availability of cartography within the public sphere encouraged developing notions of territorial nationalism by the late eighteenth century.

Cartography which illustrated geography with a relative degree of accuracy had long encouraged the drawing of lines to denote frontiers between “us” and “them”, and provided the means for claiming overseas territory. European focus on territorial sovereignty and the establishment of boundaries in the eighteenth century was encouraged by, and contributed to, the development of cartography which promoted national and international interests.¹⁸² It is the

¹⁷⁸ M. Pelletier, ‘Cartography and Power in France During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’ in *Cartographica* 35:¾ (Autumn/Winter, 1998), 41-55.

¹⁷⁹ M.E. Edney, ‘British military education, mapmaking, and military ‘map-mindedness’ in the later Enlightenment’ in *The Cartographic Journal* 31 (June, 1994), 14-20.

¹⁸⁰ See R. Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (London, 2011).

¹⁸¹ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised Edition* (London, 1991), 9-36.

¹⁸² J.R. Akerman, ‘The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Printed Atlases’ in *Imago Mundi* 47 (1995), 139-146.

cartographic redefinition of space though, and its manipulation by state mechanisms that gave rise to the idea of territorialised authority. The transformation of mappable space within political thought is particularly notable in the decades following the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) when the sudden expansion of Britain's global empire encouraged a revolution in its colonial ideology. Emerging ideas regarding sovereignty have been attributed to contact with the New World and the growing need to identify certain areas as belonging to agents of the Old World which could be drawn on their maps in Europe. In this context, it was so-called "colonial reflections" which transformed the notion of boundaries as a linear feature on maps that should correspond with the landed reality, leading subsequently to their gradual adoption in Europe.¹⁸³ Branch has then argued that European politics and international relations in general, particularly after the heightened nationalism of the Napoleonic Wars, were defined by respect for borders (in theory at least).¹⁸⁴ Complications occurred when it was assumed these conventions would be easily applied elsewhere. Accurately defining political territorialisation would come to occupy the western world through the eighteenth century with recognisable consequences for how Britain approached its lands and settlements in West Africa.

Because the territorialisation of political authority has its basis in the cartographic discourse, Stuart Elden has argued that the more significant occurrence here is ultimately the connections that were made between political power and mapped places.¹⁸⁵ Thus, when Britain sought to establish power over parts of West Africa, it involved several considerations relating to their knowledge of the land and their intended purpose of being there, existing attitudes towards overseas power, and the opportunities which supported their efforts to legitimise their actions through mapping. Consequently, when Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins argue that Britain's political expansion overseas was predicated on its economic needs (particularly those at the imperial fringes), the nature of that movement was characterised by the British relationship with

¹⁸³ J. Branch, "Colonial reflection' and territoriality: The peripheral origins of sovereign statehood' in *European Journal of International Relations* XX(X) (2010), 1-21.

¹⁸⁴ Branch, *The Cartographic State* (2014).

¹⁸⁵ S. Elden, 'Land, terrain, territory' in *Progress in Human Geography* 34:6 (2010), 799-817.

unclaimed, unmapped lands.¹⁸⁶ There is therefore a strong correlation between mapping and imperialism or other forms of establishing and projecting European assumptions of authority.¹⁸⁷ Elsewhere we see the establishment of a Surveyor-General at Bengal in the 1770s and the Great Trigonometric Survey of India from 1800 as a means of extending and consolidating governmental control over the sub-continent.¹⁸⁸ In the context of West Africa, the inability of any European power to extensively survey the land does not disguise similar agenda behind efforts to improve the map. Akerman identifies comparable impulses to discover and endeavour to lay claim over political, economic, or commercially significant locations.¹⁸⁹ It is no surprise then that exploration has long been regarded as a precursor to colonization, usually owing to the influences of those with the power to direct the course and objectives of expeditions.

There is a well-studied link between European science and imperial stimuli, most notably in relation to expanding maritime trade-routes and tropical colonies.¹⁹⁰ It is particularly found in the economic botany which encouraged the transplanting of flora and fauna across the globe, and which symbolised the British international agenda after the loss of the Americas in 1783.¹⁹¹ In much the same manner as cartography has traditionally been discussed as a symbol of power, science is intertwined with the cultural image of empire; both reflect the prominence of maps in the minds

¹⁸⁶ P.J. Cain & A.G. Hopkins, 'The Political Economy of British Expansion Overseas, 1750 – 1914' in *The Economic History Review*, New Series 33:04 (Nov., 1980), 463-490.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example: N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2004), 171, 174; J. Lennox, 'An Empire on Paper: The Founding of Halifax and Conceptions of Imperial Space, 1744-55' in *The Canadian Historical Review* 88:3 (September, 2007), 373-412.

¹⁸⁸ Edney, *Mapping an Empire* (1997).

¹⁸⁹ See J.R. Akerman, 'Introduction' in J.R. Akerman (ed.), *The Imperial Map* (London, 2009), 3.

¹⁹⁰ R. Macleod (ed.), *Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise* (New York, 2000); J.M. Blaut, 'Geographic Models of Imperialism' in G. Henderson & M. Waterson (eds.), *Geographic Thought: A Praxis Perspective* (Oxon, 2009), 23-5.

¹⁹¹ R. Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (London, 2000) - The establishment of botanical gardens and the contribution of Enlightenment-era projects of collecting and cataloguing Natural History created scholarly and visual links that connected Britain with the rest of the world. See L.H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (London, 2002); In the British context, however, the analysis of science and empire has been typically focused on the sporadic involvement of specific individuals or societies that lacked the coordinated state-patronage characteristic of colonial scholarship in France. This follows a similar pattern to the cartographic history of this period which saw a stark contrast between the level of state involvement in Britain and France. See J.E. McClellan III & François Regourd, 'The Colonial Machine: French Science and Colonization in the Ancien Régime' in Macleod, *Nature and Empire* (2000), 31-50; critique noted in M. Harrison, 'Science and the British Empire' in *Isis* 96:1 (March, 2005), 56-63.

of contemporaries as mediators between them and their knowledge of the expanding imperial horizon.¹⁹² This then brings us back to the “imagined geographies” which began this chapter, and the dialogue which cartography facilitated between people and what they believe to exist in different parts of the world.

Stone has referred to the nineteenth century as the “Golden Age of the Cartography of Imperialism” because it was a century of transition; from the problematic practices which had long characterised map-making, to the more accurate trigonometric surveys conducted during the age of Empire which supported colonial administration.¹⁹³ In this respect, the imperial map emerges from the same place as the contemporary desire to improve the geographic archive. In his effort to trace the origins of imperial thought and related cartography in the century before the Berlin Conference and the rapid expansion of colonisation in Africa during the 1880s, Stone thus located it in the “unofficial mind” of British commercial, religious and political agencies which utilised extant maps during their activities there.¹⁹⁴ Dedicated map-making which supported imperial authority was, he argued, only produced after the establishment of colonial rule.

There are issues then with the broad labelling of cartography in this period as an imperialist activity. Edney has said that in terms of cartography and empire-building, their relationship and meaning is inherently bound to how they are understood by the reader. The map is only an agent of imperial power if it has been made solely to promote empire and the map-maker can guarantee that it will only be interpreted as such; which, of course, they cannot. In this manner, Edney argues that to a certain extent an empire exists as an empire in the mind of the map-reader “because it has been discursively mapped as an empire.”¹⁹⁵ Maps are therefore understood to be not only inseparable from the land they portray but they in fact help create the reality they are believed to represent.

¹⁹² *ibid*, 56-63.

¹⁹³ Stone, *A Short History* (1996), 47-63.

¹⁹⁴ J.C. Stone, ‘Imperialism, Colonialism and Cartography’ in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* 13:1 (1988), 57-64.

¹⁹⁵ Edney, ‘The Irony of Imperial Mapping’ (2009), 13, 45.

The study of maps, carto-literacy and associated science has typically focused on intertwined issues of power, economy and audience. There is unquestionably a value judgement associated with the information provided by cartography that renders it subject to these influences. Historiographical interest in the movement and development of European engagement with the world has encouraged an examination of the time and place ideas emerged and how they took on particular meanings within broader discourses. As the nature of European enquiries into the non-European world developed from the disparate natural history project of the eighteenth century to become the scientism of the nineteenth, cartography continued to offer a means of providing legitimacy to the several studies and descriptions which appeared.

During this study, popular knowledge of West Africa expanded and evolved at an unprecedented rate. The language of maps and discursive powers of geographical science provided contemporaries with tools to make sense of the region and project new paths for themselves across its unknown landscape. A collection of studies by Livingstone and Withers has highlighted this relationship between humans and geography (and geographical thought) in the context of revolutionary ideas and practices.¹⁹⁶ A “revolution” is exactly what happened within Britain’s images of Africa, its interactions and ambitions there during this period. From this collection, Peter Burke makes clear the importance of combining examinations of the chronological, spatial and social aspects of changing perceptions within society.¹⁹⁷ Analysing the culture of cartography, the form of geographical enquiries, and the presence of maps within society offers a framework for examining how the mapped reality of somewhere like West Africa emerged in Britain. Turning now to chapter two, we look to the correlation of this cartographic discourse with the history of this period, and the nature of the British engagements there.

¹⁹⁶ See D.N. Livingstone and C.W.J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Revolution* (London, 2005).

¹⁹⁷ P. Burke, “Afterword” in *ibid*, 352.

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Chapter 2: Britain and West Africa, 1749-1841

The state of Britain's cartography of West Africa in 1749 was shambolic. The culture of commercial map-making combined with trends of map-consumption with its limited circulation in society had not engendered a particularly critical approach to its quality or reliability. Nor was there any great desire, or opportunity, to amend the situation. By 1841 that state of affairs had entirely changed. The map had been filled with a wealth of information based on a combination of observation and reasoned probability, replacing the confusing jumble of names and rough geography characteristic of earlier examples.

This chapter will outline the progression of Britain's relationship with West Africa, confined loosely between the printing of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's "Afrique" in 1749 and the Niger Expedition of 1841 with its attendant cartographies. For the sake of clarity, this period has been divided into five phases to emphasise significant shifts in Britain's cartographic focus. This does not mean that the style, distribution or use of maps advanced in any material degree at these times but there are correlations that can be observed between the evolving map of West Africa and the changing reasons for British involvement there. In this way, the maps highlighted here will be situated historically and I will take this opportunity to demonstrate why this study of cartography begins several decades before the organisation of more coherent enquiries in the late 1780s. Because large-scale surveys were generally impossible, the regional map of West Africa did not simply appear all at once. British cartographers gathered information as and when it was made available. In this regard, I build on what Dane Kennedy has referred to as "Gateway" states in terms of exploration; the places where access to Africa was negotiated. The course of exploration was dictated by opportunity and Kennedy acknowledges that Britain's engagement with these gateways was also reflective of their own objectives and desire for geographical knowledge of particular

areas.¹⁹⁸ It is argued then that the nature and pace of that emerging image is closely intertwined with the development of Britain's interaction with the region rather than in response to focused investigations.

It remained the case that Europeans mapped the world in terms which they understood, using cartographic conventions which had developed alongside Western culture in the Early-Modern period to the extent that mapping was interwoven with contemporary society in very tangible ways.¹⁹⁹ In a more literal sense, however, the British map of West Africa was given meaning by the perceptions and activities of Britons in that region. With limited opportunity to gain access beyond the coast and the high mortality of Europeans there, how the land was conceptualised often relied more on historic contact and image-association than scientific observation.²⁰⁰ The division of Guinea, for example, into the Grain (or Pepper) Coast, the Tooth (Ivory) Coast, the Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast was indicative of labels given by Europeans to classify their purpose for visiting. In 1749, Guinea itself was simply defined by one source as "comprehend[ing] all the Countries the Guinea or African Company trade to on the West Coast of Africa..."²⁰¹ Thus the geography was classified and mapped by the circumstances of British interaction there.

Curiously the changing content of the maps considered here cannot be viewed simply as a chronological narrative of Britain's various enquiries from the time when the cartographic record was symbolically purged of its unverifiable content. Cartography did not always respond in a straightforward manner to new contributing information, and older geographies were constantly being reinterpreted based on their relationship to the latest discoveries. Cartographic histories today warn us against the periodisation of map-making. The British engagement with West Africa did, however, change in a variety of dramatic and profound ways. The intention here is not to simply

¹⁹⁸ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 95-128.

¹⁹⁹ See Branch, *The Cartographic State* (2014).

²⁰⁰ P.J. Marshall & G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1982), 227-255.

²⁰¹ T. Salmon, *A New Geographical and Historical Grammar: wherein the Geographical Part is Truly Modern; and the Present State of the Several Kingdoms of the World Is so interpreted As to render the study of Geography both entertaining and Instructive. ... Illustrated with a new set of Maps of Countries described, and other Copper-Plates, ten of which were not in any former edition* (London, 1749), 454.

summarise almost a century of events and the changing focus of the map's content. Particularly significant topics concerning the quest for the Niger, the great markets of the interior alluded to by historic texts, and the fabled city of Timbuktu which appeared in the public imagination to be the grand objectives of exploration, have all been extensively discussed by others.²⁰² The emphasis instead remains on the shifting nature of Britain's interest, capacity to learn and ability to do so, and the conceptualisation of West Africa as it emerged. Later chapters in this thesis will then be in a position to pursue those themes that lie closely behind the constructed image of West Africa, as well as the socio-political and economic agenda that characterised existing or prospective engagements.

1749-1788: British use of French Cartographies

British maps of Africa by the 1750s were demonstrably inferior to those produced in France in terms of both their content and detail. Therefore, whilst maps from foreign sources were readily available, there were few incentives for map-makers or would-be patrons to expend their own capital pursuing similar inquiries. Mary Pedley has demonstrated that strong commercial links had developed between London and Parisian map-sellers by the mid-1750s which oversaw the movement of cartography across the English Channel.²⁰³ Thomas Jefferys (the Royal Geographer), for example, was importing maps from several French printing houses irrespective of periodic outbreaks of war between Britain and France. Amongst his more notable partnerships, were those with d'Anville himself, and Philippe Buache (d'Anville's son-in-law) who had been apprenticed to the famous French map-maker Guillaume Delisle.²⁰⁴

²⁰² For classic histories of British exploration and the Niger, see A.A. Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861* (Oxford, 1964) and E.W. Bovill, *The Niger Explored* (London, 1968); for an interesting discussion of the search for Timbuktu, see M. Heffernan, "'A dream as frail as those of ancient Time": the in-credible geographies of Timbuctoo' in *Environment and Planning D: Science and Space* 19 (2007), 203-225.

²⁰³ Pedley, 'Maps, War, and Commerce' (1996), 161-173.

²⁰⁴ By way of a comparison between British and French continental mapping, we can turn to the maps Thomas Jefferys was commissioned to draw for Thomas Salmon's *New Geographical and Historical Grammar* (1749).

British contact with West Africa at the start of the period was confined almost exclusively to the forts and factories built on the river Gambia and scattered along the Windward and Guinea Coasts where they were positioned to receive trade; “water-borne parasites” as Richard Drayton refers to them.²⁰⁵ Eveline Martin’s classic study of Britain’s settlements in the region demonstrated that this presence was indicative of popular models of empire in the eighteenth century wherein the imperial metropole was supplied with its raw materials and exotic items from such far-flung places.²⁰⁶ Their isolation ultimately limited their knowledge of the region and restricted the development of any further relationship with it. That insulated perspective is consequently borne out in one of the more prominent British maps to appear immediately prior to d’Anville’s “Afrique” (and one which was reproduced on several occasions through the eighteenth century): William Smith’s 1744 “New & Correct Map of The Coast of Africa” (figure 6) which was dedicated to the Royal African Company (RAC) who administered Britain’s commerce to and from the coastal forts and factories. As this map makes clear, Britain’s interest was exclusively focused on the geography of trade with little pretension to knowledge of the interior. Instead of illustrating anything much beyond the shore, that space is filled up with a more detailed chart of the coast.

In general though, little was known of West Africa and it was only in the 1760s that arguments were made to suggest that its interior must be somewhat habitable if the slave trade could exist as it did.²⁰⁷ Before the 1780s and the combined pressures of developing abolitionist

Whilst his drawing of the interior conformed to the confused mess of rivers, mountains and towns that reflected its varied range of sources, Salmon’s description of the Niger is particularly revealing:

The great River Niger, which runs from east to west through Negroland, and falls into the Atlantic Ocean by three grand Channels, according to our Maps called Grande, Gambia, and Senega[sic.], but it seems doubtfull whether these three channels are not three distinct Rivers, for no Body has informed us where they unite.

Irrespective of his doubts, the great rivers of West Africa were dutifully drawn by Jefferys to be connected, contributing to the notion that the Niger flowed westward towards the Atlantic. In contrast, French map-makers had been drawing the Senegal and Niger as separate rivers since the start of the century. See T. Salmon, *A New Geographical and Historical Grammar: wherein the Geographical Part is Truly Modern; and the Present State of the Several Kingdoms of the World Is so interpreted As to render the study of Geography both entertaining and Instructive*. (London, 1749), 453-454.

²⁰⁵ Drayton, *Nature’s Government* (2000), 92.

²⁰⁶ E.C. Martin, *The British West African Settlements, 1750-1821: A Study in Local Administration* (London, 1927), 1.

²⁰⁷ Because of the dearth of first-hand information, John Hippisley’s *On the Populousness of Africa* (1766) pieced together a view of the interior from what could be assumed of the volume of slaves being transported



Figure 6: William Smith, "A New & Correct Map of The Coast of Africa, From Cape Blanco Lat. 20° 46N To the Coast of Angola Lat. 11° S." (1744). National Archives CO 700/WestAfrica1

interest, and the commercial ambitions of the African Association, Britain had limited material concern with the broader African interior beyond academic curiosity. Provided that trade continued to be brought to the coast, there was little need to look further inland, allowing speculation and misinformation to dominate the popular image of the continent.²⁰⁸ As for enquiries into the region's

to the coast and his understanding of their culture. Hippisley's argument that the population of Africa was certainly larger than was normally supposed is understood to have been the first discussion of its kind in the English language. He demonstrates though, the inadequacy of British geography to offer a more reasonable explanation or a more satisfactory account of the interior. See J. Hippisley, 'On the Populousness of Africa: An Eighteenth-Century Text' in *Population and Development Review* 24:3 (Sep., 1998), 601-608.

²⁰⁸ Where practical curiosity about the lands beyond the coast did emerge was when commerce was interrupted from its internal sources. For example, when the roads running from Asante through the Fante lands towards the British headquarters at Cape Coast Castle were closed by regional conflicts. Correspondence between the fort commanders and London in the late 1750s reveal efforts to redirect tradable goods towards coastal sites where they could be received and transported inland. As they would discover though, their limited knowledge of the lands beyond their forts and factories impeded their ability to do so efficiently. It was, therefore, the rivers of West Africa that were recognised as the surest (and only) means of accessing the interior, rendering the factories that Britain had built on the River Gambia valuable sources of commerce and places to gather news and information of the lands beyond. See R.A. Fisher,

natural history, Kathleen Murphy has observed the relationship between scholarly patrons in Britain who relied on the transatlantic trade to further their own opportunistic (though independent) interests in the early-eighteenth century.²⁰⁹

After 1749, and to a background of political turmoil on the Gold Coast as the warlike Asante expanded in the interior, beyond the view of the European forts, there are signs that a more accurate view of the British presence was, however, desirable. In 1749, the Royal Navy's annual tour of Africa was used as an opportunity to survey James Fort in the estuary of the Gambia River and the various Guinea forts. Led by Captain Thomas Pye, this review noted that many buildings and defences were in dire need of repair if they were to serve as a places of security for merchants, both British and African.²¹⁰ Considering its financial troubles at this time, the RAC was in the process of being dismantled and replaced by a new regulated company which took responsibility for the British settlements. Despite the urgency of Pye's warning, the newly established Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (the African Company) struggled to amass the necessary capital to put its administration into effect and address the problem. It was a series of confrontations along the coast (with the Dutch at Dixcove in 1750 and the French at Anomabo in 1751) which ultimately drew attention to the unacceptable vulnerability of the British position. In both of these instances, Britain's claims to the exclusive commercial rights of certain parts of the coast were challenged by foreign merchants and it was only through the timely intervention of the Royal Navy and the help of local African allies that the situation was resolved.²¹¹ In these final years before the outbreak of the Seven Year's War in 1756, the new African Company was thus only able to retain a very loose control over their presence in the region. Indicative of their limited power, the London-based

'Extracts from the Records of the African Companies [Part 3]' in *the Journal of Negro History* 13:3 (Jul., 1928), 343-367; R.A. Fisher, 'Extracts from the Records of the African Companies [Part 4]' in *the Journal of Negro History* 13:3 (Jul., 1928), 367-394.

²⁰⁹ K.S. Murphy, 'Collecting Slave Traders: James Petiver, Natural History, and the British Slave Trade' in *the William and Mary Quarterly* 70:4 (October, 2013), 637-670.

²¹⁰ Roger Knight, 'Pye, Sir Thomas (1708/9–1785)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.stir.ac.uk/view/article/22923>, accessed 1 Feb 2016]; NA CO 700/Gambia1b; NA CO 700/GoldCoast1b.

²¹¹ J.D. Newton, 'Slavery, Sea Power and the State: The Royal Navy and the British West African Settlements, 1748-1756' in *the Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41:2 (2013), 171-193.

Committee of the African Company could only advise the Governor at Cape Coast Castle (Britain's largest fort there and centre of its commercial administration) in 1751 to simply try and "keep up the appearance of possession" of Anomabo.²¹²

In 1755 the House of Commons instructed the Office of Ordnance to dispatch an engineer to "visit the several British Forts on the Coast of Africa, to Inspect their present State, make Correct Plans and Profiles of the same, survey as far as in your power the Environs thereof Particularly their several Coasts and Soundings."²¹³ Fear of European competition and the possibility of losing a valuable branch of trade had finally encouraged the British government to involve itself directly. The resultant surveys by Justly Watson, however, did nothing to contribute towards a broader regional image and merely highlight the narrow focus of Britain's interest in the strength of their position (figure 7). His reports, like Pye's before, made for gloomy reading. He wrote: "I cannot presume to judge of what Consequence the Trade to Africa is to Great Britain... But in the present Condition of Our Forts 3 or 4 French Men of War each of 40 Guns only might take every One with Ease..."²¹⁴ Subsequent efforts by the African Company to maintain their isolated outposts illustrates the necessity of financial support from the Government. By 1761, roughly £10,000-worth of annual payments had been granted by the British Treasury for the repair and upkeep of Company possessions with an additional subsidy of £6,000 to rebuild Anomabo.²¹⁵ Such extravagant expenditure, however, now complemented Britain's engagement with West Africa during a period which saw it expand its presence across the region.

At the outbreak of the Seven Year's War in 1756 the opportunity to move on the French-controlled Senegal was seized upon as a means of extending Britain's commercial empire. Favourable reports of the area's potential had helped nurture ambitions of a closer interaction and

²¹² RGS SSC/22, f.1, the Committee of the African Company to Thomas Melville, London, 21 August 1751.

²¹³ NRD DD/S 49/132, "Instructions for Justly Watson Esq[ui]re, Director of Engineers", 10 July 1755.

²¹⁴ NA MPG 1/224-236; See also NA CO 267/11, "A Numerical List of the several Books of Reports & Drawings relating to the British Forts On the Coast of Africa. 1755 & 1756. Presented by Mr. Justly Watson, 7th March, 1757."

²¹⁵ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 17-18.

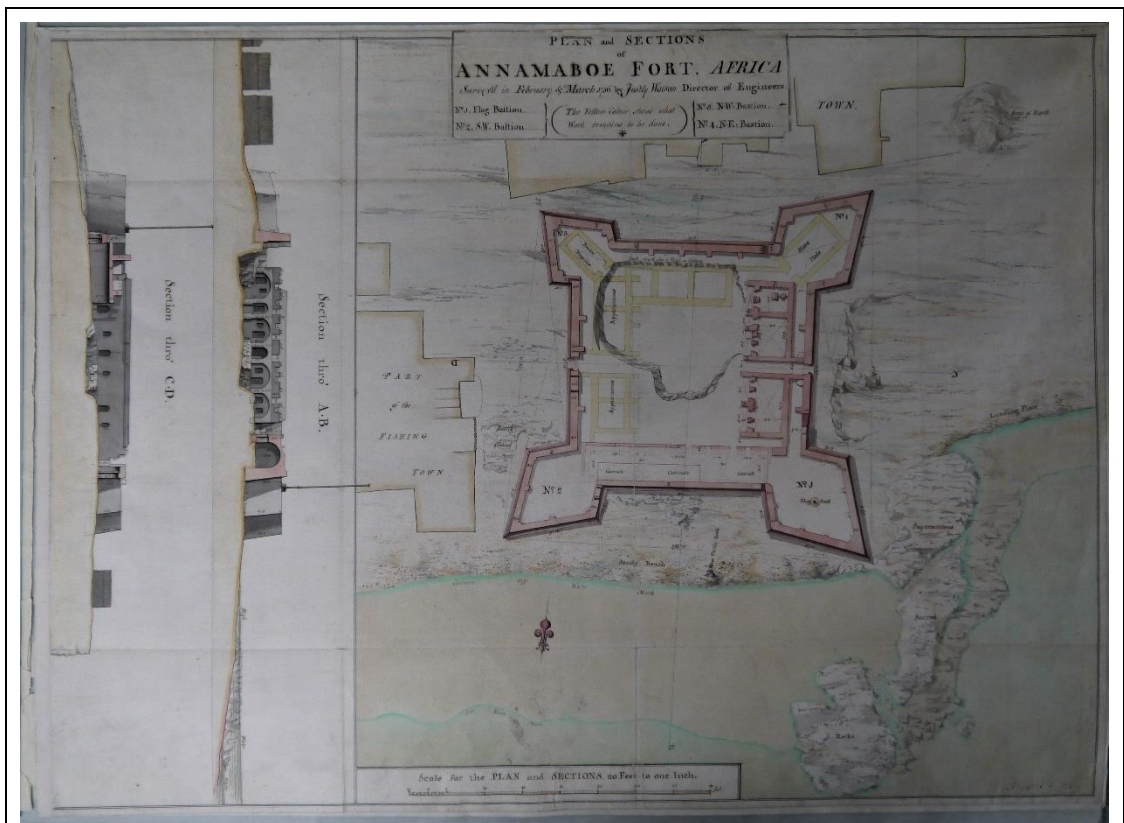


Figure 7: An example of Justly Watson's surveys, "Plan and Sections of Annamaboe Fort, Africa. Surveyed in February & March 1756 by Justly Watson" (1756). National Archives MPG 1/231

challenged popular assumptions of the region. Significant collections of global travel narratives produced by Thomas Astley in the 1740s, for example, combined British and French accounts of Africa with a scope which few others had achieved.²¹⁶ Within that broadening market for foreign descriptions, texts such as Michel Adanson's *Voyage au Senegal* which had been published in 1757 to encourage French colonisation similarly served to inspire British investigations into African ethnography and natural history, after it had been translated into English by 1759.²¹⁷ Britain's advances in Africa during the war occurred, therefore, to a background of developing study and interest.

²¹⁶ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 15-16; T. Astley, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels consisting of the most Esteemed Relations, which have been hitherto published in any Language: Comprehending every Thing remarkable in its Kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa and America*, 4 Volumes (London, 1745-1747).

²¹⁷ M. Adanson, *A Voyage to Senegal, the Isle of Goree, and the River Gambia* (London, 1759), 83.

Anxious to establish control over the Senegal's valuable gum Arabic trade, two merchants convinced William Pitt's Government to support a military expedition in 1758 against the French base of Saint Louis located in the mouth of that river.²¹⁸ The successful expedition saw British forces capture the fort and extend their influence upriver to the strongholds of Podor and Fort St Joseph. At what was estimated to be 900 miles upriver, Fort St. Joseph in the Galam region was further inland than any other European settlement in Africa.²¹⁹ Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, one memorialist wrote: "By our conquests there, and the cession afterwards at the Peace, of the Province of Senegal with its dependencies we are in a manner absolute masters where before we were entirely strangers."²²⁰ In 1765, as the African Company repaired and consolidated its position on the Guinea Coast, and to consolidate British power across the region, the Province of Senegambia was established between Cape Rouge and Cape Blanco; it was Britain's first Crown colony in Africa.

The Province of Senegambia was ostensibly formed to secure an area of valuable trade exclusively for British merchants whilst also denying France its monopoly over the European supply of gum Arabic for which demand was growing in industrialising countries. Its first Governor, Colonel Charles O'Hara, however, was convinced of its potential to engage more fully with the interior and he communicated his ambitions for expanding Britain's colonial presence there to London following his appointment in 1766.²²¹ In this he was clearly influenced by the activities of the former French Governor, Andre Brüe (1692-1702 and 1714-1720), who had first expanded the Compagnie du

²¹⁸ J.L.A. Webb, 'The mid-eighteenth century gum Arabic trade and the British conquest of Saint-Louis du Senegal, 1758' in *the Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25:1 (1997), 37-58.

²¹⁹ The occupying British force made contact with Galam and secured it from its remaining French garrison in 1759. NA T 1/394, f. 162, Governor Worge to William Pitt, Senegal.

²²⁰ BL King's MS 200/275A, f.9.

²²¹ O'Hara's proposals are worth quoting in some detail to illustrate the scope of his ambition:

"All the Traders in the River have repeatedly solicited of him the forming of a Settlement at Galam ... If that Settlement were established, many of the Traders would go and reside there, and the Inhabitants of that Country, as in the French time, would flock there for Protection & Trade.

When that Settlement should become considerable, which it would be very soon, we might extend our Settlements to the Eastward of the Mountains of Garina, by sending people there from Galam, and by these means we might in time extend over every part of the Continent that was worth being settled."

See BL King's MS 200/275A, f.27, Charles O'Hara, 25 June 1766.

Sénégal's commercial operations upriver to Galam. Brüe's surveys and activities on the Senegal had been documented in several French texts and illustrated with maps by d'Anville to great acclaim in both Britain and France.²²² Following his appointment, O'Hara clearly hoped to build on those foundations until a combination of financial and administrative limitations impeded his ability to do.²²³ Before his attentions became fixed on securing coastal defences, O'Hara identified several features of the interior deserving of closer inspection which are recognisable in the later curiosities which encouraged the African Association. For example, he believed that a large market existed for British goods which could be transported inland using the river without the intervention of middlemen who dominated the commerce of the Guinea Coast.²²⁴ He also noted the rumoured existence of gold mines around the Senegal's headwaters which were reported to supply all the Barbary states.²²⁵

Senegambia has proved a popular topic for historical study in recent years because it highlighted an alternative commercial model between Britain and West Africa, one that pursued different markets from the well-established ones of slaves, ivory and gold.²²⁶ Because of its focus on agricultural produce, Christopher Brown considers it to be a significant precursor to the abolitionist movement of the latter eighteenth century and the gradual move towards "legitimate commerce" in the 1800s.²²⁷ Moreover, by defining for itself a short-term claim to sovereignty, Paul Lovejoy notes that Senegambia set a "precedent for colonial Settlement in Africa" and encouraged

²²² D'Anville's consideration of these same reports and his communications with other French officers with experience of the Senegal River had contributed to the breadth and quality of his regional cartography in 1749. See Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 93-95.

²²³ The Governor even went so far as to draft instructions for four vessels carrying materials and workmen upriver, with specifications relating to the best methods of preserving the crews' health and one boat set aside as a floating hospital.

²²⁴ BL Kings MS 200/275 A, f.22-24, Charles O'Hara, Fort Lewis, 28 May 1766.

²²⁵ BL Kings MS 200/275 A, f.27, Charles O'Hara, Fort Lewis, 25 July 1765 - In the late 1760s a brief attempt was made to engage with this landscape of potential when a party of soldiers and engineers were dispatched to Galam to repair the old French fort and assess any nearby mineral outcrops. The survivors returned to the coast two years later after many of their number had succumbed to disease and no further action was taken. See J. Lind, *An Essay on Diseases Incidental to Europeans in Hot Climates, with the Method of preventing their fatal consequences* 4th edition (London, 1788), 37-40.

²²⁶ See R. Law, S. Schwarz & S. Strickrodt (eds.), *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade & Slavery in Atlantic Africa* (Suffolk, 2013).

²²⁷ See for example C.L. Brown, 'The Origins of 'Legitimate Commerce'' in R. Law, S. Schwarz & S. Strickrodt (eds.), *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade & Slavery in Atlantic Africa* (Suffolk, 2013), 138-155.

the later identification of potential sites for experiments with free labour (such as Sierra Leone) in the 1780s and 1790s.²²⁸ Despite the interest shown though, little has been made of the cartography which developed in response to the new British position. The demand for sailing charts and directions to new markets, for example, provided necessary information and illustration on a small scale and publications such as “Directions for Crossing the Bar of the River Senegal” by Joseph Lash appeared quickly in 1765.²²⁹ However, I argue that as Britain took charge of the French commercial infrastructure, driven by ambitions cultivated from recent studies (particularly French ones), there was also a profound desire for cartography which illustrated their position as it was and as it could be. In the absence of suitable British cartographic material, this pressure encouraged the adoption of French ones.

When the British conquered Fort St Louis they found a variety of plans, charts and surveys of the river that were swiftly transported back to London along with notes describing the circumstances of local trade.²³⁰ The consequence of this was the manipulation of French materials available in Britain by map-makers who incorporated these surveys into their own “improved” works. These charts were presented to the British market as coming from the most authoritative sources. The most prominent example is Jefferys’ 1768 “Senegambia Proper” (figure 8) which corresponds exactly to d’Anville’s “Carte Particulière de la Côte Occidentale de l’Afrique”, one of several reductions from his 1749 “Afrique”.²³¹ Jefferys stated that his map had been “improved & Corrected from a large & Curious Survey of that River found in the Fort of Senegal” and it was made more appealing by drawing attention to the fact that the original has been censored in 1762 during

²²⁸ P.E. Lovejoy, ‘Forgotten Colony in Africa: The British Province of Senegambia (1765-83)’ in P.E. Lovejoy & S. Schwarz (eds.), *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone* (New Jersey, 2015), 109.

²²⁹ BL Egerton MS 1162 B, f.117-118.

²³⁰ K.H. Ledward (ed.), ‘Journal, April 1759: Volume 66’, in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, Volume 11, January 1759 - December 1763, (London, 1935), pp. 25-31 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol11/pp25-31> [accessed 9 January 2015], f. 129.

²³¹ By contrasting the two maps closely it is observable that one is clearly modelled on the other. Jefferys was not in a position to recycle the same printing plates. There are other examples of d’Anville’s chart being used as a model for English map-makers, such as Andrew Dury’s “Map of Senegal with part of the Coast of Africa” in his *A New General and Universal Atlas Containing Forty five Maps* (1763) which appeared shortly after the Treaty of Paris in that year. This Atlas contains other maps that bear a close resemblance to French pieces of that time. See the David Rumsey Collection.

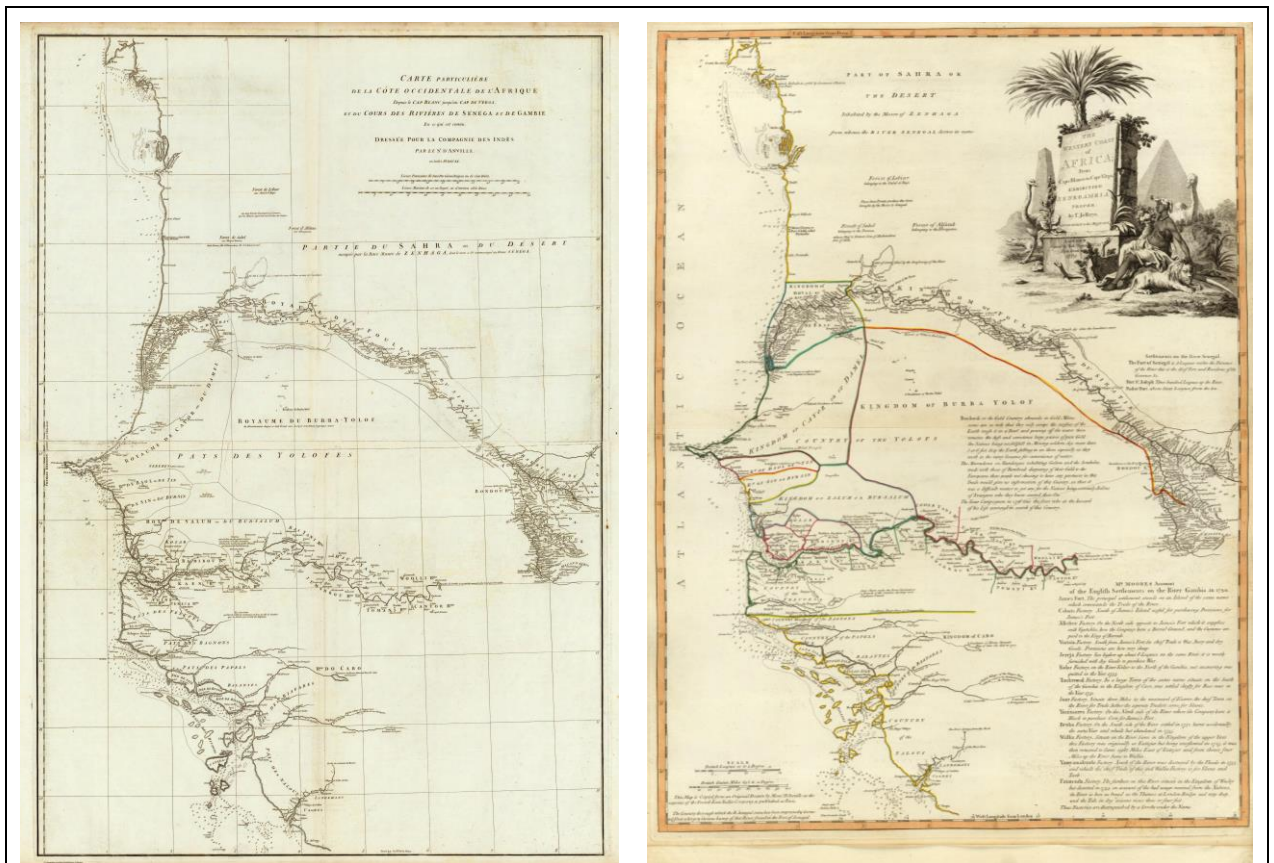


Figure 8: Thomas Jefferys, “The Western Coast of Africa; From Cape Blanco to Cape Virga, Exhibiting Senegambia Proper” (1768) is nearly identical to Jean B.B. d’Anville’s “Carte Particulière de la Côte Occidentale de L’Afrique depuis le Cap Blanc jusqu’au Cap de Verga et du Cours des Rivières de Sénega et de Gambie En ce qui est connu” (1751). Jefferys’ map was reprinted several times including this version which appeared in colour in 1789. See R. Laurie & J. Whittle, *A new universal atlas, exhibiting all the empires, kingdoms, states, republics, &c. &c. in the whole World... 6th Edition* (1804). David Rumsey Map Collection.

the war. Onto the blank spaces characteristic of d’Anville’s cartography, however, various details had been added to illustrate and describe the extent of Britain’s new territory. Text from Francis Moore’s 1738 *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* describe the various factories extending up the Gambia and is joined by a few lines concerning the three new acquisitions on the Senegal. Altogether, Jefferys’ “Senegambia Proper” represented the attempted drawing of a colonial reality by the merging of British and French sources.²³²

²³² I have expanded on these events elsewhere. See S. Outram-Leman, ‘Mapping Senegambia: legacies of ambition and the failure of an early colonial venture’ in *British Scholar* (2018).

Unlike Brüe, O'Hara's ambitions and desire to engage with the colony's potential were neither supported by similar geographical surveys nor published accounts (largely because the Governor was remarkably inconsistent in his correspondence with London).²³³ The Province of Senegambia ultimately failed, even before the French recaptured Fort St Louis in 1779, and it was officially dissolved at the Treaty of Paris in 1783. From 1772 though, map-sellers such as Robert Sayer (Jefferys' partner and business successor) and later Solomon Boulton followed Jefferys' example and began printing updated copies of d'Anville (figure 9) in response to domestic interest in the continent, and contributing to the establishment in Britain of the Frenchman as an authority on African geography. Reprints of d'Anville's "Afrique" continued to appear throughout the remainder of the century, but whilst they claimed to have been "improved" by British cartographers, there was little they could do in the face of limited new information. For example, the only noticeable distinction of Robert Sayer's 1772 map beyond the translation of its place-names is his addition of arrows indicating the prevailing coastal currents. Yet it is in the 1770s that Laurence Worms observes the origins of later improvements to the culture of commercial cartography in Britain. It is at this time that map-sellers such as Sayer or his rival William Faden began to control enough of the London trade to engender a new culture of map-making. They were able to do so, in part, by exploiting the contacts which Jefferys had established with cartographers in France from whom they could source a better quality of map than they could produce themselves.²³⁴ Jefferys' former apprentice Faden also began selling African maps derived from d'Anville in 1775 and, unlike Sayer and others, began accompanying some of his work with educational texts.²³⁵ Any desire to expand Britain's interaction with West Africa could gain no traction whilst there was no forthcoming initiative to investigate the region by any institution or

²³³ See Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 89.

²³⁴ Worms, 'The Maturing of British Commercial Cartography' (2004), 5-11.

²³⁵ See W. Faden, *Geographical Exercises; calculated to facilitate the study of Geography, and by an expeditious method, to imprint the Knowledge of the Science on the Minds of Youth. With a Concise Introduction, explaining the Principles of Geography* (London, 1777) – Rather than explain the map's construction, Faden's *Geographical Exercises* was an educational publication.

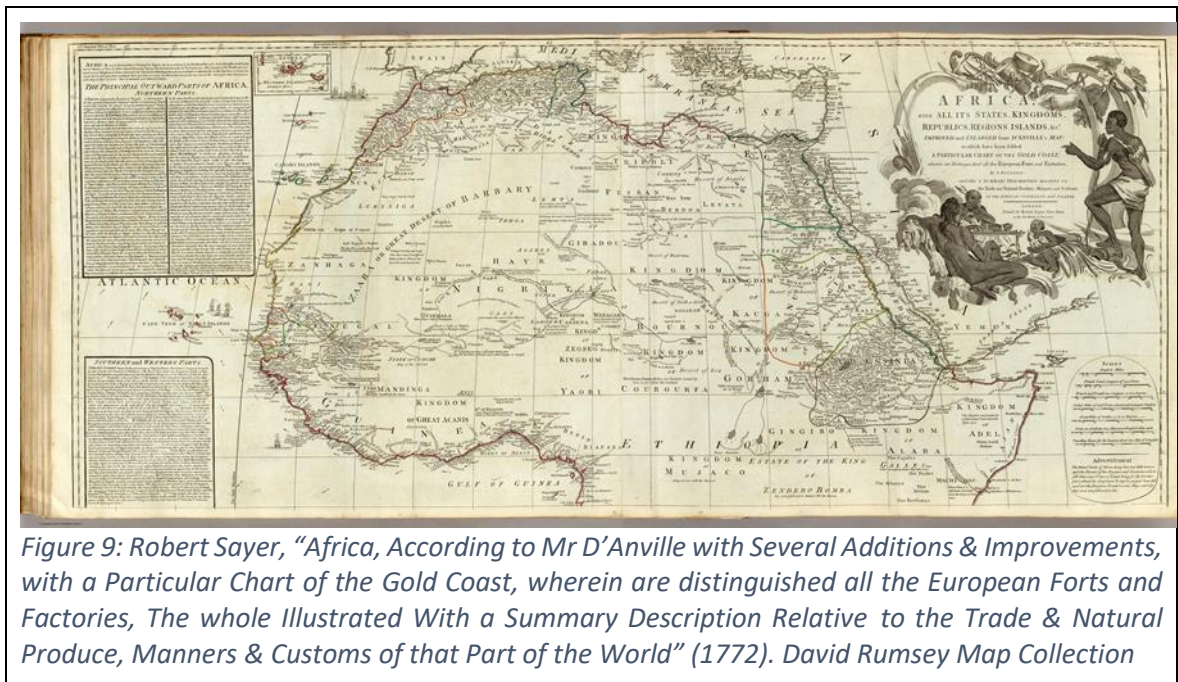


Figure 9: Robert Sayer, “Africa, According to Mr D’Anville with Several Additions & Improvements, with a Particular Chart of the Gold Coast, wherein are distinguished all the European Forts and Factories, The whole Illustrated With a Summary Description Relative to the Trade & Natural Produce, Manners & Customs of that Part of the World” (1772). David Rumsey Map Collection

government department that was focused enough or had the financial means to do so. The continued reliance on increasingly outdated French maps which formed Britain’s only available frame of reference is symptomatic of that state of affairs.

After the French re-conquest of the Senegal spelled the end of the Senegambian experiment and the British struggled to retain their position on the Gambia, John Roberts (Governor of Cape Coast Castle) was instructed by the Colonial Office to compile a detailed summary of the state of African commerce which he delivered in December 1779.²³⁶ In addition to several proposals and the testimonials of officers and merchants in the region, the final report was accompanied by a hand-drawn view of plantations around Dixcove on the Gold Coast, Joseph Lash’s chart of the Senegal River, William Smith’s 1744 map, and various plans of the European forts extracted from French and English publications. This studied record of the British position by the turn of 1780 demonstrates the continued desire for broader interaction with the region, and Roberts used charts, maps and illustrations to promote those ambitions. Several schemes quickly began circulating in Britain, even one that envisioned the establishment of a penal colony on the

²³⁶ BL Egerton MS 1162 A-B.

Gambia.²³⁷ The re-evaluation of British engagements with West Africa after the loss of the American Colonies and Senegambia in 1783 was increasingly informed by such investigations and the proposed expansion of British trade and colonies now “acquired an intellectual basis”.²³⁸

Because of the growing debate over abolition, Britain’s interest in West Africa also reflected a wealth of new agenda which found traction in several printed formats reflecting the growth of humanitarian sentiment.²³⁹ It is no surprise that the bound ledger of Roberts’ report appears to have found its way into the possession of William Wilberforce, a prominent politician and Britain’s most influential abolitionist in the late eighteenth century.²⁴⁰ Encouraged by growing public and political pressure, the 1780s was characterised by the philanthropic atmosphere which led to the founding of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787 and which supported efforts to establish settlements in West Africa founded on principles of free labour and commercial agriculture.²⁴¹ This “early scramble for Africa” as Pernille Røge calls it witnessed the mobilization of men and resources along the coast, galvanized by the advances of European competitors elsewhere, and supported by investigations into local natural history which were presenting an ever-more a positive view of the region’s potential.²⁴²

Between 1783 and 1788 several colonisation proposals appeared. Of these, the best known is that by the naturalist Henry Smeathman. The outline of his *Plan of a Settlement to be made near Sierra Leona* in 1786, and the image of tropical fertility he presented his patrons with, was based on his observations at the nearby Banana Islands.²⁴³ Starr Douglas and Felix Driver have shown how

²³⁷ See E. Christopher, *A Merciless Place: the lost story of Britain’s convict disaster in Africa and how it led to the settlement of Australia* (Crows Nest, 2010).

²³⁸ L.H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (London, 2002), 61.

²³⁹ D. Dabydeen, ‘Commerce and slavery in eighteenth century literature’ in *Kunapipi* 5:2 (1983), 2-23; Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 6-10.

²⁴⁰ The bound ledger of this report is labelled on its inset with Wilberforce’s name. See BL Egerton MS 1162 A.

²⁴¹ D. Garrioch, ‘Making a Better World: Enlightenment and Philanthropy’ in M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf & I. McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Oxon, 2007), 492.

²⁴² P. Røge, ‘An Early Scramble for Africa: British, Danish and French colonial projects on the coast of West Africa, 1780s and 1790s’ in R. Aldrich & K. McKenzie (eds.), *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (New York, 2014), 72-83.

²⁴³ H. Smeathman, *Plan of a Settlement to be made near Sierra Leona, on the Grain Coast of Africa. Intended more particularly for the service and happy establishments of the Blacks and People of Colour, to be shipped*

Smeathman's original plan for Sierra Leone was part of a multi-media presentation of the area's agricultural capabilities, of which his cartographic material and illustrations focused his Romantic imagery and improvement rhetoric into one coherent message. In this way, Smeathman was able to illuminate both the area's tropical exuberance and contrast it with other sites from within the scope of Britain's trans-Atlantic trading activities in a manner which qualified his argument for its economic viability.²⁴⁴ In 1787, and to a background of philanthropic optimism, a settlement was founded near the Sierra Leone River.²⁴⁵ Encouraged by the apparent public and political support for the Freetown establishment, a similar (though abortive) attempt was made shortly afterwards in 1792 to demonstrate the sustainability of European colonisation and free African labour on Bulama Island in the mouth of the Rio Grande.²⁴⁶

As the first phase of this study ends, it becomes apparent that the nature of West African enquiries was changing. Not only had the circumstance of Britain's presence there altered significantly, but the purpose, character and appearance of the cartography which accompanied contemporary dialogues had altered substantially in response to the demands of the British engagement.

1788-1802: the "Age of the African Association"

Robin Hallet referred to the fourteen years between 1788 and 1802 when that society focused its attention on the African interior and sponsored the first British expeditions of discovery to uncover its secrets as "The Age of the African Association".²⁴⁷ At its establishment on 9 June 1788, the Association's founding members complained that in contrast to the improving geographical

as freemen under the direction of the Committee for Relieving the Black Poor, and under the protection of the British Government (London, 1786).

²⁴⁴ S. Douglas & F. Driver, 'Imagining the Tropical Colony: Henry Smeathman and the Termites of Sierra Leone' in F. Driver & L. Martins (eds.), *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (London, 2005), 91-112.

²⁴⁵ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 104-105.

²⁴⁶ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 110-112.

²⁴⁷ Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 191.

knowledge of other continents, the map of the African interior was “but a wide extended blank.”²⁴⁸

The Association’s intention was to demonstrate by private means what an individual society with limited resources could achieve in the hopes that a greater national commitment could be encouraged. “[O]f all the advantages to which a better acquaintance with the Inland Regions of Africa may lead,” they declared, “the first in importance is, the extension of the Commerce, and the encouragement of the Manufactures of Britain.”²⁴⁹ They were driven by a variety of factors; not least academic curiosity which explains their fascination with the Niger River described by Ancient and Arabic geographers but which no modern European had yet seen. A. Adu Boahen’s analysis of the famous naturalist Joseph Banks and other founding members noted their political connections and common affiliation with the developing science of economic botany.²⁵⁰

By the end of 1789, two travellers had been dispatched to try and ascertain something of the interior’s physical geography and its capacity for trade and raw materials. Simon Lucas was sent to Tripoli from where he was to travel south in the supposed direction of Timbuktu and John Ledyard was told to follow a broadly east-west transect of the continent in search of the Niger starting from Cairo. Neither traveller was able to pursue their mission very far but what they learnt from African informants offered clues about the landscape of the interior; Lucas was even able to determine a possible route to the mysterious kingdom of Bornu. The following year, Major Daniel Houghton, a veteran of the coast and former garrison commander with experience of the Senegambian administration, was sent to the Gambia (where he died), once more in search of the Niger. In addition to these endeavours, Henry Beaufoy (the Association’s first secretary) also conducted interviews with Africans residing in London and requests were sent to the various British Consuls on the North African coast to collect any information they could from the trans-Saharan caravans.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ H. Beaufoy, *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa* (London, 1790), 6.

²⁴⁹ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 204.

²⁵⁰ Boahen, *Britain* (1964), 1-18.

²⁵¹ R. Hallet (ed.), *Records of the Africa Association, 1788 – 1831* (London, 1964), 79.

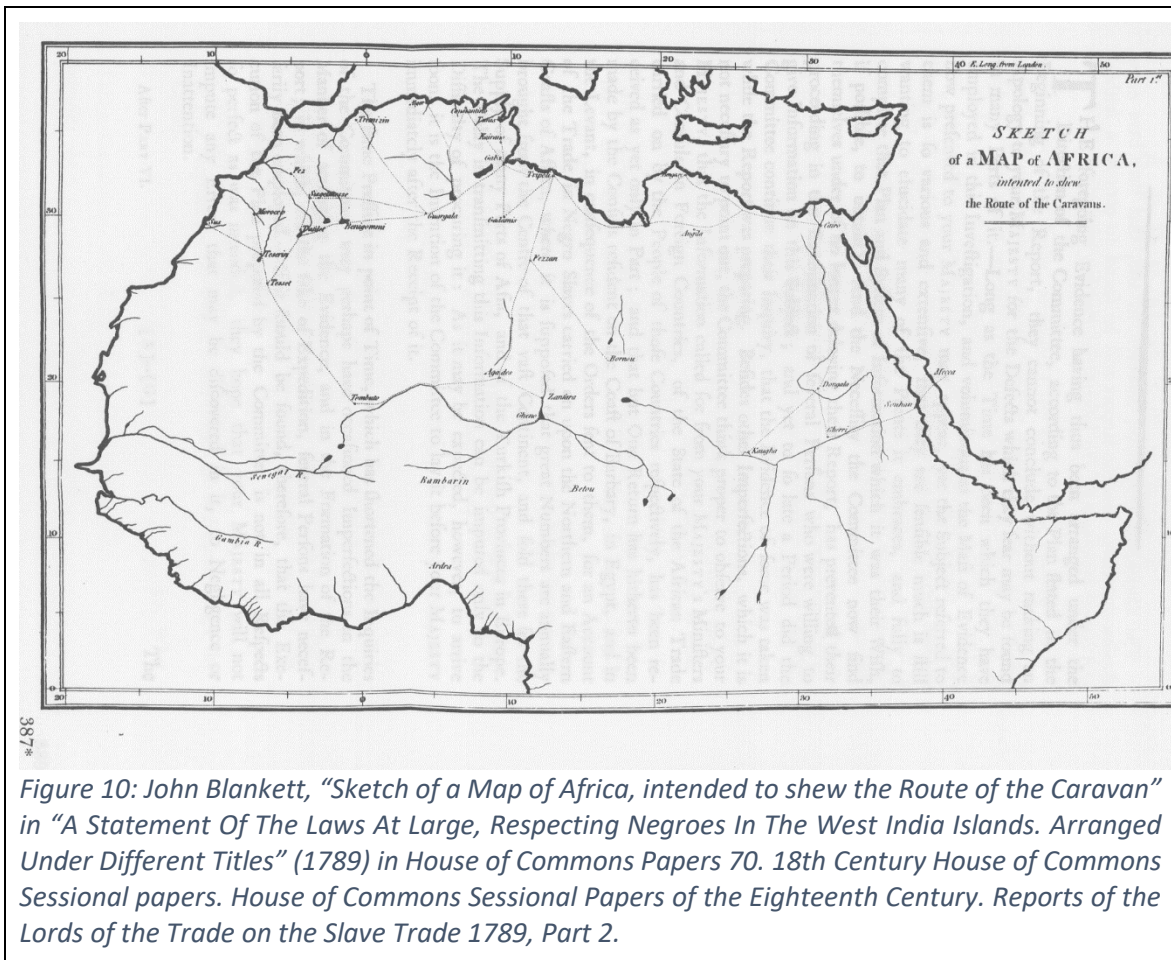
Whilst the Association oversaw these investigations, Parliamentary Committees were called in 1788 and 1789 to hear arguments from both sides of the abolitionist debate with particular attention being paid to the most reliable sources concerning alternatives for British commerce at the coast. As Klas Rönnbäck has discussed, studies into the realities of West Africa and its potential which appeared scientific carried significant weight during these hearings irrespective of their stance on the subject.²⁵² Amid the ensuing deliberations, a report was presented by the Lords of Trade detailing the extent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which included preliminary summaries of those consular reports requested by the African Association. Much of it was compiled by Captain John Blankett who was in communication with Beaufoy and who supported efforts to send a European traveller into the interior. Accompanying this statement was a map labelled “Sketch of a Map of Africa, intended to shew the Route of the Caravans” (figure 10). Visually it offers only a very limited view of the interior and its hydrography is derived from d’Anville but it illustrates clearly the supposed location of known trading centres and the direction of developing British interests, in particular the road to Timbuktu. Furthermore, it demonstrates an early discussion of the wider movement of goods within the internal African economy in relation to the slave trade.²⁵³

As Britain sought to redefine its global position after 1783, Africa represented a wealth of economic potential. Partly because of the optimistic view of the region which the Association sought to foster, the late eighteenth century has been described by Philip Curtin as one in which Africa was of greater interest to Europeans than at any other time before the era of decolonisation.²⁵⁴ In concert with those investigations of the interior, considerable attention continued to be paid to the opportunities which could be found at the coast where the desire to

²⁵² K. Rönnbäck, ‘Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration and Abolitionism: Anders Sparrman’s and Carl Berhard Wadström’s Colonial Encounters in Senegal, 1787-1788 and the British Abolitionist Movement’ in *Slavery & Abolition* 34:3 (2013), 425-445.

²⁵³ “A Statement Of The Laws At Large, Respecting Negroes In The West India Islands. Arranged Under Different Titles” (1789) in *House of Commons Papers* 70. 18th Century House of Commons Sessional papers. House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century. Reports of the Lords of the Trade on the Slave Trade 1789, Part 2, 382-387.

²⁵⁴ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 9-10.



experiment with agriculture reflected the ongoing debate over the slave trade. Long before abolitionists adopted a moral argument with which to attack the trade, they sought to illustrate the economic advantages of retaining and employing African labour in Africa itself rather than transporting it to the Americas. Pro- and anti-slave trade publications continued to appear regularly to offer rival views of the region's viability for agriculture, or the likelihood of cooperation by Africans for a new commercial relationship.²⁵⁵

The publication of Carl Bernhard Wadström's lengthy *Essay on Colonization* in 1794 was one such text which advocated the identification of suitable sites for European settlement and agricultural projects based on educated enquiry.²⁵⁶ Despite his Swedish nationality, Wadström

²⁵⁵ Dabydeen, 'Commerce and slavery' (1983), 2-23.

²⁵⁶ C.B. Wadström, *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also brief descriptions of the colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leona and Bulama. Part 1* (London, 1794), 1-8.

wrote much of his work for the English-speaking market because of the reception he anticipated it would have amongst the growing humanitarian movement in Britain. To accompany this work, he compiled a large “Nautical Map” (figure 11) to present his readers with a view of the coast between the Gambia River and Cape Mesurado that was complemented by a wealth of information from a variety of contributors. The significance of his writings and cartography during this “Age of the African Association”, however, lies not only in the substance and breadth of his argument but the conclusion which we can draw of the 1790s that maps were appearing for British audiences in response to careful investigation and to support new projects and discussions.

Their enquiries were far-ranging and their focus was ill-defined beyond broadly ascertaining any rational facts about the interior, yet the cartography produced by the African Association was symbolic of a new era of Britain’s engagement. The well-known geographer and acquaintance of Banks, Major James Rennell (famous for his survey of the Indian subcontinent), was given responsibility for the compilation and editing of the Association’s geographical notes. As an honorary member of the Association, he produced a series of maps beginning in 1790 with his “Sketch of the Northern Part of Africa: Exhibiting the Geographical Information Collected by The African Association” (figure 12). Unlike his French predecessors who had supposed the Niger could reach the Nile, Rennell emphasised the river’s hypothetical termination in an interior lake identified by various historical sources as “Wangara”. Accompanying his cartography, the Major also wrote detailed memoirs as d’Anville had done that were printed in the Association’s *Proceedings*. The initial focus of Rennell’s first “Sketch” was the accessibility of the interior and the layout of the trans-Saharan caravan network. His objective was to “exhibit the new matter only [so] care has been taken to exclude all that has already appeared, except what was absolutely necessary towards explaining the other...”²⁵⁷ Consequently, the Major favoured the drawing of a blank map upon which the Association’s discoveries could be drawn. Whilst d’Anville’s map was an exercise in

²⁵⁷Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 219-220.



Figure 11: Carl Bernhard Wadström, "Nautical Map Intended for the use of Colonial Undertakings on the W. Coast of Africa from Lat. 5°30' to Lat. 14°N. but more particularly those of Sierra Leona and the Island of Bulama" in C.B. Wadström *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also brief descriptions of the colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leona and Bulama. Part 1* (London, 1794). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

empiricism, however, Rennell's "Sketch" was emptied and filled with details relating only to commercial information. Interestingly, it bears a striking resemblance to Blankett's earlier piece (the drawing of caravan routes from the north gathered by the British Consuls, for example), suggesting a close link between the Association and the government's debates in the late 1780s.

As a result of their enquiries, the Association began lobbying for the establishment of a

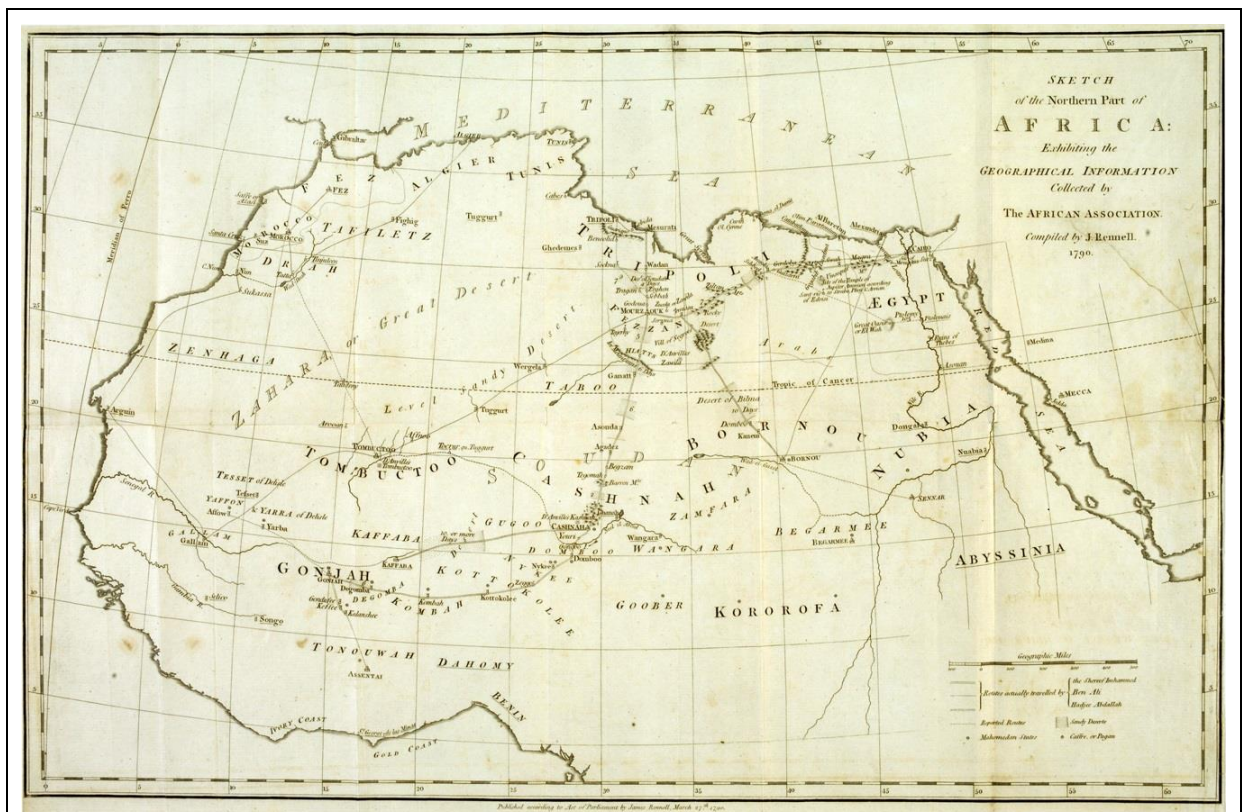


Figure 12: James Rennell, “Sketch of the Northern Part of Africa: Exhibiting the Geographical Information Collected by The African Association” in H. Beaufoy, *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa* (London, 1790). https://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/african-association/african-association.html [accessed: 27/01/2017]

British Consul to Senegambia in the upper Gambia region from which future exploration could be supported and British commerce directed.²⁵⁸ These plans were initially designed to operate in concert with their next mission in 1794 (Mungo Park’s famous expedition to the Niger) but delays caused by French activity along the coast and the spiralling cost of the war in Europe saw them shelved and Park left for Africa alone. To complement Park’s travels in the west, however, the Association appointed Friederich Hornemann (a German national) in 1796 to conduct another expedition from Egypt towards the Fezzan (southern Libya) and from there also to the Niger.²⁵⁹ Dispatching these two expeditions to operate at either end of the continent were, at their heart,

²⁵⁸ R. Hallet, ‘The European Approach to the Interior of Africa in the Eighteenth Century’ in *the Journal of African History* 4:2 (July, 1963), 191-206.

²⁵⁹ As a Hanoverian, it was hoped that Hornemann would be able to travel overland and across the Mediterranean with little opposition thanks, in part, to the passport that Banks would secure for him – NHM JBRP DTC 10(2), f.25, Joseph Banks to Frederick Hornemann, London, 6 January 1797.

an attempt to compile as broad a view of the interior by collecting details from different points around its peripheries.

In light of Park's relatively successful expedition between 1794 and 1797 during which he had established the eastward flow of the River Niger, made contact with a surprisingly populated landscape, and demonstrated the viability of the Gambia for accessing the interior, Rennell's second map in 1798 was considerably busier. "A Map Shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement in the Geography of North Africa" (figure 13) demonstrates how swiftly the image of West Africa's geography shifted in the 1790s in response to the Association's investigations. More importantly, the predominantly blank map which the Major had produced in 1790 was now filled with new details and is notoriously characterised by the fictitious Kong Mountain Chain which Rennell drew extending far across the width of Africa, the result of a distant observation by the traveller. Because popular belief carried the Niger to an inland termination or to the Nile, it made sense for a barrier to exist between the river and relatively close sea to the south. Concerning the Niger's eastward flow, however, Park had merely confirmed what the Association had already come to expect from their earlier enquiries.²⁶⁰ The publication of his journal in 1799 helped to consolidate this new image of West Africa in the minds of the British public whilst his encounter with the unforeseen population of the interior had profound ramifications for the future of Britain's activities there; indeed, Banks and his friends believed that Park had revealed a potential (though overestimated) market of "millions of Natives" to British commerce.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Daniel Houghton travelled far enough in 1790 to make contact with the hospitable Mandingo at Bambuk and learn enough about the River Niger to suggest its eastward flow. His last notes, sent before his murder in 1791, were combined with an extensive report from Consul Matra in Morocco by Rennell in a brief work titled *Elucidations of the African Geography* that was printed for Association members in 1793. See J. Rennell, *Elucidations of the African Geography; from the Communications of Major Houghton, and Mr. Magra* (London, 1793).

²⁶¹ NA CO 2/1, f.11, "At a general meeting of the Association for promoting the discovery of the interior parts of Africa, Held at the Star and Garter Tavern on Saturday the 25 May 1799".



Figure 13: James Rennell, "A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement, in the Geography of North Africa" in B. Edwards & J. Rennell (eds.) *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park's Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park's Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798). https://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/african-association/african-association.html [accessed 27/01/2017]

The view from the Gambia River into the interior was now more comprehensive than anywhere else in Africa. So much concerning the physical and political geography of West Africa had been discovered that in 1799 Banks was encouraged to approach the Government again with revised plans for the establishment of a Consul at Bambuk where access to the Niger could be secured and the French on the Senegal undermined. No longer an object of simply academic curiosity, the Niger was identified as a commercial artery with which British merchandise could be transported into the heart of Africa. Banks argued passionately once more for the extension of Britain's commercial activities and the application of modern science to the extraction of Gold from the rumoured mines of the interior (as O'Hara had done earlier). To facilitate these plans, the Association advocated annexing an extensive tract of the coast, greater than that of the former

Province of Senegambia considering Britain's new colonial interests at Sierra Leone.²⁶² The economic and political climate of the late 1790s, however, was not encouraging for large-scale Government-sponsored expeditions into West Africa whilst the war in Europe continued. Moreover, during these final years before abolition, the future of Britain's position in Africa was increasingly unknown, particularly whilst its interests were represented on the ground by the Sierra Leone Company and the African Company which found themselves on opposite sides of the slavery debate.²⁶³

Hallet's "Age of the African Association" ended in 1802 because it is in that year that the threat of losing power and position in West Africa to France finally galvanised the British government to intervene directly in the organisation and direction of expeditions to that region. In 1802 we also see the production of Rennell's third map (figure 14) for the African Association which updated his earlier one from 1798 with the latest information relating to the Fezzan received from Hornemann who was now presumed lost in the desert. Though there remained much about it which would later be proved wrong, the map of West Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century had clearly advanced considerably in the space of a relatively short period.²⁶⁴

In contrast, French geographic enquiries had declined in the aftermath of the Revolution and there is evidence (noted below) that British sources were increasingly sought after on the continent.²⁶⁵ In this context, Rennell's cartography had succeeded d'Anville as the foundation upon which European discoveries were automatically compiled and contested. Furthermore, the

²⁶² NA CO 2/1, f.9-10, Joseph Banks to Lord Liverpool, 8 June 1799.

²⁶³ Despite the optimism of texts such as Wadström's, Parliamentary debates over abolition, combined with inconsistent and conflicting governors' agendas impacted on Sierra Leone's relationships with its neighbours whose economy relied on the slave trade. The results had disastrous implications for the colony's position in the region.

Bromwen Everill's analysis of the settlement concludes that the humanitarian focus on the promotion of agriculture within the colony for subsistence and regional development ultimately placed too much pressure on the success of farming as an alternative to the slave trade. See Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 123-135; W. McGowan, 'The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade Between Sierra Leone and its Hinterland, 1787 – 1821' in *The Journal of African History* 31:1 (March, 1990), 25-41; B. Everill, 'The colony has made no progress in agriculture' Contested perceptions of agriculture in the colonies of Sierra Leone and Liberia' in R. Law, S. Schwarz & S. Strickrodt (eds.), *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade & Slavery in Atlantic Africa* (Suffolk, 2013), 180-202.

²⁶⁴ Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 288.

²⁶⁵ Konvitz, *Cartography in France* (1985), xvii.

Association's investigations had established Britain at the fore of West African geographical studies; at least that was the popular impression. As one journal confidently stated in 1801:

As to what concerns the northern part of the inland country ... Rennell, by his last map, has almost entirely rectified the whole; and his statements will long remain the rule for geographers to proceed upon.²⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the Association's enquiries, there was now a confidence in British cartography which had not previously existed.

1802-1818: the Government takes over

In March 1802 the Peace of Amiens was signed, marking a brief cessation to the conflict in Europe and easing the flow of information and academic communication across the Channel.²⁶⁷ During this interlude a book appeared in Paris advocating the French annexation of the Senegambian coastline.

Having acquired a copy of Silvester Golberry's *Fragmens d'un Voyage en Afrique*, Banks was so concerned that he contacted John Sullivan (the Colonial Undersecretary) in August warning:

I am clear that His Majesties[sic.] Ministers, should be aware of the contents [of the book], and hold in mind what will happen, which is, that whoever colonises in that part of Africa with Spirit will clearly be able to sell Colonial Products of all kinds in the European market at a cheaper price than any part of the West Indian or America can afford.²⁶⁸

French advances on the Senegal River presented Britain not only with a possible race to the Niger, but also the potential loss of regional markets for tropical produce. As far as Banks and the African

²⁶⁶ *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine Or Monthly Political and Literary Censor, from January to April*, Volume 8 (London, 1801), 43-5.

²⁶⁷ Gavin de Beer's study in 1952 illustrates that relations between the academic communities in Britain and France were so strong that several scholars pre-empted the official signing of the peace and travelled in both directions over the Channel to study at the respective institutes of London and Paris. See G.R. de Beer, 'The Relations between Fellows of the Royal Society and French Men of Science when France and Britain were at War' in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 9:2 (May, 1952), 258-276; see also ; M. Crosland, 'Relations between the Royal Society and the Acadmie des Sciences in the Late Eighteenth Century' in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 59:1 (Jan. 22, 2005), 25-34.

²⁶⁸ NA CO 2/1, f.7-8, Joseph Banks to John Sullivan, 1 August 1802; It is interesting to note that Silvester Golberry actually apologised to the French readers of his *Fragmens d'un Voyage en Afrique* (1802) that he had been forced to refer to an "improved" English copy of d'Anville's *Afrique* because there was nothing else available to him. He was most likely referring to one of Robert Sayer's series which had been regularly printed from 1772. See S.M.X. Golbéry, *Fragments d'un voyage en Afrique: fait pendant les années 1785, 1786 et 1787, dans les Contrées occidentales de ce Continent, comprises entre le cap Blanc de Barbarie ... et le cap de Palmes* (Paris, 1802), 31.



Figure 14: James Rennell, “A Map shewing the Progress of Discovery & Improvement in the Geography of North Africa: Compiled by J. Rennell, 1798. Corrected in 1802” in F. Hornemann, *The Journal of Frederick Hornemann’s Travels, from Cairo to Mourzouk, the Capital of the Kingdom of Fezzan, in Africa. In the Years 1797-8* (London, 1802). British Library

Association were concerned the threat was not to the hypothetical potential of the region any more but to the landscape of tangible opportunity which they had identified. At the Colonial Office, Sullivan duly established contact with several knowledgeable individuals in an effort to direct an informed response to the area.

If the “Age of the African Association” had encouraged confidence in Britain’s enquiries of West Africa, then the period after can be defined by the way Britain’s agents referred to them. In the first instance, Sullivan approached Captain Philip Beaver (who had led the failed experiment at Bulama) for his thoughts on the viability of a settlement on the West African coast from which to support an expedition into the interior via any one of its great rivers. Because France still retained secure access to the Senegal, Beaver was confident that such a project would succeed near the Rivers Gambia, Grande or Nunez.²⁶⁹ Rennell was also asked for his thoughts on how best to access

²⁶⁹ NA CO 2/1, f.14-18, Philip Beaver to John Sullivan, 14 August 1802; In light of his correspondence with Sullivan, Beaver compiled notes from his failed efforts on Bulama a decade earlier and later published his *African Memorana* in 1805. See P. Beaver, *African Memoranda* (London, 1805).

the interior but his response was less optimistic. "I confess when I look on the map and observe how unfavourable the courses of the western Rivers of Africa are to an entrance into the heart of the Country," he wrote, "I cannot help doubting the practicability of the scheme you mention..."²⁷⁰ Beyond the ease of transport, the Major was also sceptical about the African response to such an endeavour. Both Houghton and Park had suffered during their travels because they had underestimated the local response to their appearance. Irrespective of such doubts, however, the political and public atmosphere in late 1802 supported a decisive response to the perceived French threat. This new direction of British interaction with the region was reflected in Aaron Arrowsmith's spectacular map of Africa (figure 15) that was printed towards the end of that year and which stands as a natural mid-point between d'Anville's "Afrique" and the cartography of the Niger Expedition.²⁷¹

Containing the latest details from Hornemann and showing Park's route to the Niger, Arrowsmith illustrated with astute precision the new British agenda in West Africa. The notable coloured division of political units symbolised the recognition of organised African societies, emphasising a landscape that could be communicated with and with which diplomatic relations could be established. Rennell's Kong mountains stand proudly, cutting off all access to the Niger region from the Guinea Coast. The dark shadows falling on its southern flanks mark the end of Britain's historic activity there and draw the reader's eyes to the lands beyond. Even the shape produced by the coloured sections confined between the rivers Senegal and Mesurada appear as a funnel, directing attention resolutely to the interior from those points of entry. Finally, its splendid cartouche marks the turning of a new era of paternal, humanitarian leadership, of which an analysis

²⁷⁰ NA CO 2/1, 46-49, James Rennell to John Sullivan, 17 October 1802.

²⁷¹ Shortly after the appearance of Aaron Arrowsmith's "Africa" (1802) in the British market, Arrowsmith was also responsible for providing a series of nautical charts of the African coast to accompany James Stanier Clarke's *Progress of Maritime Discovery* (1803). In this manner, it is fair to say that the cartography emerging from Britain (and from Arrowsmith in particular) in the early-1800s is suggestive of a culture of map-making that was considerably more confident than it had been in the previous century. It was actually advised that Clarke's readers not only purchase the charts separately but that they wait for Arrowsmith to complete his series of nautical mapping so that they could add the African sheets to a specially prepared bound ledger. See J.S. Clarke, *The Progress of Maritime Discovery, from the earliest period to the close of the Eighteenth Century, forming an extensive system of Hydrography, Volume I* (London, 1803), xxxi.

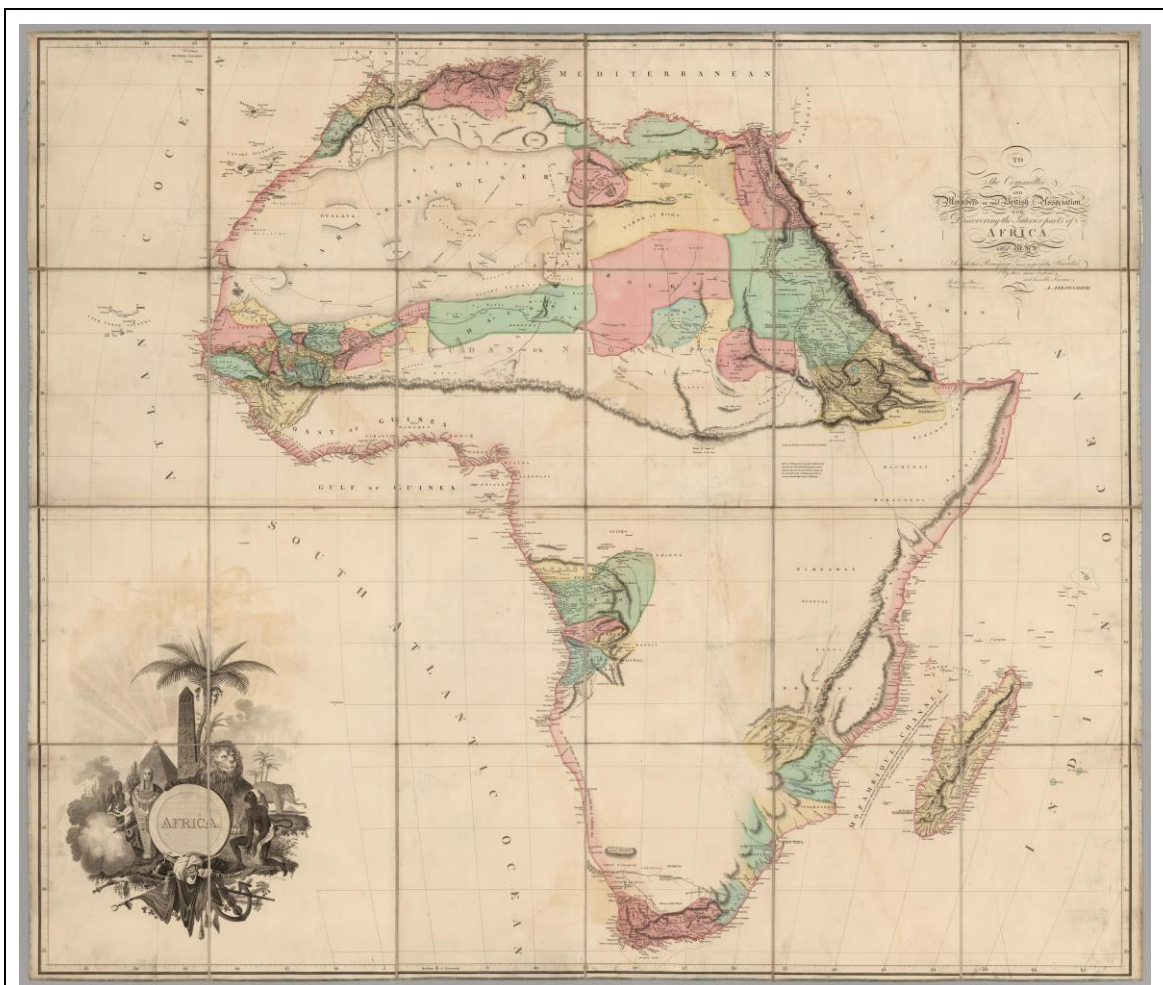


Figure 15: Aaron Arrowsmith, "Africa" (1802). "To the Committee and Members of the British Association for Discovering the Interior Parts of Africa This Map Is with their Permission most respectfully Inscribed By their most obedient and humble Servant A. Arrowsmith." David Rumsey Map Collection

by Thomas Basset is particularly insightful.²⁷² Suffice to say, the kneeling African is evocative of Josiah Wedgwood's famous anti-slavery medallion of a slave kneeling amidst the words "am I not

²⁷² Regarding the cartouche decorating Aaron Arrowsmith's 1802 map of Africa:

"The scene is dominated by an enormous anthropomorphized lion that symbolizes the United Kingdom. It is an imperial figure capable of both ferocity and gentleness. The furrowed eyebrows and the pensive look of the lion suggest a wise, paternalistic figure. It stretches a protective, possessive paw over the medallion-shaped title panel on which Africa is inscribed.

Africa appears to be divided into two parts. On the left side is North Africa, especially ancient Egypt, epitomized by the pyramid, obelisk, and pharaonic mummy. The blazing cannon and sailing ship beyond the billowing smoke represent the supremacy of the British navy: a British fleet, under Admiral Lord Nelson's command, had destroyed a French fleet at the Battle of the Nile during Napoleon Bonaparte's 1798-1801 effort to occupy Egypt... The decline of Ottoman rule in Egypt is symbolized below the medallion by the broken cutlass, turban, and fallen staff.

On the right side of the cartouche is sub-Saharan Africa, epitomized by an elephant and an African figure on bended knee looking toward the lion. The posture suggests a supplicant seeking protection from slave traders...

a man and a brother". In short, the map was a triumph of contemporary enquiry and revealed the extent of Britain's continental knowledge. Reviewed in this manner though, that comprehensive view gives way to one which illustrates a narrow field for future activities.

Efforts to counter any potential French threat were approved by Lord Hobart (the Colonial Secretary) and Sullivan was communicating with military advisors by early 1804 who constructed a plan of attack. Having opened the door to West Africa, the African Association turned its focus to the Nile and was thereafter no longer directly involved with any expeditions to the Niger.²⁷³ In mid-1804, however, a new government under William Pitt the Younger came into power and was less desirous of the expense which sending a large armed force into Africa would incur. Edward Bovill has discussed how these schemes were watered down to become Park's much reduced second expedition which involved a small escort provided by the Royal African Corps.²⁷⁴ That mission embarked in 1805 and ended with Park's death on the rapids at Bussa downstream of Timbuktu sometime in 1806 (although that knowledge would not reach Britain for several years).

During these events, and whilst Park was engaged in the interior, events on the peripheries of West Africa continued to encourage public interest in the region. The souring of relations between the African Company at Cape Coast Castle and the Fante population on the Gold Coast, for example, raised various questions about the British position there. Beginning in late October 1803, local concerns over the future of Britain's commerce when abolition was being debated in Parliament were compounded by the provocative actions of British Officers there.²⁷⁵ Confrontation occurred amidst a deteriorating economic and diplomatic situation that spiralled rapidly beyond the capacity of the Committee of the African Company in London to respond to. Belatedly, a new Governor was dispatched with instructions to address several problems with their coastal

The rising sun in the background of the cartouche evokes the dawn of modern imperialism in Africa advocated by the African Association."

- Basset, 'Cartography and Empire Building' (1994), 328-329.

²⁷³ Boahen, *Britain* (1964), 27.

²⁷⁴ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 1-10; see also Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 323-330.

²⁷⁵ R. Porter, 'The Cape Coast Conflict of 1803: A Crisis in Relations between the Africans and European Communities' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 11 (1970), 27-82.

administration and attempt to improve its relations with neighbouring African Kingdoms.²⁷⁶ Unfortunately the newly-appointed George Torrane was dead from fever by 1807, the same year as abolition was passed by Westminster. The same year also that the Asante invaded the Fante states on the coast in a bid to engage directly with the European forts without the mediation of middlemen.²⁷⁷ The brief confrontation between the British garrison at Anomabo (who were harbouring Fante refugees) and the Asantehene's army significantly undermined Britain's power at the coast, highlighting the troubled circumstances of the Company's situation.

March 1807 marks an obvious turning point for the history of British interaction with West Africa, when new legislation prohibiting the slave trade forced a restructuring of Britain's activities along the coast. Martin uses this event to mark the beginning of a period of unification, in which Britain's presence in the region was slowly drawn under one executive government at Freetown by 1821.²⁷⁸ In May 1807, the prominent abolitionist and former Governor of Sierra Leone, Zachary Macaulay, warned Lord Castlereagh (the new Colonial Secretary) that the British position in Africa and any anti-slave trading policies that it might support was ultimately hindered by the "disjointed" administrations of Freetown and the Gold Coast.²⁷⁹ In recognition of the Sierra Leone Company's economic failures, the Freetown colony was progressively brought under the direct control of the Government from August 1807.²⁸⁰ Doing so allowed Britain to pursue the anti-slave trade agenda in a more coherent manner than that Company could have achieved on its own.

To adapt to this new situation, efforts were made to establish a more accurate view of the coast and a commission was duly appointed "to investigate the Settlements and Government on

²⁷⁶ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 147-149.

²⁷⁷ G. Austin, 'Between abolition and Jihad: the Asante response to the ending of the Atlantic slave trade, 1807 – 1896' in R. Law (ed.), *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: the commercial transition in nineteenth-century West Africa* (Cambridge, 1995), 93-111.

²⁷⁸ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 145; To the backdrop of the ongoing war in Europe, a British force under the command of Major Maxwell took the Senegal back from the French in 1809 in furtherance of several decades of back-and-forth between Britain and France in West Africa. Possession of the river was later returned at the peace in 1815. See Boahen, *Britain* (1964), 36.

²⁷⁹ NA WO 1/352, f.349, Zachary Macaulay to Castlereagh, 8 May 1807.

²⁸⁰ NA WO 1/352, f.384, 8 August 1807 – "An Act for transferring to His Majesty, certain possessions and Rights vested in the Sierra Leone Company, and for shortening the Direction of the said Company, and for preventing any dealing or trafficking in the buying or selling of slaves within the Colony of Serra Leone."

the Coast of Africa, Native as well as European...”²⁸¹ Despite several delays, commissioners were dispatched in 1809 with instructions from the government (written with additional advice from Macauley) outlining the necessity of “exploring the Coast of Africa from Cape Negro [South Africa] to Cape Blanco [Mauritania]” for the gathering of information covering an extensive range of political, economic, cultural, geographic and cartographic themes. The Government also used this opportunity to encourage British residents of the various settlements to turn their attention to commercial agriculture.²⁸²

As these surveys were being conducted and the African coast was appearing in ever-greater detail on British charts, rumours of Park’s death began to reach Britain (though it was not until well into the 1820s that a coherent picture could finally be pieced together).²⁸³ In 1815, a collection of his communications from Africa and the testimony of his former guide were published alongside a short biography to popular acclaim. It was readily acknowledged, however, that his expedition had contributed little to improve the geography of Africa as he had largely retraced the course of his former journey and any observations he had made after his last correspondence from Sansanding were lost. He had, however, clearly demonstrated the viability of the Gambia route to the Niger and periodicals such as *The Quarterly Review* were quick to emphasise that fact.²⁸⁴ In addition to his second journal, reprints of Park’s first visit to the Niger helped promote, and sentimentalise Britain’s effort to access the West African interior. A recent study of the John Murray publishing house by Innes Keighren *et al* has addressed that emerging market for travel narratives which fed the public demand for new information. Whilst the Murrays had printed books concerning Africa

²⁸¹ NA CO 268/18, f.2, Castlereagh to William Dawes, Downing Street, 11 April 1807.

²⁸² The instructions issued by the Colonial office to the commissioners before their departure from Sierra Leone illustrate the wide range of information they were sent to ascertain. Conversely, these directions also indicate the dearth of reliable information available to the government which it now wanted to address. Their guidelines extended from ascertaining the “nature, position, latitude & longitude, content &c.” of important places along the coast, their “local advantages or disadvantages”, and extended to detailed queries regarding local African populations, agricultural potential, the circumstances of any trade (illegal slavery and otherwise), and by what means they might be improved. See NA CO 268/18, f.14-20, Lord Liverpool to Edward Columbine, 27 December 1809 – underlined words in the original.

²⁸³ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 19-28.

²⁸⁴ See *The Quarterly Review*, Volume XIII (London, 1815), 140.

since at least 1779, the frequency of texts considerably increased after Park's in 1815.²⁸⁵ Illustrating the public interest, Debbie Lee has estimated that between 1800 and 1820, no less than forty titles concerning the African interior appeared in Britain from various publishers.²⁸⁶ In the years since Park had been lost, awareness of Africa had been sustained by these publications and by the energies of the African Company and the African Institute (formed from the remaining members of the disbanded Sierra Leone Company).²⁸⁷

Because of the national interest in West Africa, two expeditions were swiftly financed after the cessation of European hostilities in 1815. Both were focused on the course of the Niger. In the first instance, Major Peddie was sent to the Windward coast in command of a large force to travel overland to the river. Complementing his efforts in the west, Captain Tuckey was sent to the Congo in search of the Niger's possible termination there. Despite their aspirations, both expeditions ended in disaster and did little to fix the map of Africa. Their organisation and direction illustrates, however, the role of the Government in supporting their enquiries, particularly Earl Bathurst (the Colonial Secretary) and John Barrow of the Admiralty.²⁸⁸

Both Peddie and Tuckey's ventures were well reported upon in the popular press, and updates appeared periodically due to the length of time which they were engaged in the region. Furthermore, the reporting of their exploits helped emphasise the grand work that Britain was embarking on:

...the general opinion entertained is, that both [the Congo and Niger] rivers join, and empty themselves into immense morasses in the interior of Africa. The two expeditions are in consequence expected to meet; anticipating this event, the letters we have perused say, "with what exstacy[sic.] will the survivors meet, relate the hardships they have endured, and, in the wilds of Africa, where footsteps never trod, and where silence reigns with undivided sway, raise the cup of friendship to their dear friends of the sacred isle."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 228-266.

²⁸⁶ D. Lee, 'Mapping the interior: African cartography and Shelley's the Witch of Atlas' in *European Romantic Review* 8:02 (1997), 171.

²⁸⁷ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 157.

²⁸⁸ Boahen, *Britain* (1964), 43.

²⁸⁹ *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (Oxford, England), Saturday, May 18, 1816; Issue 3291. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900*.

These exploratory activities demonstrate a distinct shift away from the lone travellers which had characterised the African Association's enquiries. More importantly though, they represent something new in terms of how contemporaries perceived West Africa. This was not a vast, unnavigable wilderness where European activities could only be confined to isolated outposts, connected to each other by the sea, but a region across which lines of communication could be established. The Association had shown the way into Africa but by the second decade of the nineteenth century, contemporaries were exploring how to open the rest of it to their investigations.

During these events, the African Company struggled more than ever to remain relevant in the post-slave trade era.²⁹⁰ To address the hostile atmosphere on the coast, an embassy was dispatched to Kumasi, the Asante capital, to meet with the Asantehene. During its fraught proceedings, Thomas Edward Bowdich (a Company employee) wrested control of negotiations and signed the unpopular treaty of 1817.²⁹¹ Bowdich had been commissioned to gather information concerning the mysterious Asante and his collection of geographical notes from merchants travelling into and from the interior contributed towards the map which accompanied his official account. His 1819 "Map shewing the Discoveries & Improvements in the Geography of Western Africa" was heavily reliant on African itineraries and offered a revolutionary view of the tropical belt. From these enquiries, Bowdich traced several routes northwards through the area commonly associated with the Kong Mountains leading him to confidently recommend the establishment of diplomatic Residents throughout the region who could gather further materials. After the high mortality of Tuckey's voyage, however, and the long, drawn-out failure of Peddie's expedition, there was little enthusiasm for approaching the interior through the tropical belt again. Moreover,

²⁹⁰ Without the slave trade, many of the British forts had become obsolete. After the death of Governor Torrane in 1807 and the recent conflicts with the Asante, the Company forts were in disarray and a significant decline in trade was recorded across the region. Their governing body in London was barely capable of maintaining order and factories such as the one at Ouidah were promptly abandoned. See R. Law, *Ouidah: the Social History of a west African Slaving 'Port', 1727 – 1892* (Oxford, 2004), 161-162; A.W. Lawrence, *Trade Castles & Forts of West Africa* (London, 1963), 68.

²⁹¹ T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London, 1819), 49-58.

the supposedly impassable barrier of the Kong Mountains continued to pose a serious cartographic impediment to any attempt, despite Bowdich's arguments. As far as the British Government was concerned, the remaining forts and factories on the Guinea Coast were simply a necessary expense to further the aims of abolition and support the transition to legitimate commerce.²⁹² Because of its unpopular concessions made to Asante, the new treaty was swiftly dismissed by Company Officers at Cape Coast Castle and Bowdich returned to Britain disappointed.²⁹³

Filling the blank map had taken on a mantle of no small significance by 1818, one that was intertwined with the developing myth of European exploration through uncharted lands. Building on the traditions of the African Association, the discovery of West Africa was established (for all intents and purposes) in the minds of many as a British endeavour; one that had cost the country much in money and men. Yet, the way enquiries were made of the interior geography had undergone a significant revolution in response to fears that Britain would be deprived of power and further opportunities there if it failed to pursue such activities. What follows now is an era in which Britain recognised Africa's populated landscape, when it stopped trying to pass over the unknowns of a blank map with strength in numbers, and sought instead to pass through areas of progressively detailed (and known) geographies. From 1818 then, efforts were made towards the establishment of a broad diplomatic exchange with the interior.

1818-1830: An Era of Diplomacy

Bowdich's embassy to Kumasi might not have improved circumstances at the coast but it did demonstrate the viability of diplomatic missions to African rulers. At the same time as those events transpired in the south, reports reached London from the British Consulate in Tripoli suggesting that its ruler might be persuaded to protect a mission across the Sahara in return for an appropriate sum of money.

²⁹² See *Report from the Committee on African Forts* (London, 1817).

²⁹³ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 158-159.

In the summer of 1817, Captain Warrington Smyth of the Royal Navy was sent to North Africa to survey the coast (part of the Admiralty's ongoing mission to improve its charts). Dispatches from Earl Bathurst indicate that he was keen to use the opportunity of Smyth's presence, and the amicable relationship between Pasha Yusuf Karamanli and the British Consul-General Hanmer Warrington, to negotiate for Yusuf's support for a mission to the interior.²⁹⁴ By November, Smyth had met with the Pasha and they had agreed loosely on the principle of an expedition being escorted through his territories, whilst Warrington was informed in December that a young diplomat had been charged with the establishment of a Vice-Consulate at Murzuq in the Fezzan.²⁹⁵ Bathurst's instructions to Joseph Ritchie were clear: Britain desired "the successful prosecution of the discoveries now attempting in the interior of Africa" and a clear road opened to Bornu, Hausaland and Timbuktu.²⁹⁶

Upon his arrival in Tripoli, Ritchie immediately began collecting geographical notes and information about the roads leading south and what he might expect to find there. Through his enquiries, he discovered how mistaken were the Saharan geographies found in British maps and began addressing various discrepancies he noted in the popular cartography of map-makers such as Arrowsmith and Faden, lamenting as he did that they were "certainly wrong".²⁹⁷ Amongst their many faults, he recognised that the location of several kingdoms known to exist across the region were incorrect.

²⁹⁴ NA FO 8/7, f.9, Earl Bathurst to Hanmer Warrington, Colonial Office, 17 June 1817.

²⁹⁵ NA CO 2/9, f.146, Warrington Smyth to Charles Penrose, Tripoli, 26 November 1817; NA FO 8/7, f.17, Henry Goulburn to Hanmer Warrington, Downing Street, 19 December 1817 –Hanmer Warrington later rejected Captain Smyth's version of his meetings with the Pasha and was angered by the publication of various articles congratulating that officer for his diplomatic zeal. Regardless, events were set afoot.

²⁹⁶ NA FO 8/7, f.20, Earl Bathurst to Joseph Ritchie, Downing Street, 1 February 1818.

²⁹⁷ RGS LMS R 12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, 30 April 1819 – this letter illustrates a regular frustration that is to be expected of these correspondents, that is the confusing dates assigned to copies of original letters. In the archives of the Royal Geographical Society this letter is catalogued under the date 30 April 1818 with the note "written just before his departure for the interior with Lyon" attached. For that to be the case it makes more sense for it to have been written in April of the following year as Lyon did not arrive in Tripoli before November 1818. According to Lyon's journal though, by April 1819 they were already drawing close to Murzuq. I have considered it here because Ritchie was certainly consulting maps before he left Tripoli.

Before embarking for Murzuq in 1819, Ritchie's meetings with African merchants also revealed details of the tumultuous Fulani jihad of 1804. The Islamic rebellion led by Sheikh Uthman ibn Fudi had succeeded in establishing the powerful Sokoto Caliphate and continued to expand throughout the nineteenth century.²⁹⁸ In October 1818, these accounts were confirmed to Ritchie by the Bey of Fezzan along with news that ibn Fudi had since died and been replaced by his son, Sultan Bello.²⁹⁹ Bornu, he reported, was "at present in a state of Anarchy and Confusion" and Tripoli had limited contact with that place or any other lands of the interior.³⁰⁰ Indicating the beginning of a new era of interaction that was founded on the cooperation of the ruling Pasha, Ritchie was subsequently requested by the Colonial Office to inquire as to the likelihood of Tripoli and the interior accepting British mediation on the subject of abolition.³⁰¹ This complemented Britain's efforts in Europe where anti-slave trade treaties were being secured.³⁰²

In concert with Ritchie's mission in the north, Bathurst also appointed Joseph Dupuis (former Vice-Consul to Mogadore in Morocco) in early-1818 to return to Kumasi and sign a new treaty with the Asante. Bathurst's instructions to Dupuis remained broadly the same as the 1817 embassy's but considering the information which Bowdich had gathered of the interior, he asked that Dupuis continue to collect "correct information of the Kingdoms further inland."³⁰³ Following the Company's dismissal of Bowdich's earlier agreement, the British government had finally lost confidence in the African Company. It was later dissolved in 1821 and responsibility for the administration of its forts were conferred to the government at Sierra Leone.³⁰⁴

By late 1819, Ritchie had died after months of languishing in the Fezzan, leaving his companion Lieutenant George Francis Lyon to return to Tripoli alone. Conveying this news to Bathurst, Warrington wrote:

²⁹⁸ R.A. Adeleye, 'The Sokoto Caliphate in the Nineteenth Century' in J.F.A. Ajayi & M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa: Volume Two* (London, 1974), 57-91.

²⁹⁹ NA CO 2/9, f.20, Joseph Ritchie to Henry Goulburn, Tripoli, 28 October 1818.

³⁰⁰ NA CO 2/9, f.17, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 28 October 1818.

³⁰¹ NA CO 2/8, f.26, Earl Bathurst to Joseph Ritchie, London, 19 January 1819.

³⁰² See Law, *Ouidah* (2004), 155-157.

³⁰³ NA CO 2/11, f.17, Simon Cock to Joseph Dupuis, 31 October 1819.

³⁰⁴ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 160-166.

...it is that Infernal Traffic for the Barter of Human Flesh that shuts the avenue to all communication & making use of [Ritchie's] own words "if that were done away with the Road from Fezzan to Guinea would be as open as that from London to Edinburgh."³⁰⁵

The prospect of such a simple route into the interior drew much attention, especially in the aftermath of so many failed efforts elsewhere. British periodicals were quick to recognise the possibilities of an open road into Africa and that comparison with the road between London and Edinburgh appeared in *The Quarterly Review* as a means of cultivating public interest.³⁰⁶ The Sahara, however, remained as enigmatic and imperfectly defined as ever and was subject to enormous speculation. Through enquiries by the likes of Bowdich, Dupuis and Ritchie though, it was becoming clear that there was an extensive communication of merchants across West Africa which linked the Guinea territories with the Muslim states to the north; Dupuis' 1824 "Map of Sudan" (figure 16) illustrated the extent of that intercourse rather well.³⁰⁷ It was even reported that had Ritchie survived, his plan had been to travel from Murzuq to Bornu, from there to Nyffe [Nupe], and onto Asante.³⁰⁸ This pan-regional sense of the landscape was a new phenomenon which built upon the same ambitions which had supported Peddie and Tuckey's expeditions and contrasts with the image of Arrowsmith's "Africa" (1802) which seemed to reject such exchanges.

In terms of the developing map, British investigations now included significant engagements in the north and south of the region in addition to the settlement at Sierra Leone which was supporting its own enquiries of neighbouring lands.³⁰⁹ Consequent to its ongoing naval activities, the Admiralty also initiated various surveys in the 1820s to improve its navigational charts.³¹⁰ Because the Royal Navy's efforts to capture illegal slave traders were increasingly concentrated further east along the Guinea Coast towards the Bights of Benin and Biafra, the African squadron was regularly forced to sail against prevailing winds and currents to return

³⁰⁵ NA FO 76/13, f.21, Hanmer Warrington to Earl Bathurst, Tripoli, 27 December 1819.

³⁰⁶ *The Quarterly Review* (Vol. XXIII) (London, 1820), 228.

³⁰⁷ I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: the Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge, 1975), 310-312.

³⁰⁸ NA CO 2/9, f.47, George F. Lyon to Earl Bathurst, Murzuq, 22 November 1819.

³⁰⁹ McGowan, 'The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade' (1990), 25-41.

³¹⁰ David, 'Charting the Waters' (1987), 21-23.

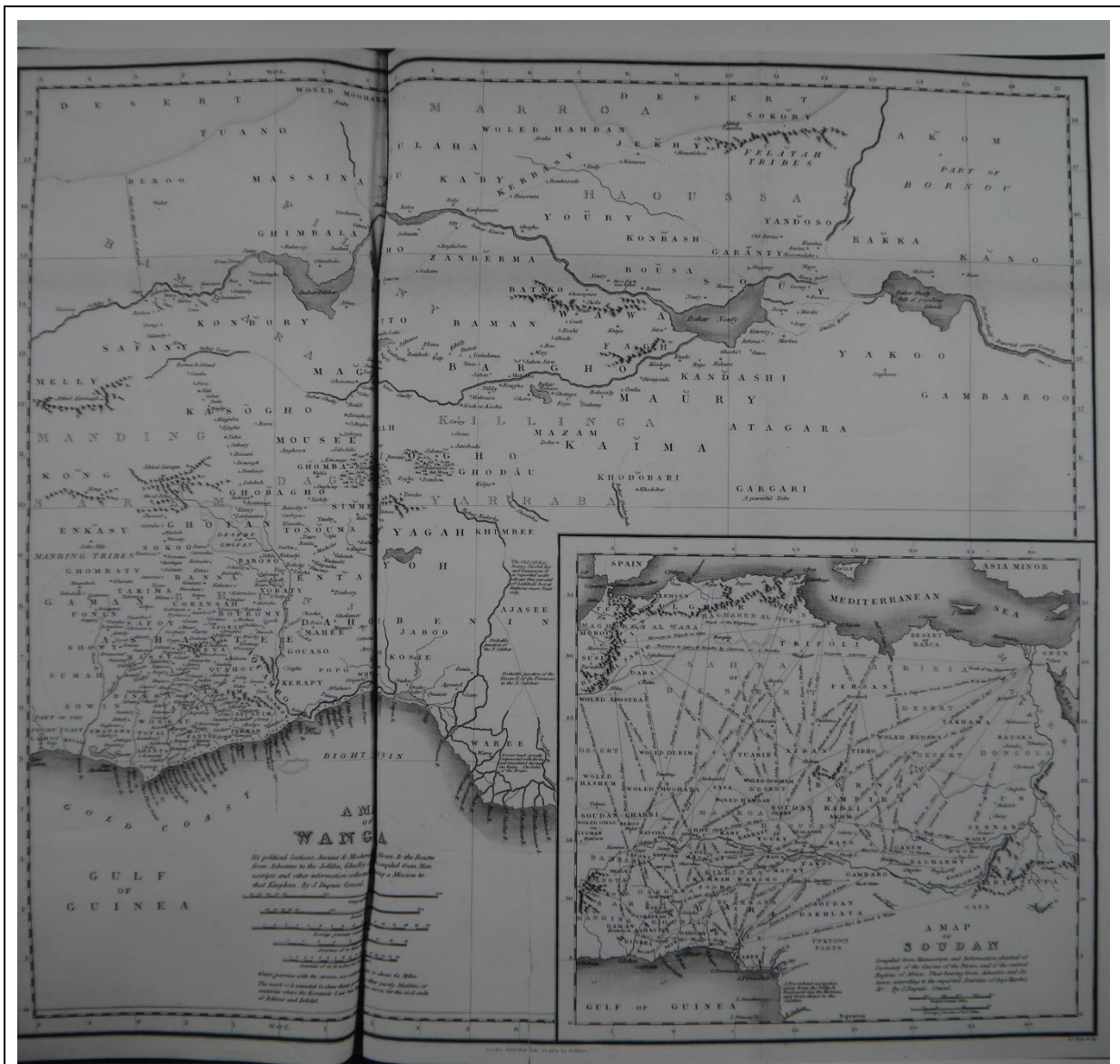


Figure 16: Joseph Dupuis, "A Map of Wangara... Its political Sections, Ancient & Modern kingdoms, the course of its Rivers & the Routes from Ashantee to the Joliba, Ghulby and Kuara rivers, compiled from Manuscripts and other information collected at Coomassy during a mission to that Kingdom" in J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*. By Joseph Dupuis, Esq. Late His Britannic Majesty's Envoy and Consul for that Kingdom. Comprising Notes and Researches relative to the Gold Coast, and the Interior of Western Africa; Chiefly collected from Arabic MSS. and information communicated by the Moslems of Guinea: to which is prefixed an account of the origin and causes of the present war. Illustrated with a Map and Plates. (London, 1824). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

captured vessels to Freetown. Voyages by Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen in 1825 and his highly-detailed charts of the coast ultimately culminated in a short-lived settlement on the island of

Fernando Po in 1827, briefly supporting Britain's efforts near the unknown mouth of the Niger River.³¹¹

The atmosphere of enquiry which existed in the early-nineteenth century encouraged not just examinations into West Africa, but reinterpretations of established geographies also. The most prominent of these appeared in the summer of 1820, when the Glasgow wine merchant James MacQueen wrote to certain members of the British Government with a proposal to establish commerce with the interior. Requesting an audience with the First Lord of the Admiralty (as well as the President of the Board of Trade and the Colonial Secretary), he hoped to "lay before him the map of Africa" that he had drawn himself.³¹² The crux of his scheme rested on his belief that the Niger would discharge itself into the Atlantic at the Bight of Biafra and that the interior was more fertile than commonly supposed.³¹³

MacQueen was an outspoken critic of the British abolitionist movement, believing that the operations along the coast had done nothing to address the source of the issue. His petition in 1820 was intended to secure support for the establishment of a chartered trading company which could lead to a commercial presence in the heart of Africa to pursue a colonial and mercantile agenda whilst also acting as the spearhead of anti-slave trade activities. David Lambert's study of the Scotsman's proposals for the Niger has emphasised the significance of his written texts and cartographic plans for Africa that were based on the production and manipulation of the geographical archive to suggest a positive view of the interior.³¹⁴ By adapting the geographic and cartographic discourse to the issue of abolition, Lambert has argued that MacQueen was able to influence the discussion in a way that would have been impossible only a few decades previously.³¹⁵

³¹¹ R.T. Brown, 'Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6:02 (1973), 249-264.

³¹² NRS GD 51/1/463, f.1-2, James MacQueen to Lord Melville, London, 17 July 1820.

³¹³ NRS GD 51/2/619/4, f.1-4, James MacQueen to Lord Melville, Glasgow, 19 August 1820.

³¹⁴ As a former plantation overseer and advocate of slave-ownership, MacQueen represented something of a controversial figure at this time. Lambert has explained that his opposition to abolition across the British Empire was related to his concern for how such an event would impact on the colonial economy. See Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 4-5.

³¹⁵ Lambert, "Taken Captive by the Mystery of the Great River" (2009), 44-65.

His proposals gained limited traction in 1820 but within a year MacQueen had published *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa* outlining his hypothesis concerning the Niger's termination in the Bight of Biafra and advocating a closer British engagement with the interior. In support of his claim that commercial agriculture could be sustainable in the interior, his accompanying map of the Niger (figure 17) illustrated extensive tributaries that conformed to his belief in a large and fertile watershed.³¹⁶

It is to the Niger and his tributary streams that our attention ought to be turned... The wide extent of Africa through which these rivers run, is susceptible of great improvement, and is every way adapted for trade.³¹⁷

MacQueen's drawing of the river drew intense criticism from individuals such as Barrow at the Admiralty who believed the Niger ultimately joined the Nile, and who used his position as an editor and contributor of *The Quarterly Review* to attack the Scotsman.

It was ultimately the case, that for as long as the British perspective was largely confined to the coast, rational argument was all that men like MacQueen or Barrow could resort to. Following the relative success of the recent enterprise at Murzuq, however, and with the prompting of Warrington who continued to promote the humanitarian agenda in Tripoli, the British Government set in motion another expedition to capitalise on the Pasha's cooperation. In 1822, Walter Oudney, Dixon Denham and Hugh Clapperton were dispatched in the company of a heavily-armed escort, with instructions to make contact with the Kingdom of Bornu and establish a friendly relationship with its leader and any other important individuals they might encounter.³¹⁸ It was hoped that Oudney (as a naturalist) would be able to assess the commercial capacity of the interior for British

³¹⁶ In addition to his work on the Niger's outlet, MacQueen was also embroiled in the ongoing debate about the future of Sierra Leone throughout the 1820s. Problems associated with the high mortality of Europeans living there compounded by ongoing economic stagnation experienced by the colony were highlighted as evidence of its failure. Complementing his belief in the Niger's outlet being in that area, MacQueen argued that the island of Fernando Po would provide a better site for the naval squadron, healthier conditions for European overseers of any potential establishment, and easier access to the Niger for trade. See Lambert, 'Sierra Leone' (2007), 103-132.

³¹⁷ J. MacQueen, *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa: Containing a Particular Account of the Course and Termination of the Great River Niger in the Atlantic Ocean* (Edinburgh, 1821), 218-219.

³¹⁸ Boahen, *Britain* (1964), 53-74.

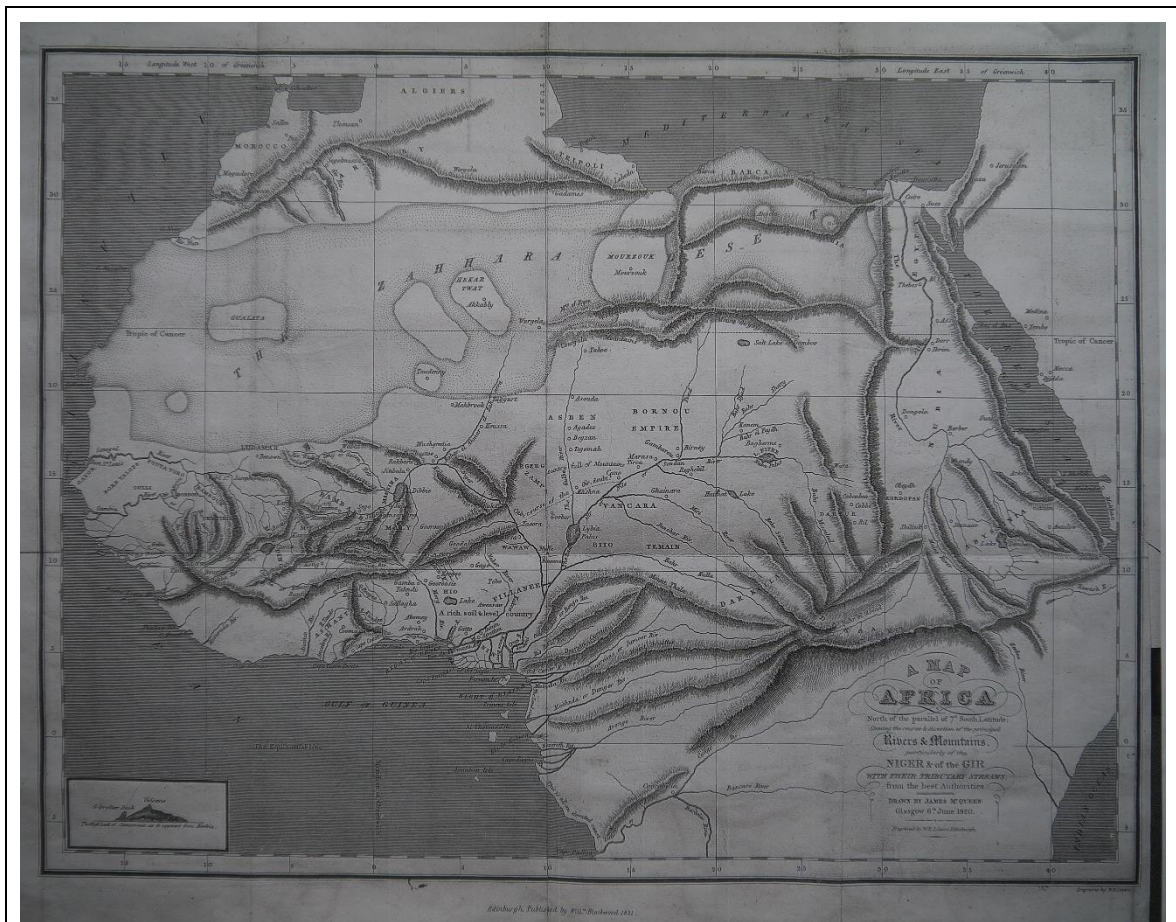


Figure 17: James MacQueen, “A Map of Africa North of the parallel of 7° South Latitude; Shewing the course & direction of the principal Rivers & Mountains, particularly of the Niger & of the Gir with their Tributary Streams, from the best Authorities” in J. MacQueen, *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern Central Africa: Containing a Particular Account of the Course and Termination of the Great River Niger in the Atlantic Ocean* (Edinburgh, 1821). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

manufacture. For almost three years, the Bornu mission continued to operate in the desert during which it discovered Lake Chad, made contact with the Sokoto Caliphate and revealed a strange new region in the south named “Mandara”. All of which combined to substantially alter the appearance of West Africa on the face of British cartography. Of the area they examined and in light of their instructions to determine its value or potential for improvement, however, Oudeny had little confidence of its agricultural potential. “There is nothing that can render the country of commercial importance to England,” he wrote, “as I only see cotton she could bring on return for her commodities...”³¹⁹

³¹⁹ RGS LMS 0/3, Walter Oudeny to John Barrow, “Kuka”, 14 July 1823.

The Bornu Mission succeeded in securing a brief consular presence in the interior and a relatively stable relationship was established with Sheikh al-Kanemi of Bornu and with Sultan Bello of the Sokoto Caliphate whom Clapperton had met. Ritchie had identified the broader political importance of Bornu during his time at Murzuq so it was with satisfaction that Denham informed Bathurst of their discovery that “there is but one power in Central Africa to be at all compared to the Sheikh of Bornou[sic.] in importance – that of Bello the Fellata Chieftain...” It was in contrast to Bornu though, that Clapperton’s account of Hausaland as he travelled towards Sultan Bello found its significance. Not only did he observe European goods at Kano – “the great central mart for Commerce of Northern Africa” – which had been transported from the Guinea Coast and across the Sahara but he concluded that the regions of Sokoto and Nyffe (Nupe) were well suited for cotton, gum, indigo and tobacco.³²⁰

The cartographical legacy of the Bornu mission was momentous. The map of their travels (figure 18) stretched the line of directly observed geography far into the interior and almost to the southern coast, wiping away much of the rationalised geographies and inaccuracies that had caused Ritchie concern. Aside from the emphasis on the revolutionary new understanding of West Africa, Denham understood their most significant discovery to have been that of its political landscape.

The whole Country between Bornou and Mandara is thickly populated with numerous walled Towns... Our labours therefore in connecting the Geography of Central Africa will we trust not be deemed unimportant...³²¹

Looking to capitalise on the situation, two further missions were financed by Parliament: one conducted by Alexander Gordon Laing from Tripoli to Timbuktu, and the other to the Bight of Benin to secure an overland route to Sokoto led by Clapperton himself.³²² Their primary objectives were to initiate commercial and political interaction on a grand scale across West Africa, reflecting the British confidence in their increasingly detailed maps. As Warrington proudly declared, he

³²⁰ NA CO 2/13, f.332-333, Hugh Clapperton to Robert Wilmot Horton, London, 6 June 1825.

³²¹ NA CO 2/13, f.160-161, Dixon Denham to Lord Bathurst, London, 1 June 1825 – underlining in original.

³²² Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 149-225.



Figure 18: Hugh Clapperton, "Map of the Travels and Discoveries made in Northern & Central Africa, by Dr. Oudney, Major Denham & Capt. Clapperton R.N." in D. Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824, by Major Denham, Captain Clapperton, and the Late Doctor Oudney, extending across the Great Desert to the tenth degree of northern latitude, and from Kouka in Bornou, to Sackatoo, the Capital of the Fellatah Empire with an Appendix* (London, 1826). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

“[trusted] in God that this Research may yet establish an epoch in the Reign of His Majesty little Inferior to the Columbean Discovery...”³²³ Whereas Clapperton was qualified by his recent experiences, Laing was similarly fresh from his own diplomatic past. In 1822, he had been sent from Freetown to treat with the Temne people whose regional warring had threatened trade routes to the British colony. During that venture, Laing had taken the opportunity to explore an area in which he identified the source of the Niger. Thus it was, in 1825 and 1826 respectively, both he and Clapperton returned to Africa with that river in their sights.³²⁴

As ever, British ambitions were tempered by the realities of the region and neither Laing nor Clapperton and his companions survived their respective endeavours. Banditry and hostility to Laing’s appearance in the desert cost him his life, whilst disease took its toll on Clapperton’s party during their march from Badagry. Moreover, the unique relationship that had been established with Bornu and Sokoto was now complicated by the conflict which appeared to have arisen between them. Very few of Laing’s reports survive, and nothing from his time in Timbuktu reached Britain beyond a tantalising letter dated September 1826 (delivered some years later) which conveyed a brief description of the city and confidence that his notion of the Niger’s termination in Lake Volta was correct.³²⁵ Compounding these disappointing circumstances, a young Frenchman named René Caillié survived the journey from the Senegambian coast to Timbuktu and onto the North African coast by the close of 1828, claiming the honour of its discovery for France and ending centuries of speculation regarding that mysterious city.³²⁶ Controversy quickly ensued, however, as Barrow and others accused the French consul in Tripoli of conspiring with certain Tuaregs to murder Laing and steal his notes. Warrington even suspected that the Pasha himself was complicit.³²⁷ The conditions by which Britain had gained access from the north were swiftly, and irreparably, closed. After the deaths of so many agents, and the outbreak of war with the Asante in 1823 which cost the life of

³²³ NA FO 76/19, f.23-24, Hanmer Warrington to Earl Bathurst, c.1825.

³²⁴ A.G. Laing, *Travels in the Timannee, Kooranko, and Soolima Countries in Western Africa* (London, 1825).

³²⁵ RGS LMS L.1, Alexander Gordon Laing to Hanmer Warrington, 21 September 1826.

³²⁶ Heffernan, “A dream as frail as those of ancient Time” (2007), 203-225.

³²⁷ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 179-184.

Governor Sir Charles MacCarthy within a year, West Africa was appearing to be more trouble than it was possibly worth.³²⁸

Fortuitously though, the question of the Niger's course and termination which had lain at the heart of British exploration since the days of the African Association was finally brought to a head in the late 1820s. The 1829 "Chart of the Route of the late Captain Clapperton" had tantalisingly illustrated its known course to within a relatively short distance of the coast and the highest navigable point of the Formosa River. To put the matter finally to rest, Richard Lander, Clapperton's former manservant who had accompanied him in 1826, offered in 1829 to retrace their route from Badagry to the river at Bussa, from there to follow it to its end. Because of the limited nature of this proposed expedition in terms of men and expenditure, Bathurst accepted. No extensive instructions were issued; Lander's only objective was to find the river at the point where he and Clapperton had crossed it a few years previously, and "follow its course if possible to its termination, wherever that may be."³²⁹ In the company of his brother John, Richard Lander succeeded in tracing the river (not without incident) to the sea by the close of 1830. Within the first week of January 1831, they were back in Clarence Town (Fernando Po), communicating their discovery to the Colonial Office.

I think it my duty to inform you ... of our safe arrival at this island on the first ultimo, in a Liverpool vessel called the Thomas, from the Nun, or Brass River, which is one of the mouths of the Niger or Quorra, by which it disembogues itself into the Atlantic.³³⁰
In light of everything that had recently occurred in the Sahara, along the Guinea Coast, and the Sierra Leone colony's slow progress combating the slave trade, Britain's attention was quickly, and resolutely, fixed on the Niger Delta in the Bight of Biafra.

³²⁸ I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: the Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge, 1975), 312-314.

³²⁹ NA CO 392/1, f.219, Robert William Hay to Richard Lander, London, 31 December 1829.

³³⁰ NA CO 2/18, f.34-35, Richard Lander to Robert William Hay, Fernando Po, 7 January 1831.

1830-1841: Britain and the Niger

After 1830, the field of interest was, like the Gambia had been at the turn of the nineteenth century, dominated by the opportunities posed by the Niger for gaining access to the interior. Following the Lander brothers' discovery, several events occurred in relatively quick succession to monopolize the opportunities of the situation in Britain's favour. In the first instance, efforts were made to celebrate the discovery and bring it within the scope of contemporary scholarship. International competition and the institutionalisation of scientific enquiry had recently culminated in the establishment of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in May 1830. As Felix Driver's study argues, the purpose of the society was to position itself and its members at the heart of Britain's enquiry into the wider world, whilst its founding members sought to brand the geographical milestone of locating the Niger Delta as a triumph of British ingenuity by awarding Richard Lander its first Gold Medal.³³¹ To feed public curiosity and to reinforce the magnitude of their discovery, the Landers' account was swiftly edited and printed in 1832 with a chart of the delta included.³³²

A more direct response to knowledge of the river's navigability mirrored the growing market for legitimate commerce. Martin Lynn's assessment of the Palm Oil trade in the nineteenth century observes the fortunate coincidence that the Bight of Biafra had already been established as the heart of that traffic by the time the Niger's outlet was discovered.³³³ But Lander, like Clapperton before him, had also illustrated the populated landscape above the river mouth, indicating the potentially huge demand for manufactured goods. The 1830s has consequently been recognised and broadly defined by John Flint as a period in which the delta region became the narrow focus of Britain's exploratory and commercial activities in West Africa because access to the interior finally allowed traders to by-pass the middlemen of the coast and access the supposedly

³³¹ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 27-28; F. Flemming, *Barrow's Boys* (London, 1998), 276.

³³² R. & J. Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger; with a Narrative of a voyage down that river to its termination. In Three Volumes. Illustrated with Engravings and Maps. Vol. I*, (London, 1832).

³³³ M. Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: the Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1997), 17-21.

huge markets beyond.³³⁴ By the end of 1831 the African Inland Commercial Company (AICC) had been established and was in the process of acquiring two steam vessels to attempt an ascent of the river under the command of the merchant-philanthropist MacGregor Laird. Rumours of the mission spread through Britain quickly, captivating public attention; not least because its financial backers were drawn from across the various cities and ports with the closest trade connections to West Africa. The ships themselves were a national project, with component parts sourced from all over and constructed in Liverpool. Looking to make the most of the opportunity, the Admiralty sent an officer to join the venture, chart the river and determine the most efficient route through the delta to the main trunk of the river. Lieutenant William Allen had accompanied Captain Owen's earlier survey of the coast and was instrumental in applying the rule of scientific observation to the unreliable sketch which had been made of the Landers' former journey. Lander, now something of a national hero, was approached to join the undertaking and act as both guide and intermediary with the Africans they were likely to meet.

It quickly became apparent, however, that the accessibility of West Africa did not negate the broader risks of European engagement there and Lander perished, alongside many of Laird's officers and men. Moreover, because it struggled to conduct any meaningful trade, the project was labelled a failure; though the publication of Laird's account in 1837 maintained that image of fertility and agricultural potential which was now associated with the interior.³³⁵ Whilst trade continued along the coast, it is clear that nobody knew quite what to do with the newly-discovered route into Africa. It was, however, reported in 1836 that Captain John Beecroft (then director of the British settlement on Fernando Po and former member of the AICC) successfully replicated Laird and Lander's voyage up the Niger where he traded for a season.³³⁶ The few attempts that were made to access the interior during this interim were by private individuals looking to make a name

³³⁴ J.E. Flint, 'Economic Change in West Africa in the Nineteenth Century' in J.F.A. Ajayi & M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa: Volume Two* (London, 1974), 394-396.

³³⁵ M. Laird & R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa, by the River Niger, in the Steam-Vessels Quorra and Alburkah, in 1832, 1833, and 1834 (Volume 1)* (London, 1837).

³³⁶ Recorded in *The Standard* (London, England), Thursday, April 14, 1836; Issue 2786. *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900*.

for themselves. Men such as C.H. Coulturst who died in Old Calabar exploring the waterways of the delta, or John Davidson who died in the Sahara seeking an alternative route to Timbuktu.³³⁷ Meanwhile, the delta region was descending into confusion. Following the emancipation of slaves across the British Empire in 1834, large numbers of former slaves began migrating from Sierra Leone eastwards along the Guinea Coast. From the interior, refugees and slaves were arriving at the coast following the collapse of the Oyo Empire which had contributed to a state of confusion as regional powers expanded into the power vacuum it left.³³⁸

For all intents and purposes, the great geographical questions that had perturbed the blank map of Africa were answered. The coast had been extensively charted, the boundaries of the desert had been broadly defined, and a relatively detailed view of the internal political landscape was developing. Park had found the Niger at Segu and learnt of its course as far as Timbuktu, Laing had identified its source, Clapperton had fixed Bussa and the site of Park's death on the map, and the Lander brothers had followed the river to its termination in the sea. As Davidson wrote in 1836, his desire for visiting the stretch of land between Timbuktu and Sokoto was simply because it remained "the only unexplored portion of the Niger", the last major blank spot on the map.³³⁹ Rennell's mountains of Kong remained but were now broken up in most maps to allow rivers and roads to stretch from the coastal region into the interior. In 1834, a detailed map (figure 19) by Aaron Arrowsmith's nephew, John, was printed as part of his *London Atlas*. As a founding member of the RGS, John Arrowsmith's cartography was derived from the wealth of information which Britain had amassed and represented to a contemporary audience the triumph of British enquiries. It effectively took stock of all current knowledge and emphasised the fertile landscape between the desert and the northern flanks of the Kong Mountains in the region labelled "Soudan".

³³⁷ J. Davidson, *Notes Taken During Travels in Africa by the late John Davidson* (London, 1839); Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 62-64.

³³⁸ J.F.A. Ajayi, 'The aftermath of the fall of Old Oyo' in J.F.A. Ajayi & M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa: Volume Two* (London, 1974), 129-136.

³³⁹ NA CO 2/19, f.43-44, John Davidson to Lord Glenelg, Agadir, 31 March 1836.



Figure 19: John Arrowsmith, "North Western Africa" was first printed in 1834. This copy was found in J. Arrowsmith, *The London atlas of universal geography, exhibiting the physical & political divisions of the various countries of the World, constructed from original materials* (London, 1838). David Rumsey Map Collection

The map of West Africa may have advanced immeasurably since the mid-eighteenth century yet Britain was confronted in the 1830s with the Royal Navy's slow progress against the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There was also a growing concern that the Navy's efforts at the coast had actually contributed to the increase of the internal slave trade. Seeking to address this state of affairs, the prominent abolitionist politician Thomas Fowell Buxton turned his attention to the extension of legitimate trade into the interior. Britain's strategy to date had been to address the trans-Atlantic demand for slaves; this new approach marked the beginning of a new phase in Britain's historic interaction with West Africa, one that targeted the very source of the traffic.

Buxton's campaign was initially founded on the acquisition of information regarding the nature and structure of the internal slave trade. Because of his former writings on the subject, Macqueen was contacted (possibly with Laird acting as a mediator) to assist the development of a

scheme to promote the new abolitionist agenda. Lambert has observed that the Scotsman was almost certainly encouraged by the opportunity to initiate commercial projects that he had been advocating for over twenty years.³⁴⁰ MacQueen's influence is particularly notable in the first of what Lambert has called "the Niger Texts", Buxton's *Letter on the Slave Trade, to the Lord Viscount Melbourne* (1838), which presented the facts and figures of the traffic which they had gathered to a private audience of politicians.³⁴¹ Together, they advocated the re-establishment of a settlement on Fernando Po to support steamboats sailing up the Niger for the purposes of negotiating with African rulers, and the construction of a British base near where the Tchadda (Benue) river joined it. To generate attention to his proposed objectives and their geographical justifications, Buxton and his allies printed *The Remedy* in 1839. It was accompanied by a map from John Arrowsmith which boldly illustrated the river's known course to the coast and ignored anything north of Lake Chad as irrelevant to the scheme. A languishing government consented to these proposals because, as John Gallagher has argued, the gathering public support for the humanitarian principles of the venture made it politically expedient to do so.³⁴²

Unlike former examples of African exploration, the mission was meticulously planned with precise objectives that were drafted, carefully considered and redrafted before being printed for continued reference in the field. Significant provisions were made to supply its leaders with any materials deemed necessary for their information or guidance:

You will be furnished, at the cost of Her Majesty's Government, with a set of such books, maps and charts, and instruments as you conceive may be useful to you in your mission...³⁴³

It was to be conducted by the Royal Navy under the authority of Captain Henry Dundas Trotter and the recently promoted Commander Allen. Together they were ordered to conduct representatives

³⁴⁰ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 183-185.

³⁴¹ *ibid*, 5; H. Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa: the Antislavery Expedition to the River Niger 1841-1842* (London, 1991), 17-22.

³⁴² J. Gallagher, 'Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy, 1838 – 1842' in *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10:01 (1950), 36-58.

³⁴³ NA CO 2/21, f.532, "Annex A. Expedition and Mission to Africa. (Draft) Instructions for the Negotiators", [February, 1839].

of the crown into Africa where they could negotiate anti-slave trade treaties with African rulers on the banks of the river.

Aside from participating in the publications and political campaigning that supported the expedition during its planning stages, MacQueen was also busy securing his position as an expert on African geography. His contributions had finally afforded him a position close to Britain's policy-makers which his efforts twenty years earlier had failed to do and he was anxious to make the most of this opportunity. Focus on the "Tchadda" (Benue) tributary for the location of a model farm whilst underplayed in Arrowsmith's map, for example, reflects the geographical conclusions that he had formerly made of its hypothetically healthy situation within the supposed Kong Mountains.³⁴⁴ In 1840, he released his *Geographical Survey of Africa* which was illustrated by his "Map of Africa from Loanda in the South to Tripoli in the North". A year later he produced his magnificent "New Map of Africa" which he dedicated to Prince Albert in his capacity as President of the Society for the Extinction of Slavery. Reflecting the quality of MacQueen's work in conjunction with Buxton's zealous humanitarian campaign, the RGS announced in 1841 that it was adding his latest West African cartographies to its library in recognition of his contribution to the mission and the excellence of his geography.³⁴⁵

On 13 August 1841, the Niger Expedition ventured from the Bight of Biafra, over the bar at the mouth of the Nun and into the river's main trunk, drawing this last phase to a close.³⁴⁶ Its principle aim was to affect change through demonstration and example rather than conquest or settlement. It nevertheless paved the way for Britain's creeping colonialism of the mid-nineteenth century, enforced by the strength of its naval forces along the coast.³⁴⁷ To demonstrate the agricultural viability of the land, the Niger Expedition hoped to locate and secure an area for a

³⁴⁴ The timetable and financial limitations of Buxton's texts prevented MacQueen from contributing his own cartography to accompany them, relying instead on slightly older pieces by John Arrowsmith. See Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 193-196.

³⁴⁵ *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society (Volume XI)* (London, 1841), xxv.

³⁴⁶ Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa* (1991), 88.

³⁴⁷ B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004, 4th Edition* (Harlow, 2004), 22.

Model Farm that would exhibit “proper” agriculture and encourage Africans to turn their attention to the potential profits of trading with Britain. Arguably, it is the designation of land in the interior as suitable for such a project that symbolises, more so than any other example, the full revolution of British ideas and attitudes towards West Africa in the near-century of this study. That there was confidence of fertile soil, navigable access further inland, and hospitable Africans nearby, all suggests a very different geographical imagining to that which had existed in the mid-eighteenth century.

Driven by public interest and the ever-developing map of West Africa, the circumstances under which Britain looked to the interior were a far cry from those which had existed in 1749.

* * *

Chapter 3: sponsoring cartography and the mapped image of West Africa

It is contended here that not only was the process of Britain's mapping of West Africa characterised by an economy of necessity – why map, where and how? – but that the resultant cartographic image was subject to those same issues. The examination of historical maps and their place in contemporary discourses about the world by Brian Harley acknowledges the existence of two forms of influence over cartography: internal and external powers that manipulated their content and interpretation.³⁴⁸ The susceptibility of maps to manipulation by the socio-political and economic spheres within which they appeared and were distributed, and their construction in accordance with established conventions and academic expectations, rendered them mirrors of the cultures and times in which they were made rather than mirrors of the world.

This chapter will examine how cartography was susceptible to external influence; the emphasis on “sponsorship” will help guide the discussion towards a broader understanding of the various interests that were exhibited in different cartographies and map-making projects. The argument follows that if maps were at the heart of changing forms of the British engagement with West Africa, the pressures exercised over them should be considered enormously significant for the course of that discussion. New ideas and images had to be encouraged, ones that promoted in some manner the causes of individuals, institutions, or the Government, be they motivated by intellectual, socio-political or economic needs. “Sponsors” are traditionally thought of as the individuals or groups who patronised new cartographies, who identified the objectives of exploration and geographical enquiries, and presided over the processes that led to the production

³⁴⁸ ‘Power and Legitimation in the English Geographical Atlases of the Eighteenth Century’ in P. Laxton (ed.) *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore, 2002), 111-117.

of a finished map.³⁴⁹ In terms of Britain's expanding global activities, London quickly became the site of administrative and scholarly concerns. Elsewhere, cities with commercial interests in Africa such as Bristol, Glasgow and Liverpool, or areas of burgeoning academic societies such as Edinburgh, contributed in several unique ways to the cartographic discourse. Map-makers who operated close to these centres were consequently susceptible to similar influences or at the very least paid homage to them in their work. The term "sponsored" is not intended to imply that cartographic truths were simply bought and sold; it is merely a recognition that the map was the end-product of various power-relations contributing towards a final, complicated image. The stimulus behind British enquiries into West Africa was neither constant nor consistently focused on the same areas and its motivations varied extensively throughout the period. Detailed surveys were virtually impossible, meaning that the developing map relied on the acquisition of information whenever and wherever possible. Consequently, the identification of likely places to conduct research into (or gain access to) the interior reflects both the impulse behind Britain's interests, and the conditions on the ground which facilitated or obstructed its investigations.

The desire for a more accurate view of West Africa emerged in the eighteenth century at the same time as Britain's engagement there was undergoing enormous changes. It is therefore worth examining how the two are related, how they were stimulated by and encourage one another. We have seen how early colonial projects and successive investigations into the slave trade were complemented by mapping traditions which endeavoured to illustrate the sum of Britain's geographical knowledge, allowing readers a relatively accurate reference tool. In practice, however, the map remained susceptible to the hopes and ambitions of those who sought to fill it. As Matthew Edney has observed, maps "are not records of what each part of the world actually is; regardless of historical and cultural context, maps are careful imaginings of what people have wanted the world to be."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ For example, see Kirk-Greene, 'West African Exploration: Africans, Auxiliaries and Also-Rans' (1972), 37-38.

³⁵⁰ Edney, 'Mapping Parts of the World' (2007), 157.

In terms of the cartographic discourse, the historiography concerning map-making is inherently concerned with the various interpretations of the knowledge/power paradigm which is reflected in the influence of different types of authority over the map and the presumptive power over the land depicted.³⁵¹ Yet knowledge, so the discourse goes, is not simply a product of observation and study, it is a product of being in a position to observe.³⁵² This means that Britain's developing understanding of Africa occurred because of the ability of its agents to conduct their enquiries there, meaning that the broader dynamics of contact must also be considered if the map is to be understood. The problem here then revolves around the several obstacles to map-making endeavours, the way they were overcome, and the ability of cartographers to overwrite their impact on the map's final appearance in support of its claim to reliability.

Philip Curtin's argument that popular ideas about Africa had little in common with reality has encouraged a wealth of scholarship attempting to untangle the relationship between images of the region and actions.³⁵³ As the audience for travel narratives, maps and popular journalism continued to spread information and cartographies, interaction with West Africa was progressively influenced by the ebb and flow of public interest. In addition to restrictions inherent to the map-making process, the distribution and spread of new information was limited by a variety of economic and social factors. Thus the emergence of a coherent, single mapped truth was impeded, allowing certain groups to retain a privileged position over important cartographic knowledge. To define European interests and attitudes towards the region, Robin Hallet had to acknowledge the gulf between two contending groups: the "opinion-makers" and the "wide mass of the general public, in whose minds Africa tended to be reduced to a few crude disparate but powerful images."³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ As the first chapter noted, the powers exercised over the map were many and complex. However, that power over the land is reflected in both a practical sense (in terms of the directing of different activities) and an intellectual one (wherein the reader gained power through information).

³⁵² Said, *Orientalism* (2003), 32.

³⁵³ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 318-342.

³⁵⁴ R. Hallet, 'Changing European Attitudes to Africa' in J.E. Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume 5, from c.1790 to c. 1870* (Cambridge, 1976), 467.

The development of the British map of West Africa between 1749 and 1841 was increasingly predicated on the principle that there was a desire (or need) for more extensive, reliable and useful information. In practice though, this process was easily manipulated by the disproportionate influence of very select individuals. By first offering a working model for defining the conditions under which cartography of West Africa was produced, this chapter will then discuss with reference to specific examples how the maps of this period were shaped accordingly. Much of the focus of this chapter is on the cartography produced through exploration and the quality of information produced in consequence of sponsors' participation. What will be shown is that the geography of West Africa was revealed according to the intellectual and social culture which influenced that discourse but was in no way improving consistently during this study. It becomes interesting that the scientism which emerged in Britain to oversee geographical enquiries was actually undermined by the emerging "culture of exploration".

Cartographic sponsorship?

To illustrate what is understood here as sponsorship it is worth turning briefly to the end of the period to present a clearer view of Britain's exploratory mapping after it had become more formalised in the nineteenth century. On 24 May 1830, John Barrow presided over the formation of the RGS which joined the African Association with the Raleigh Travellers Club together for the purposes of directing British geographical investigations. It was the inevitable conclusion of the exploratory activities of the African Association when confronted with the changing intellectual atmosphere of the 1800s. After its establishment, the RGS conducted its affairs in concert with elements of the British Government, primarily through the mediation of Barrow. As Second Secretary to the Admiralty he was well placed to ensure that expeditions of discovery were given due consideration by the various Governmental departments responsible for publicly funding,

equipping and directing such activities. Through the society, the products of those missions could be easily received, digested and published.³⁵⁵

The RGS's founding manifesto highlighted seven roles the new society envisioned for itself which represent their identification of the various conditions under which geographical scholarship was conducted.³⁵⁶ The Society understood its role to be the sponsor and arbitrator of British exploration and its resultant geographical discoveries. It was a source of direction and funding, and it equipped travellers with the necessary tools for their observation. Most importantly though, it understood itself to be the place where new knowledge was collected and authenticated through careful study. The society provided British exploration with ideological support, and provided an element of legitimacy to its products by printing and distributing them.³⁵⁷ Maps could be produced by any one of the several cartographers to have joined its ranks while Barrow's close relationship

³⁵⁵ Fleming, *Barrow's Boys* (1998), 1-12.

³⁵⁶ "1. To collect, register, and digest, and to print for the use of the members, and the public at large, in a cheap form and at certain intervals, such new, interesting, and useful facts and discoveries, as the Society may have in its possession, and may from time to time acquire.

2. To accumulate gradually a library of the best books on Geography—a selection of the best Voyages and Travels— a complete collection of Maps and Charts, from the earliest period of rude geographical delineations, to the most improved of the present time; as well as all such documents and materials as may convey the best information to persons intending to visit foreign countries; it being of the greatest utility to a traveller to be aware, previous to his setting out, of what has been already done, and what is still wanting, in the countries he may intend to visit.

3. To procure specimens of such instruments as experience has shewn to be most useful, and best adapted to the compendious stock of a traveller, by consulting which, he may make himself familiar with their use.

4. To prepare brief instructions for such as are setting out on their travels; pointing out the parts most desirable to be visited; the researches most essential to make; phenomena to be observed; the subjects of natural history most desirable to be procured; and to obtain all such information as may tend to the extension of our geographical knowledge. And it is hoped that the Society may ultimately be enabled, from its funds, to render pecuniary assistance to such travellers as may require it, in order to facilitate the attainment of some particular object of research.

5. To correspond with similar societies that may be established in different parts of the world; with foreign individuals engaged in geographical pursuits, and with the most intelligent British residents in the various remote settlements of the Empire.

6. To open a communication with all those philosophical and literary societies with which Geography is connected; for as all are fellow-labourers in the different departments of the same vineyard, their united efforts cannot fail mutually to assist each other.

7. And lastly, in order to induce men of eminence and ability in every branch of Science, Literature, and the Arts, and in particular those who have travelled by sea and by land, and all such as are skilled in geographical knowledge, and likely to become useful and efficient members, it was suggested that the admission fee and annual contribution should be on as moderate a scale, as, with the number of subscribers calculated upon, would be sufficient to enable the Society to fulfil the important objects herein alluded to." See *The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, Volume 9* (Edinburgh, 1830), 153-154.

³⁵⁷ For a discussion of the social and intellectual realities of the Royal Geographical Society, see Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (1992), 155-174.

with the John Murray publishing firm helped present geographical discoveries of foreign lands to an ever-growing audience. Building on its position as the official publisher to the Admiralty, Murray also took responsibility for printing the RGS' accounts in 1831 and so integrated the presentation of places like West Africa within its own formula for discussing and presenting foreign lands, their cultures and geography.

Identifying the different elements of cartographic sponsorship unified within the model provided by the RGS means recognising two dominant pressures exercised over the map: the support and direction necessary for Britain's geographical enquiries there, and how authority was assigned to its products. Through its academic status and position at the heart of the British Empire, the society had power over several aspects of the cartographic image of West Africa at a time when there was a growing demand for descriptions based on first-hand observation. Thus Felix Driver has argued the necessity of studying exploration within the broader contexts of imperialism and metropolitan science. His own examination provides a broad view of how RGS operated within the opportunities provided by the British empire in the pursuit of objectives which reflected the socio-political and economic interests of its members.³⁵⁸

At its establishment, RGS attempted to codify (through its establishing manifesto and position near the heart of Britain's global administration) its self-defined role as the epicentre of any global geographic computations, as a site of knowledge-making. Members of the RGS emphasised their authority over the learned discussion of African geography (as the African Association had formerly done), allowing it to claim a privileged position over any calculated image. Sponsors of cartography are, therefore, distinguished by their presumed entitlement to receive new information. A "centre of calculation", as defined by Bruno Latour's study of science in society, is identifiable by its participation in the gathering of information and processing of it, and its subsequent representation and distribution in some finalised form.³⁵⁹ The recognition of these

³⁵⁸ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 24-48; for a particular emphasis on the societal element of RGS, see also Bridges, 'Nineteenth Century Exploration' (1987), 9-12.

³⁵⁹ B. Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, 1987), 219-232.

spaces of learning and discussing the conditions by which they functioned has been a popular subject for historians of exploration and science who now examine contemporary efforts to operate within an ever-shifting intellectual and academic landscape.³⁶⁰ The discourse concerning these sites of knowledge-making, however, underscores the distinction made between the sedentary nature of metropolitan scholarship and the travellers who were sent to West Africa to retrieve raw information.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was problematic (and virtually impossible) for travellers to circumvent the authority of “centres of calculation” and simply edit the map as they saw fit after their return to Britain. New information gathered about foreign lands (of which the travellers’ testimony was the only extant source) was subjected to rigorous analysis to determine its reliability and relationship to the extant archive of already-established knowledge. To overcome the obstacles which obstructed individual contributions, Philip Stern has concluded that the socio-economic nature of Enlightenment scholarship meant that “patronage was the key” and enormous pressure was put on the academics, geographers and institutions (such as RGS) who had positioned themselves at the fore of such scholarship.³⁶¹ In the case of the African Association after its founding in 1788, the efforts of its members to establish their authority over the map’s appearance is especially recognisable.³⁶² Stern has argued though, that the Association’s members

³⁶⁰ Outram, ‘New Spaces’ (1996), 249-264.

³⁶¹ Stern, ‘Exploration and Enlightenment’ (2014), 65-68.

³⁶² One of the more prominent indicators of this culture of patronage was the tradition of dedicating new works to noted individuals. Irrespective of the trials faced by the British traveller in Africa or the map-maker who utilised their notes, both were often obliged to acknowledge the presence of their patrons who provided funding and directions. Benefactors provided important access to academic and social circles unavailable to the average person, and also promoted the value of new information to a wider sphere of intellectual study that was traditionally dominated by elites. Dedications were a well-established scholarly custom and one with a reciprocal effect on both parties as the dedicatee was also rewarded by association with new academic discoveries.

The role of sponsorship during the Enlightenment is especially recognisable on the part of Joseph Banks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and we see efforts by James Bruce in the 1780s, for example, trying to name African plants in his honour to help position his journals in a more favourable light. In effect, Bruce authenticated the image generated by his texts through its association with Banks’ name.

In many instances during this period, writers and map-makers would reference the support of notable individuals who had supported their work in hopes of encouraging the public’s interest. For that reason, the cartography and texts which appeared prior to the 1841 Niger Expedition were dedicated to Prince Albert who was involved with the African Civilization Society (ACS) responsible for organising public interest in the venture. Elsewhere, the practice of ascribing new scholarship to certain individuals was

were driven as much by the traditional gentlemanly pursuits of scientific patronage and the exclusivity of knowledge, as they were by any practical utilisation of geographical discovery.³⁶³

Efforts throughout this period to subject geographical enquiries to evolving standards of “scientific protocols and instrumentation” by academics and patrons have been interpreted by Dane Kennedy as indicative of an ongoing “struggle to impose their own social and intellectual authority” over the processes of discovery and its subsequent products.³⁶⁴ Charles Withers and David Livingstone’s work on geographical studies during the Enlightenment identify similar problems with the application of academic and intellectual controls to the processes of enquiry. “If Enlightenment was about reason and the potential for human freedoms,” they write, “it was no less about restriction and dominance: if knowledge was a means to challenge authority, so, too, was it the power of social authorities using claims to reason to regiment, restrain, control.”³⁶⁵ The content of maps relied on such relationships with patrons and intellectual conventions but their claims to objectivity were compromised by them.

Of the culture of science which emerged to influence exploration, Kennedy concludes that: “disciplinary designs created barriers that placed explorers and other field workers in subordinate positions.”³⁶⁶ Whilst that assessment is ultimately correct, it does not, however, illustrate fully the relationship which existed between travellers and their metropolitan patrons. Sponsors played a significant practical role in the direction of exploration by funding and equipping expeditions, and also receiving their notes at its end. Yet the preparation of any mission of discovery not only sought to facilitate the journey and investigations of a traveller, it was intended to direct an individual who was an instrument of enquiry themselves. In this regard, the explorer was imbued with design and

replicated in the presentation of subscribers’ names at the beginning of geographical works to acknowledge the support of individuals who hoped to associate themselves with new studies. See NHM JBRP DTC 6, f.226, James Bruce to Joseph Bank, Edinburgh, 9 September 1789; NA CO 700/Africa5; Withers, ‘Geography, Enlightenment and the Book’ (2010), 209-212.

³⁶³ P.J. Stern, “‘Rescuing the age from a charge of ignorance’: gentility, knowledge, and the British exploration of Africa in the later eighteenth century’ in K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), 115-135.

³⁶⁴ Kennedy, ‘British Exploration’ (2007), 1888.

³⁶⁵ Withers & Livingstone, ‘Introduction’ (1999), 8.

³⁶⁶ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 38.

purpose, to gather data as an appendage of their enlightened and learned benefactors; especially in the days of the African Association's dispatch of natural historians. Whilst discussing Mungo Park's reluctance in 1798 to conduct a mission to Australia following his return from the Niger, for example, Joseph Banks complained: "Had his Enthusiasm continued, he would have made an excellent Instrument in the hands of a good Director. As that is gone, he is no longer worth a Farthing."³⁶⁷ It is the implications which this treatment of travellers suggests that give sponsors particular power over the final map. Driver refers to the "imperial archive", meaning the accumulation of knowledge gathered through exploration that was created to serve the interests of those with the "vision" to pursue global projects. In terms of West African discovery, exploration was intended to fit within a broader framework of scholarship that was overseen and monitored by academic and social superiors. In this model, explorers existed solely to provide others with the means of completing the blank image.³⁶⁸ Even as the nature of British exploration expanded beyond the solitary travellers dispatched by the African Association to become the larger military, naval and diplomatic ventures directed by the Government, that tradition of patronage and direction remained.

The maps indicative of this relationship were therefore interpretations of travellers' notes, offering only a rationalised view of the broader regional geography as it was understood by map-makers such as Major James Rennell. Rather than allow travellers to contribute their point-of-view directly to the map, the Major sought to wield the Association's agents as the instruments of enquiry they were, sometimes he even instructed them how to record their observations. In the case of Frederick Hornemann, for instance, Rennell provided him with written reminders to help his determination of distances between places so that his subsequent geographical notes could be easily factored alongside the itineraries which the Association's enquiries had already collected.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ NHM JBRP DTC 11, f.100-101, Joseph Banks to Robert Moss, Spring Grove, 28 September 1798.

³⁶⁸ F. Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (December, 2004), 91 - In terms of the discourse of power, Edney has described map-makers (and by extension, the observer who maps) as agents of empire and imperially-minded governments and institutions. See Edney, 'The Irony of Imperial Mapping' (2009), 31.

³⁶⁹ NHM JBRP DTC 10(1), f.154, Frederick Hornemann to Joseph Banks, High Holborn, 26 June 1797.

That level of influence was characteristic of the cartographic enquiries which Rennell positioned himself in the middle of. After being approached by the Colonial Office in 1802 to aid them in their assessment of West Africa, he similarly compiled questionnaires to be sent to Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast Forts to instruct British officers and merchants how to collect indigenous testimonies in a format that was compatible with his map.

As I could not tell from whence they [travelling African merchants] come, I could only mention such Places as we wished to know the Routes to; but I added a good deal respecting the different modes of travelling (in respect of the rate) & advised them how to manage about obtaining the Bearings, &c.³⁷⁰

In both these examples, Rennell's identity as Britain's foremost geographer allowed him to quite literally dictate the terms by which the map was developed.

Whilst there was a distinction between the traveller and the "centre of calculation", there was a desire to recruit the perfect tools of observation (more of which shall be addressed in the following chapter). After Barrow's involvement with the preparation of Captain Tuckey's failed Congo mission in 1816, there began a tradition of naval personnel accompanying expeditions of discovery. As many expeditions had the Niger in their sights, the ability to navigate its waters was obviously desirable and the employment of individuals such as Lieutenants George Francis Lyon, Hugh Clapperton and William Allen reflected his intervention. A "Naval Lieutenant," Barrow declared in 1821, "generally possesses resources of a superior kind..."³⁷¹ Their employment, however, afforded the Admiralty considerable influence during the several stages of exploration and mapping and Clapperton, for example, referred to himself as "Barrows Pioneer."³⁷²

Barrow's participation was also particularly important for imposing naval discipline over the processes of recording and delivering information during exploration. As it was routine in the Royal Navy for officers to keep regular journals of their observations and submit them to the Admiralty along with their daily logbooks for inspection upon their return to Britain, African

³⁷⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 13, f.268, James Rennell to Joseph Banks, Brighton, 7 October 1802.

³⁷¹ NA CO 2/14, f.12, John Barrow to Henry Goulburn, London, 14 July 1821.

³⁷² NLS MS 40219, f.121-122, Hugh Clapperton to John Murray, London, 1825.

travellers were similarly expected to transmit their notes to the proper authorities for analysis.³⁷³ Even during expeditions which were coordinated elsewhere, Barrow routinely requested details to contribute to his articles for *The Quarterly Review*. As such, he was then in a position to formulate his own interpretations which could be publicised through that journal. Preserving authority over geographical material was, however, his main concern and Barrow, like Banks, was very protective over the presentation of exploration and its attendant cartographies. Addressing John Murray in the aftermath of the Congo expedition, for example, he discussed seeking legal counsel to stop the publication of a pirated journal by unknown “rascals” to rival his official one.³⁷⁴ In this instance Barrow was conciliated by the fact that whosoever had acquired the copy of Tuckey’s notes had neither obtained the information relating to natural history nor were they in a position to commission illustrations.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, they had no data with which to construct a map, without which the narrative was useless. Barrow’s desire to retain authority over the final product indicates though, the proprietorial relationship which defined the position of sponsors over African geographies in this period.

In addition to the scholarly prestige associated with the uncovering of West Africa on the map, there were several practical concerns that any developing cartography should be a British achievement. This discourse of sponsorship also extends then to the arrangement of travel which facilitated their enquiries in a manner that was fuelled by the consequence of losing initiative to foreign agents. As the field of African enquiries expanded from the early nineteenth century, however, it was increasingly difficult to monitor the movement of potentially valuable information during these expeditions. Due to the nature of African exploration, there existed numerous opportunities for details to be shared or lost. Moreover, expeditions of discovery generated considerable interest. Hornemann, for example, acknowledged that attention when he wrote to

³⁷³ R. Cock, ‘Scientific Servicemen in the Royal Navy and the Professionalization of Science, 1816-55’ in (eds.) D.M. Knight & M.D. Eddy, *Science and Beliefs: From Natural Philosophy to Natural Science, 1700-1900* (Aldershot, 2005), 95-111.

³⁷⁴ NLS MS 40055, f.73, John Barrow to John Murray, Admiralty, 25 August 1817.

³⁷⁵ NLS MS 40055, f.75, John Barrow to John Murray, Admiralty, 30 August 1817.

the African Association in 1796 conveying his thanks for their help; “You have put me,” he said, “in a situation in which the eyes of Europe on account of this most famous Society, are directed to...”³⁷⁶

In the interest of secrecy, travellers were generally restricted in terms of who they could communicate with whilst operating in West Africa. To preserve the field exclusively for British discovery, for example, Consul-General Hanmer Warrington was inspired to use his influence with the Pasha of Tripoli to deny any other European entry to the interior from the north. His concern, and it was shared by the Colonial Office, was that foreign agents operating independent of Britain’s authority could damage the conditions of access that had been bought at great expense in terms of lives and resources. Grudgingly, however, Warrington was cautioned that the British Government “neither possess nor have sought the exclusive rights to explore the Interior of Africa.”³⁷⁷ Unable to physically obstruct the enquiries of others, his only option was to address the flow of information between travellers and their correspondents. Aware in 1825 that Alexander Gordon Laing (who had recently been dispatched for Timbuktu) might be in contact with other European consulates in Tripoli, Warrington warned him not to discuss geographical matters in his letters to them. “[E]very Consul here is a sort of Spy,” he wrote, “ready to suck the sweets & to transmit the Honey of your Industry to His or their Governments.” Warrington suggested that “it is even fair to deceive them, sooner than they should forestall.”³⁷⁸

It is observable then that the influences of cartographic sponsorship are varied. What has been discussed so far merely establishes that behind the construction of a single map there are several ways in which pressure could be applied to the production of West African cartography. Having demonstrated the ability of external sponsorship to influence maps by exerting control over the direction of enquiries, and the reception and interpretation of cartographic material, I will briefly highlight an example of how research and geographical enquiry struggled in the absence of

³⁷⁶ NHM JBRP DTC 10(1), f.91, Frederick Hornemann to Joseph Banks, Göttingen, 7 December 1796.

³⁷⁷ NA CO 392/3, f.28-30, Robert Wilmot-Horton to Hanmer Warrington, London, 2 May 1825.

³⁷⁸ NA FO 76/19, f.365, Hanmer Warrington to Alexander G. Laing, Tripoli, 17 October 1825.

institutional support. The remainder of this chapter will then discuss the development of these activities during this period.

Thomas Edward Bowdich: “I am going to Africa, use me as you please”³⁷⁹

The rather unfortunate case of Thomas Bowdich illustrates neatly the limitations placed upon individuals when they fell afoul of Britain’s mainstream activities and traditional sources of patronage. As such it is possible to highlight the pressures exercised over the British enquiry into West Africa and therefore the map; in this case around the turn of the 1820s.

After his embassy to the Asante in 1817, Bowdich found himself at odds with his former employers in the African Company. The rejection of the treaty he had negotiated with the Asantehene by the officers at Cape Coast Castle was then compounded by the criticism of his geographical enquiries upon his return to Britain. Barrow, in particular, whose editorials for *The Quarterly Review* afforded him a significant platform to popularise his own interpretations of African geography, was less than complimentary of Bowdich’s *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (1819). An article which appeared in *The Quarterly Review* in 1820 reported: “The chapter on the 'Geography' of Africa we made several attempts to read and understand, but in vain.”³⁸⁰ Of that all-important discussion of the Niger: “Mr. Bowdich seems determined to reconcile himself to every hypothesis that has ever been formed of the course and termination of this celebrated river.”

Over the following years, Bowdich was consumed by a literary campaign to secure recognition of his efforts (for which he believed he had not been suitably remunerated) and to redress the slander he felt had been directed at him. In the first instance, he responded by privately

³⁷⁹ BL Add MS 19422, f.48-49.

³⁸⁰ *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXII (London, 1820), 291 – To indicate the broader tone of the article; whilst imagining what the *Asantehene* would make of Bowdich’s published journal, the article quipped:

“If his sable majesty, Sai Tooto Quamina, 'King of Ashantee and its dependencies,' should ever be favoured with a sight of the goodly quarto which Mr. Bowdich has contrived to manufacture on the subject of his gold and his grandeur, his captains and his caboceers, he would certainly conclude ... that 'he come only to take walk and make book' - and a pretty large book, too, he might probably add, for so short a walk.” – p.273.

publishing a short pamphlet titled *The African Committee* in which he listed his several grievances and attacked the corruption he had witnessed of Company officers.³⁸¹ Bowdich's complaints were not with the Company alone though. The hindered publication of *The African Committee* following his official account convinced him of a more sinister plot against him:

This Pamphlet was to have appeared at a more seasonable period, but a publisher, who by personal solicitation had secured the Author's account of his Mission to Ashantee, *after pledging himself to furnish the proof sheets immediately*, kept the MS. Sufficiently long to defeat the Author's intention, and then returned it.³⁸²

The publishing house of John Murray had been responsible for editing and printing Bowdich's notes from Kumasi. Behind their decision to delay his other work, Bowdich also identified (but did not name) Barrow operating in the shadows. He penned a *REPLY* to the article which had appeared in *The Quarterly Review* in which he made several references to the "Geographer of the Quarterly Review". In response to Barrow's criticism, and in recognition of his powerlessness against Murray, Bowdich observed that geographical writing in Britain was under the control of a close monopoly.

Young authors have felt and I believe the public knows pretty well by this time, that if any gentleman dares to offend Mr Murray the bookseller, he is as certainly condemned by the Inquisition of the Quarterly Review as if he were to deny the existence of a Polar Basin or a Congo hypothesis. Whether the Government Secretary [Barrow] shares the profits of Mr Murrays shop I do not know, but I know from experience that he is quite as absolute and as busy in it, unhappily for the works of authors and the public, as any partner could be ... and he maliciously exercised all his intrigue, and all his power, as he hoped in the dark, to injure my interests, and to wound my feelings and my reputation.³⁸³

Jonathan Cutmore's assessment of *The Quarterly Review* and the nature of those who contributed to it, recognised a "commodity of exchange", an acceptance to that sphere of established authored-scholarship which the publication bestowed upon those who acquiesced to its rules.³⁸⁴ At the heart of Bowdich's complaint was the rejection of his geography and he clearly believed that he had been

³⁸¹ T.E. Bowdich, *The African Committee* (London, 1819)- Contrary to the enlightened view of the African Company presented in his published journal, Bowdich wrote that at Cape Coast Castle he found that British officials had few interests beyond trade. The image which they had projected of themselves as interested in the geographical discovery of the region beyond the coast was, Bowdich argued, false. A quadrant and two small compasses were the only instruments he could find at Cape Coast Castle to aid his research.

³⁸² Bowditch, *Committee* (1819), I – italics in original.

³⁸³ BL Add MS 19422, f.47.

³⁸⁴ J. Cutmore (ed.), *Conservatism and the Quarterly Review* (Oxon, 2007).

treated unfairly in response to the submission of his own geographical analysis. To highlight the reliability of his enquiries and the value of his geographical assessments, Bowdich consequently printed excerpts from his own correspondence with eminent academics such as Banks, Rennell, William Hamilton of the African Association, William Elford Leach of the British Museum, and even the great explorer Alexander von Humboldt; each of whom he had been in communication with after his return from Africa. They had all been congratulatory of his work and Banks was even supportive of Bowdich's proposals to dispatch diplomatic Residents to points along the coast.

Bowdich had arguably made the mistake of thinking he could participate in the discussion of West Africa when the model of exploration existing at that time understood his position as only the tool of observation. Not willing to submit the entirety of his raw notes to his former employers, Bowdich had ensured that a selection of his charts and interviews with African Merchants in Kumasi had been transmitted to the African Association who were grateful for the data.³⁸⁵ It is possible that in doing so he had invited Murray and Barrow's ire, as by breaking up his information they were stripped of their claim to the sole interpretation of any new data. As punishment for such audacity, his application to join the Royal Society, which had received support from Rennell and others, was thwarted by Barrow's apparent intervention with Banks (who remained its President until his death in late 1820). By that time, the personal cost of his printed pamphlets was taking its toll and Bowdich struggled to balance the support of his family with the overheads of publication. At the beginning of 1820, whilst still awaiting payment from the Government for his work in Asante, he was pleading with his booksellers for credit.³⁸⁶ It was not long before he and his family relocated to Paris where he felt more appreciated.

In the aftermath of his confrontation with Barrow and Murray, Bowdich sought ultimately to return to Africa in pursuit of the enquiries his former journal had begun but which circumstances had denied him the proper recognition. From the nature of his preparations, it is possible to identify

³⁸⁵ See BL Loan 96 RLF 1/465/2, William Hamilton to Thomas Bowdich, Chelsea, 29 March 1818.

³⁸⁶ CRL Ladd/2428, Thomas Bowdich to Messers Priestly & Whale, 3 February 1820.

the manner of sponsorship that he endeavoured to fill from sources independent of Barrow's influence. Accompanying his *REPLY* in 1820, Bowdich circulated a prospectus through literary and scientific journals advertising his intentions and calling for individual donations of five pounds to cover the costs of travel and equipment. Further funding was collected using certain of his academic correspondents to spread interest in the venture and was provided by subscribers to whom he guaranteed recognition in any future publications.³⁸⁷ Finally, to improve the accuracy of his observations, Bowdich wrote to the Committee of the Literary Fund Society asking for their help equipping his proposed mission with "Astronomical and Physical Instruments".³⁸⁸ They awarded him £40.

Bowditch believed that Britain's exploration had been compromised by the grand objectives it was set upon that were driven by public interests, political machinations and commercial ambitions. Contrasting his experience of operating within the confines of the African Company and citing the example of the African Association, he argued that the "harmless, simple, enterprises originated by individuals" offered an opportunity to establish friendly relations and make scientific discoveries with no ulterior motives. Consequently, he pledged to slowly and methodically collect information, promising no "dazzling and precipitous rush to the Niger."³⁸⁹ It seems though, that Bowdich had learned his lesson about the desired relationship between the traveller and metropolitan centres of calculation who determined the worth of his discoveries, and he appealed to the scientifically minded of Europe with the promise that he would be their instrument of enquiry:

"I am going to Africa, use me as you please, as a machine, too well tempered to a baneful climate to get immediately out of order, which may help to verify the theories of intellect and genius by zeal and labour..."³⁹⁰

In 1824, the last of his books on African geography was published (in English) in Paris, illustrating his break from British scholarship. Perhaps in consideration of his French audience, he sought to

³⁸⁷ Loan 96 RLF 1/465/4, Sir Humphry Davy to Thomas Bowdich, London, 2 March 1821.

³⁸⁸ BL Loan 96 RLF 1/465/1, Thomas Bowdich to The Committee of the Literary Fund Society, 13 May 1822.

³⁸⁹ *The Journal of Science and the Arts, Volume 9* (London, 1820), 428-430.

³⁹⁰ BL Add MS 19422, f.48-49.

engage directly with d’Anville’s map once more by referring to a grand mission of filling its blanks with details from his own investigations.³⁹¹ Considering Britain’s diplomatic efforts elsewhere, with Joseph Ritchie in Murzuq, Joseph Dupuis’ mission to Kumasi, and the Bornu Mission’s ongoing activities near Lake Chad, Bowdich saw his own self-appointed venture as an opportunity to engage with Africans and improve their view of Britons. He argued that the friendlier disposition of Africans would ultimately facilitate efforts to spread Christianity and civilization, the grand objective of Britain’s post-abolition agenda as he understood it.

From this brief analysis it is possible to highlight the form of sponsorship Bowdich was keen to establish for himself. Issues of funding and equipping were his two most practical concerns in the absence of a patron, whilst references to his correspondence with eminent academics replaced any association with the Admiralty or John Murray that would have accompanied most other accredited traveller’s claims to legitimacy.³⁹²

“The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy”³⁹³

When d’Anville’s blank map appeared in 1749, British cartography had stagnated. From 1750 though, the replacement of the Royal African Company (RAC) by the African Company encouraged the consolidation of Britain’s possessions along the coast, whilst the establishment of the Province of Senegambia in 1765, and the developing investigation into the nature of the slave trade and its alternatives by the 1780s, all revolved around efforts to better understand the region and determine Britain’s relation to it.

³⁹¹ T.E. Bowdich, *An Essay on the Geography of North-Western Africa* (Paris, 1824), 2.

³⁹² Bowdich did return to Africa in 1824 and promptly died near the Gambia River.

³⁹³ *A New and Accurate Chart of the Coast of Africa. From Cape Blanco to the River Sierra Leon. With the Navigation of the Rivers Gambia, Senegal &c. The Rocks, Sands, Soundings, Setting of the Tide, and Time of High Water on that Coast from an Actual Survey made by the Sieur Lewis Lord Engineer. Who was employed Seven Years in that Work: N.B. The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy when the English took SENEGAL from the French in 1758. Brought to England by Cap[tain] Tho[mas] Walker, Chief-Engineer on that Expedition And publish’d at the Request of Several Gentlemen in the African Trade - NA CO 700/westafrika1e.*

Following the liquidation of the RAC by 1752, British settlements on the African coast were too important to abandon. The establishment of the African Company was accompanied by several notably uncoordinated activities calculated to protect the future of that commerce. It is apparent though, that there was no single authority which could take responsibility for the gathering and production of information concerning West Africa. The Admiralty had dispatched Thomas Pye in 1749 to investigate the coast, a “surveyor” was reported to be operating for the African Company by early 1752, and Justly Watson was sent by the House of Commons through the Board of Ordnance in 1757 to complement these enquiries by also drawing the coastal forts and their environs.³⁹⁴

I have drawn attention to the discovery of French surveys of the Senegal River following the capture of St Louis in 1758 and subsequent efforts by map-makers such as Thomas Jefferys to incorporate that information into new maps.³⁹⁵ In addition to Jefferys though, there is the interesting example of Thomas Walker (the expedition’s Chief Engineer) who was responsible for transporting these French notes and surveys to Britain, where he quickly constructed a new map from them. Walker’s c.1760 “Chart of the Coast of Africa” (figure 20) was made at the “Request of Several Gentlemen in the African Trade” and contained two endorsements (one from a merchant, the other from a ship’s captain) testifying to its value as a navigational aid to several markets.³⁹⁶ Portolan in nature, with navigational rhumb lines and compass roses, this map presented a wealth of information which sought to show the boundaries between African states, religions and ethnicity. Its claim to value was Walker’s assurance that: “The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy when the English took SENEGAL from the French...”³⁹⁷ Because of their

³⁹⁴ RGS SSC/22, Committee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa to Thomas Melville, London, 18 January 1752.

³⁹⁵ See S. Outram-Leman, ‘Mapping Senegambia’ (2018).

³⁹⁶ NA CO 700/westafrica1e.

³⁹⁷ *A New and Accurate Chart of the Coast of Africa. From Cape Blanco to the River Sierra Leon. With the Navigation of the Rivers Gambia, Senegal &c. The Rocks, Sands, Soundings, Setting of the Tide, and Time of High Water on that Coast from an Actual Survey made by the Sieur Lewis Lord Engineer. Who was employed Seven Years in that Work: N.B. The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy when the English took SENEGAL from the French in 1758. Brought to England by Cap[tain] Tho[mas] Walker, Chief-*

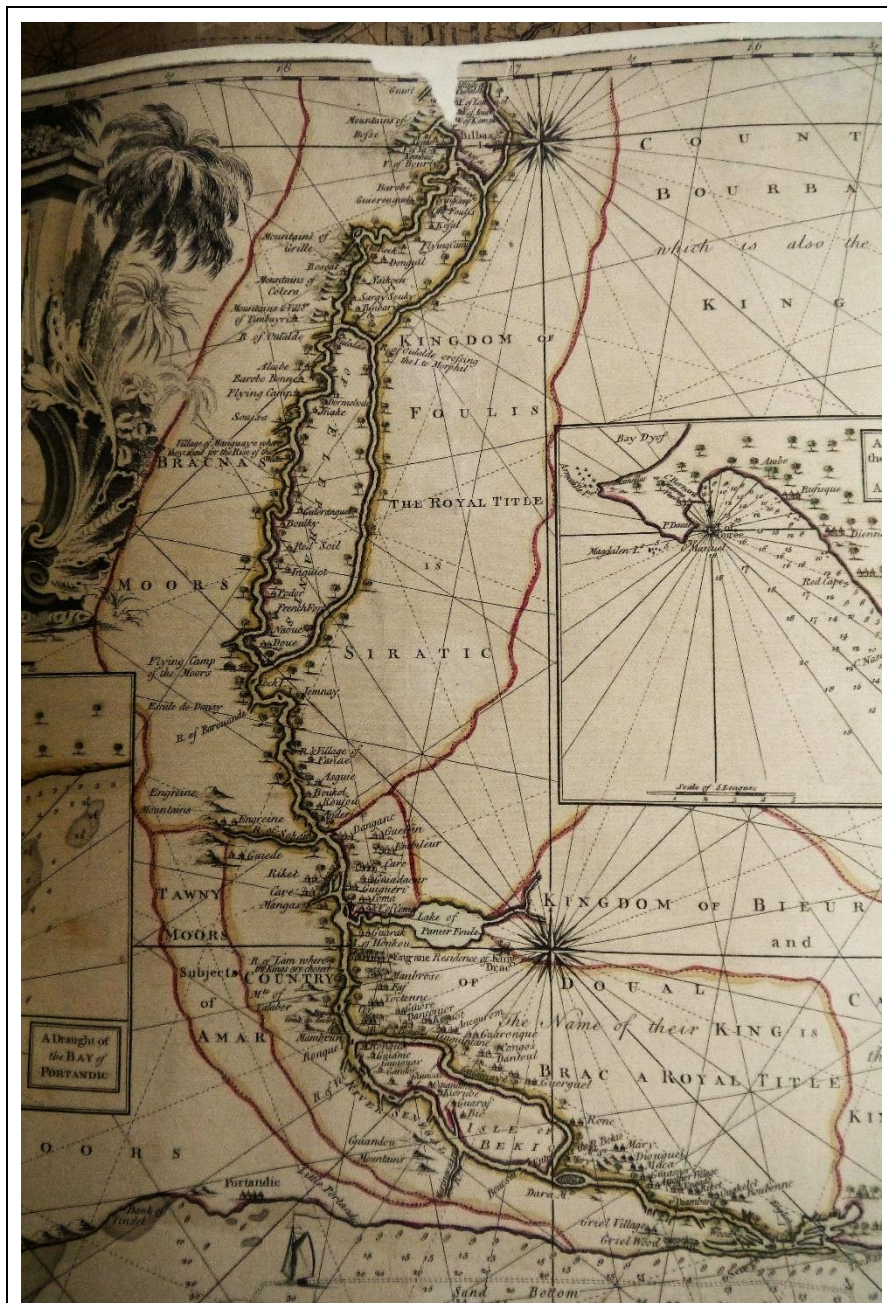


Figure 20: Detail showing the Senegal River from Thomas Walker, "A New and Accurate Chart of the Coast of Africa, From Cape Blanco to the River Sierra Leon. With the Navigation of the Rivers Gambia, Senegal &c. The Rocks, Sands, Soundings, Setting of the Tides, and Time of High Water on that Coast, from an Actual Survey made By the Sieur Lewis Lord Engineer, Who was employed seven Years in that Work." [undated – c.1760]. "N.B. The Original of This Chart was found in the Possession of the Enemy when the English took Senegal from the French in 1758. Brought to England by Capt. Tho. Walker Chief-Engineer on that Expedition, And Publish'd at the Request of Several Gentlemen in the African Trade." National Archives, CO 700/WestAfrica1e

long residence in the area, the French were naturally in possession of a more accurate image than the British. It follows then that the greatest influence over Walker's map should be the utility he envisioned it would find if it were known to be modelled on French surveys. Its use for navigation was then unquestionably linked to their perceived value.

The Province of Senegambia had a troubled history before its collapse in 1779. The inability of its provincial administration to engage meaningfully with the region was due (in part) to the inattention the colony received from the British government, an oversight that was addressed by the reorganisation of Whitehall in response to the deteriorating situation in the Americas. The office of the Colonial Secretary was established in 1768 to take responsibility for various problems across the Atlantic and took responsibility for overseeing Senegambia from the Secretary of State for the Southern Department in 1771.³⁹⁸ The Colonial Office and its new Secretary (the Earl of Dartmouth) proved keen to develop Britain's position in Africa.³⁹⁹ Although the government was confronted with the limitations of its knowledge of the region, there was clearly a desire to gather relevant information and it was not long before the Colonial Office began dispatching questionnaires to the colony and other possessions on the coast. In 1776, instructions were even sent to the officers of all the British settlements in Africa to facilitate (if necessary) a French expedition that had been dispatched to accurately measure the location of "the Principal Places upon the Seacoast" irrespective of the deteriorating relationships between their two countries.⁴⁰⁰ Writing to Senegambia's Governor in the colony's final years, Dartmouth requested detailed reports of the "situation of the Province under your Government, the nature of the Country, Soil & Climate, the Latitude and Longitudes of the most considerable Places in it[.]"⁴⁰¹ His objective was the "improvement and extension of our commerce".⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ NA CO 268/3, f.1, Viscount Hillsborough to Charles O'Hara, Whitehall, 26 April 1771.

³⁹⁹ NA CO 268/3, Earl of Dartmouth to Charles O'Hara, Whitehall, 16 March 1773 - A memorandum from Dartmouth to O'Hara in 1773, for example, instructed that the fort at Podor (fifty miles upriver on the Senegal) should be expanded a place of trade, influence and provision for the administration at Saint Louis.

⁴⁰⁰ NA CO 268/3, unnumbered, 6 May 1776.

⁴⁰¹ NA CO 268/3, unnumbered, c.1778.

⁴⁰² NA CO 5/206, unnumbered, "Instructions for John Clarke", 28 January 1777.

Even as Britain lost control of its preeminent position in West Africa by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Richard Drayton has argued that their response took inspiration from France's post-war programmes in economic botany and colonial enterprise when it had faced a similar position after the Seven Years' War in 1763.⁴⁰³ An atmosphere of enquiry supposedly thus arose in the 1780s which culminated in the identification of sites for possible colonisation or plantations along the coast. It is apparent though, that the Government had already initiated that research. As a measure of the Colonial Office's success in these investigations in terms of the map, however, we turn to the original complaint of the African Association at the time of its establishment in June 1788, that Britain's "knowledge of the Senegal and Gambia rivers [had not] improved upon that of De la Brue and Moore", whose writings from the early-eighteenth century had clearly not been updated to any great degree.⁴⁰⁴

A controlled map: "under the Patronage of the African Association"⁴⁰⁵

The African Association was established to illustrate what private capital could achieve when directed by enlightened individuals in the hope that the Government could be persuaded to invest in further interaction.⁴⁰⁶ Their earliest activities were focused on the collection of any information regarding the continent whilst the bulk of their notes were sent to Rennell who operated from the centre of his own ever-growing personal archive of geographical materials.

Whilst the Association was primarily concerned with the commercial potential of the interior, the Major was exclusively employed to identify and map its physical landscape. Henry Beaufoy (the Association's secretary) ensured that only geographical notices were sent to the Major and withheld the full extent of the notes which were made available to Banks and other senior

⁴⁰³ Drayton, *Nature's Government* (2000), 112.

⁴⁰⁴ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 6-7.

⁴⁰⁵ NLS MS 85565, AP.5.212.01, 4 June 1798, *Proposals for Publishing by subscription, under the Patronage of the African Association, Travels in the Interior Parts of Africa, by Way of the River Gambia, Reformed in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797, By the Direction and Expence, of that Association.*

⁴⁰⁶ Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 197-198.

members.⁴⁰⁷ Consequently the analysis of African commerce and society was left to others who used Rennell's geography to form their own conclusions. The Major's experience of the trigonometric survey of India encouraged confidence in the quality of his work but it was his relationship with the scholarly position which Banks had forged for himself that was of singular importance to the affirmation of his new African cartography. As President of the Royal Society and Director of Kew Gardens, Banks famously operated from his home in Soho Square, London, which became the "hub of an international scientific empire".⁴⁰⁸ It was the nexus of his global correspondences, the source of training and instruction to would-be naturalists (a number of whom were sent to Africa), and where he employed staff to arrange and archive the products of British enquiries. From the evidence of their communications, it is clear that Rennell often transmitted his notes to Banks seeking concurrence on his geographical conclusions.⁴⁰⁹ For almost a decade, therefore, the most up-to-date map of West Africa was their exclusive domain until the Association's discoveries appeared in published forms and invited conflicting interpretations.

Having acquired new information, the Association was very particular as to the manner of its presentation as well as its audience. For example, following the death of John Ledyard in 1790 (one of the Association's first African travellers) his relatives had come forward to request a copy of his journal so that it might contribute towards a planned biography of his life. They recognised the role of the Association which had directed his enquiries by congratulating Banks as having given "method & design" to Ledyard's "natural thirst for discovery".⁴¹⁰ Banks refused, however, arguing that the reports in question, "which consists almost intirely[sic.] of information concerning the interior parts of Africa, collected from various people whom he met with," belonged to Ledyard's "employers".⁴¹¹ Any details which they might want to reproduce for other purposes could, he said,

⁴⁰⁷ As secretary to the African Association following Park's return, Henry Beaufoy sent "a Copy to Rennell of that part of the letter which contains Geographical information, & am in hopes that he will do us the favour to mark on the Map the knowledge it conveys." NHM DTC 8, f.23, Henry Beaufoy to Joseph Banks, 3 May 1792.

⁴⁰⁸ P. Fara, *Sex, Botany & Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (Cambridge, 2004), 57.

⁴⁰⁹ Much of their correspondence can be found at the Natural History Museum archives.

⁴¹⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 7, f.28, Isaac Ledyard to Joseph Banks, New York, 29 January 1790.

⁴¹¹ NHM JBRP DTC 7, f.29, Joseph Banks to Isaac Ledyard, undated – reply to letter of 29 January 1790.

be derived from the printed reports of the Association for which they would have to subscribe to. By doing so, Banks ensured that no rival version of the same notes could appear to contradict the geography which he and his compatriots had determined upon without first reference to the African Association.

Tim Fulford and Debbie Lee's analysis of Banks' relationship with the published volumes of exploration before his death in 1820 has argued that the popular image of newly discovered lands was heavily influenced by his desire to retain authority over its interpretation.⁴¹² The position which Barrow and Murray later defined for themselves over the production of African geography was thus following the model which Banks had already established.

One notable exception to the exclusivity of the Association's discoveries occurs through the interesting relationship which developed between Rennell and Aaron Arrowsmith, a rising star of British cartography.⁴¹³ Arrowsmith was one of a select few British map-makers who, by the end of the eighteenth century, had whole-heartedly adopted the empiricism of the blank map popularised by d'Anville. His 1794 double-hemisphere "Map of the World" (figure 21) has been described as "quite simply the greatest map of the world produced to date anywhere in Europe," and which "set

⁴¹² T. Fulford & D. Lee, 'Mental Travelers: Joseph Banks, Mungo Park, and the Romantic Imagination' in *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 24 (2002), 117-138; An interesting example of Banks' power over British enquiries arises in 1791 when, in light of his reputation as a naturalist with a keen interest in the tropics, he was requested by William Wilberforce to help identify a botanist who could be sent to Sierra Leone under the newly formed Sierra Leone Company to "examine the hitherto unexplored forests of that neighbourhood." Banks' choice of Adam Afzelius, a former disciple of Linnaeus, as the colony's new naturalist helped contribute to the emerging image of that region, grounded in scientific enquiry, and complimented Banks' efforts to "promote the great work settling and cultivating a country that has hitherto produced no real advantage to Great Britain."

Having made his recommendation Banks was disappointed to learn that the Sierra Leone Company's Directors who were responsible for the colony's administration had forbidden him from sending notes and specimens to London. Whereas the natural history and geographical enquiries which Banks was encouraging in West Africa were envisioned as being in pursuit of knowledge that was beneficial to society as a whole, the commercial interests of the site were deemed to be of more significance so as to deny the movement of potentially valuable resources beyond the Company's control. See NHM JBRP DTC 7, f.239, William Wilberforce to Joseph Banks, London, 21 December 1791; NHM JBRP DTC 8, f. 197, Joseph Banks to William Wilberforce, Soho Square, 8 April 1793; NHM JBRP DTC 8, f. 197, Joseph Banks to William Wilberforce, Soho Square, 8 April 1793; NHM JBRP DTC 8, f.193-195, Joseph Banks to Adam Afzelius, London, 8 April 1793.

⁴¹³ For a brief introduction see R.V. Tooley, 'Aaron Arrowsmith' in *The Map Collector* 9 (December, 1979), 19-21.

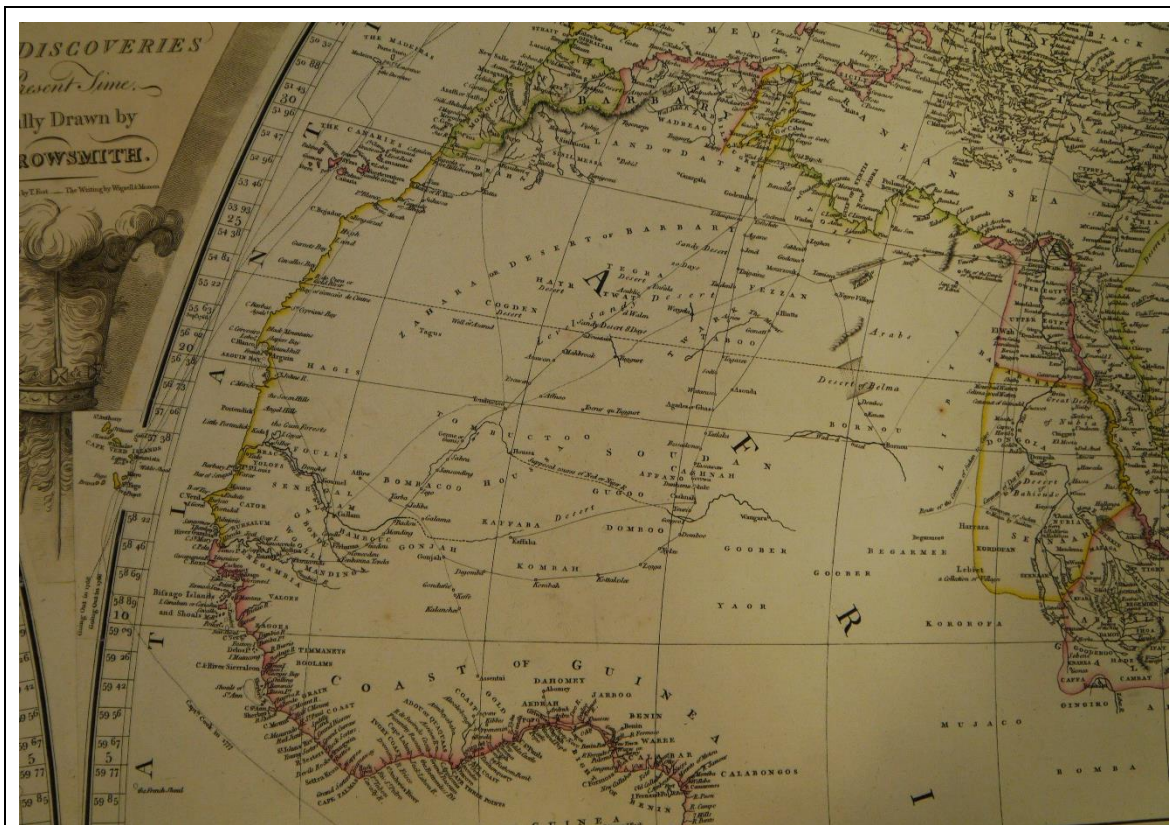


Figure 21: Detail showing West Africa from Aaron Arrowsmith, “Map of the World on a Globular Projection, Exhibiting Particularly the Nautical Researches of Capn. James Cook, F.R.S. with all the Recent Discoveries to the Present Time” (1794). British Library

a new bench-mark for cartography.”⁴¹⁴ His achievement can be attributed to the range and quality of sources he consulted during this map’s construction. According to his written *Companion*, which contains reference to the Association’s *Proceedings*, Arrowsmith was “indebted” to Rennell “for the correctness of the *African* geography.”⁴¹⁵ The content of this map then, was guaranteed by the celebrity of Rennell, whilst the internal geography of West Africa reflected the latest discoveries the Association had made, even pre-empting the eastward flow of the Niger before Park’s confirmation in 1795. It almost certainly marks the first time that any element of the Major’s African geography was made commercially available and emphasised the existence of Wangara which Rennell was convinced marked the termination of the Niger. Most importantly though, it provides an overlooked context for Arrowsmith’s spectacular map of 1802 which was dedicated to the

⁴¹⁴ Armitage & Baynton-Williams, *The World at their Fingertips* (2012), 92.

⁴¹⁵ A. Arrowsmith, *A Companion to a Map of the World* (London, 1794), 18-19.

Association's Committee. By acknowledging their discoveries in this fashion, he aligned the British map of the interior resolutely with their interpretation of it.

At the Association's founding, members had pledged to withhold the products of their research from the public sphere unless its governing Committee agreed otherwise and, provided that doing so did not jeopardise any ongoing mission.⁴¹⁶ Whilst the Association was alone in the direction and reception of geographical enquiries, the movement of their cartographic discoveries through society prior to the printing of Park's account of the Niger in 1799 and the wider publication of their *Proceedings* in the early 1800s was slow.⁴¹⁷ The publication of Park's journal in 1799, however, was the first opportunity many Britons had to learn about the newly determined geography of the African interior. In June 1798, prospective readers were directed to order their copies from George Nicol on Pall Mall (an acquaintance of Banks') and pay a one Guinea subscription fee. Rennell's map was displayed there to show Park's route and illustrate the advancement of Africa's geography which they could learn about. The advert declared that the account appeared "under the Patronage of the African Association", reinforcing their guarantee of its academic value and laying claim to the glory of Park's discoveries.⁴¹⁸

By publicising Park's account and the geographical dissertation produced by Rennell though, the Association invited criticism and it was not long before the content of his new map and its geography was questioned. *The Critical Review* in 1799, for example, objected to the Major's analysis of a broad range of written material, declaring: "We can only advise the ingenious major

⁴¹⁶ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 10-11.

⁴¹⁷ R. Hallet (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, In Two Volumes, Vol. 1*, (London, 1967), v-vi.

⁴¹⁸ NLS MS 85565, AP.5.212.01, 4 June 1798, *Proposals for Publishing by subscription, under the Patronage of the African Association, Travels in the Interior Parts of Africa, by Way of the River Gambia, Reformed in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797, By the Direction and Expence, of that Association* - For those to whom the price of Park's journal proved too much, however, there also appeared in 1799 a short, more affordable text titled *A Historical and Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries and Settlements of the Europeans in North and West Africa, at the close of the Eighteenth Century* which summarised (initially for a Scottish audience) an outline of Park's expedition and the enquiries of the African Association without its accompanying map. See J. Leyden, *A Historical and Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries and Settlements of the Europeans in North and West Africa, at the close of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1799) – See also Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 289-290. The author, John Leyden was so inspired by Park's exploits that he later volunteered his services to the African Association before settling on a position in India.

to read books, instead of merely consulting them”.⁴¹⁹ Their concern was that Rennell had been unchallenged as he accumulated his sources to determine a new view of the interior and had made dubious interpretations of them.

During this “Age of the African Association”, Banks and his compatriots sponsored several exploratory efforts and conducted enquiries through their contacts in the government. In fourteen years of this activity, its members retained exclusive control over the new map of West Africa by exerting their authority over the computation of any British notes concerning its interior. It was inevitable, however, that once Africa’s worth and accessibility had been successfully demonstrated that the nature of any future interaction would complicate that situation. Yet, even as the responsibility of directing expeditions and mapping its products was transferred to other parties, Banks and Rennell retained their celebrated position at the heart of the British cartography of West Africa and are never far from the discourse.⁴²⁰

Exploiting the map: “the enterprize is great”⁴²¹

By 1802, the legacy of expeditions sponsored by the African Association is measured in the presentation of West Africa as a region that was accessible for British commerce. In the year that Silvester Golberry’s *Fragments d’un Voyage en Afrique* appeared in Paris, the agenda behind Britain’s enquiries resolutely shifted to the establishing of communications with the interior by securing a route to the Niger from the remaining British possessions on the Gambia.⁴²²

After 1802, calls for government action to counter the potential French expansion on the Senegal led to the sharing and even usurpation of various roles from the African Association.

⁴¹⁹ *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature, Volume 26* (London, 1799), 376-377.

⁴²⁰ As I have shown in the context of one particular captivity narrative that was published in 1821 (a year after Banks’ death), both men were approached by its editor to confirm its claims to authenticity. See S. Outram-Leman, ‘Alexander Scott: Constructing a Legitimate Geography of the Sahara from a Captivity Narrative, 1821’ in *History in Africa* (2016), 63-94.

⁴²¹ NA CO 2/1, f.64, c.1804.

⁴²² See NA CO 2/1, f.8, Joseph Banks to John Sullivan, 1 August 1802.

Responsibility for defining objectives, financing and equipping expeditions of discovery fell to government departments which, unlike the narrowly-defined vision of the Association, was characterised by grander concerns. Michael Heffernan described the transition as one in which the “polite, scholarly, and humanitarian view of exploration represented by the African Association now seemed almost quaint: the fading legacy of an earlier, gentler age.”⁴²³ As Colonel Stevenson, the principal architect of the expedition to respond to the threat posed by France, wrote:

... the enterprize is great – the Expense will be great, but the probable advantages will be brilliant, but this Expedition must be made with a view to a permanent & important Establishment, and not as an attendant or a rambling Individual, who wishes to have the honor of ascertaining the course of the Niger or the Source of the Nile.⁴²⁴

Stevenson hoped that Park would act as an emissary of the British nation with instructions to only engage with African rulers if they treated him with respect; not as a tool of geographical observation. The planning of Park’s return expedition to the Niger in 1805 suggests, however, that there was no immediate consensus as to what sort of enquiries should be pursued and what the nature of such a mission should be. Having taken responsibility for the mission following a change of government, Lord Camden (the new Colonial Secretary) wrote to William Pitt to discuss “what manner a Journey of Discovery and of Enquiry for commercial purposes can best be attempted.”⁴²⁵ Whilst Camden decided to reject the military campaign initially recommended and considered by his predecessor, it is apparent that the nature of Britain’s exploratory enquiries was subsequently characterised for over a decade by the direction to Africa of armed expeditions to protect and enforce their position. There was then little emphasis on the practical development of the map, and the government had few outlets for such geographical enquiries.

Indicating the new order of affairs in 1803, Banks admitted to Park that he had not been privy to the direction of his upcoming expedition. He wrote: “I cannot say that I am master of the

⁴²³ Heffernan, “A dream as frail as those of ancient Time” (2007), 207.

⁴²⁴ NA CO 2/1, f.64, c.1804 - underlined words in original.

⁴²⁵ Lord Camden to William Pitt, 24 September 1804, quoted in R. Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London, 2008), 223 – Park was less uncertain and described mission as “an Embassy or rather a Journey of discovery” to his family. See NRS RH1/2/743, Mungo Park to Alexander Anderson, London, September 1804.

particulars of it; nor do I know, if I was master of them, how far I could venture to tell you the particulars upon Paper."⁴²⁶ In recognition of his former patronage, however, Park maintained as regular a correspondence with Banks as he could manage, and sent him copies of his itinerant route up the Gambia, complete with updated observations of various locations from his former travels. These notes were then transmitted to Rennell who used them to correct his maps.⁴²⁷

Park's last communications from Sansanding (being no further inland than his first expedition) in November 1806 offered no great geographical enlightenment other than his own conviction that the Niger would reach the sea. There was, therefore, little information with which to add to the map. In the time taken to establish Park's death on the rapids at Busa sometime in 1806, there were no significant cartographic developments, none that even reflected the notes he had sent to Banks (particularly those relating to the latitudinal position of the Gambia which Park believed was wrong). But was this a deliberate occlusion? Such an oversight was arguably indicative of more general problems concerning the movement of relevant information within Britain. Rennell was not a commercial cartographer and there was no reason for him to produce anything to this effect prior to the publication by Murray of the edited journal.

The main conclusion to be drawn from the whole enterprise was the apparent ease with which one could reach the Niger. Consequently, the map of Park's journey printed by Murray was focused predominantly on the region he had traversed, ignoring the Sahara to the north and anything south of the supposed Kong mountains. Park's demise at Busa provided a convenient termination to the map which accompanied his journal (figure 22). Printed by John Murray, the map was there to serve a literary function rather than develop any Niger theories. Due to the time it took to corroborate Park's death, and the ongoing distraction of war in Europe, nothing was published regarding this expedition for almost a decade, by which time the immediacy of the French

⁴²⁶ NHM JBRP DTC 14, f.163, Joseph Banks to Mungo Park, 26 October 1803.

⁴²⁷ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.39, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, "Badoo near Tambacunda", 28 May 1805.

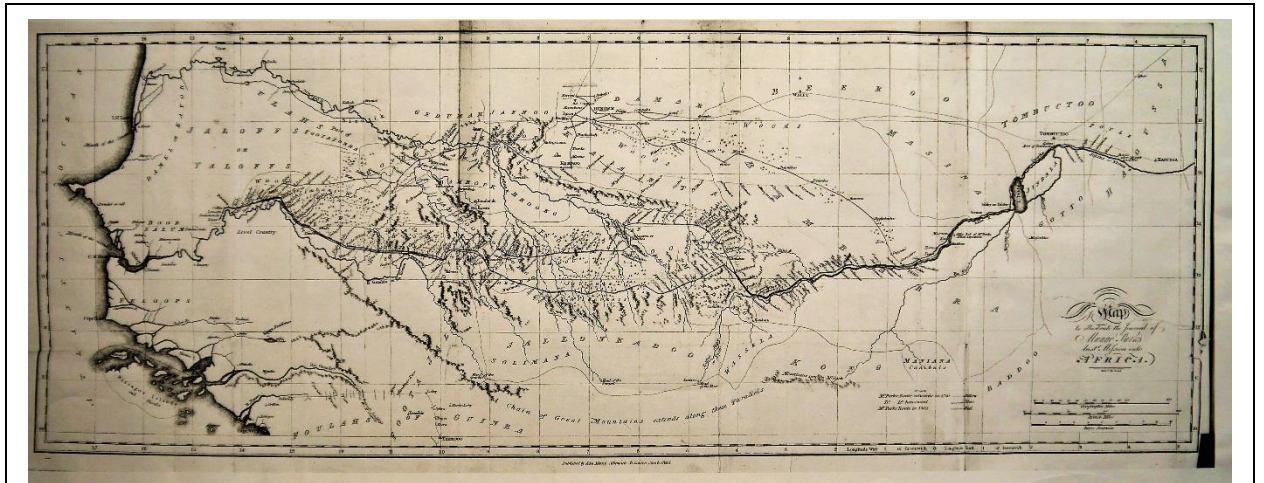


Figure 22: “Map to illustrate the Journal of Mungo Park’s last Mission into Africa” in M. Park, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa, in the Year 1805* (London, 1815). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

threat had theoretically ended. The significance of Park’s correspondence with Banks, therefore, is the revelation that he apparently did not send the Colonial Office similar data. If he had, or if Banks had shared the details of his communications, it is not apparent that any of it was passed onto other map-makers.

“I am not thoroughly master of the manner of calculating the Longitude”⁴²⁸

In July 1815, barely a month after the battle of Waterloo, Barrow wrote to inform Banks of a new mission being outfitted for Africa. Having identified the commercial benefits of securing access to the Niger, the militarised nature which Park’s expedition had encapsulated in its early planning was expanded upon as a necessary precaution to perceived African hostility and led to the concerted efforts of the British army and navy to establish a powerbase in the interior. Working on the newly popularised theory which Park had believed that the Niger might join the Congo, Earl Bathurst (the new Colonial Secretary) concluded “that an Expedition up the Congo is more likely to be successful than an Expedition down the Niger...”⁴²⁹ Barrow wrote that he was capable of directing the naval

⁴²⁸ NA CO 2/7, f.83, William Gray to Lord Bathurst, “Samba, Kautya Boudou”, 21 July 1818.

⁴²⁹ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.167, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 29 July 1815 – underlined words in original.

aspects of the venture (using the recent example of Lewis and Clarke's voyage up the Mississippi River in 1805 as a model) but he was reliant on Banks for the selection of naturalists.

Barrow's professed interest in the expedition was purely academic, irrespective of any predetermined objectives.

All I can say, is, that, if the Expedition should proceed a thousand miles up the Country, and be the means of ascertaining all that may be procured of information on that extent, I shall not think, as far as I am concerned, that it has been undertaken in vain.⁴³⁰

The mission in 1816 is regularly identified as a milestone of scientific exploration due to the manner of its preparation and the scholarly personnel employed to accompany it; Randolph Cock's study of the Royal Navy's developing professionalization of its "scientific servicemen" consequently begins with that venture.⁴³¹ Barrow's introduction to the published journal of Captain Tuckey's unsuccessful venture famously declared:

To what purpose indeed could a portion of our naval force be, at any time, but more especially in a time of profound peace, more honourably or more useful employed, than in completing those *minutiae* and details of geographical and hydrographical science, of which the grand outlines have been boldly and broadly sketched by Cook, Vancouver, Flinders, and others of our own countrymen...?⁴³²

The Admiralty had a clear idea of what sort of information it was keen to acquire, and had begun preparations for "a Naturalist & draftsman (the same person if one could be found), a comparative anatomist and Surgeon (a Navy Surgeon besides) a Collector of plants & seeds (gardener)" to join the expedition.⁴³³ Barrow was later so confident of the illustrators and collectors who had volunteered for service and the education of the Admiralty surgeons, he confessed that he believed the mission could survive "without any professed Naturalist" if Banks could not find one.⁴³⁴ As for mapping their route, naval officers were already trained to fulfil that role.

⁴³⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.173, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 8 August 1815.

⁴³¹ Cock, *Scientific Servicemen* (2005), 95, 104.

⁴³² J.H. Tuckey, *Narrative of an expedition to explore the river Zaire, usually called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816, under the direction of Captain J. K. Tuckey, R. N.* (London, 1818), ii-iii.

⁴³³ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.196-197, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 3 October 1815 – underlined words in original.

⁴³⁴ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.220, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 30 November 1815.

Banks' participation was inevitable given his status as Britain's foremost naturalist. In that capacity, he had rejected many of those nominated to conduct observations in the field because he believed it was necessary to engage individuals with direct experience of the natural history expected to be found in southern climes. His particular concern was how best to fit the expedition's discoveries into a global model that was still broadly characterised by latitudinal divisions of climates. His agenda, therefore, remained fixed on the ascertaining of West Africa's place in the world in terms of its contrast to temperate Britain. The importance associated with the individuals chosen, beyond the quality of their observations, was the very nature of the information used to fill the map of West Africa. For that reason, he opposed Barrow's suggestion of two Scottish naturalists because he was neither impressed with their botanical drawings nor their qualifications to study tropical plants.⁴³⁵

In contrast to the Congo enterprise, Major John Peddie's attempted overland approach to the Niger's source from West Africa's west coast was not a naval operation and thus organised in an entirely different manner. Kennedy has noted the peculiar state of affairs that where Britain's navy took charge of oceanic discovery, its army was unwilling to do the same for continental exploration.⁴³⁶ The failure of Peddie's expedition, he argues, therefore reflects the conditions of its direction and organisation.⁴³⁷ Considering Barrow's involvement above and the existing framework of the Admiralty's vested interest in mapping, it is significant that no provision was made for the appointment of a geographer or naturalist to accompany Peddie's force (though his second-in-Command, Captain Thomas Campbell, demonstrated his aptitude at times). A letter sent in March 1816, four months after Peddie's arrival in West Africa, marks his realisation of this oversight and recounts his meeting with (and employment of) "Mr Ross, who possesses a knowledge of astronomy," and whose ability to navigate by the stars would, it was hoped, be particularly useful when travelling down the Niger.⁴³⁸ Shortly afterwards, a Swiss naturalist, Adolphe Kummer, was

⁴³⁵ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.221, Joseph Banks to John Barrow, c.December 1815.

⁴³⁶ Kennedy, 'British Exploration' (2007), 1885-1886.

⁴³⁷ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 129-131.

⁴³⁸ NA CO 2/5, f.30-32, John Peddie to Lord Bathurst, Senegal, 16 March 1816.

also recruited from the French garrison at Senegal to collect and draw specimens of natural history.⁴³⁹ Though his specimens were lost, a selection of Kummer's finer sketches did appear in the edited publication of the mission's journal.⁴⁴⁰ As far as the extant maps and drawings from both Campbell and Kummer are concerned, however, they offer a view entirely limited to the expedition's itinerary.⁴⁴¹ In terms of the broader geographical interests that Britain was concerned with there was little need for such minute detail and their tracks appear much-reduced in the printed map accompanying their account (figure 23).

The military nature of Tuckey and Peddie's expeditions echoed the reaction inspired by the threat of French competition in 1802 and emulated the precedent of Park's second expedition, whilst their organisation and direction was characteristic of other grandiose European spectacles of science and conquest. The cartographic legacy of this period of exploration, however, was ironically defined by the lack of new information it contributed to the developing map despite the government's participation in its direction. Ultimately, it remained the case that map-making in Britain was still largely in the hands of private individuals, rather than a centralised body. Banks and Barrow's participation in the organisation of enquiries was thus defined by their ability to recruit and instruct personnel who could conduct the "scientific" observations they both desired. In doing so, they contributed to the logistical preparations of the Admiralty and Colonial Office. Had they not, there is little to suggest that those departments would have pursued similar enquiries. The enterprises might have been grand but they were not successful.

That relationship between the traveller and the sponsor or centre(s) of calculation is strained in this instance because it had lost its distinction after the African Association ceded its

⁴³⁹ NA CO 2/5, f.66, Thomas Campbell to Lord Bathurst, "Robugga Kakundy on the Rio Nunez", 7 January 1817.

⁴⁴⁰ W. Gray & D. Dochart, *Travels in Western Africa, in the years 1818, 19, 20, and 21, from the River Gambia, through Woollie, Bondoo, Galam, Kasson, Kaarta, and Foolido, to the River Niger* (London, 1825), 384-385.

⁴⁴¹ NA MPG 1/322, 1/323, 1/324 - After a short spell in Sierra Leone, the mission's survivors made a spirited attempt up the Gambia and reached the Niger where they languished for two years, denied permission by local rulers to continue any further. Its failure to achieve anything of note, and the cost in terms of men and resources, meant that little was made of its subsequent reports. For a brief summary see B.L. Mouser, 'Forgotten Expedition into Guinea, West Africa, 1815-17: An Editor's Comments' in *History in Africa* 35 (2008).

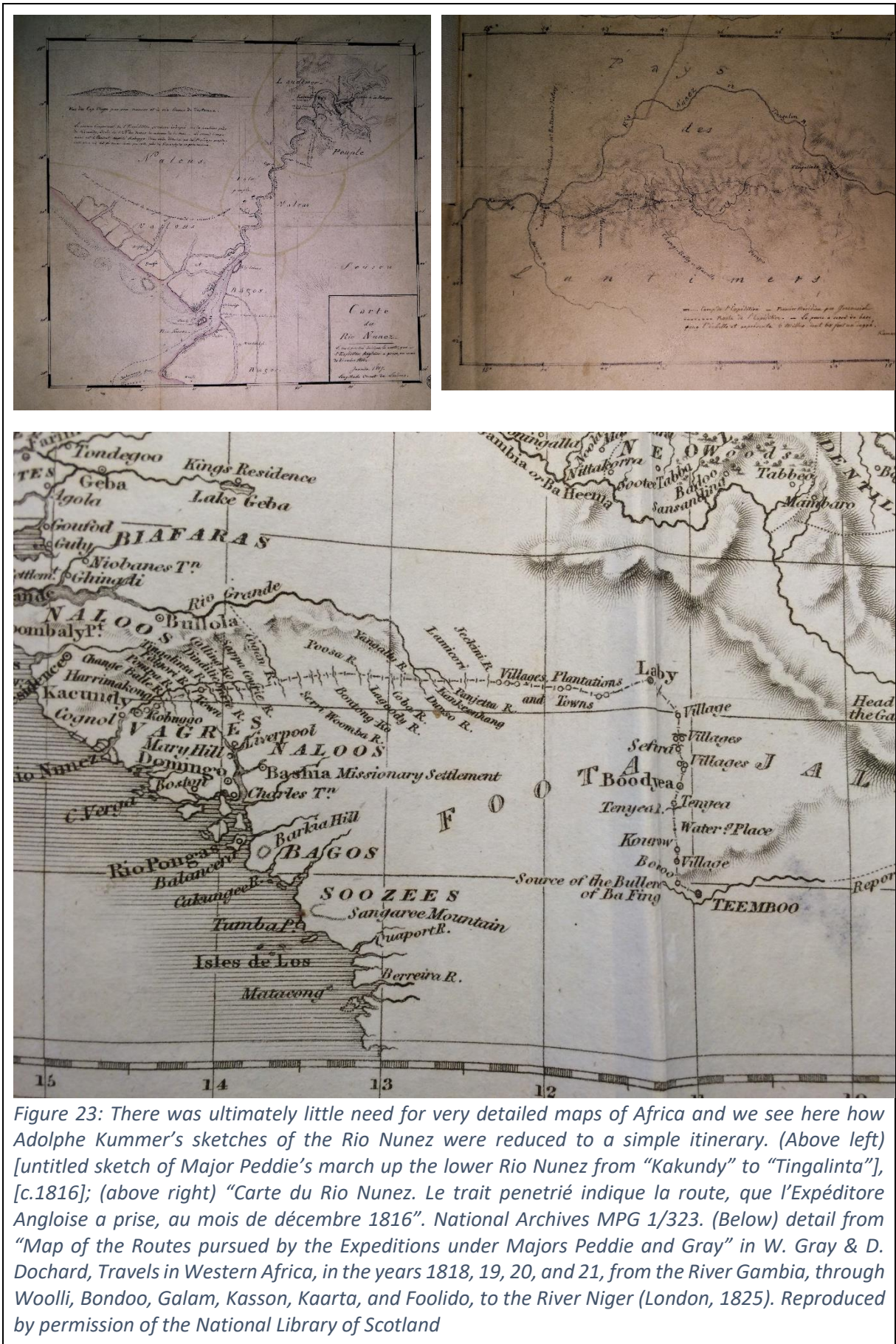


Figure 23: There was ultimately little need for very detailed maps of Africa and we see here how Adolphe Kummer's sketches of the Rio Nunez were reduced to a simple itinerary. (Above left) [untitled sketch of Major Peddie's march up the lower Rio Nunez from "Kakundy" to "Tingalinta"], [c.1816]; (above right) "Carte du Rio Nunez. Le trait penetrié indique la route, que l'Expéditore Angloise a prise, au mois de décembre 1816". National Archives MPG 1/323. (Below) detail from "Map of the Routes pursued by the Expeditions under Majors Peddie and Gray" in W. Gray & D. Dochart, *Travels in Western Africa, in the years 1818, 19, 20, and 21, from the River Gambia, through Wooll, Bondoo, Galam, Kasson, Kaarta, and Foolido, to the River Niger* (London, 1825). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

role to the government. The disastrous and protracted effort to reach the Niger from the Rio Nunez does, however, illustrate the limitations of travellers and how circumstances in the field impacted upon the information that was returned to Britain. In that instance, the remnants of the mission under command of its former medic, Staff-Surgeon Dochart, and Major William Gray who had joined the expedition from Sierra Leone, were still trying to reach the Niger from the Gambia in 1821. As Kummer and Campbell had perished, and in the absence of any other to record their route, the responsibility of doing so fell to Gray. In one of his few communications with Bathurst, the Major was obliged to confess that:

...as I am not thoroughly master of the manner of calculating the Longitude from observations I must for the present content myself with carefully noting them and leave to a future day the calculation when the assistance of some person more competent than myself will enable me to put them in a fit state to be laid before your Lordship.⁴⁴²

It was still necessary then for scholars in Britain to take responsibility for making sense of field notes. As a military man, Gray appears to have accepted the authority of the metropole with little issue.

Bathurst and Barrow triumphant

In the aftermath of these failures, the opportunity to access the interior from the north in 1818 encouraged a renewed focus on the mapping of Africa's geography. The cartography which emerged continued to reflect the influence of those individuals who directed enquiries. Ritchie's expedition to Murzuq was financed by the Treasury and directed by Bathurst at the Colonial Office who dispatched instructions and letters of introduction to the Consulate at Tripoli. The importance of geographical discovery and the commercial prospects were highlighted by Bathurst's office as the principal reasons for sending a traveller into Africa. Before leaving London though, Ritchie was invited to the Admiralty by Barrow to discuss in person the mission, its route and importance.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² NA CO 2/7, f.83, William Gray to Lord Bathurst, "Samba, Kautya Boudou", 21 July 1818.

⁴⁴³ NA CO 2/9, f.140, John Barrow to Henry Goulburn, Admiralty, 29 January 1817.

Conducting the range of surveys which the Admiralty and the Colonial Office desired was deemed to be too much for one man so permission was given for a companion to be engaged who could share the burden.⁴⁴⁴ To complement his own training in astronomical observation and its application to geographical surveys, Ritchie clearly assumed that he would be responsible for charting the interior and initially sought to employ someone with a background in natural history.⁴⁴⁵ He declared:

...however anxious I may be to render the results of this undertaking as useful as possible to the progress of Science, I shall at the same time, strictly attend to the directions which I have received, not to allow this Consideration to compromise the Success of the principal objects of the mission, the determination of the leading Geographical features of the Interior of Africa.⁴⁴⁶

The appointment of Lieutenant Lyon, a naval officer, was facilitated by Admiral Sir Charles Penrose (Britain's most senior Admiralty man in the Mediterranean) who was anxiousness that unlike former examples, their route should be mapped by someone with formal training.⁴⁴⁷

As the leader of the expedition, Ritchie was responsible for communicating regularly with London but as his and Lyon's appointment reflected the interests of the Colonial Office (Bathurst) and Admiralty (Barrow) respectively, it is interesting to note how his dispatches in 1819 were tailored to each recipient. To Bathurst, Ritchie concentrated first and foremost on the friendly reception they had experienced in North Africa, commenting on the "excellent disposition of the

⁴⁴⁴ Ritchie quickly employed an officer named Captain Manyat of his acquaintance in Paris, eligible by "[h]is knowledge of various branches of Natural History, united with his zeal and professional talents..." When this individual eventually declined to travel into the desert, a Monsieur Dupont was recommended by the head of the French Jardin des Plantes, "well qualified to undertake the collection and presentation of the objects of Natural History which we may meet with in the course of our Journey..." Unfortunately, M. Dupont was later forced to abandon the mission due to an undisclosed scandal involving the son of the French Consul-General to Tripoli. See NA CO 2/9, f.3, Joseph Ritchie to Henry Goulburn, Paris, 18 April 1818; NA CO 2/9, f.9, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Paris, 11 June 1818.

⁴⁴⁵ NA CO 2/9, f.3, Joseph Ritchie to Henry Goulburn, Paris, 18 April 1818; f.9, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Paris, 11 June 1818.

⁴⁴⁶ NA CO 2/9, f.9, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Paris, 11 June 1818.

⁴⁴⁷ Lyon's journal does, however, note that Ritchie was in the habit of recording their position through astronomical observation suggesting that they might have shared the responsibility for tracking their progress. See G.F. Lyon, *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa, in the years 1818, 1819, and 20; Accompanied by Geographical Notices of Soudan and of the Course of the Niger* (London, 1821), 86.

people of this country towards Christians, & the British Nation in particular.”⁴⁴⁸ Given the importance associated with the Niger’s possible course and termination, however, he was reserved:

[the Niger] is commonly supposed in Barbary to form the Western Branch of the Nile, but this improbable theory is not supported by any evidence: - & its termination in the marshes of Wangara is obviously inconsistent with the position assigned to that Country...⁴⁴⁹

He had heard of a large freshwater lake near Nupe which he supposed the river might run into but he had no idea if there was a branch that continued east in the direction of the Nile. He did note though, that the disruption to the trans-Saharan caravans by the Bey of Murzuq’s (the Pasha’s governor of the southern province of Fezzan) predatory attacks presented an opportunity to introduce links between Britain and the interior accessible from Tripoli. In response to Bathurst’s instructions, Ritchie enquired about the possibility of British intervention in the region in a bid to end the slave trade and noted that it was the absence of regular commerce across the Sahara which afforded the best opportunity of doing so.⁴⁵⁰ The geography of trade was, therefore, once more embroiled in Britain’s changing ambitions for the region.

To Barrow, Ritchie’s reports were focused almost exclusively on the relative positioning of places and the weighing of sources which contributed towards any speculation regarding the Niger. The doubt that had characterised his former notes to Bathurst was replaced with a more assertive tone:

I can trace with certainty a great river running to the eastward through Kano, Kashna & Bornou, & assuming several different names as the Gulbi ... Kamadookoo, Tschad ... & running according to universal belief to form the great Western branch of the Nile of Egypt.⁴⁵¹

In an article for the *Quarterly Review*, Barrow eagerly published these new details and even accompanied them with his own sketch of the river from Timbuktu to the Nile (figure 24).⁴⁵² From the similarity of certain passages, it would appear that he had also seen Ritchie’s letters to Bathurst.

⁴⁴⁸ NA CO 2/9, f.25-27, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁴⁴⁹ NA CO 2/9, f.29-30, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁴⁵⁰ NA C) 2/9, f.26, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁴⁵¹ RGS LMS R 12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, 30 April 1819.

⁴⁵² *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXIII (London, 1820), 225-244.

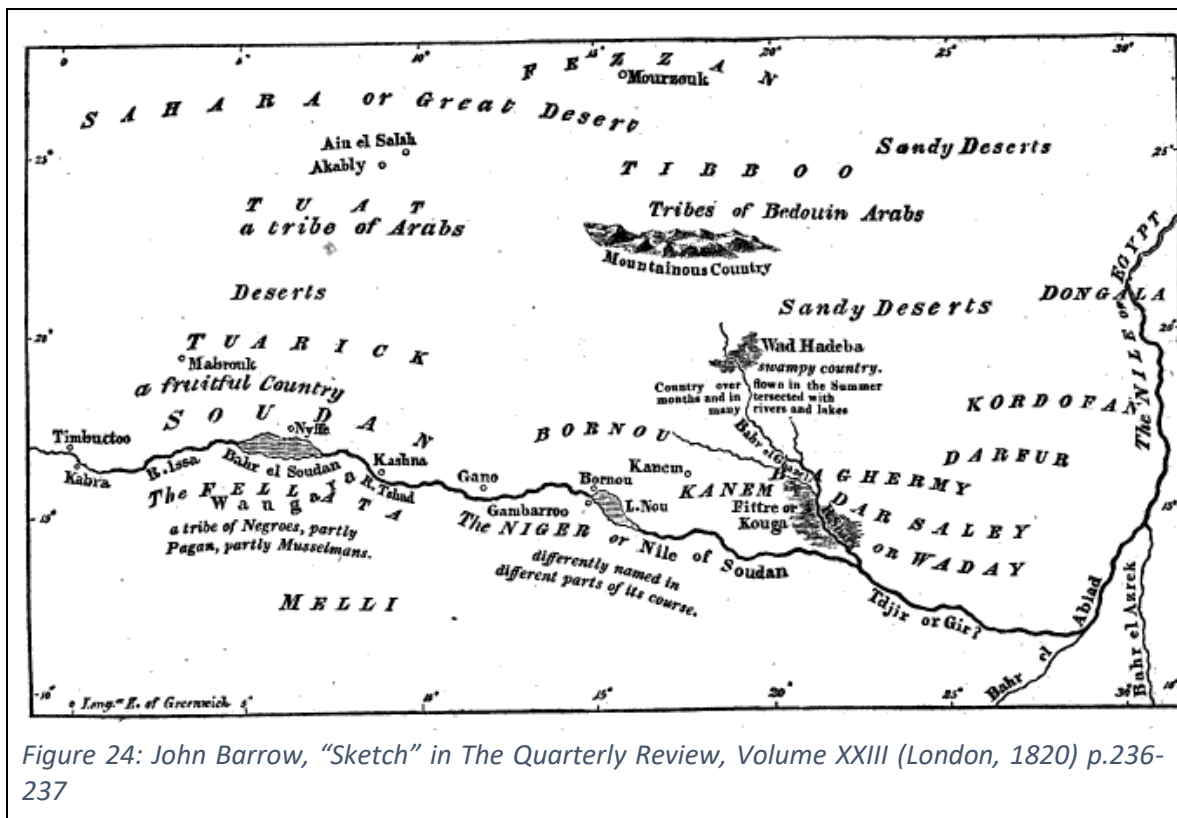


Figure 24: John Barrow, "Sketch" in *The Quarterly Review*, Volume XXIII (London, 1820) p.236-237

Alongside his proposed course of the Niger, Barrow's map contrasts the prevalent desert of the interior with well-watered regions on the banks of the river and its tributaries. In these areas, he noted the location of several "tribes", reinforcing the developing image of a populated interior which characterised Ritchie's letters to Bathurst. The first cartographic response to the mission, therefore, was drawn by Barrow himself to promote the geography which he had established from Lyon and Ritchie's notes, and which presented a landscape that justified Britain's diplomatic efforts. More importantly, it was a map (however, insignificant) which appeared in response to a mission that was still in progress; something of a first for West African exploration.

After Ritchie's death, Bathurst wanted Lyon to replace him as Vice-Consul to Fezzan but in the time taken for his instructions to reach Tripoli Lyon had already left for home.⁴⁵³ Indicative of the public interest generated by his articles in *The Quarterly Review*, Barrow had recommended that Lyon be directed to continue enquiring after the course of the Niger from Bornou, to

⁴⁵³ NA FO 8/7, f.49, Lord Bathurst to Hanmer Warrington, London, 24 April 1820; see also FO 8/7, f.50-51, Henry Goulburn to George F. Lyon, London, 24 April 1820.

complement the geographical notices that Ritchie had gathered. If the river was found to continue eastward, he advised that priority be given to pursuing it in hopes of discovering a connection with the Nile.⁴⁵⁴ Revised instructions were immediately dispatched from Bathurst's office. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as a Secretary of State the Earl was credited in this correspondence as having determined the importance of charting the Niger to the Nile, not Barrow.⁴⁵⁵ In light of Lyon's departure, these directions formed the basis of the Bornu Mission a year later. After his return to London, the Lieutenant began compiling his notes and in November 1820 he finished his narrative and its accompanying map. He requested a meeting with the Colonial Secretary so that he could deliver both for Bathurst's inspection in a manner reminiscent of Bank's former position over the African Association's geographies.⁴⁵⁶

When the Bornu Mission was dispatched in 1821, its organisation continued to reflect the prominent roles of Bathurst and Barrow, as well as the immense logistical skills of Consul Warrington.⁴⁵⁷ Walter Oudney was hand-picked by Barrow for his qualifications as a natural historian and it was Bathurst who appointed him Vice-Consul to Bornu with instructions to work closely with the Consulate in Tripoli. So as not to distract him from his consular responsibilities, Lieutenant Clapperton was assigned as his companion (by Oudney's request) alongside Captain (later Major) Dixon Denham who had volunteered his services to the Colonial Office.⁴⁵⁸ Between the three of them they were expected to share the task of observing and recording their route. The expedition was directed by Bathurst and the Colonial Office and financed by the Treasury but by also seeking information and instruction from external sources, the mission allowed external pressures to influence their geographical enquiries. Oudney, for example, contacted Barrow asking directly for a contribution to his briefing because he knew of "no one better acquainted with the

⁴⁵⁴ NA CO 2/9, f.168, John Barrow to Henry Goulburn, Admiralty, 27 April 1820.

⁴⁵⁵ NA FO 8/7, f.52, Henry Goulburn to George F. Lyon, London, 27 April 1820.

⁴⁵⁶ NA CO 2/9, f.119, George Francis Lyon to Henry Goulburne, London, 14 November 1820.

⁴⁵⁷ The Colonial Secretary was so active in the promotion of African exploration that Warrington later congratulated him as the "main spring" of the several expeditions convening on the interior by the mid-1820s. See NA FO 76/19, f.23-24, Hanmer Warrington to Earl Bathurst, c.1825.

⁴⁵⁸ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 71-72.

present state of Africa than yourself".⁴⁵⁹ In doing so, Oudney acknowledged that the direction of his mission, and the interpretation of his observations, was centred on a specific image of Africa with Barrow at its centre. Denham, on the other hand, requested Rennell's address to discuss the particulars of African geography with him; continuing a tradition of British map-making which had emerged in the 1790s.⁴⁶⁰

Whilst dividing tasks might have seemed an efficient way to balance the strengths and weaknesses of the three principal members of the Bornu Mission, the conflicting agendas contained within their individual instructions nearly compromised the venture entirely and impacted on the final map. The model of sponsorship which directed travellers as tools of enquiry now began to clash with the "culture of exploration" as it existed in the 1820s that emphasised the role and identities of the individuals involved.⁴⁶¹ The tradition of West African exploration by the early-1820s and indeed the broader "culture of exploration" which Driver refers to was one that was increasingly focused on specific questions. When writers such as Kennedy talk about the "professionalism" of exploration, it is in the context of travellers who operated with clearly defined purpose.⁴⁶² In this instance, Bathurst appointed Denham to investigate the conditions of the road to Bornu and beyond, independent of Oudney's mission and authority.

[T]he object of your attention will be principally the character of the people, the geography of the Country, its rivers lakes mountains & relative situation & distances of the towns through which you may pass.⁴⁶³

Denham was not to worry about collecting specimens of natural history, but concentrate instead on how to travel to the south and east of Bornu. His only official relationship with Oudney was as a source of funding when necessary. Denham actually requested permission to communicate directly with the Colonial Office rather than through diplomatic channels which travelled through the Consul's office at Tripoli.⁴⁶⁴ Consequently, it is observable from the surviving archives that Denham

⁴⁵⁹ NA CO 2/14, f.4, Walter Oudney to John Barrow, Edinburgh, 23 May 1821.

⁴⁶⁰ NA CO 2/13, f.23, Dixon Denham to Henry Goulbourn, London, 1 August 1821.

⁴⁶¹ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 8.

⁴⁶² Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 62-66.

⁴⁶³ NA CO 2/13, f.7, c.1821.

⁴⁶⁴ NA CO 2/13, f.19, Dixon Denham to Lord Bathurst, Sandhurst, 12 March 1821.

addressed more letters directly to Bathurst than Oudney had done by the time of the Vice-Consul's death in January 1824; Oudney, by comparison, wrote most of his letters to Bathurst's secretaries.

Despite his instructions, Denham deferred to Clapperton's experience as a naval officer and relied on him for regularly establishing their position. During the mission, however, the two men grew increasingly hostile towards each other, particularly as Denham (who believed that Clapperton had been employed as his subordinate) sought to take charge over that officer's notes. Their correspondence to each other (from separate tents, presumably written out for later reference) indicates the awkwardness that existed as the party continued to move south. In response to the Major's efforts to assume the authority of his rank, Clapperton later objected that "You must not introduce a martial system into what is civil and scientific..."⁴⁶⁵ From their exchanges though, it becomes clear that Clapperton's principal concern was his belief that by submitting his maps and sketches to Denham, the Major, anxious for prestige and reputation, and the approval of his superiors, would dispatch them to Britain as his own work. Later, in April 1823, Clapperton even accused the Major of copying the map which had been drawn for Oudney's report from Lake Chad and including it within his own letters to the Colonial Office.⁴⁶⁶

The problem faced by the Bornu Mission beyond the conflicting personalities of its members was arguably the state of confusion caused by different powers and agenda being exercised over the mission from the outset. The way in which sponsorship directed enquiries, and the increasing pressures of the celebrity status which awaited successful travellers on their return, was now affecting the mapping of Africa to such an extent that the direction of exploration and the pressures exercised over the map changed quite fundamentally.

⁴⁶⁵ NA CO 2/13, f.113, Hugh Clapperton to Dixon Denham, 1 January 1823.

⁴⁶⁶ NA CO 2/13, f.323, Hugh Clapperton to Robert Wilmot, "Kooka", 2 April 1823.

“I am anxious that in your case this evil should be avoided”⁴⁶⁷

It has been noted that travellers prepared their reports for specific audiences but how were they prepared in the first instance to produce the type of information needed by Britain’s “centres of calculation”? The answer, beyond the complexities of contemporary academic practices and training, rests in the instructions that would-be explorers were issued with and we have seen how these could reflect the input of certain interests. Sponsors of map-making projects such as the African Association, the Colonial Office or Barrow at the Admiralty directed the observational behaviour of their agents in the field by highlighting objectives, issuing directions, and providing equipment. Whilst the role of metropolitan scholarship continued to exercise its influence over new observations, the sponsored map of West Africa was one which incorporated their input regardless of the emerging culture of exploration that emphasised the travellers’ perspective. The treatment of journals and the demands made of them, like much else here, is a subject which changed over time but the role of mapping was complicated by the efforts of the metropole to interfere with cartographic materials even when there appeared little need to do so.

Travellers sent their notes and letters from the field as and when they could. If they remained stationary for long periods of time they were sometimes even able to receive letters themselves, allowing certain parties in Britain to continue shaping ongoing exploration.⁴⁶⁸ As the history of British exploration is pockmarked with tragedy, expeditions increasingly revolved around the protection and safe transit of travellers’ reports even after their own demise. After his ascent of the Gambia in 1805, for example, Park sent an “abridged account” of his course to the Colonial Secretary.⁴⁶⁹ Many travellers presumably assumed (or hoped) that they would live to participate in the post-processing of their records (though as we have seen in the case of Bowdich, that was not always a guarantee of success). After the high mortality of his expedition’s journey to the Niger and the lingering sickness afflicting the survivors of his party, Park’s original correspondence was later

⁴⁶⁷ NA CO 2/13, f.8, [Instructions for Dixon Denham], c.1821.

⁴⁶⁸ It is because of these factors that the Bornu Mission offers such a rich field of study.

⁴⁶⁹ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.40, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, “Badoo near Tambacunda”, 28 May 1805.

joined by a more comprehensive “account of each day’s proceedings” indicating the uncertainty of his survival.⁴⁷⁰ Arguably, it was only following instances where valuable information was at threat of being lost that there was a particular pressure to communicate concise reports as a precaution to disaster. By briefly examining the experience of failure as Britain struggled to uncover the geography of Africa we can see how that relationship between sponsors and observers who produced raw data evolved accordingly.

When an individual failed to record information because of extenuating circumstances or because they simply trusted their own memory, much obviously relied upon their survival. Following instances when travellers perished there was a perceptible desire to avoid similar mistakes. In the course of this period, dissatisfaction with the slow progress of African geography is palpable in the directions issued to gather information carefully and to ensure its return. Particularly in the case of Ritchie at Murzuq, his illness prevented him from keeping a regular journal meaning that after his death Lyon was left the responsibility of making sense of the expedition’s incomplete and disorganised papers. This was a task which Lyon feared he was not properly qualified to do because he doubted whether he could adequately translate the several itineraries which Ritchie had collected from local merchants.⁴⁷¹ Consequently, the Colonial Office’s displeasure was prominent in the instructions sent to Denham prior to the Bornu Mission:

You will not fail at all times immediately to record any discovery which you may consider deserving of credit respecting the interior of the Country & to transmit a minute or copy of it to me [Lord Bathurst] through Dr Oudney at Bornou[sic.] or any other channel which you consider equally safe. Much of our present ignorance with respect to the Country arises from the omission of former travellers in this respect & the loss of Information which had only been by them committed to memory and I am anxious that in your case this evil should be avoided.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.159, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, Sansanding, 16 November 1805.

⁴⁷¹ NA CO 2/9, f.50, George F. Lyon to Henry Goulburn, Murzuq, 23 November 1819.

⁴⁷² NA CO 2/13, f.7-8, [Instructions for Dixon Denham], c.1821.

Denham's reports echoed his instructions closely and he described his keeping as "minute and particular a journal as circumstances would allow" in a manner which made its digestion at the Admiralty simpler.⁴⁷³

By contrast, Oudney's dispatches to the Colonial Office were progressively limited by his failing health. In September 1823 he wrote:

I send you a simple itinerary from Fezzan here – that to the river Sharee, & the borders of Soudan & my remarks on Bornou I must leave till another time – I cannot write long, one days labour in that way makes me ill for a week.⁴⁷⁴

By "itinerary", Oudney was referring to his report of their journey but he accompanied his rough accounts with a "very correct chart" of their route there by Clapperton to make up for its deficiencies. Maps, accurate maps, therefore had the ability of bringing a semblance of order to imperfect notes. Clapperton had been recording their path into Africa and was able to draw his charts from within Africa. It was arguably because of Clapperton's extensive observations and field notes that the Bornu Mission had such an impact on the cartography of Africa, calling into question the fundamental relationship between cartography and exploration when the broader value of discoveries was still determined by sedentary scholars back in Britain. If it were possible to produce an accurate map in the field, what epistemic purpose was served by processing that information in a "centre of calculation" in Britain?

By comparison, the efforts of Barrow and Murray to draw a map (figure 25) in Clapperton's absence to accompany his official posthumous journal in 1829, drew significant reproach; especially in the context of the Niger's unknown termination. In 1827, whilst lying on his deathbed in Sokoto, Clapperon had famously entrusted his papers to Richard Lander with instructions to return them to Britain at whatever cost, leaving to others the responsibility of identifying their value.⁴⁷⁵ From surviving sketches done during his return to Sokoto in 1826, it is possible to see the quality of the

⁴⁷³ NA CO 2/14, f.35, Dixon Denham to John Barrow, "Kouka", 28 June 1824.

⁴⁷⁴ NA CO 2/13, f.315, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, "Kuka", 12 September 1823.

⁴⁷⁵ H. Clapperotn, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa, From the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo* (London, 1829), 328-330.

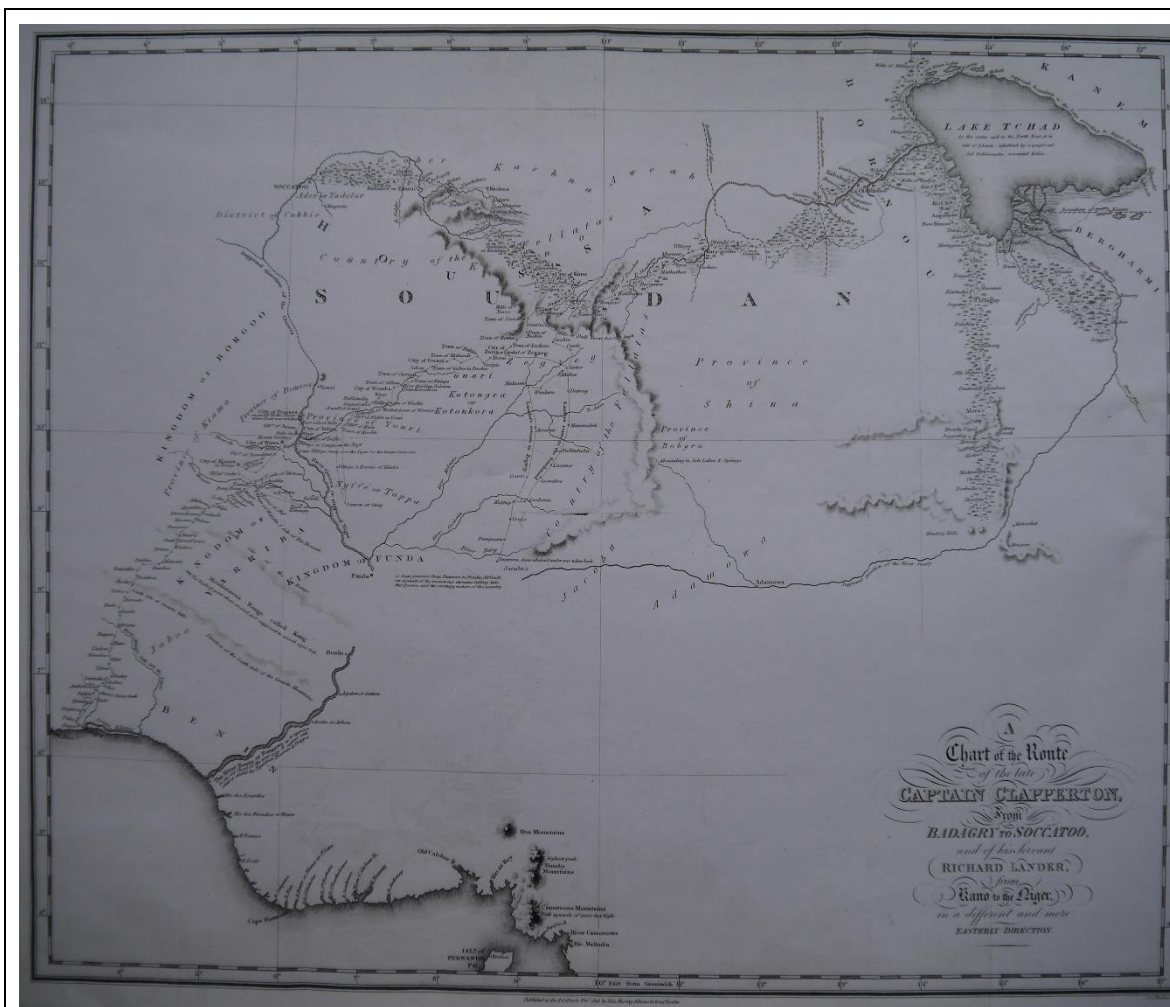


Figure 25: Hugh Clapperton, “A Chart of the Route of the late Captain Clapperton, From Badagry to Soccatoo, and of his Servant Richard Lander, from Kano to the Niger, in a different and more Easterly Direction” in H. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa, From the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo* (London, 1829). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

drawn itineraries he was in the habit of keeping and the introduction to his published account said of its accompanying cartography that it was “constructed entirely from the latitudes and longitudes in a table annexed” referring to the tables which Lander had preserved. Yet it did not have that connection to a wealth of detail and description which the mission to Bornu had formerly generated. Barrow’s preface was hugely dismissive of the Clapperton’s poorly written, disorganised and unreflective records⁴⁷⁶ The book’s reception indicates though that the British public were

⁴⁷⁶ *ibid*, xviii.

dissatisfied with the effort made to reproduce those notes in a coherent manner. *The British Critic*, for example, was unimpressed:

In the book before us, the map is continually at variance with the text, and between the names in the one and the other there is a perpetual discordance. But have we no scientific geographers capable of giving an account of the materials they use, that these maps must be constructed by mere mechanics? Why are there no memoirs, however short, to point out the principle on which the construction has been made, and distinguish what is well authenticated from that which is dubious?⁴⁷⁷

Barrow's efforts to clarify observations from the field were evidently understood to have corrupted their first-hand value. The quality of Clapperton's cartographic material in this instance was, moreover, not as supportive of his notes as they had been of Oudney and Denham's reports from Bornu, calling into question what the relationship of maps to journals really was especially in the absence of the traveller who could clarify any confusion.

Except for Park's return to the Niger in 1805, Clapperton's was the first expedition to have lost all its principal members, leaving the responsibility of telling their story and illustrating their discoveries exclusively in the hands of metropolitan scholarship. The demands of contemporary scholarship were now so focused on the products of first-hand observation, rather than the rational deductions which had characterised many earlier maps, that serious doubts were cast on efforts to reinterpret what should be first-hand data. It was feared that the map could be drawn to fit any conclusion if it had no clear scientific roots in the account given. *The Edinburgh Review* commented that the Niger which appeared on Clapperton's second map suggested a termination into the Bight of Biafra via the known outlet of the Benin River, yet it was unconvinced by the construction of the map which emphasised that possible connection.

[T]he principles upon which this map is constructed, appear to be somewhat more than dubious. ...Benin and its rivers are here undoubtedly carried at least a hundred miles too far into the interior, seemingly with an express view of adjusting them to the theory.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ *The British Critic, Quarterly Theological Review, and Ecclesiastical Record, Volume 6* (London, 1829), 78-79.

⁴⁷⁸ *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal (Volume 49)* (Edinburgh, 1829), 146.

There was a developing conflict between the established tradition of sponsored cartography which had relied on map-makers in Britain to clarify new information, with that of the new species of travellers who emphasised the value of their first-hand perspective. At the founding of the RGS in 1830, Driver argues that the culture of exploration “extended well beyond the frontiers of science, and, moreover, that these frontiers were constantly being renegotiated and even redefined.”⁴⁷⁹ The model of enquiries which had characterised the African Association’s efforts could not be sustained in the face of increasingly skilled individuals trying to make a name for themselves in the field of discovery, nor could the map be based exclusively on the outputs of metropolitan scholarship. In this regard, the RGS was created in part to consolidate the authority of the metropole over the changing map.

After the Niger Delta was established, one of the great geographical mysteries of Africa had been answered and the way was open for commercial access to the interior. Efforts to monopolise the navigation of the delta were complicated though by the multiple interests represented during its mapping. To preserve the exclusivity of any discoveries, Richard Lander was forbidden by his employers in the African Inland Commercial Company (AICC) from writing to anyone but his wife. Considering his correspondence with the Colonial Office during his former mission to discover the river delta though, Lander had promised to keep the British government informed of their progress and in October 1832 he addressed the Colonial Under-Secretary apologising that he was forbidden by his employers from doing so.⁴⁸⁰ Restricting the movement of information in this way obviously impacted on the ability of map-makers to update their maps to reflect their latest discoveries but it also indicates that geographical enquiries were not necessarily intended for public consumption. Addressing the purpose and utility of these investigations will be examined later in the thesis.

MacGregor Laird’s journal notes the Admiralty’s request that one of their officers be permitted to join the expedition to survey the river. He was careful to observe that although the

⁴⁷⁹ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 25.

⁴⁸⁰ NA CO 2/19, f. 20, Richard Lander to Robert William Hay, Cape Coast Castle, 10 October 1832.

“company had very liberally granted this request,” they had not “received the slightest assistance or encouragement from any department of the government.”⁴⁸¹ Following in the tradition of Lyon and Clapperton, Allen was dispatched by the Admiralty and produced the map which accompanied Laird’s journal (figure 26), representing the first reasonably accurate survey of the delta region. On his return, Allen was commanded to formulate and submit his report of the mission, his thoughts for the future of British contact there, and an assessment of the best route to the main trunk of the river.⁴⁸² The significance of his notes to Barrow and the Admiralty was that as their representative, their tool of observation, it was his views that were of importance, rather than their interpretation of his notes. As for his map, it did not appear before the public until 1837.

The desire to avoid the problems which had characterised earlier ventures was reflected in the guidelines that were printed and given to the Niger Expedition’s leaders in 1841 by its directors in the Admiralty and the Colonial Office. Their instructions reflected the sum experience of Britain’s exploratory efforts during this study.

That part which specifies the information to be collected is taken partly from the Foreign Office Instructions to the British Ministers abroad, and partly from Instructions given by the Admiralty to the commanders of naval expeditions of discovery and survey.⁴⁸³

In these provisions we see the legacy of those missions conducted across the Sahara from Tripoli which uncovered and engaged with the political landscape of the interior, as well as that tradition of interference from the navy which Barrow had introduced in 1816. Reports were to be written regarding each place of note which the mission encountered, and logged as individually numbered

⁴⁸¹ Laird, Narrative (Volume 1) (1837), 10.

⁴⁸² NA CO2/19, f.55-57, William Allen to John Barrow, London, 6 October 1834; NA CO 2/19, f.59-64, William Allen to Lord Auckland, London, 27 October 1834.

⁴⁸³ NA CO 2/21, f.525, “Annex A. Expedition and Mission to Africa. (Draft) Instructions for the Negotiators”, [February, 1839].

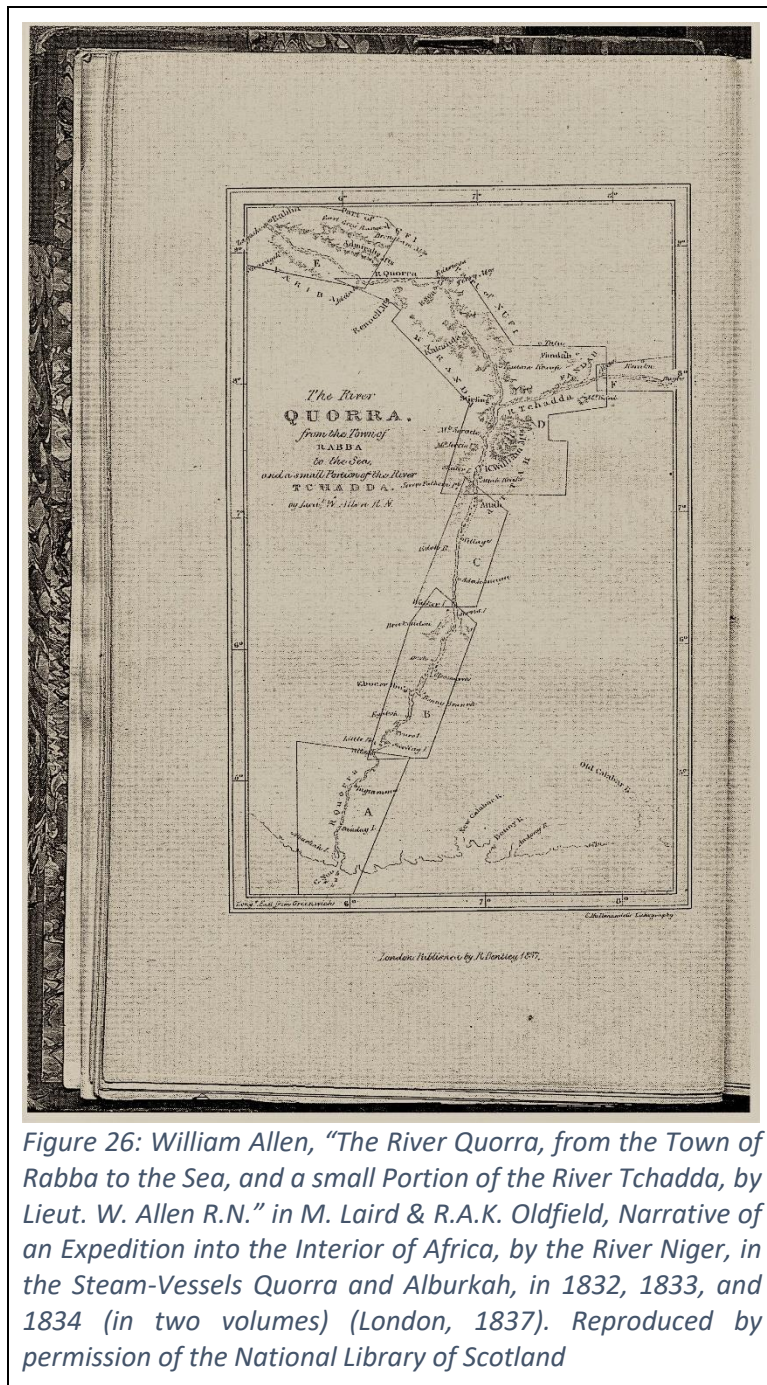


Figure 26: William Allen, “The River Quorra, from the Town of Rabba to the Sea, and a small Portion of the River Tchadda, by Lieut. W. Allen R.N.” in M. Laird & R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa, by the River Niger, in the Steam-Vessels Quorra and Alburkah, in 1832, 1833, and 1834* (in two volumes) (London, 1837). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

dispatches to be communicated back to Britain at every available opportunity.

You will also each of you keep minute daily Journals of every transaction which may take place under your eyes; noting down in that journal the occurrences as they take place, and the information as it is given to you, together with the observations you make on it at the time: and you will on your return make up each of you and deliver [...] a full and complete narrative, in writing, of all affairs that have come to your knowledge during your mission, which you may deem worthy of communication to Her Majesty’s Government...⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁴ NA CO 2/21, f.531, “Annex A. Expedition and Mission to Africa. (Draft) Instructions for the Negotiators”, [February, 1839].

As a naval mission, the conduct and character of the Niger Expedition was naturally different from most earlier ventures into the interior but the concern of its directors in Britain seeking to formulate an accurate image of the region reflects the trial and error of former years. Rather than absorb a mass of confused raw notes, the Admiralty and the Colonial Office desired a comprehensive system of note-taking, and a “full and complete narrative” upon the mission’s return.

During these final preparations, Thomas Fowell Buxton wrote to the Colonial Secretary querying the familiar restriction on expedition members sending reports to him directly rather than to the British government. Whilst acknowledging that the Admiralty had provided the resources and most the manpower for the venture, and that the Foreign Office had provided directions for its negotiators, the scientific staff had mostly been engaged by the ACS over which he currently presided.⁴⁸⁵ Lord John Russell acquiesced to Buxton’s request that his staff be allowed to communicate directly with him but it is instances like this which illustrate how the authority of a single centre of calculation was compromised by the desire of multiple parties to engage with the process of African enquiry.

Moving forward these are issues which complicate the changing cartographic discourse and its sponsorship during this period. In particular we see the significance of the traveller who formerly acted as a tool of enquiry and who now existed to take responsibility for their observations as well. It is that emphasis on the individual which I turn to now, to examine the circumstances of their experiences in West Africa.

* * *

⁴⁸⁵ NA CO 2/21, f.310, Thomas Fowell Buxton to Lord John Russell, Warwickshire, 15 April 1841; see also f.315, Thomas Fowell Buxton to Lord John Russell, Warwickshire, 23 April 1841.

Chapter 4: Collecting the West African cartographic archive

Britain's cartography of West Africa between 1749 and 1841 reflected to varying degrees the constant acquisition of several different types of geographical materials. Contributions to the map could be the product of dedicated exploratory activities, observations from the peripheries, the collection of second- and third-hand evidence, or the result of outdated sources being reinterpreted to fit into ever-changing geographical models. Responding to developments in Britain's knowledge of the region, the nature of empirical cartography which was symbolically characterised by the blank map ostensibly invited the addition of information only once it had been subject to careful study. During this period, however, maps were nevertheless filled with problematic data.

The metaphorical archive referred to here was undeniably vulnerable to the circumstances of its creation. As we have seen, map-making projects were influenced by several external factors which dictated the scope and character of Britain's enquiries. By closely examining the accumulation of geographical information, we can contextualise how flawed data was rationalised and absorbed. Despite the grand Atlas maps of Africa produced in this period which were suggestive of an advanced state of knowledge like other parts of the world, the reality was much less impressive. Unlike India where large trigonometric surveys had been conducted in the late eighteenth century, West Africa permitted only fleeting traverses by disparate exploratory groups who recorded their routes as itineraries with limited peripheral observations. As the previous chapter argued, the model of British enquiries wherein the traveller or explorer operated as a tool of observation for metropolitan scholarship was untenable in the face of changing epistemic traditions from the early nineteenth century. What changes significantly in this period then was the increasing importance attached to the traveller's point-of-view in place of the map-maker's ability

to simply make sense of their notes. Dane Kennedy has suggested that the similarity of those techniques used by travellers to track their progress across unmapped lands with navigational techniques devised for use at sea, encouraged the further adoption of maritime discipline during the mapping of Africa.⁴⁸⁶ These methods of nautical surveying were influential precisely because they emphasised the first-hand perspective of the explorer. As such the products of those enquiries were then subject to questions regarding the reliability of recordings made by that individual in the field.

The qualification of data collected by explorers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century has been approached by most of the relevant historiography as revolving around the issues of truth and trust. Dorinda Outram has highlighted the ontological battle between observations of the tropical environment made in the field versus their reception and scrutiny in metropolitan centres as an ongoing effort to define sites of knowledge-making and accreditation.⁴⁸⁷ Conversely, Charles Withers has examined the desire for first-hand knowledge of the Niger (what is referred to as “ocular demonstration”) to corroborate what sedentary geographers had theorised.⁴⁸⁸ Felix Driver has demonstrated the evolving standards of scientific enquiry and instrumentation which defined the processes of observation desired by the RGS.⁴⁸⁹ Michael Heffernan has shown how the emerging image of African exploration and the quest for Timbuktu developed such that the demands made of travellers to conform to a defined appearance of British discovery influenced the perceived value of their information.⁴⁹⁰ And David Lambert has used John Barrow’s dismissal of James MacQueen’s Niger hypotheses to demonstrate how the use of questionable sources such as African testimony was deemed unsuitable by a scholarly culture which increasingly rejected the legitimacy of such “unscientific” contributions.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁶ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 11; see also D.G. Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (London, 2000), 8-20.

⁴⁸⁷ Outram, ‘New Spaces’ (1996), 249-264; Outram, ‘On Being Perseus’ (1999), 281-292.

⁴⁸⁸ C.W.J. Withers, ‘Mapping the Niger, 1798 – 1832: Trust, Testimony and “Ocular Demonstration” in the late Enlightenment’ in *Imago Mundi* 56:2 (2004), 170-193.

⁴⁸⁹ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001).

⁴⁹⁰ Heffernan, “‘A dream as frail as those of ancient Time’” (2007), 203-225.

⁴⁹¹ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013).

Complementing this historiography is a growing scholarship which highlights the practical limitations of accurately observing and recording information in the field. The revisionism of post-colonial studies has targeted the triumphant image of exploration to expose the vulnerability of individuals negotiating their way through lands such as West Africa. Jamie Lockhart, for example, has drawn attention to the mental fatigue of Saharan travel that affected an individual's attention to detail or energy to write.⁴⁹² Jonathan Lamb has noted that because travelling for knowledge was dangerous, voyagers who suffered during the course of an expedition were subject to exaggeration or being overwhelmed by features undeserving of their attention.⁴⁹³ Physical and mental evidence of travel was itself an important indication of having earned new knowledge, complicating the value of observations made in moments of stress. Gerd Spittler has also questioned how the organisation and conduct of an expedition affected the character and scope of its enquiries, drawing attention to the ability (or inability) of travellers to interact with locals.⁴⁹⁴ Kennedy, meanwhile, has emphasised the contribution of African labour, expertise and guidance to the process of exploration.⁴⁹⁵

The issue of travelling for knowledge is most suitably discussed here in terms of the discourse of exploration. As this chapter will discuss, the conditions facing any African enquiries and the way observations were recorded, transported and assessed, were unavoidably influenced by conditions in the field. In the case of maps as a product of exploration, it becomes unavoidable that the information used in their construction should reflect their experiences in Africa. Consequently, I will also examine the nature of Britain's contact with Africans during this period.

⁴⁹² J.B. Lockhart, 'In the Raw: Some Reflections on Transcribing and Editing Lieutenant Hugh Clapperton's Writings on the Borno Mission of 1822-25' in *History in Africa* 26 (January, 1999), 157-195.

⁴⁹³ J. Lamb, 'Fantasies of Paradise' in M. Fitzpatrick, P. Jones, C. Knellwolf & I. McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (Oxon, 2007), 521-528.

⁴⁹⁴ G. Spittler, 'European Explorers as Caravan Travellers in the West Sudan: Some Thoughts on the Methodology of Journeys of Exploration' in *Paideuma* 33 (1987), 391-406; G. Spittler, 'Explorers in Transit: Travels into Timbuktu and Agades in the Nineteenth Century' in *History and Anthropology* 9:2-3 (1996), 231-253.

⁴⁹⁵ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 95-128.

Part of the Romance of discovery was the travellers who embodied the qualities of their home nation, and who exposed themselves to the dangers of the road to uncover knowledges. Consequently, I argue that the behaviour of explorers in Africa, and the nature of their mapping, became embroiled in contemporary attitudes towards the land they were trying to uncover. The emphasis here on explorers is not meant to discount the contributions of merchants and the officers of the African Company and Royal Navy stationed around the coast who provided a constant stream of information (albeit uncoordinated and inconsistently reliable). Yet whilst they unquestionably complimented the sporadic expeditions of discovery, the conditions and demands made of travellers' accounts and observations of the interior were progressively applied to these peripheral researches also. Moreover, the label of "exploration" was itself often assigned or established in the aftermath of enquiries. The pressures exercised over the gathering of information through exploration also raises several issues regarding the acceptability of African knowledge within the cartographic discourse.

Exploration created for itself an identity of mythical proportions which, as Cosgrove notes, was "associated with masculine adventure and the legitimating discourse of scientific and technical precision in survey, observation, and record keeping."⁴⁹⁶ Despite the changing attributes of the ideal observer, however, the history of this period demonstrates that for as long as it remained difficult to access the interior, individual shortcomings which should have limited various enquiries could be overcome. Ultimately, any information was better than none.

The observer, focusing Britain's enquiries

In 1766, twenty-two years before the founding of the African Association, Charles O'Hara, the newly appointed Governor of the Province of Senegambia, recognised the limitations caused by Britain's

⁴⁹⁶ Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye* (2001), 208.

geographical ignorance in their pursuit of commerce with inland territories. He addressed his concerns to the Board of Trade and advised the following:

That His Majesty's Consuls at Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoly[sic.] and Grand Cairo be directed to send intelligent Persons with the Caravans that go annually to those Countries.⁴⁹⁷

If travel guaranteed knowledge, then it was important that the knowledge it produced could be incorporated into the geographical archive. The significance of a traveller's reports was their ability to highlight objects worth recording at the expense of everything else. Consequently, there was pressure on the individual to identify the most interesting features they encountered and document them properly; the desire to dispatch an "intelligent" person implied their ability to not only make sense of what they observed, but to return that information to Britain in an intelligible manner. As Lorraine Daston simply puts it: "Taking notes entails taking note."⁴⁹⁸

Explorers' accounts and the recordings of their observations have been the subject of much debate, particularly concerning their transformation into published narratives. Maintaining regular journal entries was not only a means of preserving knowledge; it was a demonstration of one's commitment to science and the personal discipline essential for accurate observation.⁴⁹⁹ Routine measurements to determine location in the tradition of naval logbooks were similarly important for the reliability of cartographic information. During Park's second ascent of the Gambia in 1805, for example, he boasted that he had recorded his position "every two or 3 days".⁵⁰⁰ There were, of course, limitations to the ability of travellers to consistently and diligently record their observations. Sickness proved an unsurmountable obstacle for most, as Park quickly discovered during his fateful return to the Niger.

Defining the ideal traveller became an issue almost as important as efforts to identify those features of the African interior worth searching for. When we look at the historiographical

⁴⁹⁷ BL Kings MS 200/275 A, f.23-24, Abstract of Letters from Africa, Governor O'Hara, [St Louis, Senegal], 28 May 1766.

⁴⁹⁸ L. Daston, 'Talking Note(s)' in *Isis* 95:03 (September, 2004), 445.

⁴⁹⁹ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 28.

⁵⁰⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.39-40, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, "Badoo near Tambacunda", 28 May 1805.

considerations given to those questions of truth and testimony it is easy to identify general issues of social identity, education and, over time, the idealised attributes of the explorer that were crafted into its own heroic literary genre.⁵⁰¹ Kennedy's study of the professionalization of exploration has drawn attention to the development of specialized skillsets which improved the value of their observations; this is a theme which arose in response to the changing demands of "scientific" enquiry.⁵⁰² When the exploration of Africa began in earnest in the late eighteenth century, however, the men chosen as emissaries of the African Association were qualified in the first instance by their ability to survive the journey.

John Ledyard, the first of the African Association's travellers, presented himself to Henry Beaufoy as a potential agent in 1789. The Association's secretary described being convinced of his quality by "the manliness of his person, the breadth of his chest, the openness of his countenance, and the inquietude of his eye."⁵⁰³ Ledyard was thus made eligible by his physical attributes (necessary to overcome the trials of the road) and natural curiosity which were important if he was to survive the harsh environment of the interior. Yet it has been argued that the model of metropolitan scholarship indicative of the African Association was very much one in which Africa was observed through the mediation of its agents whose role was simply to provide raw information. As such, the observer was required to operate as an instrument of metropolitan enquiry; sometimes literally. After Park lost his thermometer, for example, he relied on his body to measure the temperature of his surroundings and so provided information which Rennell could use to fix the southern extent of the Sahara Desert on his map.⁵⁰⁴

The new "culture of exploration" conferred value on those observations that had been difficult to acquire and lionised those who put themselves in danger in the interests of gaining knowledge. In this period of course, fear of tropical disease had put pressure on individuals to have

⁵⁰¹ Craciun, 'What is an Explorer' (2011), 29-51.

⁵⁰² Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 82.

⁵⁰³ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 18.

⁵⁰⁴ M. Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed under the Direction and Patronage of the African Association, in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London, 1799), 135.

“seasoned” or survived a bout of fever which experience had shown reduced their vulnerability to subsequent infection. Rennell was actually critical of Ritchie who was amongst the most academically trained of African travellers because of his weakest constitution: “When I saw Mr. Ritchie,” he declared, “I thought him the wrong person. Pen + Ink Men are not fit for Pioneers in science.”⁵⁰⁵ To a certain extent then, the individual’s fortitude even excused other limitations to their qualifications as an explorer or observer in a manner which seems to contradict the contemporary (and historiographical) focus on their observational abilities. Lyon, for example, volunteered to return to Africa whilst noting: “I avow I have no science – but I have zeal which may in some measure compensate for the want of it.”⁵⁰⁶ In fact, resilience to the field was sometimes all a traveller had, especially when the trials of the road ultimately came at the cost of their ability to diligently record information. By the end of the Bornu Mission, for instance, its surviving members were utterly incapable of keeping consistent accounts as their health continued to decline. Denham wrote of a recurring affliction to his eyes and blinding headaches brought on by writing for long period, and could only apologise to Barrow for the quality of his notes; in place of an appropriate scientific regime, he could offer “zeal and good intentions only...”⁵⁰⁷

Due to a combination of occurrences, the model of the African Association’s map-making enquiries could not continue for long. The publication of Park’s journal, the exposure of Rennell’s geography to criticism, and the opportunity for the public to engage with the process of discovery contributed to a period of fluidity at the turn of the nineteenth century during which the British government took responsibility for directing expeditions. As the Association lost control of the exploration and mapping of Africa, the Government’s earliest expeditions were dominated by displays of strength, and the personnel sent were mostly chosen for their military experience. Even Park was given a Captaincy within the Royal African Corps before embarking in 1805.⁵⁰⁸ Following

⁵⁰⁵ NLS MS 19390, f.105, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 13 October 1821 – underlined words in original.

⁵⁰⁶ NA CO 2/9, f.63, George Francis Lyon to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 25 March 1820.

⁵⁰⁷ RGS DD/17/3, Dixon Denham to John Barrow, “Kouka”, 22 June 1824.

⁵⁰⁸ M. Park, *The Journal of a Mission to the Interior of Africa, in the Year 1805. Second Edition* (London, 1815), 54.

the end of the Napoleonic wars, officers from Britain's oversized army and navy sought promotion and societal advancement by volunteering their services and their training in the name of discovery. It was after Barrow's participation in the organisation of Captain Tuckey's expedition to the Congo though, that the emphasis arguably shifted to the qualifications of explorers as autonomous agents. An assessment of the Admiralty's development of scientific professionalism by Randolph Cock notes that through its overseas activities and pursuit of precision through accuracy, the officers and surgeons of the Royal Navy were naturally placed at the fore of British enquiries.⁵⁰⁹

The advantage of naval officers is traditionally explained by their ability to navigate themselves at sea in a fashion applicable to their travels into West Africa. During the Bornu Mission, Dixon Denham certainly believed it to be Clapperton's responsibility to keep track of their itinerary.⁵¹⁰ Interestingly, Clapperton actually rejected the assumption that as a sailor he should know how to find their position. "Let me inform him," Clapperton wrote, "that the taking the Latitude at Sea and on shore are quite different and the latter not necessary for a naval officer to know..."⁵¹¹ His reticence though, was likely a reflection of the poor relations that had developed between Denham and himself and Clapperton's geography is remarkable for the sheer quantity of information he amassed. His cartography, like Lyon's before him, was characteristically chart-like in its appearance.

We have seen that the developing focus on scientific enquiry meant that the selection of travellers began to reflect their qualifications to act independently and produce reliable information generated from their own experiences. That transferal of responsibility to the explorer was then reflected in the instructions which successive missions were issued with. It was also recognised by those operating in West Africa as they struggled to follow instructions written in London. During Captain Campbell's unsuccessful journey up the Rio Nunez following Major Peddie's death in 1817, for example, he drafted a report titled *Hints with a view to the success and vitality*

⁵⁰⁹ Cock, *Scientific Servicemen* (2005), 95-111.

⁵¹⁰ NA CO 2/13, f.110, Dixon Denham to Hugh Clapperton, 28 December 1822.

⁵¹¹ NA CO 2/13, f.112, Hugh Clapperton to Dixon Denham, "Izhia", 29 December 1822.

of the expedition for tracing the course of the Niger as he and his surviving party struggled in the African hinterland. Because of the various local circumstances which had forced them to formulate new plans to access the interior, he argued that all decisions pertaining to the practicalities of travel were “better arranged upon the spot than in England.”⁵¹² Consequently, the Colonial Office instructed Joseph Ritchie in February 1818 that he was to travel at his own discretion “from information collected on the spot”.⁵¹³ Walter Oudney was granted similar flexibility in 1821, and so was Alexander Gordon Laing in 1825.⁵¹⁴

Despite confidence in its value, knowledge gained through travel assumed a confused status in the contemporary discourse because the transitory nature of travellers’ movement had a perceived impact on the breadth and quality of their observations. By passing over the land swiftly in the direction of a vague objective, it was feared that much would be missed or ignored along the way. Particularly during instances where information was gathered from African sources in passing, there was an unresolved question as to its value if the traveller had not spent time learning everything there was to know about a place.⁵¹⁵ Instructions from the Colonial Office to George Francis Lyon in 1820 after Ritchie’s death indicated its concern that moving too fast would mean losing important intelligence. Hoping that Lyon would assume the task of travelling further inland from Murzuq in the direction of Bornu, the Colonial Secretary instructed that if he were to make it that far he was not to advance “beyond that point, until you have reported everything which has appeared [to] you worthy of observation and every information which you may collect there with respect to the interior.”⁵¹⁶ As Lyon had already departed Africa by the time these orders arrived, they formed the basis of guidelines which the Bornu Mission was issued with. Because of the expense of that expedition and the unique circumstances which allowed it to operate, it was

⁵¹² NA CO 2/9, f.544, “Hints with a view to the success and vitality of the expedition for tracing the course of the Niger”, c.1817.

⁵¹³ NA FO 8/7, f.21, Lord Bathurst to Joseph Ritchie, London, 1 February 1818.

⁵¹⁴ NA FO 8/8, f.68-69, Lord Bathurst to Walter Oudney, London, 28 August 1821; NA CO 392/3, f.1-7, Lord Bathurst to Alexander Gordon Laing, London, 20 January 1825.

⁵¹⁵ Outram, ‘Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Enlightenment’ (2007), 557.

⁵¹⁶ NA FO 8/7, f.51, Henry Goulburn to George Francis Lyon, London, 24 April 1820.

understandable that its members were told to record as much as possible.⁵¹⁷ Consul-General Hanmer Warrington discussed the matter with Oudney; “The important services before you,” he wrote, “must require time as they cannot be accomplished by galloping through the country.”⁵¹⁸

The observer was thus one who took care in the conduct of their enquiries and earned the privileged nature of their point-of-view. As Clapperton and Denham’s relationship deteriorated during the course of their expedition, Clapperton cast doubt on his rival’s ability to record anything of interest by noting that whilst he and his manservant “prefer trudging after the camels where we command a view of our goods and see every thing that is to be seen on the road [,] the gallant major he does not go outside the muzzels of the Bashaw’s musquets...”⁵¹⁹ That continued pressure on the circumstances behind travellers’ observations unsurprisingly focused contemporary interests on the details of their perspective, rather than the image generated by a scholar in Britain who had not earned the same privileged viewpoint.

For his part, Barrow was progressively predisposed to favour the products of field exploration as well as the contributions of officers; these were the “missionaries of science”, the “geography militants”, who filled the blanks of the map.⁵²⁰ He understood though, that it was the experience of their travels which was the foundation upon which their claims to accuracy rested. The *Quarterly Review* echoed his belief that the qualities most desirable of a traveller were those which defined the British upper classes.

...when we find Englishmen of rank, of family and of fortune, foregoing all the pleasures within their reach, for a voluntary exile; exposing themselves, with their eyes open, to all the inconveniences and hardships of painful and perilous journies, to the effects of bad climate and pestilential diseases, not merely out of idle curiosity, but for the sake of seeing with their own eyes, hearing with their own ears, and of obtaining that information and receiving those impressions which books alone can never give, we ought to be proud of this national trait, peculiarly characteristic, we believe, of British youth [...] we should consider their communications as entitled to every indulgence.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ For a detailed discussion see Boahen, *Britain* (1964) and Bovill, *Niger* (1968).

⁵¹⁸ NA FO 76/17, f. 117, Hanmer Warrington to Walter Oudney, 8 January 1823.

⁵¹⁹ NA FO 76/19, f.52, Hugh Clapperton to Hanmer Warrington, Bilma, 14 January 1823.

⁵²⁰ Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 3-4.

⁵²¹ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XVI)* (London, 1817), 1-2.

The issue of an observer's social status was something that became more important through the period, particularly as African discovery became progressively aligned with national interests and international reputation. Any emphasis on the status of a traveller as a member of Britain's ruling or military class during expeditions of discovery though, resulted from an alignment between academic culture and the atmosphere of political nationalism so distinctive of the nineteenth century.⁵²² From a cultural point of view, Britons were used to crediting their ruling classes with qualities which presupposed their aptitude for experiences such as exploration.⁵²³ Warrington welcomed the appointment of John Tyrwhitt, a man of birth, to join Denham at Bornu as an assistant after his squabbles with Clapperton because of his belief "that the higher a man's connections are, the less He thinks of dangers and difficulties and can endure Privations better than other Men."⁵²⁴

Richard and John Lander famously struggled in the face of intense socially-motivated distrust before and after their discovery of the Niger Delta in 1830, and their claims to accuracy were made to rest on the contributions of other, more qualified individuals.⁵²⁵ Much has been made of the hostile reception the brothers received due to their working-class origins which were assumed to impact on their capacity to accurately record their observations.⁵²⁶ Their papers were sent to Barrow and Murray, and their geographical notes were given to Lieutenant Alexander Becher of the Navy to be arranged into a mappable form. John later complained that because "accident has thrown me into a humble sphere of life, my veracity is questioned & my promises treated with indifference & contempt. I am very much afraid Mr. Becher has not behaved to me with the candour & sincerity of a Gentleman."⁵²⁷ Such was his concern that their background would be used to discredit their discovery, he later requested that all their notes be returned to them for fear that their rough and poorly written character would be used to embarrass them in public.

⁵²² Driver, *Geography Militant* (2001), 24-48.

⁵²³ See Colley, *Britons* (2005), 164-194.

⁵²⁴ NA FO 76/15, f.72, Tripoli, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst.

⁵²⁵ Flemming, *Barrow's Boys* (1998), 253-254.

⁵²⁶ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 128-130.

⁵²⁷ NLS MS 40668, f.26-27, John Lander to John Murray, London, undated [c.1831].

Barrow's treatment of the Lander brothers appears to have been particularly unfair and reflects both his disappointment at having been proven wrong on the Niger's termination and his dissatisfaction at the status of the men responsible for resolving a mystery which had foiled the efforts of greater adventurers. Following the initial publication of their account after their return to England, Barrow had little interest in anything else the Landers might have to say on the matter. In 1832, after one of their lost journals (which had been mislaid during their captivity on the river) was presented at the coast for sale, Barrow refused outright to pay anything unless there were sketches of the Niger Delta which could be purchased separately.⁵²⁸

There developed in this period then, an idealised candidate for the British traveller in Africa. In 1839, as he began working closely with Thomas Fowell Buxton on the proposed mission to the Niger, MacQueen described the perfect individual to be sent up the Niger, to engage with the people there and assess the agricultural potential of the interior:

The messenger or messengers so sent should be acquainted with and accustomed to a Tropical Climate, possessed of a knowledge of the Negro Character; well acquainted with Geographical subjects in general and with African Geography in particular, together with a practical knowledge of Tropical lands and Tropical agriculture...⁵²⁹

When Buxton and the African Civilization Society were in the process of communicating their demands for the mission to the British Government, their recommendations for the leaders of the expedition thus extended to individuals who were qualified by their knowledge of navigation, African geography, and prior experience in the tropics.⁵³⁰ Early plans for the mission consequently stated that:

The success of an expedition is found to depend so greatly on the personal character of its commander, that the Government will take great care to select one who shall be well fitted for the important charge which will be entrusted to him...⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ NA CO 2/19, f.50, John Barrow to Robert William Hay, London, 16 April 1832.

⁵²⁹ NA CO 2/22, f.331, London, 12 January 1839 – James MacQueen was, of course, invited to participate on that mission.

⁵³⁰ NA CO 2/21, f.242-243, "C.J. London, Charles Fitzroy Bexley, R. Torrens, S. Lushington, John Irving, Robert Harry Inglis, Arthur K. Bauley, T.F. Buxton" to the Marquess of Normanby, London, 27 August 1839.

⁵³¹ NA CO 2/21, f.522, "Africa. Expedition and Mission Proposed. Some Points for Consideration", c.1840.

Instrumentation and observation: “I will measure Africa by feet and Inches”⁵³²

Before the instrumentation of African enquiries, the only way for travellers to keep track of their location and route was to rely on their senses and circumstantial observations. To account for inconsistent (or non-existent) geographical notes, map-makers sought alternative methods to establish the geography of travellers’ notes. A long-standing technique was discussed by Rennell in the early 1790s based his estimation of the average distance a loaded camel could journey each day. Depending on their load, he predicted that Saharan caravans could travel anywhere between 18.6 to 23.4 British miles a day.⁵³³ Provided the traveller could maintain an approximation of the direction he moved in by using a compass or even noting the relative position of the rising and setting sun, the geographer could attempt to calculate their course. It goes without saying that mapping West Africa in this fashion produced a crude image of the interior at best but it would be wrong to assume that such itineraries were discounted. More importantly, this technique could also be applied to the verbal itineraries of African merchants as shall be discussed below.

But cartography was *science*. Advances in mathematics combined with various technological improvements encouraged an atmosphere of what has been referred to in the context of map-making as “scientism”.⁵³⁴ The developing scholarly discourse which debated the relative merits of the spaces of knowledge ultimately contrasted the experiences of sedate, objective study with the unknown pressures of travel, the academic with their tools of observation and the explorer who suffered on the road.⁵³⁵ It was in the eighteenth century, however, that the age of maritime discovery bore witness to the transport of such sites of knowledge across the world within the space of ships. These vessels represented, as Richard Sorrenson notes, a “superior, self-contained, and protected view of the landscapes and civilizations” it viewed in transition.⁵³⁶ The

⁵³² NHM JBRP DTC 15, f.356, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, River Gambia, 26 April 1805.

⁵³³ J. Rennell, “On the Rate of Travelling, as Performed by Camels; and its Application, as a Scale, to the Purposes of Geography” *Philosophical Transactions* 81 (1791), 129–145.

⁵³⁴ Edney, ‘Mathematical Cosmography’ (1994), 101-116.

⁵³⁵ Outram, ‘New Spaces’ (1996), 249-264.

⁵³⁶ R. Sorrenson, ‘The Ship as a Scientific Instrument in the Eighteenth Century’ in *Osiris* 2nd Series 11, *Science in the Field* (1996), 222.

alignment of empirical mapping with the principles of scientific methodology inevitably supported the use of special equipment in pursuit of greater accuracy in a manner which transported the careful sites of study to the field. Ascertaining the precise locations of places was obviously of singular importance for map-making and could be achieved using those instruments and techniques devised for navigation at sea, particularly tools such as chronometers which helped mariners establish their longitude.⁵³⁷ With training and the proper equipment, it was possible to fill the map with geographical data of a nature acceptable to contemporary audiences.

There was ultimately a sense of confidence in the mapping of routes if it could be achieved through instrumentation. Park, for example, boasted to Banks after his return to the Gambia in 1805 that his “watch goes so correctly that I will measure Africa by feet and Inches.”⁵³⁸ In contrast to his first journey when he had travelled with only a compass and sextant to keep track of his progress and make the necessary astronomical observations, the use of a chronometer which noted the time at Greenwich allowed a much greater degree of accuracy when measuring his distance from that meridian.⁵³⁹ He was consequently astounded to discover that the map which Rennell had constructed after his first journey appeared to be dramatically incorrect:

The course of the Gambia is laid down on my Chart too much to the south. I have ascertained nearly its whole course. I find that my former Journeys on foot were underrated. Some of them surprised myself when I trace the same road on horseback.⁵⁴⁰

Despite warnings against demarcating phases in cartographic history, it is tempting to regard this event as symbolic. Rennell’s cartography in the 1790s was formed by the rationalisations and logical assumptions derived from the itineraries of the African Association’s travellers. Better equipped, Park’s return to West Africa allowed him to correct the faults of former cartographic practices, though we have seen that his corrections had a delayed impact on the map.

⁵³⁷ For an edited volume of associated papers which discuss a variety of related themes, see F. MacDonald & C.W.J. Withers (eds.) *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration* (Farnham, 2015).

⁵³⁸ NHM JBRP DTC 15, f.356, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, River Gambia, 26 April 1805.

⁵³⁹ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park’s Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park’s Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), 3.

⁵⁴⁰ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.39, Mungo Park to Joseph Banks, “Badoo near Tambacunda”, 28 May 1805.

As the scope of British enquiries expanded and successive expeditions grew larger, more instruments were carried into West Africa and travellers quickly became inundated with equipment as well as the necessities to maintain them all. In the interest of scientific study, expeditions increasingly sought to gather as many forms of spatial data as possible in an ongoing effort to fill the map with a detailed catalogue of relevant information. Thermometers were useful for establishing environmental boundaries, whilst barometers contributed towards the understanding of physical landscapes and their associated climates. Determining height relative to sea-level also provided rough data to predict the direction and flow of rivers beyond the observations of travellers. As the debate of the Niger's possible connection with the Nile intensified in the 1820s, for example, Barrow used the barometric records of the Bornu Mission to demonstrate that Lake Chad was located below the known course of the Niger near its headlands and higher than some reaches of the Nile. Theoretically, therefore, it was not impossible for the two to connect.⁵⁴¹ Conversely, Laing argued that the height of the Niger's source which he had measured in 1822 at 1600 feet above sea level could maybe carry its waters to the Volta or possibly the Bight of Benin, but certainly not to Egypt.⁵⁴²

Using instruments was, however, absolutely no guarantee of precision. Scientific equipment was not made to a factory standard; therefore, no two items were identical, rendering even the most careful measurements inconsistent with one another.⁵⁴³ As tools to enhance the observational capacities of the traveller though, they were sourced from the most reputable artificers in London. Oudney and Clapperton were equipped in 1821 by Thomas Jones ("Mathematical, Optical, Philosophical & Experimental Instrument Maker"), Laing had collected his instruments from John Newman ("Philosophical Instrument Maker to the Royal Institution of Great Britain") and G. Dolland ("Optician to His Majesty, His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, Mathematical Instrument Maker to the Hon[ourable] Board of Customs &c."), and Clapperton

⁵⁴¹ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXIII)* (London, 1826), 548-549.

⁵⁴² Laing, *Travels* (1825), 325; NA CO 2/15, f.119-130, "Cursory Remarks on the course and termination of the Great River Niger" written by Alexander Gordon Laing in Tripoli, 28 September 1825.

⁵⁴³ Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (2007), 98-99.

prepared in 1825 for his journey to Sokoto by returning to Thomas Jones (who now styled himself: “Pupil of Ramsden, Astronomical, Mathematical, Optical & Philosophical Instrument Maker, To His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, the Hon[ourable] Board of Ordnance, &c. &c. &c.”).⁵⁴⁴ The instrumentation of exploration developed as a means of standardising the methodologies of enquiry yet the significance of that equipment and the role it performed became interwoven with the image of western discovery and the presentation of its products as authoritative. Illustrative of the “culture of exploration” to which this paraphernalia was associated with, Clapperton and the members of his second expedition to Sokoto carried personalised, hand-engraved watches in celebration of their important work.⁵⁴⁵

If mapping was an activity of educated society, then the instrumentation of geographic enquiry reflected the civilized nature of its culture.⁵⁴⁶ Yet the use of equipment further implied the education of the observer and its presence during the recording of African geography contributed towards the acceptability of the traveller’s observations in a hostile environment. As the demands made of field reports changed, there were therefore complications during those instances when circumstances prevented that desired level of instrumentation. In contrast to the grand ventures which had recently departed from Tripoli, Richard and John Lander’s expedition to the Niger Delta was, for example, an altogether humbler undertaking. They requested to be supplied only with a watch, compass and thermometer to conduct their research, during which they lost their possessions and were forced to rely on their senses.⁵⁴⁷ Without a sextant or the tools necessary for astronomical observations, there were complications regarding how their route could be accurately mapped from their notes. When introducing the map which he had been commissioned to make of the Lander’s notes, Lieutenant Becher therefore warned readers of their published journal that:

The accomplished surveyor will look in vain along the list of the articles, with which the travellers were supplied, for the instruments of his calling; and the man of science, to form

⁵⁴⁴ NA CO 2/14, f.90; NA CO 2/15, f.23-25, f.205.

⁵⁴⁵ NA CO 2/15, f.204 – The economy of exploration, however, clearly favoured practicalities over gaudiness and Clapperton was criticised for spending too much on these items. See NA CO 2/15, f.244, Hugh Clapperton to Robert William Hay, HMS Brazen, 26 August 1825.

⁵⁴⁶ Edney, ‘The Irony of Imperial Mapping’ (2009), 41-42.

⁵⁴⁷ NA CO 2/18, f.5, Richard Lander to Robert William Hay, London, 13 November 1829.

his opinion of it, need only be told, that a common compass was all they possessed to benefit geography, beyond the observation of their senses. Even this trifling though important assistance was lost at Kirree, below which place the sun became their only guide ... The map, in its most favourable point of view, can be considered only as a sketch of the river authenticated by personal observation, which will serve to assist future travellers, from whose superior attainments something nearer approaching to geographical precision may be expected.⁵⁴⁸

The chart which accompanied the Landers' published journal (figure 27) makes no pretension to broader regional significance and shows only their route through the Delta and a short sketch of the river above. Sketches of huts which they had seen further grounds the map within the testimony of their direct observations. Their experience was only enough to demonstrate the fact of the Niger's termination, not the precise course that it took. As such, they demonstrate that instrumentation was not essential to produce geographical information but there were clearly problems associated with it. In the case of the Landers, it is possible to recognise the demand for empirical data which simply did not exist to the same degree during the African Association's early enquiries when Rennell was poised to receive and interpret any raw notes. Ocular testimony had been the foundation upon which Park's discovery of the Niger rested but by the 1830s geographical scholarship demanded more.

Regardless even the most qualified individuals could struggle to use instruments and the conditions of travelling in West Africa were rarely so simple as to allow uncontested observations. Explorers regularly struggled to maintain or protect their equipment, or were simply robbed of their possessions. In February 1824, Clapperton complained that he had "not a watch I can depend upon", whereas Denham worried that he had been left without a sextant after parting company with Oudney and Clapperton (who had two) to explore southward.⁵⁴⁹ Even after they were reacquainted, Clapperton refused to share his equipment meaning that neither was in a position to

⁵⁴⁸ R. & J. Lander, *Journal* (1832), lxiii-lxiv.

⁵⁴⁹ NA PRO 30/26/141, Hugh Clapperton to Dixon Denham, Kano, 3 February 1824 - Even after they were reacquainted, Clapperton refused to share his equipment. See RGS DD/17/3, Dixon Denham to John Barrow, "Kouka", 22 June 1824.



Figure 27: Alexander Becher, "The Course of the Quorra, The Joliba or Niger of Park from the Journal of Mess.rs. Richard and John Lander, with their Route from Badagry to the Northward, in 1830" in R. & J. Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger; with a Narrative of a voyage down that river to its termination. In Three Volumes. Illustrated with Engravings and Maps. Vol. I*, (London, 1832). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

map their progress in the fashion desired by metropolitan science. The southernmost observations Denham made consequently rested on his estimation of the direction and distance between himself and a far-off mountain he heard was called "Mendify"; a report which benefited from his use of a telescope to fix its image in his own mind.⁵⁵⁰ With no instruments to accurately measure the precise location of places, Denham's discoveries there relied on sketches he drew on the spot. His journal,

⁵⁵⁰ Denham, *Narrative* (1826), 146.

moreover, was physically shaped by the elongated sketched itinerary of his route, authenticating his written accounts by relating them to his drawing of local geography (figure 28).⁵⁵¹

It was the hostile environment and the labours of an expedition's movement though, which proved the most taxing for travellers' equipment. Laing, for example, was compelled to write to Warrington during his journey across the Sahara with the following report:

you are already aware of the loss I sustained of my two Barometers, and had I been in possession of twenty instead of two, they must have all gone to wreck, as their present structure wou'd neither stand the intense heat or Camel shaking to which they are exposed. My Hygrometers are rendered useless from the evaporation of the aether – I am reduced to my two last thermometers, the tubes of the others having snapt by the warping of the Ivory – the glass of my artificial horizon has in many places become so dire (being ground by the friction of the sand which insinuates itself every where) as to render an observation a matter [of] considerable trouble, if not of difficulty – two days ago my chronometer stopt, having been previously going very irregularly owing to the extremes of heat and cold to which it has been exposed...⁵⁵²

In their assessment of Laing and his struggles with his instruments, Keighren *et al* conclude that for the purposes of demonstrating his scientific credentials, his struggles (like those of other travellers in Africa) were understood to demonstrate his commitment to science.⁵⁵³ But as the tools of science suffered in the field, so too did the explorer and Michael Heffernan illustrates in grim detail the obstacles which faced Laing on the road to Timbuktu which ultimately conferred the same quality

⁵⁵¹ The journals he carried with him were actually lost during his ill-advised participation in a military expedition in 1823 against Bornu's enemies in Mandara. To his great embarrassment, Clapperton was later presented with Denham's baggage when he first met Sultan Bello who asked if the hostility against Sokoto's allies reflected British policy. Denham's emphasis on mapping Mandara as an object of great importance in his published work was subsequently a way to overlook this awkwardness and, ultimately, to justify his participation in what was clearly a slave raid. See Denham, *Narrative* (1826), Clapperton's "Journal of an Excursion, etc etc", 82-83.

⁵⁵² NA FO 76/19, f.347-348, Alexander G. Laing to Hanmer Warrington, "Gadames", 13 September 1825 – the letter continues: "a Camel having unfortunately placed his great gouty foot upon my rifle one night as I lay with it by my side on the ground, snapt the stock in two – but here I shall stop, the catalogue is large enough without noticing minor accidents."

⁵⁵³ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 97-99.

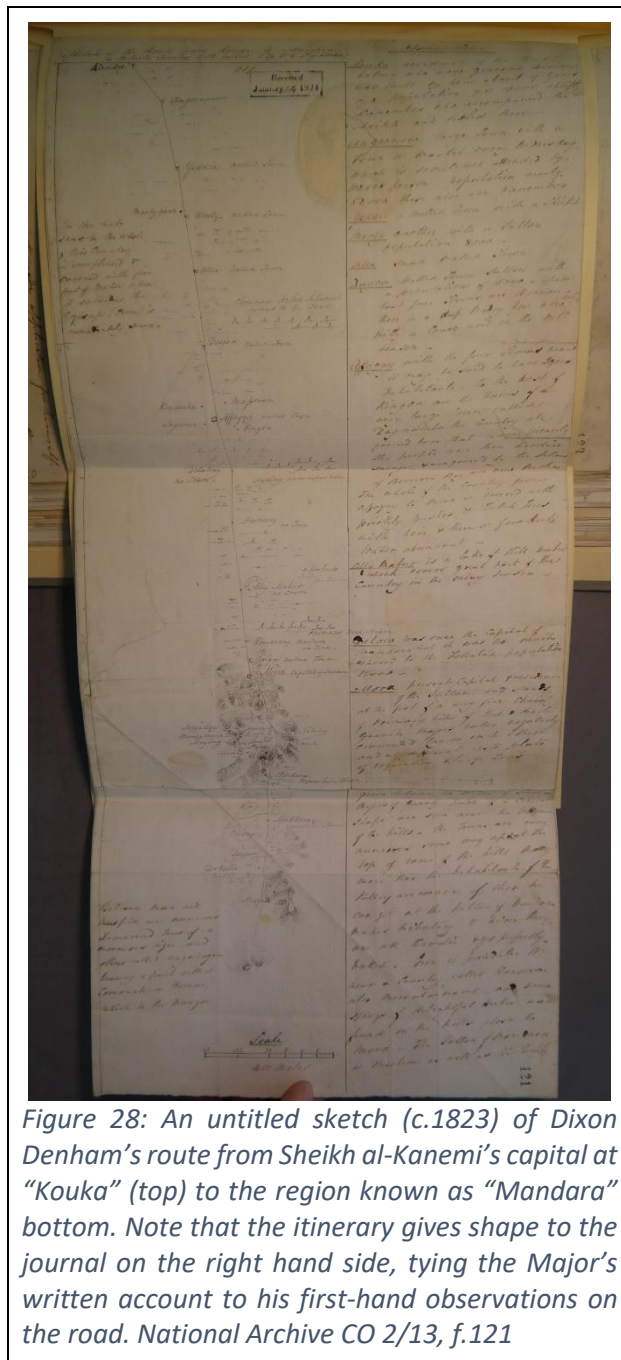


Figure 28: An untitled sketch (c.1823) of Dixon Denham’s route from Sheikh al-Kanemi’s capital at “Kouka” (top) to the region known as “Mandara” bottom. Note that the itinerary gives shape to the journal on the right hand side, tying the Major’s written account to his first-hand observations on the road. National Archive CO 2/13, f.121

of value to his observations that his instruments would have helped secure.⁵⁵⁴ As Outram has said:

“The oldest locus of authority is the human body...it was on this that the authority of the explorer was ultimately based.”⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁴ Heffernan has discussed how Laing’s discussion of his struggles in the Sahara symbolise the masculinity of his experience. His letters to Barrow illustrate both the hardships he had endured and consequently gave value to the information he had fought for, and so were published in *The Quarterly Review* (Volume 39) in 1829 for the benefit of the British public:

“I have suffered much, but the detail must be reserved till another period ... ; in the meantime I shall acquaint you with the number and nature of my wounds, in all amounting to twenty-four, eighteen of which are exceedingly severe. To begin from the top: I have five sabre cuts on the crown of the head and three on the left temple, all fractures from which much bone has come away; one on my left cheek which fractured the jaw bone and divided the ear, forming a very unsightly wound; one

Instruments came to represent the science of British enquiries and, by extension, the advances of its culture and civilisation. During their preparation for the Niger Expedition, Commander Henry Trotter and William Allen were instructed to conduct a new magnetic survey of the river using the latest instruments that were to be provided by the Royal Society.⁵⁵⁶ It is apparent though that the circumstances of travellers' observations not only changed during this period but the popular interpretation of their value shifted also. Ultimately, it was the image of exploration and its reception in Britain which most characterises the translation of field enquiries to the surface of a map.

Dressing for Africa: "why assume anything but the National Character"⁵⁵⁷

The issue of appearance, like instrumentation, has a deep resonance with the discovery of Africa as the image of travellers became intertwined with many elements of the British engagement there. More importantly though, it reflects contemporary interpretations of the conditions facing travellers in different parts of West Africa. Spittler's categorisation of exploration into three divisions of large party, small party and individual traveller draws attention to the conditions under which each could conduct its researches and notes that the vulnerabilities of solitary explorers were

over the right temple and a dreadful gash on the back of the neck, which slightly scratched the windpipe; a musket ball in the hip, which made its way through my back, slightly grazing the backbone; five sabre cuts on my right arm and hand, three of the fingers broken, the hand cut three-fourths across, and the wrist bones cut through; three cuts on the left arm, the bone of which has been broken but is again uniting; one slight wound on the right leg and two with one dreadful gash on the left, to say nothing of a cut across the fingers of my left hand, now healed up. I am nevertheless doing well ..."

See Heffernan, "A dream as frail as those of ancient Time" (2007), 217.

⁵⁵⁵ Outram, 'On Being Perseus' (1999), 290.

⁵⁵⁶ NA CO 2/21, f.22, Henry Dundas Trotter to Robert Vernon Smith, London, 11 February 1840 - The results of that survey were later passed onto Sir Edward Sabine. As an appointed scientific advisor to the Admiralty and pioneer in the measurement of the earth's magnetic field for the purposes of navigation, Sabine ensured that the cartography of the Niger Expedition was at the very fore of British science. See W. Allen, *A Narrative of the Expedition sent by Her Majesty's Government to the River Niger, in 1841* (London, 1848), viii-x.

⁵⁵⁷ NA FO 76/14, f.22, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 1 July 1820.

not shared by larger expeditions.⁵⁵⁸ Thus, wearing disguises such as African clothing was popular amongst those whose isolation encouraged them to keep their identities hidden.

Urs Bitterli defined three types of contact between Europeans and non-Europeans: transitory encounters characteristic of travelling or exploration, hostile confrontation, and long-term relationships wherein all parties found a way to cohabit or work together.⁵⁵⁹ The nature of such interaction depended on an enormous amount of circumstantial details. In terms of the cartography produced in relation to this discourse of appearance, the argument is that the experience of travellers was inherently bound to their ability to record mappable data. As more of the interior was encountered, the discovery of Africa's populated interior forced an increasingly careful consideration of how travellers approached the region and what steps were necessary to ensure their protection.

From the very beginning of the African Association's exploratory activities, the safety of its agents was of paramount importance. In 1789, the first explorers to be dispatched to penetrate the interior from North Africa were qualified by their ability to travel unnoticed through the great desert and its Muslim inhabitants. Lucas had spent many years in Morocco and was fluent in Arabic, whereas Ledyard was given the "necessary instructions for assuming the dress, and adopting the manners that are requisite for an Egyptian Traveller."⁵⁶⁰ In contrast, Daniel Houghton and Park retained their normal clothing during their advances up the Gambia through lands Britain was more familiar with. It is arguable that the rationale behind such circumstances of travel and contact with Africans was coloured by existing expectations of how travellers would be received in certain areas. During their respective ventures, however, Houghton was murdered entering Islamic territory and Park was detained and physically abused by the Moorish Chief Ali. Consequently, Banks admitted

⁵⁵⁸ Spittler, 'Explorers in Transit' (1996), 231-253.

⁵⁵⁹ Bitterli & Robinson, *Cultures* (2003), 20-50.

⁵⁶⁰ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 24.

during the preparations in 1798 for Friederich Hornemann's expedition that he believed Park would have fared better had he been able to pass as a Muslim.⁵⁶¹

In contrast to the experiences of Houghton and Park, Lyon and Ritchie had demonstrated the surprising hospitality of the inhabitants of the Fezzan in 1819 and were confident of a friendly reception further inland. Moreover, the imagery surrounding Bowdich's embassy to the *Asantehene*, had recently promoted the contrast of Britons in Africa (figure 29) so when Oudney, Denham and Clapperton left Tripoli for Bornu in 1822, they chose to openly travel as Christians. Their published journal relished in the heroic image of their crossing of the Sahara:

[W]e were the first English travellers in Africa who had resisted the persuasion that a disguise was necessary, and who had determined to travel in our real character as Britons and Christians, and to wear, on all occasions, our English dresses...⁵⁶²

Although the Bornu Mission had travelled in the company of a heavily armed escort, Oudney remained convinced of their safety without it, lending hope to the broader diplomatic goals the Colonial Office entertained. Clapperton later credited the success of his cartographic survey to the maintenance of his identity and commented that the hospitality he and his companions had received was evidence of the esteem with which Britons were regarded in the interior.⁵⁶³ It had been at Warrington's insistence that members of the Bornu Mission avoid wearing disguise because he feared that as they could not convincingly pass for Muslims they would only cause offence by trying. He had been very critical of such behaviour from Ritchie and Lyon and believed that their attempts to gain access to a Mosque in Murzuq whilst disguised was the reason for much of their subsequent difficulties securing passage further south.⁵⁶⁴ But in 1818, the reception of two Englishmen in the interior had been an entirely unknown variable which is why Ritchie's expedition

⁵⁶¹ NHM JBRP, f.166, Joseph Banks to Frederick Hornemann, Soho Square, 16 January 1798. Whilst in Cairo, Hornemann was further warned against any attempt to dress as a Christian because Napoleon's 1798 invasion of Egypt generated an unforeseen level of hostility across North Africa that posed a serious impediment to any attempted journey to the interior.

⁵⁶² Denham, *Narrative* (1826), xvii.

⁵⁶³ NA FO 76/19, f.33, Hugh Clapperton to Hanmer Warrington, Tripoli, 10 February 1825.

⁵⁶⁴ NA FO 76/14, f.21, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 1 July 1820 - The history of exploration, however, is nothing if not romanticised and Lyon's published journal is decorated with illustrations of his appearance as a Muslim.



*Figure 29: Detail from “First day of the Yam Custom” showing uniformed British officers sitting in the midst of a crowd of Asante. Obviously the experiences of travellers in the Muslim interior were different from those of the tropical coast but in terms of the popular British image of geographical and ethnographic enquiries, Bowdich’s book provided a valuable reference point. T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London, 1819). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland*

specifically categorised the purchasing of “Moorish Costumes” as a travel expense.⁵⁶⁵

As well as the relative safety of travelling incognito, there had always been concerns that the act of recording notes or using instruments to make observations might attract undue, even hostile, attention. Hornemann, for example, had assured the African Association before leaving Britain in 1797 that whilst he planned to operate in secret, should he be discovered taking astronomical measurements he would simply claim that his instruments were items for sale.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ NA CO 2/9, f.38, Joseph Ritchie, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁵⁶⁶ Hornemann, *Journal* (1802), xxii.

Various travellers had noted concern that Africans (Muslims, in particular) believed Britain intended to take control of their lands; Al-Kanemi of Bornu was critical of what he had heard of Britain's expansion in India and was cautious of Oudney's appearance as Vice-Consul in 1823. Consequently, efforts were made to avoid antagonization and Warrington insisted that during these expeditions from Tripoli, it was important that Britain's intentions not be hidden in case they could be misconstrued as hostile in any way. As British interaction with the region became increasingly dominated by the humanitarian agenda, the envisioned paternalistic relationship was increasingly reflected in the outward appearance of travellers and Warrington believed that such attention supported their prospective role as mediators between Tripoli and the interior. Writing to the Colonial Secretary, he argued:

The object of England must be most obvious and which must tend to the advantage of the Inhabitants of the Interior & not to their disadvantage as they must be fully aware that we could not conquer or molest them in any shape ... when the object is to the honor of our Great Nation and to the credit of the Individual why assume anything but the National Character.⁵⁶⁷

Exploring West Africa, therefore, became an activity which was balanced against its presentation to Africans as well as Britons at home. Projecting a peaceful and benevolent image of Britain's intentions became a fundamental element of further engagement in the Saharan region, one that was increasingly hard to separate from the act of mapping. During the preparation for Ritchie's expedition in 1818 that was to help familiarise the interior with Britain's humanitarian goals, Warrington determined that:

the plan is fraught with innumerable advantages to geographical science, to the Commercial Interest of the Civilized World and ultimately I hope it may rescue Millions of our Fellow Creatures from an abyss of ignorance and superstition."⁵⁶⁸

As a measure of how that approach was perceived to be successful in terms of the local reception to Britons, there is a useful contrast to be made between the deaths of Ritchie in 1819 and Oudney in 1824. In the first instance, it was reported that Lyon had privately conducted a Protestant burial

⁵⁶⁷ NA FO 76/14, f.22, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 1 July 1820.

⁵⁶⁸ NA CO 2/8, f.11, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 7 March 1818.

service for Ritchie whereas in public his only option had been to read the first chapter of the Quran over the grave.⁵⁶⁹ Clapperton on the other hand buried his friend as he had travelled, as a Christian.

...and as we travelled as Englishmen & servants of His Majesty I considered it my most indispensable duty to read the Service of the dead over the Grave according to the Rites of the Church of England which happily was not objected to but on the Contrary I was paid a good deal of respect for so doing...⁵⁷⁰

On his return to Britain, Denham concluded that their reception in the interior had actually improved when it was learned that Britons had a religion of their own and were not godless.⁵⁷¹

If being able to travel for knowledge and make sense of the chaos of unknown lands conveyed power of the observer over the observed, then the appearance of British agents in West Africa increasingly reflected similar assumptions of cultural superiority. Illustrative of how these themes merged, Laing included within his list “Instruments which will be required ... for certain scientific purposes in the interior of Africa” an “outfit for self” at a cost of £50 which contrasts neatly with Ritchie’s similar preparations for travelling.⁵⁷²

Laing’s celebrity and conspicuous presence as his party travelled across the Sahara, despite his guide’s insistence that he travel with caution, however, ultimately contributed to the circumstances which led to his death.⁵⁷³ The public outcry in the aftermath of his death was arguably therefore encouraged by their disappointment that British travellers were not guaranteed as warm a reception as they had been led to believe and the shock that their mission of innocent enquiry was not respected. However, considering the discussion of a traveller’s reliability when recording their observations, the question of disguise during an expedition of discovery became embroiled a contemporary distaste for subterfuge.⁵⁷⁴ When it was discovered that the Frenchman René Caillié had apparently succeeded where Laing had failed, disguised as a Muslim, Barrow was furious. If an individual was willing to adopt a disguise to make their travels easier, he argued, how

⁵⁶⁹ *The Quarterly Review, Volume XXV* (London, 1821), 40.

⁵⁷⁰ NA FO 76/18, f.202, Hugh Clapperton to Hanmer Warrington, Kano, 2 February 1824.

⁵⁷¹ NA CO 2/13, f.161, Dixon Denham to Lord Bathurst, London, 1 June 1825.

⁵⁷² NA CO 392/3, f.18, Alexander G. Laing to Lord Bathurst, 1825.

⁵⁷³ NA FO 76/19, f.347-348, Alexander G. Laing to Hanmer Warrington, “Gadames”, 13 September 1825.

⁵⁷⁴ , 203-225; *The Quarterly Review (Volume XLI)* (London, 1829), 454.

could they represent the cultured observations of metropolitan scholarship. “[H]aving once started in the character of an imposter,” *The Quarterly Review* wrote, “it became quite necessary for his safety to keep up the cheat; but we fear the habit got the better of him, and was sometimes practiced in matters where deception was less pardonable.”⁵⁷⁵

By the end of this period, the role of British explorers and their appearance was fairly well defined. The identity of travellers sent to Africa was now their qualification as both observer and as arbiters of British culture, a role that was well-suited to the naval officers which Barrow and the Admiralty preferred sending into West Africa. The nature of exploration had undeniably changed by the 1841 Niger Expedition, as had the character of Britain’s enquiries, and their agenda in the region had become one in which they engaged directly with the land and population.

“His Royal Highness has sent his followers and subjects”⁵⁷⁶

Writing in 1815, Sir Walter Scott recalled pleading with Park (who was a close friend) before his return to Africa in 1805, trying to persuade him not to travel in the company of soldiers who would surely draw the hostility of locals. “He refuted[sic.] my objection,” Scott wrote, “by referring to the subdivision of Africa into petty districts, the Chiefs of whom were not likely to form any regular combination for cutting him off & whose boundaries were soon traversed.”⁵⁷⁷

In the period covered by this study, various strategies were deployed to support the enquiries of British travellers in the field. Yet the course of exploration and subsequent development of the map was limited by the access granted by Africans and the assistance they provided in terms of guidance, portage and protection. Kennedy’s discussion of what he has called “gateways” into Africa identifies those points along the coast where access was negotiated and granted, and the conditions by which travellers were permitted to pursue their enquiries often

⁵⁷⁵ *The Quarterly Review* (Volume XLI) (London, 1829), 454.

⁵⁷⁶ RGS SSC/94.

⁵⁷⁷ NLS MS 786, f.11-12, Sir Walter Scott to “the Editor of Mungo Park’s Journal published in 1816”, Piccadilly, 24 April 1815.

relied on the promise of some form of reward or payment.⁵⁷⁸ In consequence of the former discussion of appearance and contact, several British expeditions simply prepared for such unknown variables either by disguise or through strength of arms and numbers at the risk of attracting unwanted attention.

However, the West African political landscape was constantly changing, sometimes quite dramatically, and British cartography was rarely able to keep abreast of it. Consequently, the direction of expeditions through unknown landscapes increasingly had to recognise the unknown variable of local politics. As Dupuis noted in his history of the Guinea coast:

The deplorable action of war in this country is unquestionably a bar to the attainment of a correct and lasting system of its geography... We need not go far for a solution of what this problem would give: It may be seen by a reference to maps of Guinea, which were engraved as recently as the early part of last century, that upon the Gold Coast only, many kingdoms enjoyed, in their day, a political and substantial existence; but which are now no more; or at most they exhibit but a shadow, which gives only a faint outline of their original splendour, their opulence, and their vigor; having been, from time to time harassed by cruel wars, of a tendency to extirpate or expatriate the population in a mass, and their names as nations.⁵⁷⁹

Securing a reliable knowledge of African states and the boundaries of their influence by travellers in the field was hugely important, though not always achievable. For the direction of successive expeditions, therefore, alternative strategies were devised.

During preparations for Tuckey's voyage to the Congo, Banks was concerned about the dangers facing a large party of Europeans in Africa if their presence was interpreted as hostile.⁵⁸⁰

He communicated his fears to Barrow:

⁵⁷⁸ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 95-128.

⁵⁷⁹ J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee. By Joseph Dupuis, Esq. Late His Britannic Majesty's Envoy and Consul for that Kingdom. Comprising Notes and Researches relative to the Gold Coast, and the Interior of Western Africa; Chiefly collected from Arabic MSS. and information communicated by the Moslems of Guinea: to which is prefixed an account of the origin and causes of the present war. Illustrated with a Map and Plates.* (London, 1824), Appendix, xlvi.

⁵⁸⁰ It was hoped that Barrow's experience of African society from his time at the Cape of Good Hope would be applicable to the relatively unknown Congo region. For his part, Barrow was optimistic that the people whom Tuckey would likely encounter on his ascent of the river would remain peaceful provided the British party did not antagonise them. Banks was concerned though, that any indigenous peoples who had yet to be "made sensible of European superiority" would pose a possible threat. Even if they were well-acquainted with Europeans, he was worried that any British presence would invariably lead to conflict without prior

The black Monarchs in the Bite of Benin as well as on both sides of it, well know that a Passage attempted through their Dominions, without permission first obtained, is a legitimate cause of War; & their Armies, accustomed to share in the profits of Passage Money, resent such an insult on their Sovereign as European States resent a violation of Territory.⁵⁸¹

Confrontation was not their agenda but it was agreed that in such a scenario, the naval party would be able to defend itself adequately to negate any serious opposition and it was Banks who first advocated the use of a steam ship to safely carry the crew and its armaments upriver.⁵⁸²

By contrast, Peddie's expedition was heavily armed but was expected to travel through a land that Britain was broadly familiar with. Yet the experiences of the African Association's agents in that region and Park's more recent exploits for the government had illustrated the importance of local cooperation so the Colonial Office sought to prepare the ground ahead of Peddie's advance. A declaration of intent was summarily printed in English and Arabic to be circulated through trade networks ahead of their intended route up the Rio Nunez which introduced the mission as one of enquiry and great commercial advantage to the area. Moreover, it guaranteed that anyone who provided the party with material assistance would be provided with letters of credit worth five ounces of gold collectable from any British settlement at the coast.⁵⁸³

The strategy of engaging with the African population directly through the medium of printed proclamations as Peddie had done was encouraged and imitated several times through the

arrangement and permission. See NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.170, Joseph Banks to John Barrow, 6 August 1815; NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.172, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 8 August 1815.

⁵⁸¹ NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.176-177, Joseph Banks to John Barrow, London, 12 August 1815.

⁵⁸² NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.175, Joseph Banks to John Barrow, London, 12 August 1815.

⁵⁸³ RGS LMS P 14, c.1818 – the declaration reads:

“This is to make known that Major John Peddie, Capt. Tho[mas] Campbell and Surgeon Will[jam] Cowdry; have been employed by the British Government to proceed from Senegal into the interior of Africa, to trace the course of the River Niger; and to obtain such information respecting the Countries through which they pass, as may be useful in the extension and improvement of Commerce which is the object of the British Government in sending those persons to Africa; and that any Person who may happen to meet with those Gentlemen, and shall be the Bearer of a Letter to the Governor of this or any other British Settlement on the Gold Coast, from either of them, shall receive five Ounces of Gold, and be liberally rewarded for any Service or Act of kindness which it may appear by such Letter may have been rendered to either of them”

In the end, Peddie and his successors encountered several obstacles in the course of their mission and were often at the mercy of African rulers who remained suspicious of their presence and demanded excessive bribes for safe passage, possibly in response to the promises of gold contained in the printed advert to their mission. See Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 129-131.

remainder of this period. Bowdich's orders before his visit to Kumasi in 1817 also included a request that he distribute similar missives concerning Peddie's ongoing mission because there was no knowing in what direction he or his command would be forced to pursue once they had ascended the Rio Nunez. In a more general sense though, Bowdich recognised the value of such engagement and advised the officers at Cape Coast Castle to continue circulating them in aid of any future expeditions mounted by the British government.⁵⁸⁴ His own geographical research had suggested a greater communication between the Guinea Coast and the interior than formerly suspected so there was no knowing how far those notices could travel and which future endeavours they might aid.

During the successive ventures of Ritchie, Lyon, Oudney, Denham and Clapperton, their routes were largely predetermined by the cooperation of the Pasha of Tripoli. His authority extended by different measures across the desert to Bornu even though his relationship with that place was strained. As such, travellers carried letters of introduction from the Pasha and Consul Warrington addressed to specific individuals in the interior to secure passage. The several expeditions to be conducted from Tripoli owed much of their success to the reputation of the Consul, leading Warrington to declare that "the British Consul is a greater man in the Interior of Africa than in any other quarter of the world."⁵⁸⁵ If there was a conscious desire to present British enquiries in a particular manner, then communication with Africans in this way was a valuable means of encouraging that view. In the translated letter from the Pasha to al-Kanemi which accompanied Denham's published journal, for example, was a request that the Sheikh of Bornu help the mission to "proceed to the country of Soudan, to behold its marvellous things, and traverse the seas (lakes or rivers), and deserts therein."⁵⁸⁶ During Oudney and Clapperton's journey to Sokoto to meet Sultan Bello, they were furnished with similar messages from al-Kanemi addressed to Bello and the Sheikh of Kano which explained their reasons for travel, presumably as it was

⁵⁸⁴ Bowditch, *Mission* (1819), 8, 457-458.

⁵⁸⁵ NA FO 76/19, f.174, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli 18 July 1818.

⁵⁸⁶ Denham, *Narrative* (1826), Appendix, 141-142.

understood in Bornu. “[They] have visited us through the medium & love of our Master Yusuff[sic.], Bashaw[sic.] of Tripoli,” he wrote to Bello, “at their own desire to see the Country which is by God’s mercy ours, & what is wonderful in the Land, its Rivers, Lakes, and People, all of which may differ from those of their own Country...”⁵⁸⁷

The friendly communications between travellers and African rulers at that time provided the context and model for Laing’s expedition to Timbubtu in 1825. Consequently, the Consulate in Tripoli sought to build on that established model of positive engagement and cooperation. Warrington was so confident of the preparations for Laing’s expedition that he wrote to the Colonial Office in July 1825: “The arrangements of this mission are excellent the success so certain, that I feel inclined to congratulate you by anticipation.”⁵⁸⁸ Before Laing left Tripoli, Warrington dispatched letters to the “Sultan of the Kingdom & Territory of Tomboctoo” and other known and unknown rulers who might be found on the road across the desert asking for their hospitality and help.⁵⁸⁹ Notes of credit were written which guaranteed the repayment of any money he might need to borrow from locals, signed by Warrington and the Pasha of Tripoli.⁵⁹⁰ Perhaps more importantly for Laing’s upcoming mission though, was his marriage to Warrington’s daughter shortly before leaving Tripoli. After the ceremony, the Consul provided him with a “Circular introducing you as my son...”⁵⁹¹ As noted above, Laing’s death despite the optimism with which he was dispatched contributed greatly to the disappointment felt in Britain.

After the failure of Laing and Clapperton’s expeditions in 1825 and 1826 respectively, the discovery of the Niger’s outlet changed the nature of Britain’s engagement with the region entirely. However, the established tradition of addressing Africans directly and en mass continued and was echoed by Laird whose “Proclamation to the Natives of North Africa” in 1832 declared:

⁵⁸⁷ RGS DD 29, c.1823; It is observable that the transcript of this letter which appeared in Denham’s published journal is somewhat different, with more elaborate language. See Denham, *Narrative* (1826), Appendix, 145-146.

⁵⁸⁸ NA FO 76/19, f.186, Hanmer Warrington to Robert Wilmot Horton, Tripoli, 24 July 1825.

⁵⁸⁹ NA FO 76/19, f.178-180, 30 July 1825.

⁵⁹⁰ NA FO 76/19, f.155, 22 June 1825.

⁵⁹¹ NA FO 76/19, f.244, Hanmer Warrington to Alexander Gordon Laing, Tripoli, 27 July 1825.

...His Royal Highness has sent his followers and subjects a number of times previously to the land(s) of (Northern) Africa and the Sudan for the purpose of beholding and discovering their marvels, their seas and rivers and the strange things which are to be found in them, things not found in our land(s)... We seek protection, license/liberty and maintenance for us and for our community in order to buy and sell because we are your guests.⁵⁹²

Considering the popular notion that Africans had little or no knowledge of map-making, it seems plausible that the portrayal of British exploration as a process of observing the physical landscape could be an attempt to introduce and explain the basics of cartography. Furthermore, by describing their curiosity regarding the strange and unusual sites to be found in Africa, these proclamations addressed the confusion which Park had famously encountered during his first journey to the Niger in 1795. On that occasion, upon arriving in Segou to meet Mansong (King of the Bambara) Park had been asked why he wanted to view that one particular river; had he none in his own country?⁵⁹³

The practise of producing statements for distribution was continued by the Niger Expedition in 1841 when it was invited to utilise the printing press at Cape Coast Castle by Governor George Maclean there. One of the missionaries accompanying that venture, James Frederick Schön, transcribed an address which was then “translated into the Hausa language” and printed.⁵⁹⁴ The decision not to translate it into Arabic indicates their careful consideration of who they were likely to be engaging with, and where they would be found; a significant advance from the general Arabic notices that had been circulated previously and an indication of how different language groups were associated within the geography of West Africa.

As these examples have shown, the relationship between Britons and Africans during exploration was complex and one which clearly involved consciously engaging with the indigenous population directly. The projected appearance of exploration was therefore something which was carefully considered to both protect British travellers and introduce them to the Africans of the

⁵⁹² RGS SSC/94.

⁵⁹³ Park, *Travels* (1799), 200 – Park feared that his mission of enquiry was so outrageous to the Bambaras that they would believe he was lying in order to hide his true purpose from them. Mansong actually refused to meet with Park (who was convinced that the King’s Muslim advisors had cautioned against such an act) but he sent the traveller 5,000 cowries for food and lodgings.

⁵⁹⁴ CRL CMS Acc726/F1, f.21.

interior. These are significant considerations in this context of map-making as the information which these expeditions collected was unavoidably bound to the ability of Britons to gather information. More importantly, the manner in which Britain sought to engage with the region indicates their confidence in the ability of such notices to be dispersed through the interior. It is the view of West Africa which developed on the map, with a web of transport and communication lines across it, that encouraged that approach. Having acknowledged ways in which Britons negotiated their travels, we now turn to the contribution of indigenous testimony to the map.

African testimony: “unadulterated as it came from my Informants”⁵⁹⁵

During this study, information derived from African sources was inseparable from the map. There was, for example, a desire to retain place names (such as the Niger’s local title *Joliba* which Park recorded), presumably in recognition of the surprisingly large population found to inhabit the region who had already established their own appellations. It is symbolic that through the African Association’s early investigations, Rennell observed: the “country to which the Geographers of Europe have given the name of Nigritia, is called by the Arabs Soudán...”⁵⁹⁶ Where *Nigritia* had been on d’Anville’s “*Afrique*”, *Soudan* appears instead on Rennell’s “*Sketch*” and remained a standard fixture thereafter.

Enlightenment-era natural history projects were often sympathetic to local information and actively sought to engage with indigenous forms of knowledge.⁵⁹⁷ As shifting academic and socio-political agenda began to assume Western dominance over non-Western culture, however, the value of such information was rejected or at best made conditional to several external circumstances. Yet Africans remained an obvious source of detailed local geography and their role

⁵⁹⁵ RGS LMS R 12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, Tripoli, 30 April 1819.

⁵⁹⁶ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 164.

⁵⁹⁷ J. Gascoigne, ‘Cross-cultural knowledge exchange in the age of the Enlightenment’ in S. Konishi, M. Nugent & T. Shellam (eds.), *Indigenous Intermediaries: New Perspectives on Exploration Archives* (Acton, 2015), 133-134.

during British exploration is under increasing scrutiny to help look past those representational traditions which have clouded the record. Recognising the contribution of indigenous testimony is, as Lambert says: “a way of seeking to revert European occlusions and to demonstrate the co-constitution of cartographic representations and exploratory practices.”⁵⁹⁸

Incorporating African spatial knowledge into the British geographical archive was made problematic in two distinct ways. In the first instance, the form of empirical cartography which had consolidated in Britain during the Enlightenment was increasingly dependent on the accuracy and reliability of its contributing information. Maps which relied on the traveller’s observations were legitimised by their claims to trustworthiness; an accolade that was established by the way its contributing data was collected in the field and then processed. Indigenous testimonies were by their very nature incapable of fulfilling the same criteria as those applied to European observers, particularly as their enquiries were increasingly made with the use of scientific instruments. For as long as it proved difficult for British travellers to access the interior, map-makers ultimately had to make the best of any data they received. Yet it was an unavoidable fact that British explorers were reliant on the directions and guidance of Africans whom they encountered on their journeys and the verbal itinerary routes of local informants formed the basis of many cartographic developments from the late eighteenth century.⁵⁹⁹

It is because of the recording of African place names and geographical knowledge, and their undisguised contribution to the map in certain instances, that I do not think it is entirely just to presume that contemporary practice was to discount it out of hand; certainly not during the African Association’s enquiries. In 1789, for example, Lucas’ interview with Sharif Imhammad on the northern fringe of the Sahara saw him record itineraries of caravan routes across the desert to Bornu. In that instance, Lucas introduced the principles of the map to the Sharif and explained that all he needed it was the distances and directions between important places of the interior. The

⁵⁹⁸ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 118.

⁵⁹⁹ See Akerman, ‘Finding Our Way’ (2007), 39.

Sharif's testimony was thus easily adapted to the other itineraries and rationalised geographies collected by the Association, and contributed towards Rennell's geographical elucidations. Lucas' meeting with Imhammed is a significant moment of cartographic contact between Britain and Africa in the late eighteenth century and we can see how the map is carefully positioned between the two individuals as an article which separates their two cultures.

[Lucas] one evening, took from his pocket his map of Africa, and after satisfying the Shereef's curiosity as to its nature and use, told him that he once intended it as a present to the King of Fezzan; but, that having discovered in it several mistakes, he now proposed to draw another that should be more correct. The Shereef replied, that the King would be highly gratified with such a present. Mr. Lucas said, that if he would assist him with an account of the distances from place to place, in such parts of the country he had visited, and with their names in Arabic, and would also satisfy him as to such questions as he should ask, he would prepare *two* correct copies of the map; and would give one of them to the King and the other to himself. The Shereef was delighted with the proposal; and they immediately retired to a sand hill at some distance from the tent, that their conversation might be unreserved and uninterrupted.⁶⁰⁰

Imhammed's account provided Rennell with much of the data he later used to position Bornu (albeit incorrectly) on the map.

To highlight a further example from the early nineteenth century, the first detailed accounts of the Hausa states collected by Hornemann during his travels in the Fezzan actually included a sketch by a Marabout of the division of its principal features. Irrespective of a warning from Hornemann's editor against any reliance on solitary African information without the support of complimentary evidence, this basic outline was adopted by both Rennell and Aaron Arrowsmith in their respective maps of Africa in 1802 (figure 30).⁶⁰¹ It is observable then that when African testimony was the only source of geographical data and could be interpreted in such a way as to make sense it was perfectly acceptable to include it on the map.

⁶⁰⁰ See Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 73-74 – italicised words in the original.

⁶⁰¹ Hornemann, *Journal* (1802), ii, 111-112.

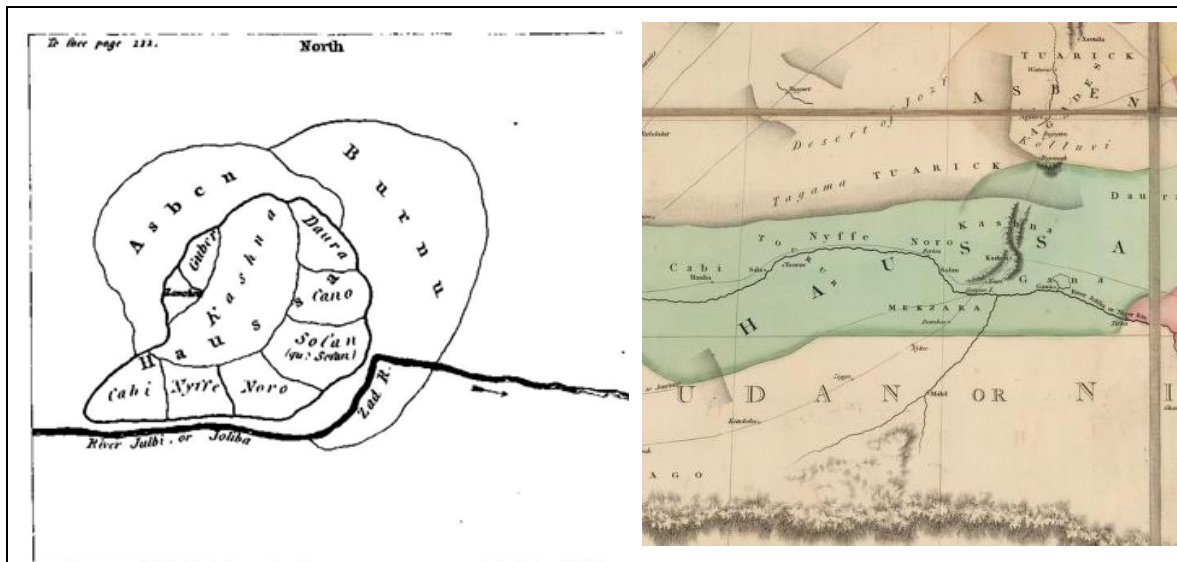


Figure 30: (Left) Sketch of Hausaland from a Marabout interviewed by Frederick Hornemann in F. Hornemann, *The Journal of Frederick Hornemann's Travels, from Cairo to Mourzouk, the Capital of the Kingdom of Fezzan, in Africa. In the Years 1797-8* (London, 1802), p111-112. (Right) Detail from Aaron Arrowsmith, "Africa" (1802). Note the positioning of place-names in Arrowsmith's map relative to the Marabout's description: (from left to right) "Cabi", "Nyffe", "Noro", "Solan" (appears as a town), "Cano" (Kano), "Daura". "Burnu" extends to the rightward from the border marked in pink.

The second problem concerning the treatment of indigenous knowledge rests in the rejection of Africans as reliable or trustworthy informants. In part, this dismissal reflected the emergence of various negative attitudes towards non-Europeans which assumed their inability to identify useful information or transmit it in a sensible format. Throughout this period the latent natural ability of non-Europeans to observe their surroundings in a scientific fashion was increasingly questioned.⁶⁰² A brief survey by Nicholas Hudson into the emergence of human categorisations in Western parlance and the definition of terms like "nation" and "race" notes their close relationship to contemporary scientific attitudes. He contends that any assumption of superiority by Europeans over groups such as Africans was usually a reflection of how contemporaries measured their relative degrees of civilization, rather than any racial distinction.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 22-57, 227-258.

⁶⁰³ N. Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29:3 (Spring, 1996), 247-264.

These were attitudes which developed into the pseudo-scientific racism of the latter-nineteenth century.

Looking closely at the map-making process and the gathering of information in Africa, we see a much more complicated picture emerging; one in which indigenous sources were utilised during the construction of rationalised geographies. As British exploration increasingly witnessed the use of advanced specialist equipment though, the qualification of information acceptable enough to influence the map shifted so as to deny Africans the proper recognition for their contributions. Furthermore, the image of discovery popularised by the developing genre of exploration narratives that projected European cultural superiority ultimately left no room for Africans; if scientific enquiry was to be a gentlemanly pursuit, then only gentlemen could be seen contributing to the map.⁶⁰⁴ Work by Driver and Lowri Jones to uncover the presence of indigenous knowledge and participation in the archives and published works of explorers draws attention to this problem. Their initial conclusions identified several types of so-called “intermediaries” whose presence was disguised, masked or overwritten entirely by European textual traditions, such that they are only “partially visible” in subsequent printed materials.⁶⁰⁵

When African testimony did find its way onto maps, geographers or travellers could either acknowledge their sources or hide them. MacQueen’s theory that the Niger reached the Bight of Biafra was based on interviews he had with slaves on Grenada but he did not overtly advertise his use of “captive knowledge”. Lambert show however that it remains distinguishable below the surface of his writing.⁶⁰⁶ In contrast, neither Bowdich nor Dupuis made any effort to hide the

⁶⁰⁴ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 82-89 – The distrust of African testimony extended beyond racial distinction and could be applied to those who were believed to have been corrupted by their exposure to African culture. The employment of Simon Lucas by the African Association in 1789, for example, was criticised by the British Consul to Morocco (who was acquainted with him) who informed Joseph Banks that: “He never has, nor never will, nor can he if he pleased, tell you one word of the truth about the country... by being brought so early among the Moors [he] has got such a determined habit of lying that he is quite a proverb not only over all Barbary, but at this place.” Quoted in Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 200.

⁶⁰⁵ Driver & Jones, *Hidden Histories* (2009); Driver, ‘Intermediaries and the archive of exploration’ (2015), 16.

⁶⁰⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 108-111.

contribution of African merchants and slaves to their maps.⁶⁰⁷ This is possibly because the very presence of Muslim traders in the Asante capital with connections inland was indicative of a communication between the coast and the interior thought to be impossible because of the Kong Mountains. As Robin Law has observed, the historical value of their accounts (particularly those collected by Dupuis) is the image they outline of Africa's geography as it was understood by Africans.⁶⁰⁸ Bowdich believed passionately in the value of African information and resented the criticism he received from Barrow for his use of it.⁶⁰⁹ He questioned who else would have such intimate knowledge of African geography if not the people who lived there? With the care and attention of Britain's scholars, he argued, such knowledge could be made reliable.

The hourly arrivals in *Coomassie*[sic.] of visitors, merchants, and slaves ... furnish a positive knowledge, which, if laid down with caution and discussed with candor, will establish the *British* claim to the discovery of these regions, by solid outlines, which the grateful and assisted traveller of any other nation may fill up and correct, but which he will never find reason to erase.⁶¹⁰

Dupuis was more careful in his presentation of indigenous sources and made the important distinction between the untrustworthy "heathen Negroe" and the more reliable "native African traveller", by which he referred to Muslim traders.⁶¹¹ He qualified the division of his faith on the grounds of their respective levels of civilization and he reminded his readers that the negative image of North Africa's Barbary Arabs and Moors should not be attributed to the interior states. Although he preferred to base his geography on eye-witness accounts rather than second or third-

⁶⁰⁷ Bowdich's map actually contains a smaller map inset titled "Reported Courses of the Niger to the Nile, Gambaroo to Cauder, Oogooawai to the Congo" of which he wrote: "My sketch in the map, of course, represents the sketches and descriptions of the natives." See Bowditch, *Mission* (1819), 203.

⁶⁰⁸ Law, "Central and Eastern Wangara" (1995), 281-305.

⁶⁰⁹ That the Niger drawn up by Bowdich was "known to the Moors (of Ashantee) by the name of Quolla, and to the negroes by that of Quorra," an article in *The Quarterly Review* (presumably by Barrow) noted, "is not surprising; nothing is more common in Africa than for the same river to bear a different name in different places, and for different rivers to bear the same name..." Problems of language and consistency were thus associated with African testimony. Apparently, however, this did not disqualify such sources entirely as Barrow found merit in certain itineraries recorded by Dupuis, specifically those which supported his continuing belief that the Niger would somehow join the Nile. His dismissal of Bowdich's geography which contemplated the same connection was, therefore, due to reasons other than simply its reliance on Africans. See *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXII)* (London, 1820), 292; *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXI)* (London, 1825), 470.

⁶¹⁰ Bowdich, *An Essay* (1824), 2-3.

⁶¹¹ Dupuis, *Journal* (1824), i-ii.

hand descriptions, he acknowledged that where “these essentials cannot be obtained in practice, others, founded upon authority, may be substituted with more or less pretension to accuracy...”⁶¹²

To overcome issues of distrust, African informers were often prefixed with claims regarding their value when British agents did record indigenous testimonies. Specifically, many were labelled as “intelligent” to justify travel decisions or cartography based on their contributions. Whilst this might appear a trivial detail, eighteenth and nineteenth century definitions of an “intelligent” person implied their good faculty and reason.⁶¹³ Thus, Consul Magra contributed to Rennell’s maps by collecting itineraries of trans-Saharan caravan routes in 1789 from an individual styled as an “intelligent man”; Peddie planned his route up the Rio Nunez in 1816 on the advice of two “very intelligent Priests”; Thomas Edward Bowdich recorded his interview with “intelligent traders” whilst at Kumasi in 1817; and Denham identified various features (that were later mapped) beyond Bornu’s southern border from the report of a “very intelligent fellow” in 1823.⁶¹⁴

There remained, however, a problem of communication and it was often feared that travellers would collect the wrong information if they were not careful. Explorers could approach the issue of language by either learning themselves or employing translators. At the beginning of this period, Europeans commonly interacted with Africans along the coast through mediators, meaning that there was no tradition of doing otherwise which could prepare travellers differently. Even in the early nineteenth century, the African Company’s governor at Cape Coast Castle reportedly never learned any local language in twenty years’ service.⁶¹⁵ During Park’s first expedition in 1795, it was only because he had been delayed by illness on the Gambia that his host Dr Laidley encouraged him to learn Mandingo. Park later admitted that had he not done so, “I was fully convinced that I never could acquire an extensive knowledge of the country or its

⁶¹²*ibid*, xxvi.

⁶¹³ See for example R.S. Jameson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: by Samuel Johnson, LL.D. and John Walker* (2nd edition) (London, 1828), 398 – Whilst *intelligent* is defined here as “Knowing; instructed; skilful; giving information,” *intelligential* is “Consisting of unbodied mind; intellectual; exercising understanding.”

⁶¹⁴ Rennell, *Elucidations* (1793), 28; NA CO 2/5, f.34, Major John Peddie to Lord Bathurst, Senegal, 23 May 1816; Bowditch, *Committee* (1819), vi; Denham, *Narrative* (1826), 144.

⁶¹⁵ T.C. McCaskie, ‘On Mouri Beach in 1821: The British and Empire in the Gold Coast’ in (eds.) T. Falola & E. Brownell, *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honor of A.G. Hopkins* (Durham, 2011), 262.

inhabitants.”⁶¹⁶ By way of contrast, Peddie’ and Campbell’s expedition in 1816 was a disaster as they struggled to communicate with the Africans they encountered, relying all the while on translators. Campbell later advised that any future expeditions should learn Arabic as a matter of “infinite importance” .⁶¹⁷ Bathurst’s instructions to Ritchie in 1818 thus reflected the experiences of both these former efforts and also his desire that the traveller learn about African geography from Africans in a manner that would help guide his later enquiries. Thus Bathurst insisted that the new Vice-Consul become acquainted with any languages that would enable him to gather information from local sources.⁶¹⁸ For his part, Ritchie was confident in his role:

I hope that the information which I shall obtain as I advance southward & become sufficiently familiar with the language to dispense with an interpreter will be more extensive as well as more minute & trustworthy than what I have yet procured, and will throw some light on the yet obscure points of African Geography.⁶¹⁹

The ability to collect details by communicating without the use of a translator was seen to be preferable as it offered fewer opportunities for misunderstandings to occur and brought the traveller one step closer to the original observation.

During Ritchie’s efforts to gather geographical itineraries of the Sahara in Tripoli, he was confronted with multiple names being attributed to a large river identifiable at different points in the interior. Popular opinion was that they must all refer to the same body of water and he concluded that “the concurrence of several persons in this point when connected with the evidence furnished by Park and Hornemann, affords a rational presumption that this opinion is correct...”⁶²⁰ In this instance, problematic sources could be authenticated if they supported the conclusions derived from the observations of reliable travellers or the rationalisations of map-makers. Yet there was confusion also because the maps and geographies which Ritchie had for his own reference marked some of these waterways in places which he could not confirm from his interviews or were

⁶¹⁶ Park, *Travels* (1799), 7.

⁶¹⁷ NA CO 2/5, f. 541-545, “Hints with a view to the success and vitality of the expedition for tracing the course of the Niger”, c.1817.

⁶¹⁸ NA CO 2/8, f.7, Lord Bathurst to Joseph Ritchie, London, 1 January 1818.

⁶¹⁹ NA CO 2/9, f.30, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁶²⁰ NA CO 2/9, f.29-30, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

inconsistent with local knowledge. With reference to Johann Lewis Burckhardt's *Travels in Nubia* (1819) and William Faden's 1803 map, he observed that:

Kamadkoo the name given to the Niger in Bornou ... appears from the vocabulary of the Bornou language transmitted home by the late Mr. Burckhardt to be the general word signifying river in that tongue. I find this name applied to the river at Bornou in Faden's Map of Africa, but I am ignorant upon what authority.⁶²¹

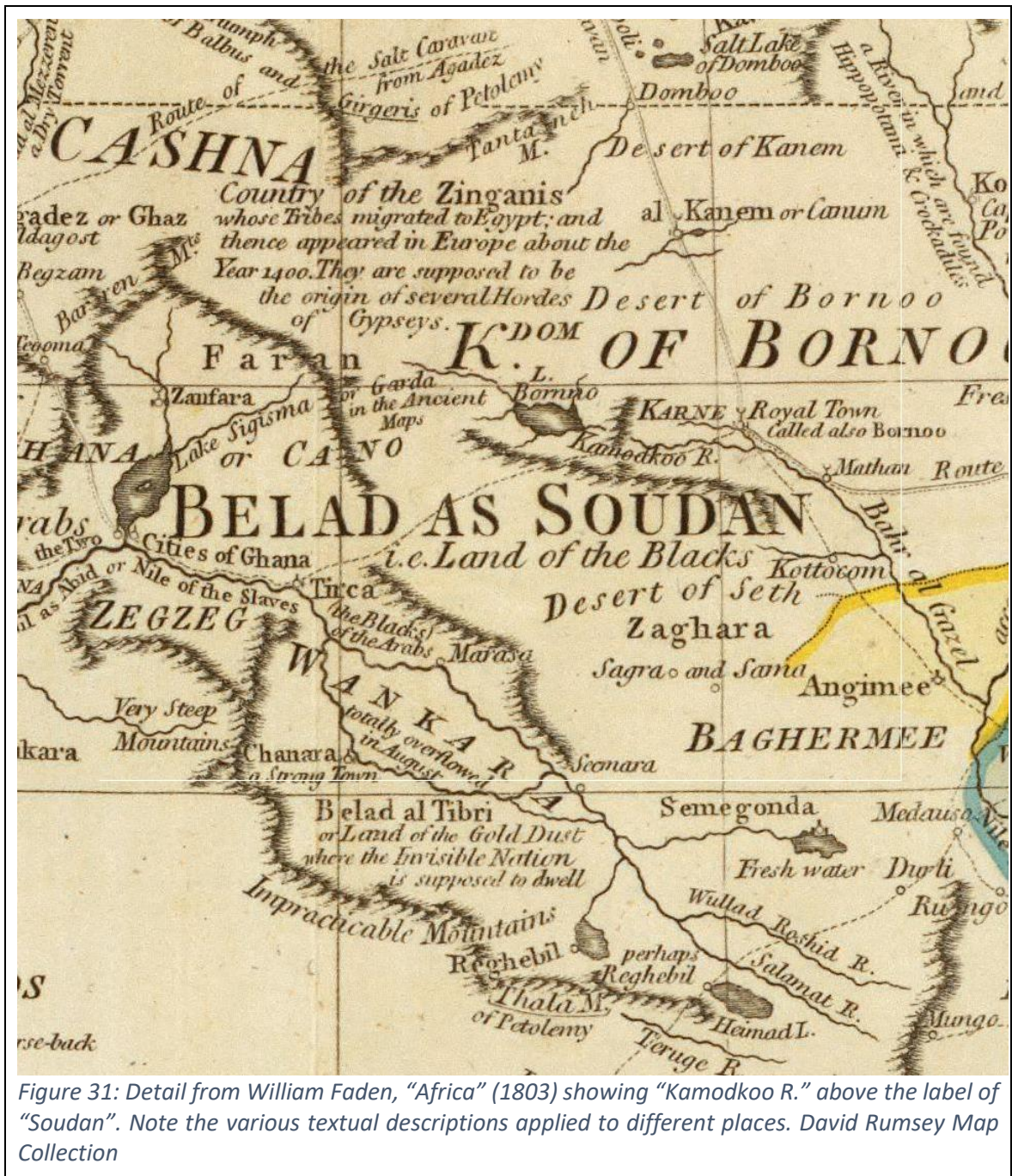
Faden's confused map of Africa (figure 31) certainly depicts a "Kamodkoo R." flowing from the rumoured lake of Bornou but it is one of few features not to have an attribution to a historical or indigenous source. At times, therefore, African testimony could make only a limited contribution to the map due to the mess of European cartography that had muddled the image.

As was the case with travellers' journals, there was a desire to transmit local testimonies in a raw format for others to interpret. Ritchie promised Barrow that he would "send every thing I have obtained home, unadulterated as it came from my Informants" with a few separate notes of any important circumstantial details.⁶²² Oudney was instructed in 1821 that should he collect anything of note from African sources, "it will be advisable to transmit it exactly in the state in which it is given, without any attempt to reconcile statements that may appear contradictory..."⁶²³ This treatment of sources relates back to the importance of "centres of calculation" discussed in the previous chapter. Unlike the traveller who took responsibility for recording and transmitting their own experiences, emphasis rested on the metropolitan scholar's ability to correlate the established geographical archive with British observations and African testimonials. There was therefore a legitimacy to African contributions provided it was mediated by some form of scholarship. In turn that scholarship is given value by its ability to interpret such data. During the early planning of Laing's expedition to Timbuktu, Warrington was eager to establish a suitable route across the

⁶²¹ NA CO 2/9, f.30, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819; see also J.L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia; by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* (London, 1819).

⁶²² RGS LMS R 12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, Tripoli, 30 April 1819.

⁶²³ NA FO 8/7, f.67, Lord Bathurst to Walter Oudney, London, 29 August 1821.



Sahara and lay the necessary groundwork before he began his journey. To do so, he advocated the dispatch of questionnaires to the principle settlements and leaders in the region so as to ascertain the safest, most hospitable path. "[C]onsiderable Information may be gained," he judged, "provided the necessary inquiries are committed to Paper in England & sent out & I can get them translated into Tripoline[sic.] Arabic." He understood then that much could be learned from local sources provided the framework and scope of any enquiries was established by the proper people. In contrast to instructions Rennell sent to Hornemann in 1797 and the Gold Coast Officers in 1802,

Warrington was not structuring the observations of Europeans but addressing the perceived inability of Africans to produce useful intelligence on their own. He argued that:

Minds unaccustomed to observation naturally pass Important events unobserved unless with the assistant[sic.] I propose.⁶²⁴

Similarities can be found in both the cases of Rennell and Warrington though by recognising the pressures of metropolitan scholarship to imprint its own authority over enquiries. As Clive Barnett's study of African testimony and its representation in the geographies of the RGS concludes: "The knowledge of non-European subjects is represented within the discourse of [the society] as the confusion and noise against which European science takes shape and secures its authority."⁶²⁵

The perception of native sources developed such that they were only as valuable as the map-maker's ability to make sense of them. MacQueen is well known for his use of African knowledge and found solace towards the end of this period by being proven correct in his hypothesis of the Niger's termination which owed much to his interviews with slaves during his time in Granada. Even so, his continued inclusion of such data was ultimately validated by his interpretation of it, and his dismissal of others' failure to make sense of similar African testimonies. As he noted in 1840:

Great care has been taken to point out what the native travellers really did state, or intended to state, and not that which they have been in too many instances made to state. In this way the true meaning of many apparently confused narratives, the erroneous speculations and conclusions of others, and the wrong positions taken by nearly all, were clearly demonstrated and ascertained.⁶²⁶

The steady gathering of African geographies, European travellers' observations and astronomical measurements to fix specific places in their proper locations ultimately led to a very confused map. The inevitable conflict between the "culture of exploration" with its emphasis on observational accuracy and instrumentation with the rationalised geographies of an earlier age

⁶²⁴ NA FO 76/16, f.19, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 27 March 1822 – underlining in original.

⁶²⁵ C. Barnett, 'Impure and Worldly Geography: the Africanist Discourse of the Royal Geographical Society, 1831-73' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 23:02 (1998), 248.

⁶²⁶ J. MacQueen, *A Geographical Survey of Africa, Its Rivers, Lakes, Mountains, Productions, States, Population, &c.* (London, 1840), 268.

contributed towards this state of affairs. Often it was simply left to the readers' discretion and so cartography usually came with labels to indicate which geographical features were derived from indigenous sources. This theme comes to a head particularly during the Bornu Mission, following Sultan Bello's drawing of the Niger in the sand for Clapperton, an event which challenged many contemporary assumptions about Muslim Africans of the interior. As Thomas Basset has argued in his assessment of the sketch: "The ability and willingness of Africans...to produce maps testifies not only to their competency in mapmaking but also to Europeans' dependency on indigenous geographical knowledge for their own mapmaking."⁶²⁷

Bello's geography depicted the Niger reaching the sea at a place called "Fundah", a revelation which inspired Clapperton's mission to the Bight of Benin two years later in search of a shorter route to the Sokoto Caliphate. Yet the copy of this map (figure 32) which he later obtained from Bello's ministers was altered (apparently by some third party) to show a different course to the Nile, leading Clapperton to believe that he was being intentionally misled by the Sultan's advisors who feared British interference in the region.⁶²⁸ The printed map which accompanies Denham's edited volumes of the Bornu Mission's activities illustrates five hypothetical courses of the river, three of which indicated an Atlantic termination. Unlike the former example of Hornemann and the Marabout, whose sketch was uncontested, Bello's geography was complicated by the existence of so many contradictory theories. The presence of several conflicting river courses is indicative of the complex debate that surrounded the issue of the Niger's termination which its publisher (Murray) could not in all propriety ignore. The decision to overlook Clapperton's claim that Bello's ministers had sought to mislead him, *The Quarterly Review* argued, was because the Arabic word for "sea" and "river" was the same, and that it was possible there had been some confusion during the initial conversation with the Sultan.⁶²⁹ Regardless, there is no distinction made on the map accompanying the Bornu Mission's journal to differentiate between the hypothetical

⁶²⁷ Basset, 'Indigenous Mapmaking' (1998), 34.

⁶²⁸ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 135.

⁶²⁹ *The Quarterly Review* (Volume XXXIII) (London, 1826), 546.

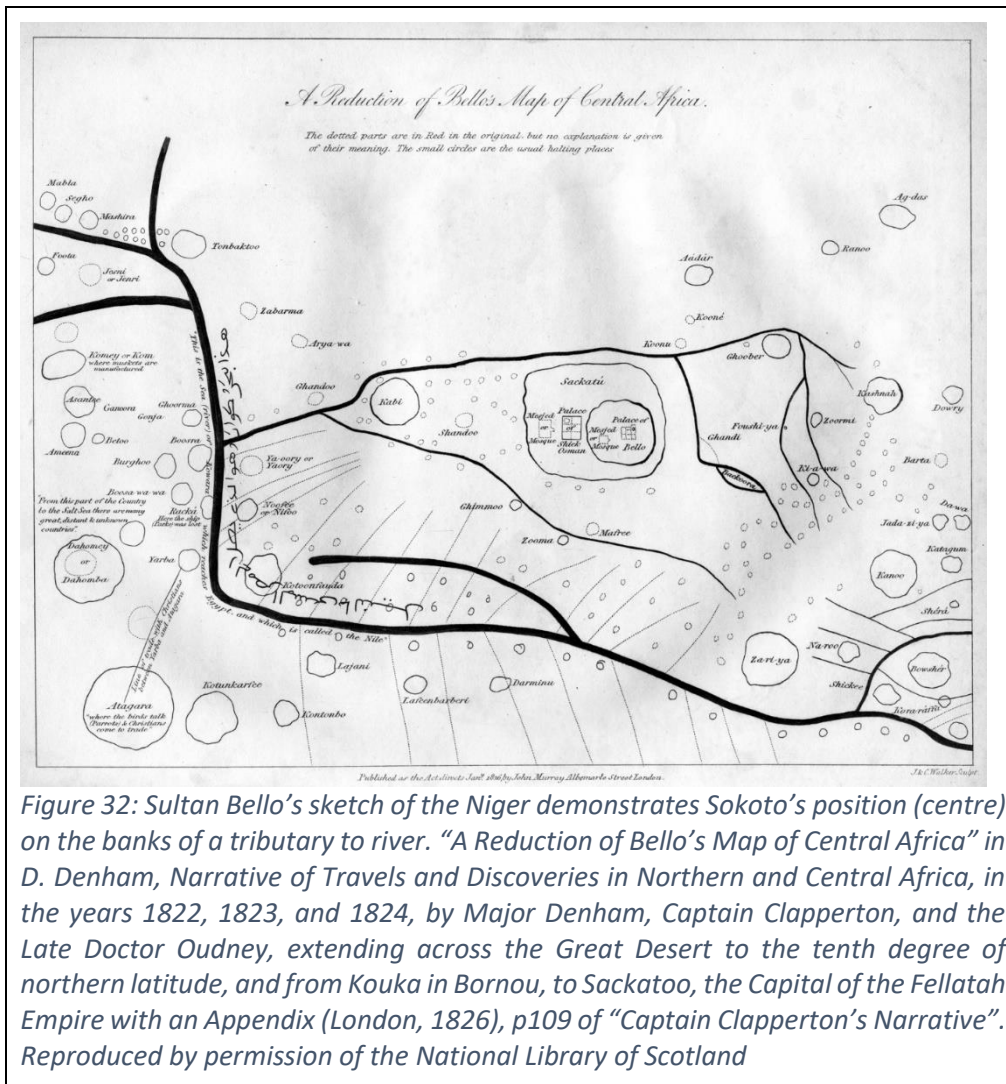


Figure 32: Sultan Bello's sketch of the Niger demonstrates Sokoto's position (centre) on the banks of a tributary to river. "A Reduction of Bello's Map of Central Africa" in D. Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824*, by Major Denham, Captain Clapperton, and the Late Doctor Oudney, extending across the Great Desert to the tenth degree of northern latitude, and from Kouka in Bornou, to Sackatoo, the Capital of the Fellatah Empire with an Appendix (London, 1826), p109 of "Captain Clapperton's Narrative". Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

river courses proposed by Europeans or Africans. Seemingly then there was no epistemic conundrum caused by the addition of these indigenous contributions, only a mess of accumulated data from sources which, when given the choice, readers could choose between based on the way it was presented to them.

To overcome the complexities of language and conflicting geographies which had evidently muddled Britain's mapping of West Africa, Sir Rufane Donkin's short text on the Niger appeared in 1829 which attempted to bring a semblance of order to the question of the Niger's course and termination. Of the confusion associated with African testimonies, Donkin's concluded that a major problem lay in the inability of British map-makers to appreciate the variation of African languages across the region. In many instances, geographers had been discussing the same features but by

different names given to them from different quarters. Donkins understood that much of Britain's geographical knowledge had been derived from African testimonials and so attempted to establish a coherent image from a more studied assessment of those sources.⁶³⁰ The conclusion which can be drawn from his writing is the recognition that Britain's cartography owed much to the indigenous knowledge which had entered the geographical archive. However much efforts were made to hide or disguise their contributions, without Africans there could be no map of West Africa.

Illustrating the presence of local testimony in the map, Macqueen's "New Map of Africa" in 1841 contains drawings of several important African contributions to the cartographic record (in addition to a view of the Niger according to Ptolemy). He included a sketch of the river's bend before Timbuktu as it was described to Park, a reduction of the chart drawn by Bello for Clapperton, and a view titled "Delineation of the middle course of the Kowara or the Niger by Sultan Bellos Schoolmaster".⁶³¹ These were each portions of the river which no European had seen or successfully measured their precise locations yet they appeared on the map, isolated from the main continental mass in their own individual boxes as *African* geographies. Their presence demonstrates MacQueen's ability to establish their place within the broader landscape as he rationalised them against the more precise geography secured through British enquiries.

* * *

⁶³⁰ R. Donkin, *A Dissertation on the Course and Probable Termination of the Niger* (London, 1829), 2-6.

⁶³¹ NA CO 700/AFRICA5.

Chapter 5: Moulding the map of West Africa

Cartography was understood to be an essential part of geographical study, one that illustrated the observable world. It was, therefore, an activity which combined a diverse and disparate range of material. With regards to West Africa, we have seen how the British map developed between 1749 and 1841 to reflect the circumstances and contributions of cartographic sponsorship, the enquiries of individuals in the field and their engagements with Africans, and I have alluded to the significance of the traveller's experience which impacted on the range and quality of their accounts. So how then did the content of the map reflect the extent of British enquiries? The model for cartographic analysis originally proposed by David Woodward in 1974 identifies four broad phases of map-making beginning with "information gathering" and "information processing" before the actual map is produced.⁶³² If we are to fully appreciate the complexities of West African cartographies, these are categories that obviously require significant expansion, especially as we have already seen how complicated "information gathering" could be.

The problem now revolves around the incorporation of new information such as travellers' journals when their experiences in West Africa impacted upon the perceived accuracy of their notes. To display cartography as correct and authoritative, it was essential that audience's expectations as to its "scientific" construction were met. As the nature of British enquiries developed to reflect evolving scholarly and commercial trends, the treatment of data changed constantly in accordance with scientific rationalities. Matthew Edney says that the metaphorical archive was "reconfigured" by improving survey techniques and methodologies in other, more accessible lands with the implication for maps of West Africa being that demands for them to

⁶³² Woodward, 'The Study of the History of Cartography' (1974), 101-115 – Following from "information gathering" and "information processing", Woodward's model then progressed to "document distribution" and "document use".

similarly reflect accurately measured first-hand observations rather than logical deductions grew.⁶³³

Due to the difficulty of mapping in this period, however, there was a continued reliance on the geographer to make sense of any materials regardless of how well they were surveyed or recorded.

The role of the geographer in this act of “information processing” was recognised in John Arrowsmith’s *London Atlas* (1838):

It has been observed by M. Humboldt that if every country were trigonometrically surveyed the construction of maps would be reduced to a mere mechanical operation: but in our days the sagacity of the geographer is still required as formerly, and sound criticism must necessarily be founded on two distinct branches of knowledge – on the discussion of the relative value of the astronomical methods employed – and on the study of descriptive and statistical works.⁶³⁴

What concerns me now is the power represented by the “sagacity of geographers” that was exercised over the map’s content which is difficult to reconcile with the empirical approach to cartography so indicative of this period.

British maps of this study were consistently made to conform to pre-existing geographical models and conclusions, often at the rejection of conflicting first-hand information. In this context we can turn especially to contemporary efforts to chart the River Niger’s course and termination because several maps and geographies appeared in this period which defined themselves by their position on the issue. In 1826 and in response to the myriad of conflicting opinions, *The Quarterly Review* challenged the arguments contrary to its own that the Niger would reach the Nile, saying that “[t]here is nothing so easy as to fill up the vacant spaces of maps with points and lines according to some favourite hypothesis.”⁶³⁵ Yet Britain’s maps were full of supposition and rationalities that were based, to some degree, on hypotheticals. In fact, the contemporary practice of geography and map-making encouraged the application of rationalisation and theory to fill in the gaps of empirical knowledge.⁶³⁶ Due to the power of sedentary and metropolitan scholarship which has already been

⁶³³ Edney, ‘Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map-Making’ (1999), 190-192.

⁶³⁴ J. Arrowsmith, *The London Atlas of Universal Geography, Exhibiting the Physical & Political Division of the Various Countries of the World, Constructed from Original Materials* (London, 1838).

⁶³⁵ *The Quarterly Review* (Volume XXXIII) (London, 1826), 543.

⁶³⁶ See M.E. Edney, ‘Theory and the History of Cartography’ in *Imago Mundi* 48:1 (1996), 185-191.

introduced, we can actually observe instances where the traveller's perspective was altered to conform to the prior conclusions of geographers in Britain.

The conflicting archives of the sedate scholar and that of the traveller appear distinct, alienated from one another until we look at the way that cartography was presented to contemporary audiences, particularly in the form of edited narratives, in which even the explorer's perspective was obscured by literary practices. In her study of imperial literature and the developing tropes of travel writing, Mary Louis Pratt identified two types of narrative which characterised the public perception of travellers' actions and the nature of their contact with foreign places: scientific and sentimental.⁶³⁷ Whilst the scientific discourse of discovery developed around the manner of its presentation and claims to objectivity, the core of that genre of sentimentality was its emphasis on the explorer's experiences in the field that allowed readers to sympathise with their observations. Public interest in travellers' exploits encouraged the emerging formulae of descriptive and presentational practices which moulded the popular image of West Africa and its inhabitants. In either case, there existed a variety of controls which influenced image of West Africa as it was presented to the public, and the representational standards adhered to by most has since been termed by Steven Shapin as "epistemological decorum."⁶³⁸ Whilst the proliferation of maps and enquiries exposed an increasingly literate population to the geography of West Africa, that demand for correct cartography forced sedentary scholarship to explain and justify its treatment of problematic field notes when delivering their conclusions. There is scope now for an examination into how mapped features become naturalised during these practices, how they were moulded to become the established image of Africa.

Throughout this period, cartography remained a useful medium between the text and the place in question, such that John Barrow even declared that "a book of Travels without a map is very unsatisfactory and sometimes unintelligible."⁶³⁹ We must ask though: does the map make as

⁶³⁷ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), 75.

⁶³⁸ Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (1994), chapter 5.

⁶³⁹ NLS MS 40057, f.108, John Barrow to John Murray, Admiralty, 26 June 1834.

much sense without the book of travels? And which takes precedence on the map, the land as it was recorded or the geographer's interpretation of it? This chapter will consequently analyse the construction of a distinct image that was fixed into reality by the drawing of maps, the assessment of historical sources, and editing of travellers' journals.

Ancients and the Niger mystery, a modern answer? Part 1

The purpose of the various pressures exercised over cartography was to render the final image (or map) a reliable interpretation of reality. Despite the emphasis on the production of a reliable view of West Africa based on first-hand observations, however, there remained the unshakable presence of texts dating from hundreds to thousands of years old which offered an enticing view that was authenticated by the lack of alternatives and the weight of history, if little else. Seeking to reconcile the texts of the "Ancients" with modern discoveries was ultimately regarded as a symbolic act of reengaging with the civilization of classical antiquity during the European Enlightenment yet it dramatically hindered the contemporary quest for scientific accuracy and the incorporation of new enquiries to the map.

Charles Withers has examined the presence of certain ancient and Arabic texts (four in particular) which defined the Niger question prior to Mungo Park's sighting of it in 1796.⁶⁴⁰ Herodotus (fifth century BC) was the first to describe a great river flowing eastwards through West Africa to join the Nile. Centuries later, Claudius Ptolemy (second century AD) described the "Nigeir" which ended in a large internal lake. He wrote though of a second great African river (the "Geir") whose course took it underground and from which it emerged to form the "Lake of Nuba" which map-makers such as d'Anville located near the upper reaches of the Nile.⁶⁴¹ A relatively more recent source from the Arabic geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi (twelfth century) which was made popular

⁶⁴⁰ Withers, 'Mapping the Niger' (2004), 171-172.

⁶⁴¹ C.K. Meek, "The Niger and the Classics: the History of a Name" in *The Journal of African History* 1:01 (January, 1960), 4.

by its translation into Latin by the 1590s contradicted these texts by declaring several of West Africa's great rivers (the Senegal, the Niger and the Nile) to be joined, and he traced their flow westward towards the Atlantic. His description of the Niger stated that its source was also that of the Nile's, though later geographers associated his Niger with the "Geir" of Ptolemy. By the beginning of this period, however, the most recent and supposedly reliable description of the West African interior was Joannes Leo Africanus' (sixteenth century) *Description of Africa* which also carried the Niger westward.⁶⁴² For our purposes here, this discussion revolves around the contemporary interpretation of these sources.

At its formation, the African Association recognised the problems of European cartography and its outdated sources when they noted that "the map of its Interior is still but a wide extended blank, on which the Geographer, on the authority of Leo Africanus, and of the Xeriff Edrissi the Nubian Author, has traced, with a hesitating hand, a few names of unexplored rivers and of uncertain nations."⁶⁴³ Major James Rennell observed that d'Anville's reliance on sources such as Ptolemy and al-Idrisi was indicative of the "low state of the African Geography".⁶⁴⁴ Yet it was from Ptolemy that Rennell identified a region in the interior (as d'Anville had formerly done) where the river might end its course, in an area named by al-Idrisi as "Wangara". The problem, therefore, was not the age of these sources; it was that nobody had confirmed them in the modern period.

The Association's founding pledge to discover the truth of Africa's geography encouraged Rennell to redress the embarrassment of contemporary cartography by drawing a new blank map as a foundation for their enquiries. Yet he remained increasingly convinced of the authenticity of classical geographies, particularly after Park ascertained the eastward flow of the Niger. That discovery represented a triumph of modern enquiry which, as Rennell later declared "confirms some points of fact, both of geography and natural history, which have appeared in ancient authors,

⁶⁴² Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 10-11 - The influence of Leo Africanus was particularly significant as it was his accounts of the people of the interior which provided a popular foundation for most African studies until new information was made available. See Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 51-58; Meek, "The Niger and the Classics" (1960), 1-17.

⁶⁴³ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 6.

⁶⁴⁴ *ibid*, 214-215.

but to which our own want of knowledge has denied credit.”⁶⁴⁵ As it became apparent that there was some merit to Ptolemy’s description of the Niger, the Association was thus content to place its faith in other elements of “the Ancients” geography:

Though we have been ignorant since the revival of letters, that this River existed, it was known to the Ancients by the name of Niger, & it is now called by the Inhabitants of its Western banks by that of Joliba ... In what manner this River disembogues itself is not known. It is certain that it does not reach the Eastern Ocean, or the Red Sea, by some hundred leagues, it is probable, therefore, that it ends in some lake, or Mediterranean Sea; and on this opinion the authority of ancient Geographers, who were better acquainted with the Interior of Africa than we now are, seems to coincide.⁶⁴⁶

Whilst the Association’s agents were busy in the interior, Rennell was actively involved in the computation of their discoveries. The more they uncovered, the more he recognised their correlation with the texts of Herodotus which he believed was “the first system of Geography on record” and so he quickly began work on a volume concerning the geography of Europe and Africa as it had been known in the ancient world.⁶⁴⁷ Such studies were popular in the eighteenth century and Jeremy Black observes that the increasing volume of maps documenting European and global history reflected both the naturalisation of cartography within society and the confidence of contemporary map-makers that they had sufficient materials to trace past occurrences.⁶⁴⁸ Rennell was certainly confident and in August 1799 he informed Joseph Banks that although Park’s discoveries had forced him to rewrite a great deal of the text concerning Africa, “I [cannot] call the delay occasioned by Park’s Business other than Gain: for it was a School to me, and much of the geographical Construction prepared for the African Association serves equally for my Work...”⁶⁴⁹

The Geographical System of Herodotus, described by Debbie Lee as a “fusion of ancient speculation and modern ‘scientific’ discovery,” was published in 1800.⁶⁵⁰ To accompany the book,

⁶⁴⁵ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park’s Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park’s Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), 52.

⁶⁴⁶ NHM JBRP DTC 11, f.223-224, “At a general meeting of the Association for Promoting the discovery of the interior parts of Africa, held at the Star & Garter Tavern, on Saturday, the 25th of May 1799”.

⁶⁴⁷ NHM JBRO DTC 10(1), f.193, James Rennell to Joseph Banks, London, 9 October 1797.

⁶⁴⁸ J. Black, *Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past* (Hong Kong, 1997), 15-18.

⁶⁴⁹ NHM JBRP DTC 11, f.275, James Rennell to Joseph Banks, London, 22 August 1799.

⁶⁵⁰ Lee, ‘Mapping the interior’ (1997), 171.

Rennell constructed eleven maps, one of which showed the African continent and was titled “The World as known to Herodotus” (figure 33). On the surface of that map was a compilation of Herodotus’ historical geography and the more recent discoveries of the Association which are distinguishable from each other by their font. They represent Rennell’s attempt to reconcile the two archives as if it were possible to simply overlay the landscape revealed by modern inquiries over that compiled from historic sources. The book was intended to provide clear details of all geographical materials which he understood to be reliable, from ancient down to the modern times, for the benefit of future study which could add to or amend them when necessary.⁶⁵¹

Rennell had to admit though that Herodotus was probably wrong about the Niger’s connection with the Nile, and he argued that the approximate elevation of the Niger’s source was not high enough to carry the river across the width of the continent.⁶⁵² To support this statement he contrasted the recent evidence of Park’s observations at Segou with contemporaneous measurement of the Nile’s supposed headwaters at “Gojam” thus bringing ancient geography into contact with the most recent enquiries. Nevertheless, he endeavoured to explain why such a junction might have appeared to be the case in the fifth century BC, ultimately blaming Herodotus’ reliance on second- hand sources for the error. In contrast, it was Leo Africanus’ claim to have

⁶⁵¹ J. Rennell, *The Geographical System of Herodotus, Examined; and Explained, by a Comparison with those of other Ancient Authors, and with Modern Geography* (London, 1800), viii-ix –Rennell’s fame did not mean that his interpretation of classical geographies was not challenged. Shortly after the publication of Park’s journal in 1799, *The Critical Review* strongly condemned the Major’s assessment of Leo Africanus and the geography of the Niger on his maps for the African Association:

By an unaccountable mistake, which pervades many of his pages, he imagines the Ghinea of Leo to be Ghana in the centre of Africa! Is it possible that he should not have read Leo’s work, or that he should have read it without perceiving that his description of interior Africa proceeds, exactly and regularly, from west to east? All geographers, preceding Rennel, uniformly understand this. Leo’s Ghinea is our Guinea. Our great geographer has so perplexed himself in this error, that it leads him to confound ideas totally discordant. Leo thought that the Niger fell into the western ocean; and that thus people might pass to Guinea from Tombuctoo. Rennell infers that this western ocean is a mediterranean lake!

As Britain’s foremost geographer, however, Rennell’s reputation contributed enormously to the acceptance of his interpretations by other map-makers. See *The Critical Review* 26 (1799), 376-377.

⁶⁵² J. Rennell, *The Geographical System of Herodotus, Examined; and Explained, by a Comparison with those of other Ancient Authors, and with Modern Geography* (London, 1800), 431-434.



Figure 33: Detail from James Rennell, "The World, as Known to Herodotus, on a Spherical Projection; and with its Parts in their just relative Positions and Proportions". Place-names with lines underneath them were defined by Rennell as those which appear in Herodotus' texts. J. Rennell, *The Geographical System of Herodotus, Examined; and Explained, by a Comparison with those of other Ancient Authors, and with Modern Geography* (London, 1800), xiii. Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

travelled through the interior that gave his writings credibility and which found resonance in the contemporary discourse of exploration, truth and observation. His account of the interior was considered much more probable in this context.⁶⁵³

The question of the Niger's termination in the interior might have been settled in 1800 had it not been for the publication of Hornemann's journal two years later. In his notes, Hornemann

⁶⁵³ Despite the probability of his being wrong about the Niger's course to the Nile, Herodotus had delineated a broadly accurate view of the interior and its distinctive populations which the enquiries of the African Association had partially proven. Given new confidence in their veracity, therefore, Rennell continued to seek correlations between the contemporary reports of travellers in West Africa and the various historic sources before him, no matter who or what they were. During Park's return to the Niger in 1805, for example, Rennell was particularly intrigued by his account of the Mandingo word for crocodile ("Bumbo") as he ascended the Gambia. "Pliny calls the Gambia R. Bambotus," he informed Banks, "& says that it abounds with Crocodiles, ie the River of Crocodiles? Gambia, it seems, (or something like it) was the name of the Country." See NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.231, James Rennell to Joseph Banks, 25 January 1806 – underlined words in the original.

had recorded the testimonies of Africans who believed unequivocally that the Niger did connect with the Nile.⁶⁵⁴ Almost with exasperation, Rennell responded in his geographical treatise for that work:

Mr. Horneman having again set afloat the idea of the junction of the Niger with the Nile, it becomes necessary to examine, minutely, the geographical materials furnished by Mr. Browne and Mr. Horneman, as well as the notices found in Edrisi [al-Idrisi]; in order to shew the improbability of such a fact.⁶⁵⁵

William George Browne's journey to Darfur in the 1790s had complemented Park's discoveries to influence Rennell's geographical analysis of Herodotus' history. Though al-Idrisi had been proven wrong on the direction of the Niger, there was some correlation between his, Browne and Hornemann's reports of a lake in the interior with possible links to the Nile. It had been given the name of "Fittré" and was promptly located on the map where Ptolemy's "Geir" could otherwise be found.⁶⁵⁶ Rennell supposed that the river rumoured to feed such a body of water could have been confused by al-Idrisi with the Niger if he only had second-hand reports to rely on. It was also possible that a similar confusion had occurred amongst Browne and Hornemann's informants. Adapting to that rationale, maps of the early-1800s began illustrating Fittré as east of Bornu near Egypt's western borders and the headwaters of the Nile.

William Faden's map in 1803 neatly illustrates the muddled and complicated image of the interior which map-makers' efforts to reconcile modern and historic geographies had created by the turn of the nineteenth century. The map is dominated by labels and descriptions which complemented the partial outlines of mountains and river courses that were either known or suspected. Such cartography was a logical outcome of Britain's efforts to overcome its own ignorance of the interior, yet whereas d'Anville and Rennell had attributed some features to Ptolemy and other writers, Faden's work is visually overwhelming as he attempted to include as much material onto the map as possible for the reader's benefit. It was in response to this mess (and we have seen already how Joseph Ritchie struggled with this particular map) that the

⁶⁵⁴ Hornemann, *Journal* (1802), 117.

⁶⁵⁵ *ibid*, 162.

⁶⁵⁶ See W.G. Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria, from the Year 1792 to 1798* (London, 1799), 464-465.

preference for directly observed geographies and for explanatory memoirs which addressed the excess details that made maps such as Faden's so confusing ultimately emerges.

The cartographer's dialogue vs. the travellers' experience

Geography in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was understood to be a process of synthesis, wherein knowledge was partly qualified by the range of sources that contributed to it. Map-makers who subscribed to the new epistemic pressures of the Enlightenment consequently sought to collect and contrast as many reports as possible when constructing their maps. At the turn of the nineteenth century when much was changing in terms of Britain's relationship with West Africa, Major James Rennell provides useful terminology to help distinguish between two types of geographical knowledge as they were possibly considered during contemporary dialogues. In 1802, when asked by the British government to discuss the viability of accessing the interior by any of the large rivers identifiable at the coast, the Major's assessment distinguished between the information supplied to him by a "Traveller" and a "Compiler".⁶⁵⁷ Compilers such as d'Anville or Rennell conducted their work from ever-growing personal libraries, identifying them as sites of knowledge-making or "centres of calculation".⁶⁵⁸ By contrast, the traveller's perspective was limited to their experiences in the field and generated information that was limited by the scope of their immediate observations.

As we have seen, contributing new data to the map was complicated and reflected the power of what has been discussed in relation to the theme of sponsorship in chapter 3. We have also seen how travellers' notes intimately reflected the circumstances of their time in the field, sometimes in a manner which impacted upon the veracity of their accounts. How then did the cartographic discourse treat notes that were compromised by external circumstances? To address

⁶⁵⁷ NA CO 2/1, f.47, James Rennell to John Sullivan, Brighton, 17 October 1802.

⁶⁵⁸ Konvitz, *Cartography in France* (1985), 34-41; Markham, *Major James Rennell* (1895), chapter 7; Latour, *Science in Action* (1987), 219-232.

this issue I argue that attention must first be paid to the contemporary recognition of the problem.

The following is an excerpt from Richard Wharton's critique of James Bruce's account of his travels in Egypt and Ethiopia between 1768 and 1773:

It is, indeed, a difficult thing to ascertain the Truth or Falsehood of relations, which refer to countries visited (and perhaps likely to be visited) by few, besides the traveller on whose narrative we are to decide: but we may form some judgement of the consistency observed throughout; as well as how far the writer adheres to, or deviates from, probability: and it will often happen, that the veracity of such accounts may be made manifest by collateral circumstances, unknown to the authors of them, but open to the investigation of an intelligent reader.⁶⁵⁹

As the first instance of a successful expedition into the African interior by a lone British adventurer, Bruce inspired the establishment of the African Association by providing a model for their own enquiries.⁶⁶⁰ The scepticism that characterised the reception of his journals, however, illustrated how fragile the public's credulity could be when presented with new (often unbelievable) information of foreign places. As Dane Kennedy has commented, many subsequent efforts by travellers and explorers to highlight the veracity of their accounts upon their return to Britain were, at their heart, an attempt to "exorcise the ghost of James Bruce."⁶⁶¹

Wharton noted that it should be within the abilities of an "intelligent reader" to discern the truth of a traveller's report by its contextual and paratextual details. In this manner then, whilst the truth and accuracy of geographical data were often defined by their scholarly treatment, it was left to the reader to determine their worth. The emphasis on new information to not exceed the bounds of "probability" characterised the presentation of much African geography. Rennell's *Elucidations of the African Geography* in 1793, for example, sought to clearly outline his assessment of reports from Britain's North African Consuls and Daniel Houghton (Park's predecessor on the Gambia). Of the geographical picture they painted, Rennell noted it was "unconnected in point of form, and by no means complete in itself; yet appears to me to contain much of that kind of evidence, which

⁶⁵⁹ R. Wharton, *Observations on the Authenticity of Bruce's Travels in Abyssinia; in reply to some passages in Brown's Travels through Egypt, Africa, and Syria. To which is added, A Comparative View of Life and Happiness in Europe and in Caffraria* (Newcastle, 1800), 4.

⁶⁶⁰ F. Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (Oxford, 2007), 333-334.

⁶⁶¹ Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013), 41.

arises from a comparison and combination of circumstances.”⁶⁶² Keighren *et al* have referred to a tactic of “textual triangulation” found in the publications of geographical accounts or travel narratives which sought to prove to the reader that the contributing data had been situated within the proper scholarship and relevant authorities by building on a foundation of gentlemanly scholarship.⁶⁶³ On the surface of a map, the equivalent practice would be the attribution of certain features to certain sources. Such appellations forged links between cartography and the written record which viewers could engage with.

Attempting to logically place travellers’ accounts within a larger geographical archive helped expand upon the limitations of their observations to present a broader, rationalised geography of the region. In the case of Park’s observation of West Africa’s great rivers, for example, Rennell concluded:

By pointing out to us the positions of the sources of the great rivers Senegal, Gambia, and Niger, we are instructed were to look for the elevated parts of the country; and even for the *most elevated* point in the western quarter of Africa, by the place from whence the Niger and Gambia turn in opposite directions to the east and west.⁶⁶⁴

Michael Bravo has concluded that Rennell’s treatment of geographical sources was calculated to conform to an idealised concept of cartographic “precision” and “accuracy” intended to address issues resulting from the problematic nature of traveller’s records.⁶⁶⁵ The Major’s introduction to Park’s geographical notes following his return from the Niger in 1796 actually drew attention to its weaknesses. Rennell was even careful to pinpoint on his 1798 map the area where Park had lost his compass thus rendering the direction and precise whereabouts of his subsequent travels a debateable matter in contrast to his more certain itinerary before.⁶⁶⁶

When he presented his conclusions to the African Association, Rennell’s desire was ultimately to portray his cartography not as established fact, but as rationalised probability. The

⁶⁶² Rennell, *Elucidations* (1793), 6 – italicised words in the original.

⁶⁶³ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 75-80.

⁶⁶⁴ Edwards, *Proceedings* (1798), 51-52.

⁶⁶⁵ Bravo. ‘Precision and Curiosity’ (1999), 170.

⁶⁶⁶ See Park, *Travels* (1799), Appendix, xxvi.

purpose of the geographical memoir which accompanied the map was clear: “to place, not only the *result* but the *detail* of the investigation, together with the *original documents* themselves, in the form of notes, in the hands of the public, that the true grounds of the construction, might be known.”⁶⁶⁷ In the tradition of Enlightenment scholarship, Rennell sought to engage in a critical dialogue with his audience. Doing so meant that he acknowledged the limitations of his own deductions and by providing the details of any raw notes he had and the rationale behind his interpretation of them he conceded that later geographers might find fault with his conclusions based on new information. “The successor of Mr. Park,” he wrote, “cannot have too extensive a knowledge of the detail of his predecessor’s work; in order that he may know what parts require correction; and how to avoid delays, from a useless attention to objects, that are already attained.”⁶⁶⁸ This was clearly a sentiment which he repeated in his later works such as the study of Herodotus’ historical geography noted above.

In the absence of more reliable notes or a culture that was receptive of the traveller’s perspective, responsibility therefore remained on the ability of “centres of calculation” to produce cartography for a discerning readership. By adhering to epistemic formulas, Rennell could present even the most flawed of geographies to an educated audience, if not with an air of credibility, then at least with enough authority to encourage the reader to give it due consideration. The Major’s successful extraction of truth out of the varied sources that were available to him was celebrated by Sir William Young (secretary of the African Association the editor of Frederick Hornemann’s journal) in 1802:

By analysis, and a comparative view of accounts given of journies and places ... Major Rennell hath corrected the map of Africa, with a learning and sagacity which *hath converted conjecture into knowledge*...⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park’s Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park’s Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), 74.

⁶⁶⁸ Park, *Travels* (1799), Rennell’s geographical treatise, xxii.

⁶⁶⁹ Hornemann, *Journal* (1802), v – italicised words in the original.

The geographical memoir ultimately served to present any relevant data in a manner which confirmed its correct treatment by the scholar to justify their conclusions. The cartography which they accompanied were of the whole region or a large part of it because they lacked enough data to produce a more detailed view of specific areas. Acknowledging the reader's ability to detect improbabilities remained important though. James MacQueen declared in 1821 of his own contentious geography of the Niger's course and termination in the Atlantic that it was for the "public to judge how far the work has been judiciously and accurately performed."⁶⁷⁰ Similarly, Joseph Dupuis observed that whilst he was confident of his attention to the details he had collected in Asante, the "reader is naturally at liberty to establish his own reflections upon the materials before him..."⁶⁷¹ Even towards the end of this period, such were the obstacles preventing a coherent geography of West Africa that map-makers were reluctant to present their maps without proper explanation. In 1840, MacQueen again used his *Geographical Survey of Africa* to address any lingering confusion about the interior and so presented all the information necessary for the "reader to see his way clearly, and judge of the general accuracy of the Map which accompanies this work..."⁶⁷² Engaging with the reader in this manner encouraged compilers to make their working transparent, highlighting the relationship between the map and its intended audience.

Robert Mayhew's analysis of historical geographical studies by 1800 concludes that the shifting culture of science and its audience put the greatest pressure on the appearance of geography and maps.⁶⁷³ Traditionally, travellers' first-hand reports have been compared with the theoretical geographies generated by sedentary scholars, those who were at times negatively-labelled as "armchair geographers" and who sought to use field accounts for their own broader analyses.⁶⁷⁴ The example of MacQueen is particularly useful in this regard and has consequently received a great deal of attention. His relatively correct mapping of the Niger's termination in the

⁶⁷⁰ MacQueen, *Commercial View* (1821), vi.

⁶⁷¹ Dupuis, *Journal* (1824), Appendix xvi.

⁶⁷² MacQueen, *Geographical Survey* (1840), 21.

⁶⁷³ Mayhew, 'Mapping science's imagined community' (2005), 73-92.

⁶⁷⁴ F. Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (December, 2004), 73-92.

Bight of Biafra in 1820 was contentious not only because his geography was contradictory to popular orthodoxy at the time, but his methodology was deemed to be unsuitable. Yet MacQueen's map-making process was typical of the popular practices of synthetic geography practiced by Rennell and others. The public battle between Barrow and MacQueen highlights the conflict between the emerging "culture of exploration" which was vindicated by first hand observation, and sedentary scholarship which argued by reference to multiple sources.⁶⁷⁵ As David Lambert has shown, Barrow's criticism was in part focused on MacQueen's lack of travel experience and thus his inability to pass judgement on a land he had no first-hand knowledge of, nor an awareness of the trials of exploration.⁶⁷⁶

As preference shifted towards a geographical archive that intimately reflected eye-witness accounts, it was considered increasingly problematic to attempt drawing larger regional geographies from the perspective of passing observations. Even Rennell conceded privately in 1818 that it was a region too big for its map to be influenced by the passing of a single traveller; "For you see what a poor figure Park's Route makes, on N. Africa at large."⁶⁷⁷

The emphasis on first-hand knowledge had significant repercussions for both the manner of British enquiries in this period and we have seen the pressure that was put on traditional centres of calculation. In contrast to the compiler's map of West Africa that was accompanied by memoirs, the more focused charts of travellers' itineraries were authenticated by the presentation of their experiences in their published journals.⁶⁷⁸ The ability of the explorer to make his own claim to

⁶⁷⁵ The arguments levelled against MacQueen appear inconsistent with the importance which Dorinda Outram has attached to sedentary academics processing the results of field exploration. Her study of a similar feud between Alexander von Humboldt and the French naturalist Georges Cuvier in the early nineteenth century demonstrates the divergence between field-science and fixed-science of metropolitan centres. At the heart of Cuvier's concerns was the potential for the experiences of travel to obscure the objectivity and observational abilities of the traveller, unlike the sedentary scholar in their controlled academic environment. See Outram, 'On Being Perseus' (1999), 281-292.

⁶⁷⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 123-129 - Barrow's own qualifications were confirmed by an expedition he had conducted through South Africa in 1797 and 1798. See J. Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, in the Years 1797 and 1798* (London, 1801).

⁶⁷⁷ NLS MS 19390, f.56, James Rennell to Dr Traill, London, 13 July 1818 – In this instance Rennell was offering his advice on how best to present the route of another traveller on a specially drawn map. In light of their limited perspective, he recommended the drawing of only a small portion of Africa rather than the whole region.

⁶⁷⁸ Edney, 'Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map-Making' (1999), 175-178.

authenticity by virtue of having travelled is reflected in Ian Maclaren's model of texts and their development from rough journals to authored accounts. He observes, however, there was no simple transition from field notes to final text (or sketch to final map) and identifies two stages before a final manuscript could be made after a traveller's return: the initial observation and its rough documenting in the field and the subsequent reflective account which was compiled later when there was opportunity for deliberation.⁶⁷⁹ Withers and Keighren have noted that examples from the field of African exploration indicate that the metropolitan preference for raw notes was complicated in this period by the efforts of travellers to offer some form of explanation for their journals.⁶⁸⁰ Withers has examined the circumstances of Park's convalescence between September 1796 and April 1797 at the home of a friendly slave trader near the western banks of the Niger that granted him an opportunity to rewrite his journal, negating its first-person perspective. "Sedentary reflection upon accumulated evidence affords time for measured thought," Withers concludes in this instance, "but raises doubts over the truth claims of what is reported upon and by whom."⁶⁸¹

Even when circumstances did not allow time for expanding notes in the field, explorers expressed their desire to make more of their papers if opportunity presented itself. When Joseph Ritchie dispatched his latest report from Murzuq in 1819, for example, he apologised to the Colonial Office that because of intermittent illness and the sudden opportunity of a courier to Tripoli he had not had more time to "augment & correct, as well as to collate it with other authorities..."⁶⁸² In December 1822, Walter Oudney begged forgiveness for sending his "rude & imperfect" journal from the Sahara.⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁹ I.S. MacLaren, 'In consideration of the evolution of explorers and travellers into authors: a model' in *Studies in Travel Writing* 15:3 (2011), 227-228 - It is these stages that could be influenced by the instructions sponsors provided and the academic conditions travellers adhered to when recording their notes in a manner reflective of the discussions contained in chapters three and four.

⁶⁸⁰ See C.W.J. Withers & I.M. Keighren, 'Travels into Print: authoring, editing and narratives of travel and exploration, c.1815 – c.1857' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* 36 (2011), 560-573.

⁶⁸¹ Withers, 'Geography, Enlightenment and the Book' (2010), 198.

⁶⁸² NA CO 2/9, f.42, Joseph Ritchie to Henry Goulburn, Murzuq, 25 August 1819.

⁶⁸³ NA CO 2/13, f.293, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, "Gatrone", 4 December 1822.

Despite demands that travellers limit their editing, raw notes were problematic if they were unintelligible or incomplete and Major Dixon Denham defended his omission of Oudney's notes in the official edited journal of the Bornu Mission in 1826 because of their "imperfect state".⁶⁸⁴ However, Jamie Lockhart has shown that Denham worked closely with Barrow and the Murray publishing firm to emphasise his own experience of the mission at the expense of his companions'.⁶⁸⁵ We see, therefore, the conflict of personalities and the quest for recognition which the culture of exploration engendered amongst African travellers as their journals were processed for publication. That individualism had implications during expeditions and I have drawn attention already to the animosity that developed between Hugh Clapperton and Denham. As the Major attempted to exercise his authority and their relationship deteriorated, he sought to discredit Clapperton by questioning the accuracy of his observations:

Mr Clapperton I see marks Kouka to the West of Mourzouk it may be so but I doubt it. I should say it was a full degree to the Eastward of what he makes it.⁶⁸⁶

Interestingly, the Lieutenant had already corrected that observation and transmitted the correction through Oudney over a year before Denham's letter. The Doctor had actually promised to include "a chart, which, for correcting of position will, I venture to say, be surpassed by few, & all its places the great desideratum of geographical science..."⁶⁸⁷ In light of Clapperton's apparent refusal to share his observations with Denham, the Major's accounts were therefore written separate from the drawing of the map and so call into question how one can be considered illustrative of the other.

The appearance of travellers' journals ultimately changed according to circumstances. In the case of Alexander Gordon Laing travelling to Timbuktu in 1825 for instance, it was his desire to write his journal concerning to the first leg of his journey (to the oasis of Gadamis) in the format of

⁶⁸⁴ Denham, *Narrative* (1826), vi.

⁶⁸⁵ Lockhart, 'In the Raw' (1999), 159.

⁶⁸⁶ NA CO 2/14, f.35-36, Dixon Denham to John Barrow, "Kouka", 28 June 1824.

⁶⁸⁷ NA CO 2/13, f.305, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, "Kuka", 14 January 1823.

a letter to the Colonial Secretary himself. Doing so projected an image of ordered, gentlemanly scholarship in contrast to the raw observations and daily note-taking characteristic of other travellers.⁶⁸⁸ Moreover, it suggests that he took time to consider how his journal would be read and so overwrote any initial observations he had collected. The sketch map accompanying these notes illustrates a neat and uncomplicated itinerary of Laing's route with little consideration given to anything beyond his immediate surroundings. It was accompanied by a table of astronomical measurements and any further scientific information he was able to record before his instruments deteriorated.⁶⁸⁹

The cartography that was drawn to illustrate exploration was intended to present a view as close to travellers' experience as possible, whilst their journals were filled with the details which informed the reader about the geography which the map revealed. As such there was not necessarily a need for separate memoirs which tried to make sense of the narrative. Particularly as naval and military officers took to the field of African discovery, there were fewer instances in which their journals were accompanied by a geographical discussion; George Francis Lyon's journal in 1819, for example, has none, and neither did Denham's (1826) nor William Allen's (1848) after the Niger Expedition.⁶⁹⁰ Rennell discussed his own suspicion of travel accounts which were accompanied by explanations independent of the main text because they were written from a perspective that should have made the relevant geography clear:

Indeed I always suspect the weakness of Authority, when a Narrative is introduced, & perhaps terminated also, by Observations, which when analysed, prove to be nothing more than attempts to establish Points, which the Narrative has failed to do...⁶⁹¹

In either case the cartography accompanying these texts is rarely free from complications because however much there was a desire for first-hand accounts and accurate observation, there were

⁶⁸⁸ NA CO 2/15, f.78, Alexander Gordon Laing to Robert Wilmot Horton, Gadamis, 24 September 1825.

⁶⁸⁹ NA CO 2/15, f.81-82, Alexander Gordon Laing to Robert Wilmot Horton, Gadamis, 24 September 1825.

⁶⁹⁰ Lyon, *Narrative* (1821); Denham, *Narrative* (1826); Allen, *A Narrative* (1848).

⁶⁹¹ NLS MS 19390, f.56, James Rennell to Dr Traill, London, 13 July 1818.

always controls on the final presentation of West Africa on the map and its appearance within edited narratives.

The problem of “Ocular Demonstration” and the traveller’s perspective: Alexander Scott and Lake Dinnie

Withers’ study of the Niger and the “ocular demonstration” of travellers in the late enlightenment makes the case that Park’s sighting of the Niger was key to his claims that it flowed eastward. His observation, however, merely confirmed what had already been speculated after Houghton’s earlier expedition. Having worked through the first reports dispatched from Park in the field, Rennell informed Banks in 1796 that “Parke’s account agrees generally with the principal features of our Geography in the quarter towards the Joliba.”⁶⁹² In the case of the traveller’s notes from his first venture up the Gambia, Rennell was pleased to note that his approximation of the river’s source conformed closely with Wadström’s in 1794 which had been derived from different sources. “This,” he wrote, “is very satisfactory” and demonstrated the ability of careful analysis to reveal the truth of West Africa’s geography.⁶⁹³ Consequently, Withers has concluded that: “the truth in maps was arrived at first without travel, and without the instrumental accuracy generally associated with the rise of Enlightenment ‘reason’.”⁶⁹⁴ That study then raises the problem of how relatively accurate maps could be produced before exploration demonstrated their correctness.

When the map’s construction relied on limited or questionable sources, however, it was the map-maker or compiler’s job to assess their merit and inspire faith in its final appearance. Constructing a believable geography thus relied on various techniques of presentation. That formula of rhetorical cartographic conventions complemented the standardisation of travel

⁶⁹² NHM DTC 10(1), f.77, James Rennell to Joseph Banks, London, 21 October 1796 – underlined words in the original.

⁶⁹³ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park’s Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park’s Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), Geographical Appendix, 69.

⁶⁹⁴ Withers, ‘Mapping the Niger’ (2004), 188.

narratives in such a manner as to provide readers of the genre with a sense of consistency between different texts. However, by subscribing to that model, any geographic material could present itself as worthy of consideration and find a place alongside similar publications. In those instances, as Lee argues with regards to Christian Frederick Damberger's fictitious journal *Travels Through the Interior of Africa* (1801), it was left to the public's sense of credulity to establish the merit of its descriptions.⁶⁹⁵ Of interest here then, is the ability of problematic texts and cartographies to find acceptance by presenting themselves as authentic.

Captivity narratives offer a view of Africa which professed by its very nature to have been experiential, yet involved none of the legitimising paraphernalia of exploration. They were written to encourage an emotional or sympathetic response from its audience in a manner popular amongst travel accounts which regularly highlighted the perils of the field. Unlike the journals of exploration though, these tales emphasised the vulnerability of its protagonists rather than the explorer's endurance of hardship. Linda Colley has suggested that because most of the captives in question were of the lower classes, it was easier for them to admit to helplessness.⁶⁹⁶ With regard to Africa, the famous tales of stranded American sailors such as Robert Adams (1816) and James Riley (1817) appeared at a time when their contributions to African geography and colourful descriptions were key to their popularity.⁶⁹⁷ My own study of Alexander Scott's 1821 narrative of

⁶⁹⁵ Lee, 'Mapping the interior' (1997), 171-182; C.F. Damberger, *Travels Through the Interior of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to Morocco... Between the Years 1781 and 1797, by Christian Frederick Damberger... Translated from the German* (1801) - Of Damberger's account, one reviewer swiftly dismissed it:

The design was, doubtless, calculated to impose even on the learned... the artful simplicity of the narrative imparted a favourable impression of belief, which greatly tended to obviate many doubts which would otherwise have arisen. The author has cautiously refrained from such precise geographical information as might have led to argument and detection... The map, by a real or pretend Mr. Brach, is ill compiled, and only revives a few old names which have been dismissed from late maps of Africa.

See *The Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature; Extended & Improved by a Society of Gentlemen, Volume 32* (London, 1801), 19.

⁶⁹⁶ L. Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire' in *Past & Present* 168 (Aug., 2000), 176.

⁶⁹⁷ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 115; R. Adams, *The Narrative of Robert Adams, an American Sailor, who was Wrecked on the Coast of Africa, in the Year 1810; was detained three years in slavery by the Arabs of the Great Desert, and resided several months in the city of Tombuctoo* (Boston, 1817); J. Riley, *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig Commerce, wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa, in the Month of August, 1815, with an account of the sufferings of her surviving Officers and crew, who were enslaved by the wandering Arabs of the Great Africa Desert, or Zahahrah; and observations historical, geographical, &c. made during the travels of the author, while a slave to the Arabs, and in the Empire of*

shipwreck and slavery in the Sahara, however, demonstrates the extent to which legitimacy could be conferred onto a problematic account if it was deemed to be of particular importance.⁶⁹⁸

Scott's tale was recorded in 1816 after his return to London by Dr Thomas Traill, a copy of which was sent to Banks for his assessment. Through Banks, the manuscript was then passed onto Rennell and between them they studied it for signs of authenticity. It was in contrast to recent publications such as Adams' that Rennell saw the value of the narrative, and he believed an educated audience would agree:

So many lying African travellers having lately appeared, Scott's will appear to advantage: for certainly there is an internal evidence to be found, in most Books of travels, by experienced & Sagacious Persons. And those evidently go very hard against some of these. Adams is I believe, not quite given up. Elephants with 4 Tusks in their lower jaws; & coconut trees with foliage like cherry Trees, &c.: this I heard him say. Yet these Facts were apologized for by some good natured Criticks!⁶⁹⁹

For his part, Banks also believed the core details of the tale; "I fear the young man did not Remark to many occurrences as an elderman could have done," he wrote, "I do not however suspect him of invention."⁷⁰⁰ Once Banks and Rennell had ascertained its validity, it was left to Scott's interviewer to write the account in such a manner as to illustrate to its potential audience that he was worthy of their consideration. In doing so, there was a focus on the mental and physical damage that his time in the Sahara had caused so as to demonstrate that he had been in Africa and suffered for his knowledge. Yet the narrative was written by Traill in the third person, removing that

Morocco (Hartford, 1817) – An interesting aside, Adams' account was actually sent to Major John Peddie in 1816 during his time on the Senegal whilst he prepared to advance into the interior by order of Earl Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary. The image of Timbuktu from the perspective of an English-speaking witness was clearly intriguing, especially as it seemed to clash with the information he had been collecting: "it appears beyond a doubt that he has been at Tombuctoo but the information he has given relative to that Town differs in many points from accounts lately received by me from several people from that country." See CO 2/5, f.44, John Peddie to Earl Bathurst, Senegal, 3 August 1816.

⁶⁹⁸ See Outram-Leman, 'Alexander Scott' (2016), 63-94.

⁶⁹⁹ NLS MS 19390, f.60, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 16 March 1819.

⁷⁰⁰ NLS MS 19390, f.58, Joseph Banks to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 21 March 1819 – On a historical note: in light of Banks' death in 1820, his participation in the Scott's captivity narrative might be regarded as the great naturalist's last contribution to Britain's African enquiries.

privileged perspective so characteristic of most travel genres, because doing so was a means of presenting it in the most objective, and therefore scientific, manner.⁷⁰¹

For Rennell, much of the account was of mild interest simply because it dealt with an area of which little reliable information was available.⁷⁰² More interesting though, was Scott's description of a lake which he had been taken to on the far side of the Sahara. Having estimated his route across the desert, Rennell quickly associated that body of water with one Park had heard of during his travels. He wrote to Scott's interviewer:

I trust that you will agree with me, in concluding that the Lake is the same with the Dibbie of Park – and they must be allowed to corroborate the Authorities of both Travellers: since it is a satisfactory coincidence: and at the same time, it gives a value to Park's hearsay Information, respecting other Matters.⁷⁰³

It is arguable then that Rennell identified merit in the account because it complemented the internal geography as he understood it and he saw the publication of that narrative as a means of supporting his earlier deductions for the African Association. Consequently, he quickly put together a geographical treatise and map to illustrate Scott's passage across the Sahara (figure 34).⁷⁰⁴

During his first expedition to the Niger, Park had discerned the river's continued course beyond Silla which was the spot where he turned back for the coast. Lake "Dibbie", he was informed by locals, lay four days' journey away.⁷⁰⁵ In 1798 Rennell identified it with the Lake Maberia which d'Anville and other French geographers had associated with the Upper-Senegal, bringing that dubious second-hand description into an already established cartographic discourse. However,

⁷⁰¹ Dr Traill had interviewed Scott with the help of a friend, William Lawson. Between them they had prepared a draft manuscript which was then later sent to Bank. As Traill explained though: "Our first intention was to give the narrative in the *first person*, but Scott was found so illiterate, that the *ipsissima verba* ["the very words"] could not be retained." NLS MS 19390, f.62-63, Dr. Traill to James Rennell, Liverpool, 15 April 1819.

⁷⁰² Rennell (and presumably Banks) were drawn to Scott's tale because of its description of the mysterious Sahara. The Major later wrote:

The most important part of [Scott's narrative] relates to the nature of the *Sahara*, in the place where the Traveller crossed it: that is, in its widest part: & which no other European that I know of, has hitherto given any Account of.

See Rennell, 'Observations' (1821), 235 – Italicised words in the original.

⁷⁰³ NLS MS 19390, f.60, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 16 March 1819 – underlined words in original.

⁷⁰⁴ See J. Rennell, 'Observations on the Geography of Mr Scott's Routes in North Africa' in *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal (Volume 4)* (Edinburgh 1821), 235-241.

⁷⁰⁵ Park, *Travels* (1799), 213.

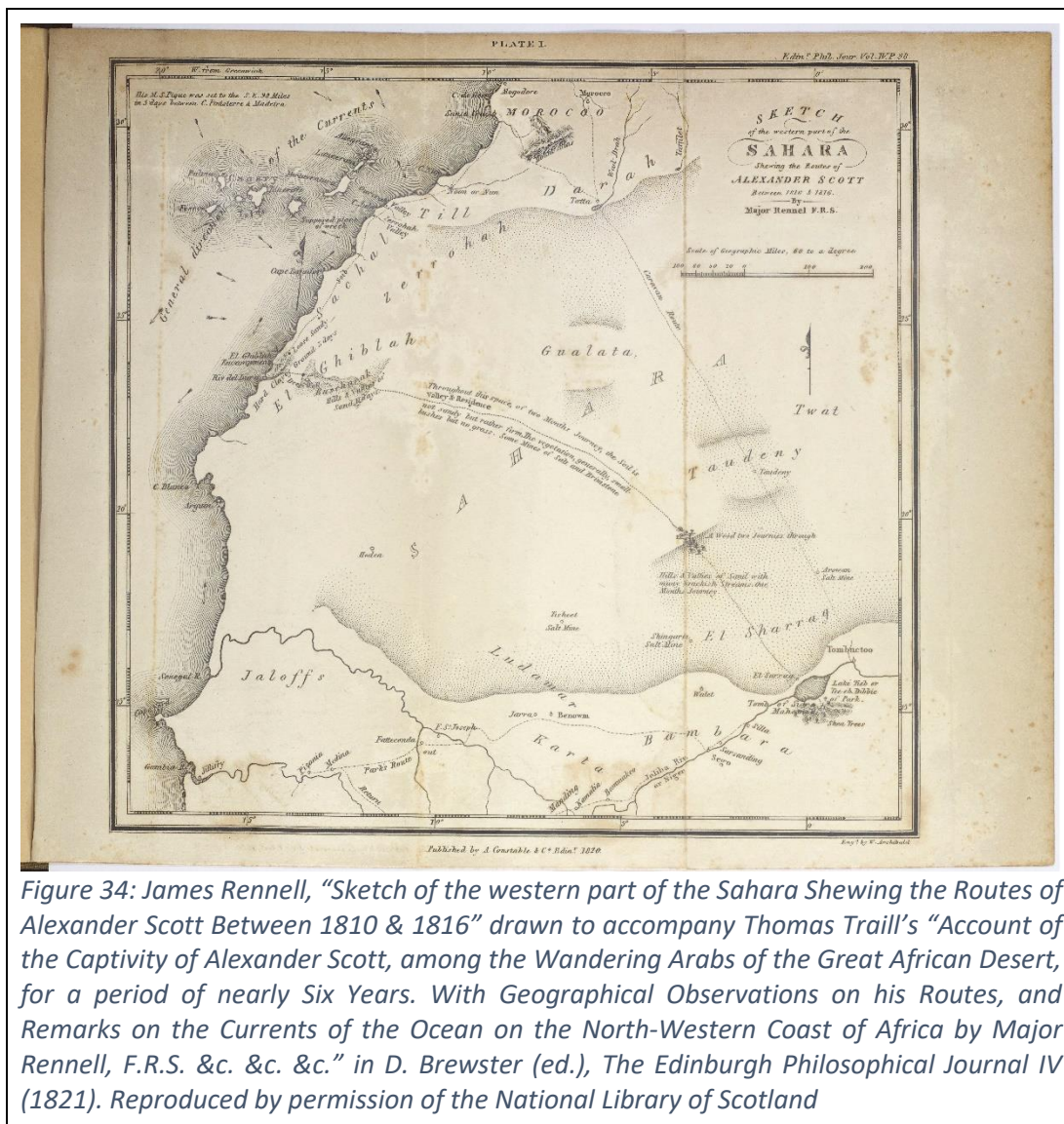


Figure 34: James Rennell, "Sketch of the western part of the Sahara Shewing the Routes of Alexander Scott Between 1810 & 1816" drawn to accompany Thomas Traill's "Account of the Captivity of Alexander Scott, among the Wandering Arabs of the Great African Desert, for a period of nearly Six Years. With Geographical Observations on his Routes, and Remarks on the Currents of the Ocean on the North-Western Coast of Africa by Major Rennell, F.R.S. &c. &c. &c." in D. Brewster (ed.), *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal IV* (1821). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

where Park had heard that the Dibble was large enough that vessels lost sight of land for a day when crossing it, Scott claimed to have been on it for three days before making landfall.⁷⁰⁶ The important distinction between these two accounts was Scott's claim to have actually observed it and Rennell explained: "The Lake as *described to Mr Park*, is so much smaller than the one *seen by Scott*: but no one will regard the two Accounts as of equal Authority."⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ T.S. Trail, "Account of the Captivity of Alexander Scott, among the Wandering Arabs of the Great African Desert, for a Period of Nearly Six Years. With Geographical Observations on his Routes, and Remarks on the Currents of the Ocean on the North-Western Coast of Africa by Major Rennell, F.R.S. &c. &c. &c." in David Brewster (ed.), *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal IV* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, 1821), 47.

⁷⁰⁷ J. Rennell, 'Observations' (1821), 239 – Italicised words in the original.

Scott's veracity, therefore, was founded almost exclusively on the ability of Rennell to make sense of his account, whilst his privileged perspective was overwritten by Dr Thomas Traill who authored the narrative to be a studied view of the interior rather than an enjoyable tale, typical of its genre. As this example illustrates, even that preferred label of "ocular demonstration" does not preclude the presence of external factors which influenced the manner of geographical information derived from that report. True to form, Rennell introduced his explanatory essay with the line: "The Geographical notices contained in this narrative are scanty, but appear to contain internal evidence of their truth."⁷⁰⁸

Rather than seek to derive a broader regional geography from Scott's unscientific account though, Rennell illustrated the narrative in a more focused map to lend credibility to its eye-witness reports. He informed Traill:

I will Sketch out, Map fashion, such prominent Geographical positions, &c. as I am able to verify, or even approximate; & then you will be pleased to make your Engraver copy out an Outline of North Africa (on a small scale) together with some principal features of the interior Geography, already known: & to these he will easily be enabled to add my Sketches. However, before any size of Map is determined on, it will be proper to know how extensive the traveller's Ranges have been: for if they have been much limited; as for instances between Morocco & Timbuctoo, I should then advise only the Western part of N. Africa to be prepared for then it may be done on a large scale, so as to make his Route appear of much more consequence.⁷⁰⁹

The map, therefore, existed as both a necessary indicator of the narrative's authenticity and as a key component of the reader's understanding of the text. In either case, it appeared subject to Rennell's intended use for it, as a vehicle for confirming his own geography of the interior. As with Park and the Niger, Scott provided evidence to support what had already been theorised by the geographer. The details of his narrative were not widely adopted by British cartography but elements of his tale such as the town *El-Ghiblah* where he resided near the coast did appear in John Arrowsmith's 1834 *London Atlas*, and MacQueen's 1840 *Geographical Survey of Africa* also refers to the unfortunate sailor.⁷¹⁰ Despite the demands that geographies and travel narratives conform

⁷⁰⁸ J. Rennell, 'Observations' (1821), 23.

⁷⁰⁹ NLS MS 19390, f.56, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 13 July 1818.

⁷¹⁰ MacQueen, *Geographical Survey* (1840), 96–106.

to various conventions to present themselves as authoritative independent of separate discussions, it remains apparent that a relationship with external power continued to exist that was hidden by those conventions which presented maps and texts as objective. Between them, Banks, Rennell and Traill manipulated Scott's eye-witness account to produce their own geography in a manner which overshadowed any other efforts to fill the map first-hand reliable data.

Little attention has been paid to the legacy of those rationalised features determined by Rennell which survived the demand for scientific observations. The most prominent historiographical exception is Thomas Basset and Philip Porter's study of the infamous Kong Mountains which the Major had fixed to the map of West Africa based on Park's sighting of distant hills and recorded account of African descriptions regarding its size. They were rationalised as the southern boundary of the Niger's watershed (based on Rennell's concurrence with Ptolemy that the Niger exhausted itself somewhere in the interior) and were often used as evidence against any suggestion that the river might find its way to the Atlantic. Basset and Porter conclude that once the range became a fixture of the established geography of Africa, "they became a salient feature in the mental maps of Europeans" and continued to influence popular geographies throughout the nineteenth century.⁷¹¹

Constructing the "graphic image"; naturalising West Africa

The consolidation of new facts and details within British cartography was part of a process of naturalisation by which the map was drawn to present a believable reality following successful enquiries. Denis Cosgrove identifies the "graphic images" of geography which take form through a combination of textual and visual materials which cartography accompanied by way of explanation or illustration.⁷¹² Through the careful editing of travellers' journals and the tracing of their

⁷¹¹ See T.J. Basset & P.W. Porter, "From the Best Authorities': the Mountains of Kong in the Cartography of West Africa' in *The Journal of African History* 32:3 (1991), 399.

⁷¹² Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision* (2001), 5-7.

itineraries which fixed their observations onto broader geographical views, a particular West African reality emerged.

My concern here is the map's relationship to the descriptions which filled travellers' narratives when they were subject to conditions of economy, patronage and convention, and literary fashions of the day.⁷¹³ In the context of reproducing European contact with the non-European world, Withers develops the linear models of Woodward and MacLaren by which new places were "geographically revealed" for Enlightenment spectators. That process involved a combination of "encountering and imagining", "mapping and inscribing", and "envisioning and publicising". Looking at how that final state of interpreting and popularising British enquiries with regards to the example of Park's first journal, we see those themes of audience and power over the map which has dominated much of this discussion maintain their influence over the final edited image. The idea of West Africa that was successfully introduced to Britain through geographical texts and maps was one which acknowledged and conformed to the presence of its readership and reflected the input of several contributors.⁷¹⁴

Park's first journal (published in 1799) is one of the great anthropological works of the Romantic period and has proven to be a popular example of how travellers tailored their published narratives for commercial benefit. Through attention to its language and detail, the text was intended to appeal to readers who were thrilled by tales of the unknown and unusual. In this task, Park received help from the African Association's new Secretary, Bryan Edwards, whose role is seen as particularly important for the quality, substance and structure of the account.⁷¹⁵ Contributing his own conclusions was of course Rennell who compiled Park's geographical notices into an illustrative map and explanatory memoir. Overseeing the construction of this work was Banks, who maintained a close correspondence with both men.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ Craciun, 'What is an Explorer' (2011), 29-32.

⁷¹⁴ Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (2007), 87-111.

⁷¹⁵ Withers, 'Geography, Enlightenment and the Book' (2010), 200-209.

⁷¹⁶ Hallet, *Records* (1964), 165.

Park's journey to the Niger between 1795 and 1797, his travels over mountainous terrain and sighting of the supposed Kong Mountains, revolutionised the face of the map. His observations helped illuminate what the African Association's earliest efforts had suggested, that a luxurious, fertile landscape existed a short distance beyond the northern boundaries of the tropical coast.⁷¹⁷ It is argued though, that their confrontation with the existence of a populated West African interior which contrasted with popular views encouraged a carefully manipulated cartographic and literary construct of Park's journey.

Edwards' first summary report to the Association stated that the "whole continent of Africa, according to all the observations and inquiries Mr. Park could make, appears to be divided into petty states, which are independent of, and frequently engaged in wars with each other."⁷¹⁸ The existence of a complex political landscape was highlighted in Park's published description of Segu, where he encountered the Niger:

The view of this extensive city; the numerous canoes upon the river; the crowded population, and the cultivated state of the surrounding country, formed altogether a prospect of civilization and magnificence, which I had little expected to find in the bosom of Africa.⁷¹⁹

Park's surprise at discovering a busy hub of commercial activity within a society more advanced than what had been expected is characteristic of the story of Britain's discovery and mapping of West Africa. To make sense of this new information, the African Association turned to the explanations offered by contemporary geographical science as was common during instances of European contact with the non-European "other".⁷²⁰ Developing a corresponding image of these societies, situated in their newly-established localities through Park's measurements and Rennell's

⁷¹⁷ *ibid*, 94.

⁷¹⁸ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park's Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park's Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), 45.

⁷¹⁹ Park, *Travels* (1799), 196.

⁷²⁰ For example, see Outram, *The Enlightenment* (1996), 63-79.

assessment, involved identifying how Africans fitted into that physical landscape of the interior in a way that accounted for the strangeness of their appearance and culture.

Historic contact along the African peripheries had taught Britain that Muslim Arabs existed in the north and pagan sub-Saharan Africans lived near the coast. Park, however, provided evidence from the interior of a physical division of the land; one that was made up of the River Niger and that great chain of mountains stretching east towards the Nile which divided the desert from the coastal forests. His discovery was swiftly interpreted by Rennell as explaining the spatial distribution of known and newly discovered African societies:

We are taught, moreover, the common boundary of the desert and fruitful parts of the country, and of the Moors and Negroes; which latter is the more interesting, as it may be termed a boundary in *moral* geography; from the opposite qualities of mind, as well as of body, of the Moors and Negroes: for the physical geography gives rise to habits, which often determine national character, must be allowed by every person, who is a diligent observer of mankind.⁷²¹

After his return in 1797, Park provided a logical geographical explanation for this spread. The allusion to moral geography will be addressed more fully in the following chapter but it is evidence of the distinctions made between humans based on their geographical situation. To consolidate that image of the interior's physical landscape, Rennell built on the foundations of historical scholarship by drawing connections between the landscape and descriptions by Herodotus who had also divided the African people into two groups which he identified as "the Moors and the Negroes; which two classes are as distinct at the present day, as in ancient times" and who were traditionally divided by the "southern border of the Great Desert."⁷²²

Rennell was to make sense of the data which Park had collected. By contrast, Edwards was to make the account presentable first for the African Association and later a British audience; it was a position which gave him power over the views presented and which he has been accused of using

⁷²¹ B. Edwards (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa; Containing an Abstract of Mr. Park's Account of His Travels and Discoveries. Abridged from his own Minutes by Bryan Edwards Esq. Also Geographical Illustrations of Mr. Park's Journey, and of North Africa at Large* (London, 1798), 52.

⁷²² J. Rennell, *The Geographical System of Herodotus, Examined; and Explained, by a Comparison with those of other Ancient Authors, and with Modern Geography* (London, 1800), 427-428.

to mould the narrative according to his stance on the question of abolition.⁷²³ Much of Edwards' editing, however, was also essential to present the journal as a work of fact, to ensure that it conformed to the rigours of scientific authenticity.⁷²⁴ Consequently, the finished publication was introduced with the well-known line: "As a composition, it has nothing to recommend it [the narrative], but *truth*".⁷²⁵ The emphasis of such a statement was obviously to encourage faith in the book's conformity with Park's experience in the field which means that Edwards' input was calculated to present "plain 'unvarnished' realism."⁷²⁶

It is observable from Edwards' correspondence with Banks that he exercised his authority over Park through all stages of its construction. Beginning in early 1798, Edwards gathered Park's notes, recorded discussions with the traveller and oversaw the writing of individual chapters. To fully examine his role in this process, it is worth quoting his letters to Banks in some detail to reveal his process of producing a text acceptable for the British public.⁷²⁷ In February 1798, Edwards wrote:

The Papers came safe; and I have made as many corrections as I can, without consulting with you personally, and having some further conversations with Mr Park himself I have likewise added some curios[sic.] anecdotes with which Park furnished me – but I know not if the rules of Decorum will allow me to retain them all.⁷²⁸

⁷²³ O.M. Blouet, 'Bryan Edwards, F.R.S., 1743-1800' in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 54:02 (May, 2000), 215-222; G. Shepperson, 'Mungo Park and the Scottish Contribution to Africa' in *African Affairs* 70:280 (Jul., 1971), 279-280 - Though Park was careful during his lifetime to avoid commenting directly on the matter, Ralph Austen and Woodruff Smith have noted that both sides of the debate referenced his text in support of their arguments. See Austen & Smith, 'Images of African and the British Slave-Trade Abolition' (1969), 76.

⁷²⁴ See also Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (1994), chapter 5.

⁷²⁵ Park, *Travels* (1799), vii.

⁷²⁶ T. Fulford, D. Lee & P.J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 2004), 94.

⁷²⁷ Banks' authority over the final image is recognisable as Edwards deferred to his assessment regarding the value of his efforts when he had finished: "How I have acquitted myself you can best judge. I hope for Park's sake that you will not spare corrections out of tenderness to me." See NHM DTC 11, f.113, Bryan Edwards to Joseph Banks, 22 October 1798.

⁷²⁸ NHM DTC 10(2), f.229, Bryan Edwards to Joseph Banks, Southampton, 28 February 1798 – Of Park's anecdotes, he continues:

"One of them relates to the Holy Water which he received, in consequence of a Moorish Wedding, as a Nuptial benediction from the Bride He will tell you the story and it is a choice one."

Park's experiences in Africa were ultimately more adequately expressed through the little details which identified his book as a "sentimental", rather than "scientific", piece of literature.⁷²⁹

It is regularly noted that Edwards found Park to be an attentive student who swiftly adapted to the style expected of such a work and in the course of 1798 he found less reason to amend subsequent draft chapters.⁷³⁰

I have corrected and newly arranged all the papers [Park] put into my hands ... What I have written (or rather retained) makes six chapters, and I know not how they can be reduced. If, however, they contain nothing of the marvellous, I think they are sufficiently interesting. They are smooth and pleasant, and furnish a very amiable picture of the Mandingoes... It is not my fault that I have not done more; for I have exhausted all the original M.S.S., and have written without effect to Park to furnish me with the remainder.⁷³¹

Trying to find balance between the "marvellous" and the "interesting" is indicative of Edwards' struggle to present a view of the interior that was both new and credible. As an opportunity to highlight the strangeness of non-Europeans, travel narratives commonly described them in terms which emphasised their "otherness".⁷³² Presenting Africans in a non-hyperbolic manner, however, subscribed to the contemporary fashion for objective enquiry and demonstrates that Park's account was also intended to show a more precise image of those societies. It is interesting to note that in the same manner which Rennell found a geographical division between African cultures, Edwards found a similar distinction in Park's narration:

With regard to the rest of the work, I shall be glad to continue it 'till Park fell into the hands of the Moors; after which, his story becomes sufficiently interesting; and he cannot spoil it in the telling. Previous to his captivity, there is such a sameness in the negro manners, and the occurrences which he relates are so unimportant, that it requires some skill in composition and arrangement, to make the reading supportable.⁷³³

The contrast of pagan Sub-Saharan with Park's Muslim Arabic captors was, therefore, addressed as a literary problem as well as a geographical one, with subsequent conclusions being drawn

⁷²⁹ See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), 75.

⁷³⁰ Edwards wrote to Banks that:

"[Park] improves in his style so much by practice, that his journal now requires but little correction, and some parts, which he has lately sent to me, are equal to anything in the English language."

See Withers, 'Geography, Enlightenment and the Book' (2010), 201.

⁷³¹ NHM DTC 11, f.84-85, Bryan Edwards to Joseph Banks, 24 September 1798 – underlined words in original.

⁷³² Bitterli & Robinson, *Cultures* (2003), 9.

⁷³³ NHM DTC 11, f.113, Bryan Edwards to Joseph Banks, 22 October 1798.

regarding their relative cultures.⁷³⁴ It is conceivable that much of the behaviour and character of the Africans he met with that are contained in his narrative were misrepresented within this model. Sketches of Park's route (figure 35) supposedly drawn by him during the preparation of his notes for Edwards illustrate clearly the division of this region by its mountainous terrain, emphasising the differences on both sides.⁷³⁵

By the end of 1798, Edwards's role as editor was much reduced in light of Park's improving authorial style and his only task was to ensure that his later chapters matched the format of what had already been sent to the printers.⁷³⁶ What has been highlighted here though, is that the emerging image which accompanied this new geography of the African interior and its inhabitants was given substance in a manner which reflected the pressures of its prospective audience and the contributions of its editors who had their own agenda. That this new constructed account of the region was rooted in the mapped geography which Rennell had determined upon is made clear by displaying of Park's route in George Nicoll's London publishing office where prospective subscribers were directed to order their copies.⁷³⁷

Because of the carefully produced image of his journey, Park was reluctant thereafter to answer questions from the public concerning his expedition. He was worried that he would either not understand their questions or they would not understand his answer; "in either case my conversation will be reported inaccurately."⁷³⁸ The entertainment value of travellers' narratives and

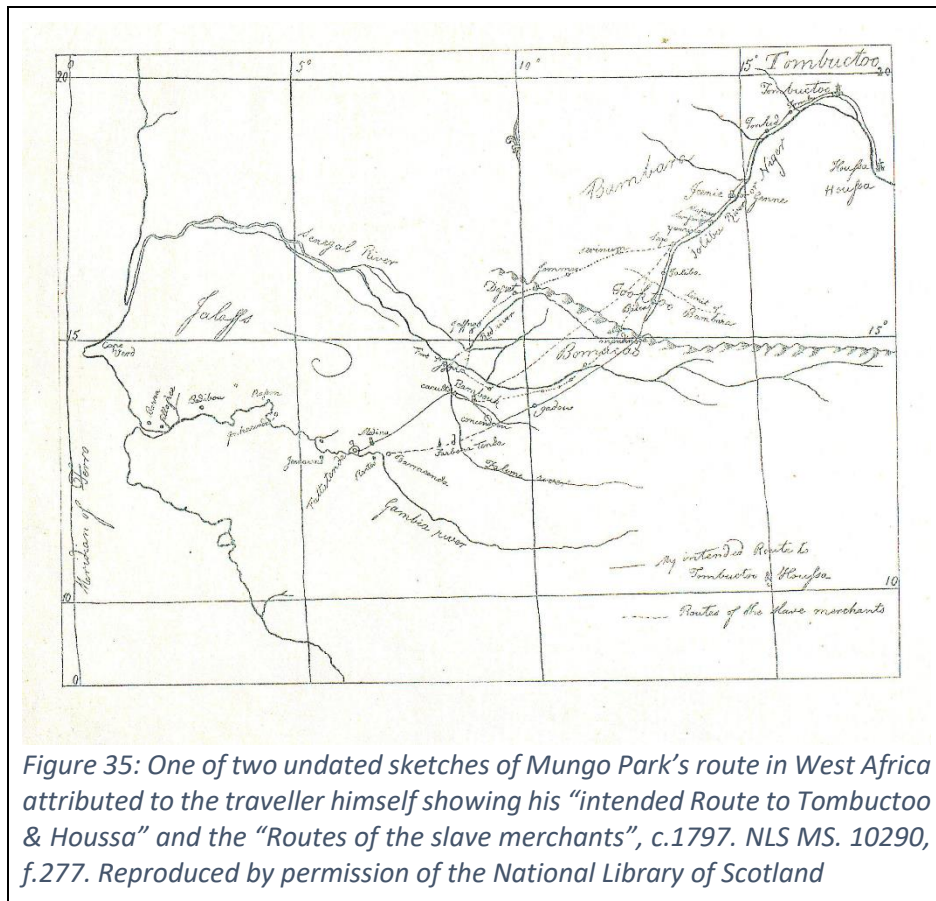
⁷³⁴ For a brief discussion of how Park's tale was Romanticised for its audience, see also Fulford & Lee, 'Mental Travellers' (2002), 126-131.

⁷³⁵ NLS MS 10290, f.276-277, c.1798.

⁷³⁶ NHM DTC 11, f.114, Bryan Edwards to Joseph Banks, 15 November 1798.

⁷³⁷ NLS MS 85565, AP.5.212.01, 4 June 1798, *Proposals for Publishing by subscription, under the Patronage of the African Association, Travels in the Interior Parts of Africa, by Way of the River Gambia, Reformed in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797, By the Direction and Expence, of that Association.*

⁷³⁸ Park's words were quoted later by his friend Sir Walter Scott, see NLS MS 786, f.11-12, Sir Walter Scott to "the Editor of Mungo Park's Journal published in 1816", Piccadilly, 24 April 1815.



the editing they required for public consumption, helped create an unscientific reality at a time when science was increasingly relied upon to provide accuracy and precision. The consequence of such carefully "imagined geographies" was their endurance in the British conscience and the frustrated efforts to introduce new perspectives later.

Commercial publications and their illustrative maps tangibly influenced the geographical illumination of West Africa such that contemporary encounters with the unknown, their experience was absolutely characterised by these constructed views. The manner in which Africa and Africans were represented and described in these texts contributed to what Neil Safier has referred to more generally as a "multifaceted discursive space within which Europeans represented native people...with recourse to an array of statistics, narratives, and geographic forms."⁷³⁹ Rennell's cartography was one of those geographic forms. The subsequent imagining of West Africa had

⁷³⁹ N. Safier, 'The Confines of the Colony: Boundaries, Ethnographic Landscapes, and Imperial Cartography in Iberoamerica' in J.R. Akerman (ed.), *The Imperial Map* (London, 2009), 183.

powerful ramifications and encouraged Banks when he submitted his proposals advocating an expansion of the British position to the Government in 1799. He was convinced not only of the market potential of the region but also of the African reception to such a scheme and he referred to the “whole Tenor” of Park’s journal to support his arguments.⁷⁴⁰

Traditions of narrating African exploration developed and Keighren *et al* have recently discussed in detail the nature of commercialised publications produced by the John Murray firm of which the 1815 journal of Park’s return journey to the Niger marked its first foray into African exploration. They have observed myriad ways in which the wider world was unveiled in the aftermath of discovery to the extent that the reality became clouded by the several conventions which emerged to mediate between experiences in the field and audiences at home. Maps, illustrations and the literary conventions which emerged to describe strange and unusual places were all given substance by the faith placed in accounts printed by the Murrays who cultivated a reputation for accuracy.⁷⁴¹

One of the archetypal explorer-turned-authors of this period was Lyon whose *Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa, in the years 1818, 1819, and 20* (published by Murray in 1821) was written in a similar tone to Park’s first journal, with careful consideration given to its reception by the public. The cartography which accompanied Lyon’s account of his and Richie’s journey to Murzuq reflected broader interests in the landscape and cultures of the interior, particularly as popular assumptions regarding them were increasingly found to be wrong. His map is notable because of the amount of text printed directly onto it describing the people and attempting to convey a little about local languages and culture. In its review of the publication, *The Quarterly Review* praised Lyon’s discussion of local societies, and noted the inclusion of a “neat chart” (figure 36) which illustrated the “nature of the surface in different parts of the country” reflective of Rennell and Edward’s earlier efforts to relate Africans with their landscape.⁷⁴² That

⁷⁴⁰ NA CO 2/1, f.9-10, Joseph Banks to Lord Liverpool, 8 June 1799.

⁷⁴¹ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 175-182.

⁷⁴² *The Quarterly Review*, Volume XXV (London, 1821), 25.

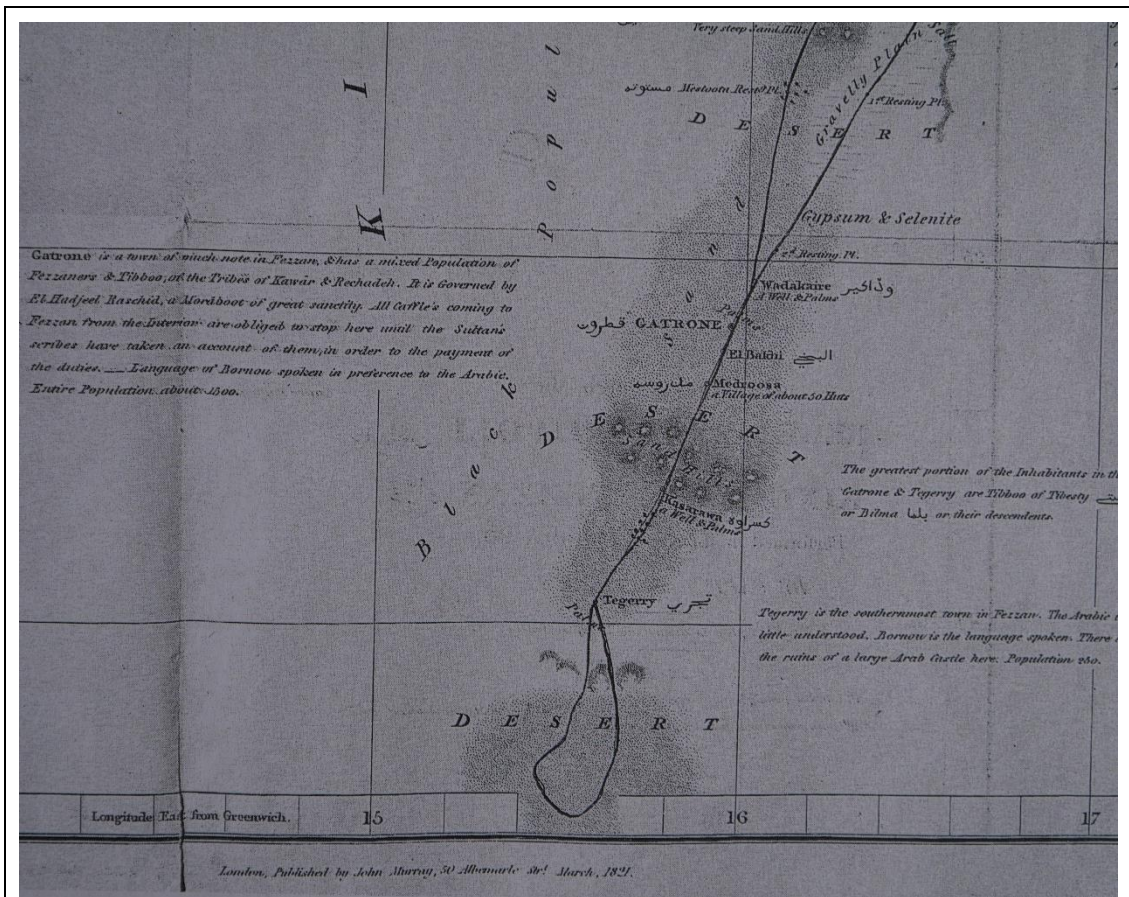


Figure 36: Detail from George Francis Lyon, "Map of a Route through the Regency of Tripoli and Kingdom of Fezzan performed in the Years 1818-19 & 20." Lyon's route is shown lying through changing terrain and geography, whilst his foray south from Murzuq through "Gatrone" carries him literally off the map. G.F. Lyon, *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa, in the years 1818, 1819, and 20; Accompanied by Geographical Notices of Soudan and of the Course of the Niger* (London, 1821). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

paratextual detail appeared alongside the travellers' itinerary because it supplemented their observations with details linked directly to the information its readers were supposed to engage with. As Lambert has demonstrated with the later example of MacQueen and Kenneth Macaulay's pamphlet-based debate concerning Sierra Leone in the early nineteenth century, the deployment of paratextual material (both on and off the map) was often essential to support both an authoritative image and a calculated one.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴³ Lambert, 'Sierra Leone' (2007), 103-132.

It is perhaps not unreasonable, that Lyon should have subscribed to the model of commercial travel literature considering the several expenses incurred by publication. In November 1820, he had been obliged to write to the Colonial Secretary for the payment which he believed was owed to him on completion of the mission because the costs of writing had left him in financial difficulty.⁷⁴⁴ Upon reading the published account, however, Consul-General Hanmer Warrington in Tripoli was concerned that much of it appeared to have been exaggerated. He concluded that the “representation of Poverty and Distress” which characterised the expedition’s narrative, could only be because “Public Pity might erase palpable Defect.”⁷⁴⁵ In short, he rejected Lyon’s claims that he and Ritchie had struggled because their mission was underfunded, though he respected that the literary construction of these experiences may have necessitated such treatment. He feared that the negativity of that publication would discourage the British Government from sponsoring any further exploration. When preparations were underway for a subsequent venture beyond the borders of Fezzan to Bornu, Warrington avowed:

Give me the man who is inclined to turn the Rugged Path into the Bowling green, & if Comparing them with Difficulties mountains into mole hills, in Preference to that phantom of mind which makes every Dwarf the Giant vide Capt[ain] Lyons Book.⁷⁴⁶

Consequent to the national interest generated by Ritchie and Lyon’s venture, and the role performed by Barrow in its organisation, articles appeared in *The Quarterly Review* with their preliminary reports. These, however, were written in a different tone (one that was more academic) to that which characterised the published narrative, such that Rennell complained to the editor of Scott’s narrative that “I was much disappointed in not finding more Intelligence respecting the Niger, in Lyon’s Book. The Quarterly Review taught me, by its Dissertation, to expect more.”⁷⁴⁷ The implications of Lyon’s apparently hyperbolic account for the later Bornu Mission when it travelled through Murzuq the following year is revealed by their confrontation with a different reality.

⁷⁴⁴ NA CO 2/9, f.129, George Francis Lyon to Lord Bathurst, London, 30 November 1820.

⁷⁴⁵ NA FO 76/15, f.41, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 16 July 1821.

⁷⁴⁶ NA FO 76/15, f.48, Hanmer Warrington to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 September 1821.

⁷⁴⁷ NLS MS 19390, f.105, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 13 October 1821.

Oudney, for instance, was “happily disappointed” to find the temperature there to be considerably lower than what he had assumed after reading Lyon’s book.⁷⁴⁸

By the time Denham’s account of the Bornu Mission appeared in 1826, the edited narrative with its multi-media approach to illuminating the unknown was an established component of the discovery process irrespective of its distorted representation of events.⁷⁴⁹ “The result of our expedition,” he declared, “has been the withdrawing the veil which has hitherto shaded central Africa from the age of Science and research and no particle of the information gained by it should be lost to the public...”⁷⁵⁰ The image of Africa which accompanied the new map was, therefore, an increasingly grand affair such that Denham requested £1500 from the Government towards the cost of its illustration.⁷⁵¹ Whilst he did not receive the full amount, Denham later paid tribute to his friend, Sir Robert Ker Porter, who provided him with several excellent illustrations based on his sketches from the field.

The significance of these edited, artificial graphic images of the West African interior becomes increasingly important towards the end of this period as preparations were made for the 1841 Niger Expedition. That venture ultimately revolved around the promotion of a positive image of the West African interior. As such, several common assumptions had to be challenged and the public’s imagination captured. In conjunction with Thomas Fowell Buxton’s several texts, the Murray publishing house also printed *Picturesque Views of the River Niger, Sketched during Lander’s last visit in 1832-33* (1840) by Lieutenant Allen who had accompanied MacGregor Laird’s expedition

⁷⁴⁸ RGS LMS 0/3, Walter Oudney to John Barrow, Murzuq, 4 November 1822.

⁷⁴⁹ Denham, *Narrative* (1826), viii.

⁷⁵⁰ Denham understood the demands of this commercial market in the preparation of his manuscript and so he too applied to the Government for financial assistance in its production.

From an estimate which I have made after consulting with persons who best understand business of this nature I find that were I only to select Twenty from the number of Sketches which are in my possession, independent of maps, a sum of six hundred Pounds would be requisite for the engravings alone and the Coloring – and this I fear would be publishing upon as large a scale as would be prudent were the whole weight of the expences to be thrown upon the work itself. While on the other hand should His Majesty’s Government be pleased to assist us at least Forty engravings of costumes arms & Country with additional maps could be given to the public at probably nearly the same price as on the reduced scale were we left to our own resources.

NA CO 2/13, f.191-192, Dixon Denham to Robert William Hay, London, 15 July 1825.

⁷⁵¹ NA CO 2/13, f.191-192, Dixon Denham to Robert William Hay, London, 15 July 1825.

in 1832, to illustrate a more positive view of the river inland (figure 37). In his own words, Allen sought to “delineate the features of the country, and the manners of the people” in a fashion evocative of the cartographic metaphor that was otherwise bringing sense and order to the region.⁷⁵² A map accompanies this work titled “A Part of the Rivers Niger & Chadda” (also by Allen) showing where the images were drawn and allowing readers to see for themselves the luxuriance of the interior as one ascends the river. Addressing the still-lingering concerns regarding the interior’s fertility, Buxton declared that the “country does not deteriorate as we ascend the river. We have the testimony of Park, corroborated by Denham and Clapperton, in support of this statement...”⁷⁵³ What we see then is a very particular, constructed image of West Africa that was consciously presented using cartography as a means of fixing descriptions and pictures to specific places.

This remained, however, a constructed ideal of the interior that was subject to extraordinary instances of bias, preconceived conclusions and the demands of a commercial audience. Despite, Allen’s claim that his illustrations were taken on the spot, their publication was subject to its marketability. Throughout this period the designation of travellers’ first-hand observation evolved to be a guarantee of its authenticity. We have seen though, how their perspective was warped by several mitigating factors.

Ancients and the Niger mystery, a modern answer? Part 2

The question of the Niger’s course and termination had captured Britain’s imagination by the early nineteenth century. In 1803, there appeared the first illustration by an innovative German map-maker named Christian Gottlieb Reichard of his hypothesis that the Niger could reach the Bight of

⁷⁵² W. Allen, *Picturesque Views of the River Niger, Sketched during Lander’s last visit in 1832-33* (London, 1840), v.

⁷⁵³ Sir T.F. Buxton, *Remedy* (1840), 318.



Figure 37: John Murray published a selection of illustrations to demonstrate a positive image of the River Niger and encourage support for the expedition being prepared. (left) "Procession to Ibu" shows a uniformed officer (distinguished by his naval hat) under a large umbrella en route to a Royal audience; (right) detail of "The Confluence of the Rivers Niger and Chadda" and the commanding view of its surrounding landscape by another officer. W. Allen, *Picturesque Views of the River Niger, Sketched during Lander's last visit in 1832-33* (London, 1840). National Archives CO 1069/75

Biafra. That theory was rejected by Rennell and the conventional wisdom of British geography but it remains a significant milestone during this discussion of African cartography nonetheless.⁷⁵⁴

As more information regarding the Niger was collected by explorers in the field, from the gathering of native itineraries, and the peripheral enquiries of European merchants and officers along the coast, the value of ancient geographical sources came under increasing pressure. In contradiction of their popular authority, for example, Park's last letter from the Niger dated November 1805, stated his conviction that the river would in fact turn south and enter the sea.⁷⁵⁵ An article which appeared in *The Quarterly Review* in 1815 argued that the lack of an Islamic presence along the Guinea coast (not to mention the Kong Mountain chain) suggested that there

⁷⁵⁴ Withers, 'Mapping the Niger' (2004), 175.

⁷⁵⁵ NHM JBRP DTC 16, f.159, Mungo Park to Joseph Bank, Sansanding, 16 November 1805 - Unlike Reichard, Park believed that the Niger would find its way to the Congo. Whilst his fate remained unknown, however, individuals such as Barrow supposed that with no proven outlet anywhere along the coast, Park had simply "perished in the swamps of Wangara". See NHM JBRP DTC 19, f.180, John Barrow to Joseph Banks, Admiralty, 16 August 1815.

was no easy communication with the interior, thus negating such theories.⁷⁵⁶ However, even Barrow flirted with the idea that the Niger might communicate with the Congo during his organisation of Captain Tuckey's disastrous expedition before becoming convinced that it could only join the Nile. As for Park's published journal, his thoughts on the river's possible termination in the sea were discussed briefly before being dismissed.⁷⁵⁷ Rennell remained true to his original conclusions and was privately frustrated by the range of alternative and conflicting proposals which were being submitted to the public. Responding in 1819 to the latest suggestion that the river might reach the Indian Ocean, he wrote:

Africa is such a vast mass of land that there is abundant Room for its River to dispose of themselves, without resorting to improbable suppositions. But the Niger seems to be so popular, that every one courts its presence. Why are they not content with the Reports of the Ancients, who knew more concerning the Interior of Africa, than we do.⁷⁵⁸

When Thomas Edward Bowdich was at the Asante capital in 1817, his interviews there revealed no knowledge of "Wangara" or the Niger's termination there (per Rennell's theory). Several of his informants had referred to a place known as "Oongooroo" leading him to suppose that they were the same place. Unfortunately, his attempt to reconcile the several names by which the Niger or other large rivers were known in Africa (such as the "Joliba", the "Gambaroo" and the "Quolla") had led him to illustrate on his map (figure 38) several branches extending from the same trunk, one of which (the "Gambaroo") flowed into that area. Others continued north, south and even further to the east. Having read Bowdich's account, Rennell privately concluded in 1821 that its geographical notices actually corroborated his theory, "however diffuse & ill combined."⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XIII)* (London, 1815), 149.

⁷⁵⁷ Park, *Journal* (1815), 358-366.

⁷⁵⁸ Rennell continued: "Ptolemy's Report is Negative – He describes its course, but does not conduct it to the sea. But Agathemerus says directly 'There are two great rivers of Africa which do not reach the Sea: they are the Niger and the Gir.'" In this manner then, he continued resorting to ancient sources to in support of his position. Agathemerus was another Greek geographer who had lived sometime after Ptolemy, possibly in the third century AD. See NLS MS 19390, f.61, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 16 March 1819 – underlined words in the original.

⁷⁵⁹ NLS MS 19390, f.105, James Rennell to Thomas Stewart Traill, London, 13 October 1821 – Bowdich had actually sent copies of his journal and map to Rennell and the African Association for their perusal. See BL 96 RFL 1/465/2.

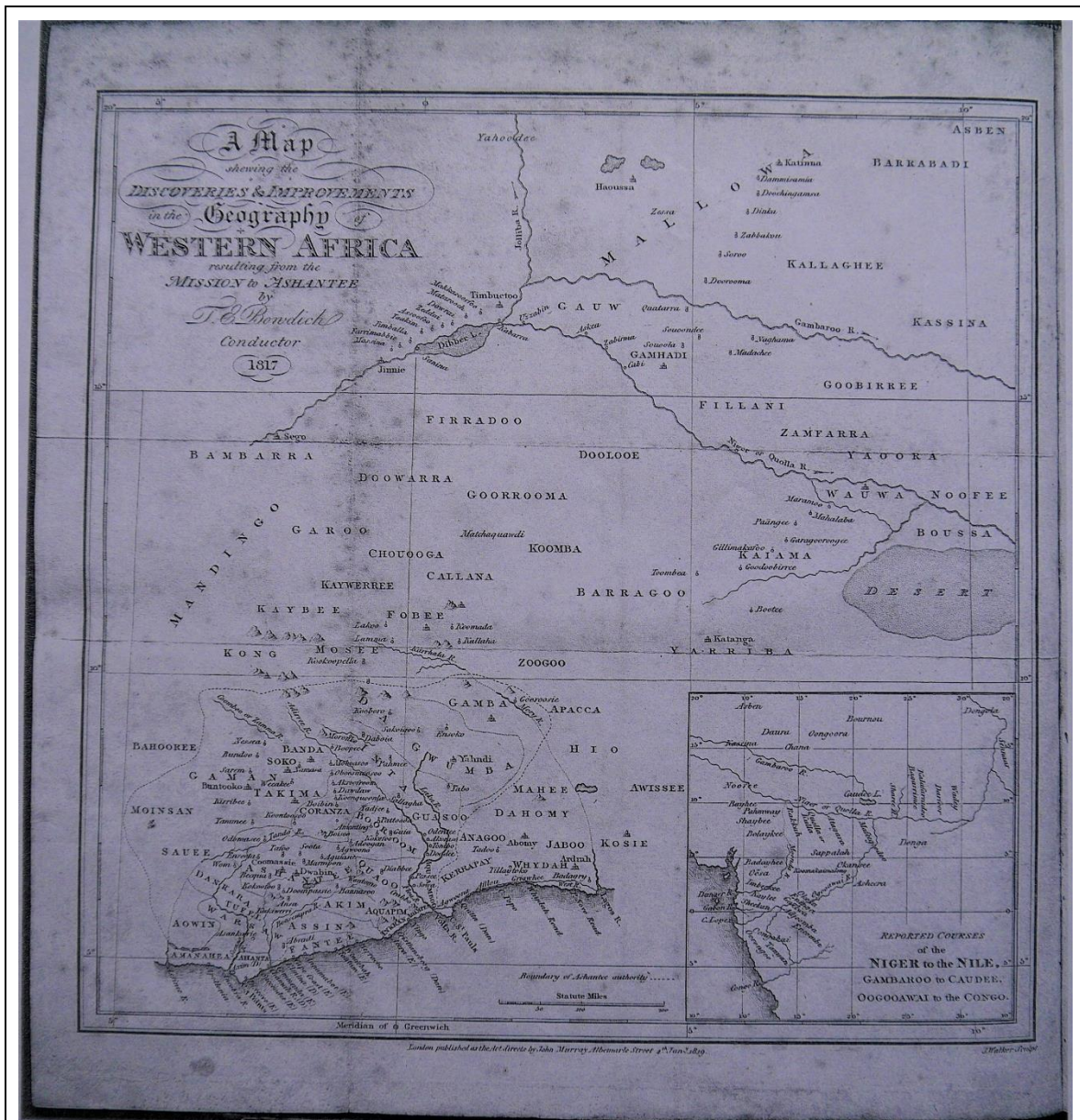


Figure 38: Thomas Edward Bowdich, "A Map shewing the Discoveries & Improvements in the Geography of Western Africa resulting from the Mission to Ashantee by T.E. Bowdich, Conductor, 1817" in T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London, 1819). Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland

As he defended his Wangara theory from Bowdich's confused attentions though, Rennell also addressed the latest geography to have emerged from the expedition of Ritchie and Lyon which also cast doubt on the Major's cartography. The several itineraries and numerous interviews with Africans from the interior which Ritchie had collected before leaving Tripoli in 1819 helped identify

a clearer image of the geography to the south and in mid-1820, *The Quarterly Review* published a summary of his most recent correspondence.

Mr. Ritchie observes that the position of Wangara, a name unknown to those natives of Bornou and Waday ... must be materially altered in our maps according to the notices which he received respecting it; so likewise must that of Bornou.⁷⁶⁰

From his informants, Ritchie supposed that Wangara might be a region a little down-river of Timbuktu but he had heard nothing of the Niger's termination there.⁷⁶¹ Moreover, he realised that two nations which had appeared separately as "Borgou" and "Waday" were almost certainly the same country and that they had been forced to fit around the incorrect locating of Bornou near Egypt.⁷⁶² Of a large internal body of water in the interior, Ritchie had heard consistent reports of one in the Hausa region, at "Nyffe" [Nupe], to which he could trace the Niger but suspected that the river continued onwards to an unknown destination.⁷⁶³ These reports were damaging for Rennell's argument as Ritchie was in the habit of comparing the names of places his informants told him about with existing maps and with the writings of Leo Africanus and al-Idrisi in search of commonalities, rarely with any success.⁷⁶⁴ In its assessment of his findings, therefore, *The Quarterly Review* went so far as to condemn the texts of al-Idrisi whose geography had been continuously proven wrong.⁷⁶⁵

After his mission to Kumasi, Dupuis offered some clarification on the matter of Wangara in his published journal (1824). As Ritchie had attested, Dupuis believed that Wangara was the name of a large area comprised of several kingdoms, not a swamp or lake into which the Niger ran.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁰ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXIII)* (London, 1820), 234.

⁷⁶¹ NA CO 2/9, f.29, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 24 March 1819.

⁷⁶² RGS LMS R/12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, Tripoli, 30 April 1819.

⁷⁶³ NA CO 2/9, f.29, Joseph Ritchie to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli 24 March 1819.

⁷⁶⁴ RGS LMS R/12, Joseph Ritchie to John Barrow, Tripoli, 30 April 1819.

⁷⁶⁵ The developing "culture of exploration" was gathering momentum at this time, led by figures such as Barrow who were increasingly critical of non-"scientific" enquiries:

The progressive geography of Africa has unquestionably been retarded by the absurd and erroneous system, if it deserves the name, of Edrisi, one of the earliest Arabian writers on the subject, whose assertions were adopted by others, in some instances contrary to the evidence of the senses [note: "Leo Africanus saw the Niger at Kabra, and yet makes it to run from east to west."]. He knew nothing of Africa from personal observation, and appears to have been ill qualified to digest that information which he collected from others.

See *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXIII)* (London, 1820), 239.

⁷⁶⁶ Dupuis, *Journal* (1824), Appendix, xvi; see also Law, "'Central and Eastern Wangara'" (1995), 281-305.

Significantly, he understood the extent of that region to actually encompass even the “great tropical Delta” in the Bight of Biafra which was later demonstrated to be the river’s outlet. Dupuis, however, learned from his Muslim informants that it was common knowledge in the interior that the Niger joined the Nile, though nobody knew its precise course.⁷⁶⁷

Efforts by MacQueen in 1821 to trace the Niger’s course into the Bight of Benin using historic sources reveals the problematic nature of contemporary scholarship which maintained faith in their fundamental value. To support the merits of his own geographical theories, however, he was forced to address the unquestioning treatment of their geographies. Whilst conceding that Africa was clearly better known to the ancients than it was to the moderns, he commented of Ptolemy: “we are not to look for the accuracy of modern detail.”⁷⁶⁸ Yet rather than challenge Ptolemy completely, MacQueen chose to focus only on the “undisputed and clearer parts which tend so strongly to confirm the accounts of modern travellers...”⁷⁶⁹ Regarding al-Idrisi, he concluded that his knowledge of the Niger was clearly flawed, whereas the problems associated with Leo Africanus’ were most likely the result of poor translations which had been compounded by history and repetition.⁷⁷⁰

During the cartographic revolutions of the 1820s, the discovery of Lake Chad in 1823 not only represented a triumph of field science, it also breathed life back into the notion of the Niger’s termination into an inland lake. In response to that expedition, the map continued to be moulded by preconceived notions reflecting the presence of antique geographies within British cartographic traditions. Denham even prepared for that venture by reading Strabo (whose geography was reflective in many regards of Herodotus’) and had acquainted himself with d’Anville’s map, the interior of which was heavily characterised by ancient sources.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁷ Dupuis, *Journal* (1824), Appendix, xli-xliv.

⁷⁶⁸ MacQueen, *Commercial View* (1821), 5.

⁷⁶⁹ *ibid*, 5.

⁷⁷⁰ *ibid*, 31, 39.

⁷⁷¹ NA CO 2/13, f.24, Dixon Denham to Henry Goulburn, London, 1 August 1821.

The discovery of Lake Chad in 1823 focused attention on the rivers which were found to flow into it, specifically the “Yaou” (Yobe) in the northwest and the “Shary” (Chari) to the south, both of which were surveyed during the course of the mission as possible branches of the Niger.⁷⁷² Oudney was of the opinion that the Yobe was a more logical candidate as it issued from the desert but it was too small to convince him that it could be the fabled river.⁷⁷³ He had heard rumours that a branch of the Chari might turn east towards the Nile but he placed no confidence in his informants.⁷⁷⁴ Regardless of Oudney’s doubts, *The Quarterly Review* swiftly reported in 1823 (prior to Dupuis’ discussion of Wangara as a region comprised of several kingdoms):

If, indeed, the account of all travellers, and the Arab writers, can be depended on ... no doubt whatever can remain that the [Yobe] is the Niger, which Major Rennel has traced satisfactorily into the swamps of Wangara, or (for they must be the same) the Lake of Bornou; what becomes of it afterwards, and whether it terminates in the lake, is a point which we trust our travellers will be able to determine.⁷⁷⁵

By the end of 1823, however, both Oudney and Clapperton were convinced from local informants that a river identifiable as the Niger by the name of “Quora” reached another lake further to the southwest at “Nyffe” [Nupe], as Ritchie had reported.⁷⁷⁶ Irrespective of his companions’ position, Denham conducted several failed attempts to search for an undiscovered outlet on the east of Lake Chad which could potentially reach the Nile, giving individuals like Barrow hope that the waters of the Niger (being the Yobe) carried on into Egypt (figure 39).⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷² For a brief discussion see Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 108.

⁷⁷³ NA CO 2/13, f.308, Walter Oudney to Hanmer Warrington, “Kuka”, 15 May 1823.

⁷⁷⁴ Confusingly, Oudney and Clapperton’s observation of that river flowing into Lake Chad was actually contrary to the majority of indigenous reports they had gathered on their approach to its banks.

⁷⁷⁵ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXIX)* (London, 1823), 522 - In a symbolic act, water from the Yaou was actually collected and sent to the Consul-General in Tripoli and through him to the Colonial Office, preemptively labelled as water from the Niger; Warrington wrote: “I have another bottle & in drinking success to the mission I hope I shall find its efficacy in inspiring me with additional zeal for the Promotion of Discovery...” See NA FO 76/18, f.234, Hanmer Warrington to Robert Wilmot Horton, Tripoli, 18 August 1824.

⁷⁷⁶ A CO 2/13, f.316, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, “Kuka”, 10 December 1823.

⁷⁷⁷ RGS DD/17/3, Dixon Denham to Lord Bathurst, “Kouka”, 18 June 1824 - During one of his excursions, Denham met with a man whose nomadic life had often taken him to the unmapped eastern portion of the lake, who described what appeared to be a dry river bed named *Bahr-al-Ghazal* which extended to the same “Lake Fittre” that Browne and Hornemann’s journals had introduced; “that it there gradually wasted itself in an immense swamp, or, indeed, lake” identifiable as another possible Wangara site. Further details were tantalisingly offered from this same source that another river (supposedly the Chari) ran from the south into the same Lake Fittre and, once joined, they continued on to the Nile. See Denham, *Narrative* (1826), 264-265.

of those two reports meant that the final map accompanying the Bornu Mission's published journal illustrated that potential course. These combined geographies ultimately supported the continued notion that the Niger could reach the Nile, perpetuating both Herodotus' geography of their communication and Ptolemy's description of its running into an inland lake at the same time.

The various hypotheses regarding the Niger came to a head in the late 1820s. Evidence gathered by Clapperton on his visit to Sokoto in 1824 and his return to Africa in 1826 all indicated its termination in the Bight of Biafra. Several maps had consequently begun illustrating it as such even before the Lander brother proved that to be the case in 1830.⁷⁸¹ When Clapperton's journal was published posthumously in 1829, the course of the Niger at the southernmost point that had been charted, at "Funda", was shown as only a short distance from the northernmost part of the Benue or Formosa river as it had appeared on certain eighteenth century maps. Funda, it should be noted, had been described by Sultan Bello as the place where the "Quarra enters the sea".⁷⁸² When it was discovered that Funda was nowhere near the coast, the ensuing discussion returned to an appraisal of the Arabic words for sea, lake and river which were the same: *bahr*.

The last great obstacle preventing the Niger from reaching the sea on British maps was the supposed Kong mountains which had been typically projected as an uninterrupted chain across the continent. However, Clapperton's journal recounted his party's traverse across broken mountainous terrain that was scarred with deep valleys through which the river could potentially run to the Atlantic.⁷⁸³ For those still holding onto the view that the Niger could reach the Nile, their last hope was to prove a union of the main trunk of the river and the Chari. During his return to the coast with his master's notes, Lander reported that he had heard of a river by the name of "Shar, or Sharry" which issued *from* Lake Chad and flowed *into* the Niger.⁷⁸⁴ Although this account contradicted the established course of the Chari, it was supposed that Lander had simply

⁷⁸¹ For a particularly early example, see J. Wyld, *A General Atlas, containing Maps illustrating some important periods in Ancient History: and distinct Maps of the several Empires, Kingdoms and States in the World, From Original Drawings according to the latest Treaties by J. Wyld and engraved by N.R. Hewitt* (Edinburgh 1824).

⁷⁸² Denham, *Narrative* (1826), 96.

⁷⁸³ Clapperton, *Journal* (1829), 21-25.

⁷⁸⁴ *ibid*, 353.

misunderstood his informant. That being the case, the suggestion that such a link existed obviously appealed to those who were looking for one.⁷⁸⁵ An article in *The Quarterly Review* used the recent publication of Sir Rufane Donkin's *Dissertation on the Course and Probable Termination of the Niger* (1829) as an opportunity to advance once more the increasingly unlikely view that the Niger reached the Nile. The argument, however, ultimately rested on the fact that nobody had proven beyond reasonable doubt that such a course did not exist.⁷⁸⁶ In response, other periodicals were quick to scorn reliance on what one writer called "the vague accounts delivered down by the ancient geographers".⁷⁸⁷

Unable to continue arguing against the weight of mounting evidence, Barrow concluded that the river which Park had found and which had been roughly charted was simply not the Niger that the ancients had written about. In his editorial for Clapperton's second journal, he wrote:

It cannot be supposed that either Herodotus, or Ptolemy, or Pliny, or any Greek or Roman writer whatever, could have the slightest intimation of such a river as this, so far to the westward and to the southward of the Great Desert, of the crossing of which by any of the ancient travellers there does not exist the slightest testimony. The name of Quorra, or

⁷⁸⁵ A fascinating proposal was consequently submitted to the Admiralty in the summer of 1829 which ingeniously used a facsimile of the map accompanying Clapperton's journal to illustrate its intended route to the unknown area between Adamawa and Funda. Henry Welford, a former officer who had served in India, thus volunteered to zig and zag across the landscape in search of any connection.

Welford was the last adventurer to be dispatched by the African Association before its merger with the Raleigh Club in 1830 to form the Royal Geographical Society. His mission was to travel from Egypt to the *Bahr-al-Abiad* which was believed to be the principal source of the Nile and which some geographers continued to trace to Lake Chad. Welford was to find that river and follow it as far as he could. See NA CO 2/18, f.194-195, "Expedition to Africa" contained within f.192, Henry Welford to Robert William Hay, Marlborough, 10 September 1829; NA MPG 1/316; See also Hallet, *Records* (1964), 240-242.

⁷⁸⁶ *The Quarterly Review* (Volume XLI) (London, 1829), 226-239.

⁷⁸⁷ *The Oriental Herald* (Volume 20) (London, 1829), 468 – *The Quarterly Review* was also quick to scorn Sir Rufane Donkin's dissertation, largely because much of the physical landscape uncovered by the Bornu Mission negated some of his arguments about the likelihood of the Niger's course to the Nile (Donkin argued that the Niger entered Lake Chad via the Yobe only to then leave again via the north of the lake into a subterranean river course which led to the Mediterranean). Although this is not the place to dwell too much on such matters, a core element of Donkin's thesis was that the river discussed by Greek and Roman geographers was a Niger rather than *the* Niger; a twist of the translation which might actually have supported the later argument that the river found by Park and sought after by European exploration was not the body of water described since the time of Herodotus. Sir Rufane, however, was clearly infuriated by the criticism he received from *The Quarterly Review* and he penned a lengthy response (58 pages) which he published privately. Donkin used this text to attack the position of power that Barrow and the John Murray publishing firm had established over the interpretation of the world's geography. See *The Quarterly Review* (Volume XLI) (London, 1829), 226-239; Sir R. Donkin, *A Letter to the Publisher of the Quarterly Review, and of "A Dissertation on the Course and Probable Termination of the Niger." By the Author of that Dissertation* (London, 1829).

Cowarra, by which it is known in Soudan, and probably also to the westward of Timbuctoo, ought now, therefore, to be adopted on our charts of Africa.⁷⁸⁸

This rationale (which, with the benefits of hindsight, is broadly true) was also ridiculed and there was no further dispute that the river which the Landers traced to the Bight of Biafra the following year should be called the Niger.⁷⁸⁹

Ultimately then there is no discussion of the mapping of the Niger without acknowledging the influence of classic geographies and the efforts of others seeking to mould new information to their own foregone conclusions. The discourse which surrounded the rough charting of that river clearly illustrates the bias which influenced developing cartographies. The actions of individuals such as Rennell or Barrow during this period were intended to relate British enquiries to the geographies and scholarship of antiquity which Enlightenment culture sought to emulate. Britain's ability to discover that river's true course and termination, to surpass the great writers of antiquity was, therefore, an integral component of the rising importance given to first-hand observations over the rationalisations of metropolitan geographies. As this period progressed, British cartography of West Africa stopped looking backwards for foundations upon which to develop, and was increasingly characterised by what it could prove instead. Thus we see the establishment of the RGS and, in 1841, the Niger Expedition which compiled the evidence of all Britain's enquiries to illustrate how the African interior might be both navigable and susceptible to agricultural improvements.

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⁷⁸⁸ Clapperton, *Journal* (1829), xix.

⁷⁸⁹ In their voyage down the Niger, Richard and John Lander came across a tributary coming from the east which was described to them as the "Tschadda" and which was used by locals to communicate with Bornu. This river, which Richard Lander confusingly described as the "Shary, Shar, or Sharry of Europeans" was observed to flow *into* the Niger. The continued reference to the Chari of Lake Chad, however, was the last echo of a discourse that had tried to equate the muddled texts of long-dead geographers with the physical realities confronted by British travellers in the field and join the Niger with the Nile by any means. See R. & J. Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger; with a Narrative of a voyage down that river to its termination. In Three Volumes. Illustrated with Engravings and Maps. Vol. 3*, (London, 1832), 61-62; NA CO 2/18, f.34, Richard Lander to Robert William Hay, Fernando Po, 7 January 1831.

Chapter 6: Britain's mapping of West Africa

What encouraged the contemporary quest for an “accurate” map of West Africa? Denis Wood and John Fels argue that cartographic accuracy was ultimately a means by which authority over land and any knowledge concerning it could be established through the medium of maps and the conventions they adhered to which supported their claims to accuracy.⁷⁹⁰ Cartography which closely reflected the reality on the ground was obviously of more value but we have already seen several reasons why it was impossible for such maps to exist in this period. Because they are rooted in historical contexts, Wood argues that maps are “more a record – or a product – of a conversation than anything.”⁷⁹¹ It follows that several historical and social circumstances found expression through maps in a manner which influenced that conversation between people and places, even as they endeavoured to be faithful, accurate drawings of reality.

The blank map was inviting for British imaginations and so, whilst it remained incomplete, the interior was filled with all manner of supposition. According to Dorinda Outram, the emergence of several mass-produced and culturally-peculiar images of foreign lands and societies at this time (in which maps played a key role) meant that the reception of “cross-cultural encounters” detailing instances of European contact with the non-European world were assimilated as the “imaginative property” of the public, conferring new meanings and significances onto popular views.⁷⁹² The argument follows that the manner in which West Africa was observed, recorded and reproduced for the contemporary audience contributed towards the creation of “imagined geographies” which Edward Said has placed at the heart of contemporary ideas about foreign lands.⁷⁹³ As Britain

⁷⁹⁰ Wood & Fels, ‘The Nature of Maps’ (2008), 191-196.

⁷⁹¹ Wood, ‘The map as a kind of talk’ (2002), 141.

⁷⁹² D. Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Second Edition) (Cambridge, 2005), 53.

⁷⁹³ Said, *Orientalism* (2003), 49-73.

searched for more accurate cartography of the region, it became unavoidable that the lands they mapped were incorporated into a wider discourse.

It is observable though, that a coherent understanding of West Africa continued to be impeded by a variety of economic and social factors introduced further pressures over the map. As one periodical in 1817 noted with regards to the discoveries being pursued in West Africa: “information, which we may truly say every reader is desirous to obtain on these points, is scattered over many and expensive works; some of them old and scarce, others more modern, but still not all within the means of the middle classes.”⁷⁹⁴ Even in wealthier circles though, the popular image of Africa was incoherent and not always reflective of the latest discoveries. Thomas Edward Bowdich, for example, complained after his return from Kumasi in 1818 that his account did not appear to have influenced a revolution of ideas and images of the Asante:

I had frequently in society to correct the general idea of all the interior of Africa being a sandy desert, by repeating that the part of the country which we marched through was fertile and abounded in small rivers and streams; and in consequence, a lady to whom I was presented in a large assembly, congratulated me on “my delightful account of the Ashantee Island”.⁷⁹⁵

In this final chapter I want to turn to the influence which maps had on the British engagement with West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Because of those inaccuracies which filled up the blank map, I want to look at the broader impact of Britain’s geographical enquiries and its reading by a growing carto-literate population. Because in this period, reading patterns did improve and Innes Keighren *et al* observe, for example, that the John Murray publishing house began printing an affordable range of travel narratives with their attendant cartographies in response to mounting pressure from the lower classes by the late 1820s.⁷⁹⁶

The “discourse function” of cartography which Wood identified illustrates the importance of that relationship between the map and its reader because it has a “regular role in the discourse,

⁷⁹⁴ *The Literary Gazette; and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Politics, &c. for the year 1817* (London, 1817), 67.

⁷⁹⁵ BL Add MS 19422, f.44, “REPLY of Thomas Edward Bowdich, conductor of the Ashantee Mission, to an article in the Quarterly Review of March, 1820, upon his published account of the Mission and his pamphlet on the same subject, 1819. Lithographed. Paper. Small Folio.”

⁷⁹⁶ Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 135-137.

in the talk, that shapes our world.”⁷⁹⁷ To help identify the desire for reliable mapping and define the historical contexts of British cartography it becomes necessary to consider it in terms of what interests were served by mapping and we have seen how specific images could be constructed.

Examining the interaction between Britain and the map of West Africa means recognising the emergence of two Africas within that discourse. The first is the one which existed cartographically, constructed from the observations and experiences of travellers, and the rationalisations of map-makers. It was the land which could be manipulated by cartographic conventions to present a reality conducive to British activities. This Africa, however, was more than the product of a limited archive; it also reflected framework of historical geography and its popular understanding which supported several well-established (yet prejudiced) views of the inhabitants of southern climes. It is therefore argued that interacting with the map of West Africa is a subject which extends beyond the geography of land and people to include the presumed influence of geography over land and people.

The second Africa, however, is the one which people interacted with at an emotional level. It was the blank map, a symbolic monument to chaos and the unknown. Whilst endeavouring to produce an accurate map, I argue that the slow uncovering of West Africa’s physical and human landscape resonated within the narrative of British map-making to acquire a symbolic meaning which excused (partially) its imperfections. Bringing a semblance of order to the emptiness of the map encouraged the emerging character of British enquiries which later justified the assumed authority of its paternal humanitarianism. Because of these conflicting themes of cartographic accuracy and the various nuances of its interpretation, this chapter focuses on how the map progressed from being simply a discourse function which informed Britons about West Africa’s “otherness” to a tool which found utility during the British engagement there.

⁷⁹⁷ D. Wood, F. Fels and J. Krygier, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (London, 2010), 2.

“the destined instruments of their civilization”⁷⁹⁸

Peter Marshall and Glyndwr Williams have observed that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the lack of available material regarding Africa and Africans had allowed outdated descriptions, fear, prejudice, and biblical terminology to characterise most contemporary discussions. Any publications which did appear were usually a product of contact through the slave trade and offered only partial, problematic views of a limited scope.⁷⁹⁹ Even after the more organised enquiries towards the end of the century, there remained several gaps in the broader understanding of the region, its landscape and inhabitants.

Robin Hallet observed that the European attitude towards Africa at this time can only be comprehended if it is placed within a “wider intellectual system, a total world view.”⁸⁰⁰ The mapping of West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought Britain into contact with a landscape and population beyond expectations.⁸⁰¹ Whilst contact with the Americas, India and other equatorial regions had disproven the traditional image of the Torrid Zone as one of sterile, barren wasteland, the organisation of space offered by mapping complemented studies which sought to catalogue and explain the observable peculiarities of Africa. It is important in this regard to then look to the contemporary discussion of Africans which called on the explanations provided by their mapped environment to account for their perceived state of being.

Contemporaries questioned the relationship between societies and their local environments; whether humans could adapt to different parts of the world or whether they were static within the geographic systems they were born to. Popular views concerning the spread of civilization across the world matured into the stadial theory which measured the progression of society from its primitive origins to the industrialisation of contemporary Europeans.⁸⁰² What has been referred to as the “defining feature of Enlightenment global thinking about humanity” was

⁷⁹⁸ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 214.

⁷⁹⁹ Marshall & Williams, *The Great Map* (1982), 33-37, 45-61.

⁸⁰⁰ Hallet, ‘Changing European Attitudes’ (1976), 463.

⁸⁰¹ Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 227.

⁸⁰² Outram, *The Enlightenment* (1996), 55-61.

that which viewed the relative degrees of civilization found across the world as a record of each society's historical achievement.⁸⁰³ By measuring world cultures from similar origins (Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) Europeans confidently claimed that they had advanced the most in the time given to them, that other less-developed societies simply lived as Europeans once had. In the words of Joseph Marie de Gérando in 1800: "The philosophical traveller, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact travelling in time; he is exploring the past; every step he takes is the passage of an age."⁸⁰⁴ Searching for reasons to explain the contrast between European and African societies then, writers such as Adam Ferguson reasoned that whilst the Torrid Zone was presumably more fertile than previously suspected, the environment had limited the development of civilization and the arts of science there.⁸⁰⁵ The argument followed that the natural bounty of the tropics had not encouraged the development of agriculture or industry, that Africans were made lazy by the ease of their existence.

The association between people and place, however, is difficult to address without acknowledging the notion of man's regression as one travelled further away from Europe. Especially in terms of the popular idea of a Great Chain of Being which represented the ordering of all living things within a linear system, from the lowest to the highest lifeforms. The rapid expansion of European activities across the world in the eighteenth century brought contemporaries into contact with so many parts of the world at a time when cartography was increasingly providing the means to catalogue them that Edmond Burke famously wrote: "The great map of mankind is unroll'd at once; there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not in the same moment under our view."⁸⁰⁶ The metaphorical map is referenced to demonstrate the sum of western knowledge but the view of non-Europeans here was one which presupposed that "Gradation of barbarism". Pro-slavery writing by John Matthews (formerly of the Royal Navy and

⁸⁰³ Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye* (2001), 198.

⁸⁰⁴ Quoted in *ibid*, 198.

⁸⁰⁵ E. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Second Edition) (London, 1768), 168-169.

⁸⁰⁶ Marshall & Williams, *The Great Map* (1982), 7; See also Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (2007), introduction.

erstwhile slave trader) in 1788 subscribed to a similar (ultimately Eurocentric) linear framework when arguing that the trade was justified because Africa's environment was so detrimental to African society, transporting slaves overseas was more conducive to their civilisation. "Trace the manners of the natives," he wrote, "the whole extent of Africa from Cape Cantin [Morocco] to the Cape of Good Hope, and you find a constant and almost regular gradation in the scale of understanding, till the wretched Cafre sinks below the Ouran Outang[sic]."⁸⁰⁷

The submission of various plans for humanitarian colonization in the 1780s were, at their heart, premised around the notion that humans were not fixed in a predetermined state relative to their position on the globe. It was hoped that by bringing order to the land and directing the affairs of its population that a more civilized society could be nurtured. Carl Bernhard Wadström, for example, explained in his 1789 *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa* that:

A Country may be considered as that to a *Community*, which the Female is to the Male: For without Land, no Use can be produced. Therefore, a civilized *Community*, possessing a fine *Country*, may be compared to a well-formed Marriage... A *Country* without *People* is a wilderness, and habitation for wild beasts; but under the culture of an industrious *People*, it rises into a terrestrial Paradise, every where replenished with the tame and useful animals, enriched by fertile fields, vineyards, and pastures, embellished with innumerable trees and plants...⁸⁰⁸

If by "wilderness" Wadström subscribed to the popular definition of "savageness", he thus described a model by which Africa (which was often depicted as blank and empty on European maps) could be brought under the control of an improved society to the lasting benefit of its inhabitants and future European trading partners.⁸⁰⁹ That principle was centred on the organisation of space offered by cartographic conventions which allowed the blank map (easily corroborated with a supposedly blank landscape) to be filled with details and ordered activities.

⁸⁰⁷ J. Matthews, *A Voyage to The River Sierra-Leone, on The Coast of Africa; containing an Account of the Trade and Productions of the Country, and of the Civil and Religious Customs and Manners of the People; In a Series of Letters to a Friend in England* (London, 1788), 158.

⁸⁰⁸ A. Nordenskjöld, C.B. Wadström, C. Barrell & Johann Gottfried Simpson, *Plan for a Free Community upon the Coast of Africa, under the Protection of Great Britain; but Intirely Independent of all European Law and Governments* (London, 1789), 8.

⁸⁰⁹ See S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced form their originals, explained in their different meanings, and authorised by the names of the writers in whose works they are found (the tenth edition)* (London, 1792).

Cartography developed to illustrate the limits of knowledge whilst also providing a blank canvas upon which to follow the course of discoveries and legitimise Britain's knowledge of the region. They also evoked a landscape without content until it could be uncovered or installed through British agency; in a literal sense, Britain's interaction with the land and its people was epitomised by its ability to bring order to its chaos. The British attitude was arguably fixed, therefore, on the notion that its exploratory and cartographic activities provided an opportunity to both demonstrate its cultural superiority, and, through its mapping of the interior, provide some benefit to its inhabitants. The African Association even went so far as to correlate their lack of knowledge with the perceived low state of African culture.

[T]here can be little doubt but that the progress of civilization amongst the Africans has been as slow as can be conceived, in any situation: and it has also happened, of course, that the destined Instruments of their civilization have remained in a proportional degree of ignorance concerning the nature of the country.⁸¹⁰

Throughout this period, Britain's cartographic activities continued to exist as a metaphor for civilization. Moreover, the legitimacy of their perceived right to improve was bound within the discourse of reliable knowledge that the African Association nurtured after 1788. For Britons then, as "the destined Instruments of [Africans'] civilization", the implication of exploration and discovery was their symbolic status as justification for intervention and improvement; with great knowledge, came great responsibility.

The contemporary ethos of improvement is a complex subject and stems from the belief that knowledge of something meant knowing how to modify its place in nature. Cartography helped illustrate the spaces of "others" and was instrumental in the discussion of those places and provided explanations for their alien appearance. Yet, from that perspective of economic botany which had originally encouraged certain members of the Association and Britain's broader global policies from the late eighteenth century in general, the mapping of Africa provided a mechanism for British ambitions to be projected across the region, over both the land and its inhabitants. Richard Drayton

⁸¹⁰ Beaufoy, *Proceedings* (1790), 214.

traces the origins of improvement ideology to the melding of “religious and intellectual modesty and hubris” which were empowered by the observation and cataloguing of the natural world.⁸¹¹ This was a discourse that was centred around the distinction made between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and the European assumption of a natural superiority over “the other”.⁸¹²

The emergence of these attitudes within British society were encouraged by the dispersal of these edited geographical texts and their accompanying cartographies which were discussed in the previous chapter. Tim Fulford and Debbie Lee’s study of the image of Africa which Banks presided over conclude that the Romantic traditions of his generation allowed him to open “spaces within the minds of Britons, mental geographies that seemed to place the real geographies of foreign realms within their knowledge and power.”⁸¹³ Lee has drawn further attention to the image of the African interior which emerged through Romantic literary traditions, fuelled by the mystery of the unknown, into which agents of enquiry travelled. These individuals were not just tools of observation for metropolitan scholarship though; they were champions of British culture and were presented as something of an antithesis to the lands they traversed and people they met.⁸¹⁴ The perspective of the traveller and the maps which illustrated his journey take on a special significance within this mental space especially when there remained an uncertainty as to what the experiences of travel in these wildernesses would do to European travellers and what the effects of that climate might be. Accompanying many eighteenth-century investigations into the nature of non-Europeans, there remained a belief that Europeans themselves would regress to a primal state if they spent too long in the wilderness.⁸¹⁵ Similarly, there was a suspicion of Europeans who adopted the behaviour of the indigenous people they were in contact with. Those who did were considered

⁸¹¹ Drayton, *Nature’s Government* (2000), 92.

⁸¹² Said, *Orientalism* (2003), 1-7.

⁸¹³ Fulford & Lee, ‘Mental Travellers’ (2002), 119-120.

⁸¹⁴ Lee, ‘Mapping the interior’ (1997), 169-184.

⁸¹⁵ P. Knox-Shaw, ‘Defoe and the Politics of Representing the African Interior’ in *the Modern Language Review* 96:4 (Oct., 2001), 937-951 – Great writers of the Enlightenment worried themselves over the debilitating effects of being so long removed from civilized society and the arts of Western culture that European travellers returned to a base level of barbarity as they travelled further away from home. See Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders* (2007), 289-290.

to have turned their backs on civilization.⁸¹⁶ As Linda Colley has noted in the context of captivity narratives, the vulnerability of the protagonist in the unknown, potentially hostile environment of the non-European world, emphasised the significance of those who retained their identity.⁸¹⁷

Considering then the imagery and meaning associated with these enquiries and the developing map, Charles Withers has examined how failures were regarded within British cultural memory. He observes that readers of travellers' journals sought to imbue their actions with purpose and symbolism which continued to resonate even after their deaths. In this manner, Park's demise and the disaster of his second expedition to the Niger were enshrined within a popular narrative which lionised his sacrifice.⁸¹⁸ Particularly significant gestures made by Britons who travelled into the chaos of the African interior thus helped memorialise West Africa as a chaotic wilderness until it was encountered by an enlightened individual. When Joseph Ritchie left for Murzuq in 1818, for example, he carried with him John Keats' *Endymion* (gifted by the author himself) as a literary beacon of the Romantic movement that could be carried into the darkness of an unenlightened land.⁸¹⁹ Similarly, when Laing was poised on the periphery of the desert in 1825 and writing out his proposed itinerary from Tripoli to Timbuktu for Warrington's reference, he punctuated his notes with excerpts from Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *A Winter's Tale*.⁸²⁰

Even as successive missions ended in disaster, the way British exploits were publicised helped reinforce popular ideas about the importance of their enquiries in the region. Naturally, the mapping of West Africa's geography helped promote the symbolism of their activities in the region. Lieutenant William Allen, for instance, named the highest peak near the confluence of the Niger River with the Benue tributary as Mount Caractacus sometime in 1832.⁸²¹ As the Celtic chief who had led the barbarian opposition to the Roman invasion of Britain in the 1st century AD, Caractacus

⁸¹⁶ Bitterli & Robinson, *Cultures* (2003), 43.

⁸¹⁷ Colley, 'Going Native' (2000), 170-193.

⁸¹⁸ C.W.J. Withers, 'Memory and the history of geographical knowledge: the commemoration of Mungo Park, African explorer' in *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004), 316-339.

⁸¹⁹ Fulford & Lee, 'Mental Travellers' (2002), 117-138.

⁸²⁰ NA FO 76/19, f.345-356, Alexander Gordon Laing to Hanmer Warrington, Tripoli, 13 September 1825.

⁸²¹ Laird & R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa, by the River Niger, in the Steam-Vessels Quorra and Alburkah, in 1832, 1833, and 1834 (Volume 1)* (London, 1837), 418-419.

(d.54 AD) had fought against the light of progress. It is arguable that the significance of Lander's discovery that the Niger broke through the supposed obstacle of Rennell's Kong Mountains to terminate in the Bight of Biafra, and illustrative of Britain's historic efforts to explore and chart the river, was epitomised in that name.

The West African interior thus presented a challenge to the cultured identity of Britons. In 1796, Park had demonstrated though that it was possible for an Enlightened individual to survive the effects of the wilderness, retain their civility and return home with hard-won knowledge. During his travels, Park encountered both the tropical environment and the desert zone, and bore witness to the qualities of African society in both. Ultimately, he was convinced by his experience that whilst Africans almost certainly shared a common humanity with the other races of the globe, their observable cultural differences were a product of geographical circumstances. That first journey to the Niger has already been discussed as a watershed for the European investigation into Africa and there is a rather fitting episode recounted by Sir Walter Scott sometime later which illustrates the confrontation of British scholarship with the illuminations of discovery. Writing to the editor of Park's posthumous second journal shortly before its publication in 1815, Scott described an evening when Park was confronted by the aged Enlightenment writer, Adam Ferguson. Rennell's map was produced and Ferguson "made the traveller trace out his whole journey inch by inch & question[ed] him upon the whole as he went along with characteristic precision."⁸²² What Ferguson's thoughts might have been can only be guessed at. Yet the map is positioned between the two men, illustrating the exploits of one and offering evidence to the ethnographical studies of the other.

Park's published journal indicated that the cruelty he had experienced at the hands of his Arab captors was itself a reflection of their cultural adaptation to the hostile environment of the desert they inhabited. Efforts to identify the relationship of the Sahara to its inhabitants, however, was inevitably drawn into the contemporary assessment of Islam in the African interior. As Hallet

⁸²² NLS MS 786, Walter Scott to "the Editor of Mungo Park's Journal published in 1816", Piccadilly, 24 April 1815.

has said, the stereotypical Arab, their common religion and the expansive desert all “gave a measure of unity to the region and allowed Europeans to put forward wide-ranging generalizations.”⁸²³ Park believed that Islam had instilled in his captors a sense of superiority over other Africans which rationalised their aggression towards him, a stranger.⁸²⁴ He noted everywhere the presence of Imams, Muslim scholars and schools spreading southward from the desert. His journal explained that the most powerful of the sub-Saharan people (the Mandingoes) had attained their position by their knowledge of the Quran, taught to them by these travelling Islamic scholars and teachers; their “book knowledge”, as one source later termed it, had given them the mental superiority necessary to assume authority over their neighbours.⁸²⁵

It was the case, therefore, that between the various European Christian enclaves along the coast and the Islam of the interior, Africans in the middle were regarded as an impressionable group who could be swayed towards either faith. In June 1799, Banks submitted his proposals to the government for closer interaction with the Niger region, arguing that:

Should the Experiment be made [it] would become popular at home by converting [Sub-Saharan Africans] to the Christian Religion, by inculcating in their rough minds the mild morality which is engrafted on the Tenets of our faith ... [T]he small superiority in useful acquirements which the Moors possess, is sufficient to induce the Negroes ardently to embrace the Tenets of the Koran, not because these Tenets appear in themselves wise, but because these People who teach them are supposed to have gained from them their superiority in the use of the Art they teach, which is the knowledge of writing...⁸²⁶

The treatment of pagan Africans as a rough canvas that could be susceptible to British or European intervention ultimately complemented the cartographic discourse of blank maps which supported similar assessments of the land. This was a religious issue characterised by Christian prejudices which, regardless of the historic conflict between them, continued to regard Islam as superior to the pagan cultures along the coast.

⁸²³ Hallet, ‘Changing European Attitudes’ (1976), 482-485.

⁸²⁴ Park, *Travels* (1799), 159-160.

⁸²⁵ J. Corry, *Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa, the Religion, Character, Customs, &c. of the Natives: with a System upon which they may be civilized, and a Knowledge attained of the Interior of this Extraordinary Quarter of the Globe; and upon the Natural and Commercial Resources of the Country: Made in the Years 1805 and 1806* (London, 1807), 44.

⁸²⁶ NHM JBRP DTC 11, f.234-235, Joseph Banks to Lord Liverpool, London, 8 June 1799.

British mapping of strange and unknown foreign lands served consistently to reinforce Eurocentric views of superiority and supported an emerging imperialistic ideology which distinguished between those advanced enough to rule and those who would be governed.⁸²⁷ The cartography which emerged to chart the geographical variation of global cultures complemented such an oversimplified view of a region like West Africa. James Wyld's 1818 "Chart of the World Shewing the Religion, Population and Civilization of each Country" (figure 40), for example, simply divides the land between either the Islamic "Moors or Arabs" of the Sahara and Senegambia, or the "Negroes" and "Guineans" whose religion was one of "Idolatry or Fetichism". Wyld's map imposed a five-stage (I-V) hierarchy of civilization ranging from base savagery to the "most civilized nations as England, France &c."⁸²⁸ In terms of West Africa, those areas which had experienced contact with European powers for the longest were shown to be as advanced as a IV. For the most part, however, the entire region was labelled as a II.

Contemporary efforts to identify the variation of global civilization was represented in the instructions sent to African explorers which directed them to seek out evidence of its potential and how it could be nurtured. That mission was key to the self-justification of British exploration in this period and Pratt has identified a developing theme of "anti-conquest" which emerged as a popular trope in the travel literature which followed expeditions across the world; it was a "utopian, innocent vision of European global authority" which excused the imperialistic nature of its enquiries. As Pratt argues, the anti-conqueror was characterised by their ability to contribute something positive to the non-European world they traversed.⁸²⁹ Particularly after the failure of those efforts in the early-nineteenth century which sought to enter West Africa by force, the diplomatic embassies to the Asante and across the desert from Tripoli emphasised their peaceful intentions and we have seen how letters and proclamations were distributed ahead of travellers who learned to dress in a way which advertised their presence and intension.

⁸²⁷ Withers & Livingstone, 'Introduction' (1999), 14-15.

⁸²⁸ RGS MR World 615.

⁸²⁹ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), 38-39, 84-85.

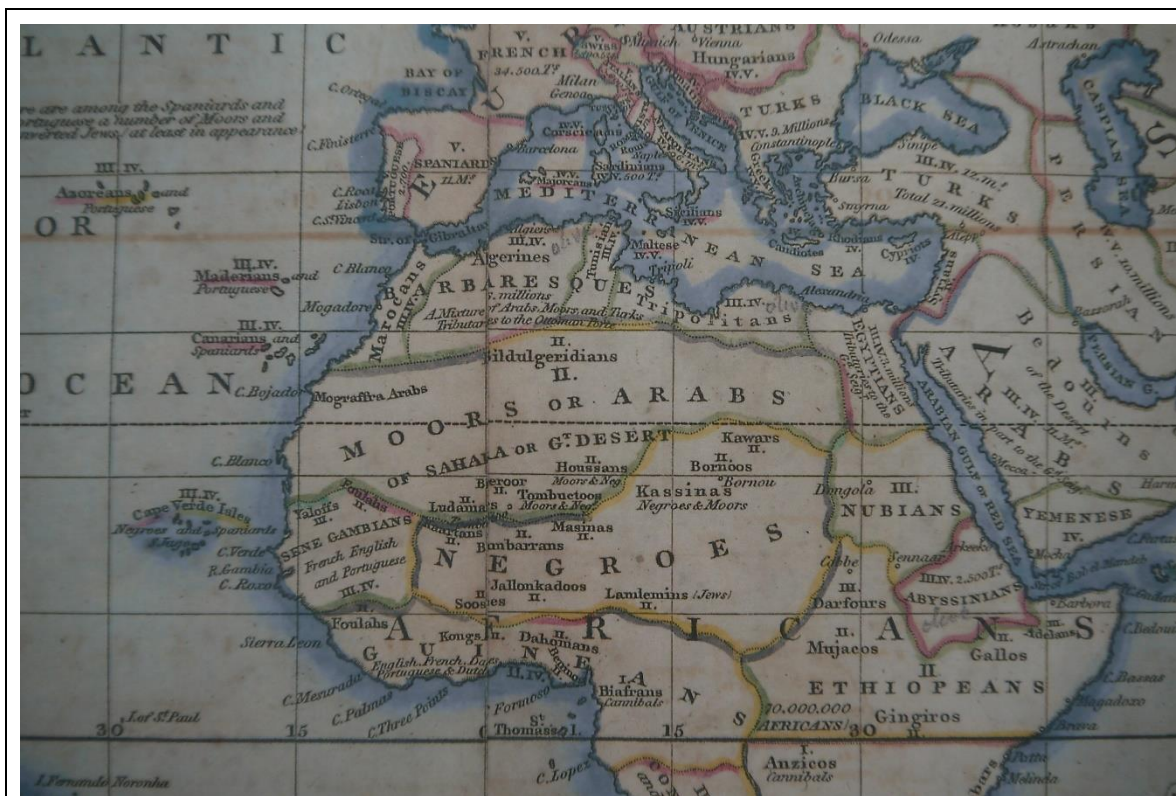


Figure 40: Detail from James Wyld, “Chart of the World Shewing the Religion, Population and Civilization of each Country” (1818). ©Royal Geographical Society MR World 615

Coordinating between the Colonial Office, the Admiralty and the British Consulate in Tripoli in 1818, Admiral Sir Charles Penrose was instrumental in the facilitating of Ritchie’s expedition into Africa. Penrose’s communications with Consul-General Hanmer Warrington shortly before the Pasha was approached for his cooperation are very revealing of the mission’s perceived purpose.

If it seems strange to His Highness or His Ministers and subjects, that there should be a wish to explore unknown deserts and that with the risk of eminent perils, when out of the powerful and friendly protection of His Highness, show him a Globe or a Map & the traces of Cook’s voyages, inform him of the present voyage undertaken towards the North Pole & Explain to His Highness the many societies established for the express purpose of enlarging our knowledge of the nature of the Globe without any views of Policy or Commerce.

Shew His Highness on the Map of Africa the various tracts in which it has been attempted to be explored, and point out to him the honor which will accrue to him, if, through his protecting influence, these objects should be obtained, which by other means have so often failed.⁸³⁰

⁸³⁰ NA CO 2/9, f.160, Charles Penrose to Hanmer Warrington, HMS Albion, 24 September 1818.

The desired image of exploration in West Africa was, therefore, not one of empire but one of science and mutual benefit that was represented on the ground by the appearance of explorers as discussed in chapter four and projected through their efforts to engage with the region in a way which was hoped to lead towards its betterment.

Thomas Bowdich wrote after his return from the Asante in 1818 that to become “intimately acquainted with the interior of Africa, and to tranquillize it, are the first great steps towards commercial intercourse and civilization.”⁸³¹ Having uncovered the geography of the interior, and assessed its perceived capacity for civilization, it was commonly supposed that improvements would naturally follow expanding engagement with the outside world. For instance, when George Francis Lyon abandoned Murzuq in 1820 after mapping its environs as best he could, he promised its inhabitants, and informed merchants bound for the interior, that Britain would send “great and learned men to talk with them, and shew them the arts and sciences of the White men.”⁸³² It is in this vein that during the Bornu Mission’s journey south from the Fezzan, its members often sought to openly demonstrate the high attainments of British culture. Denham wrote of how he had passed the illustrations from Lyon’s journal around the inhabitants of Bilma in the desert and how he had illuminated the night sky for their guides with telescopes whilst Hugh Clapperton demonstrated to Sultan Bello at Sokoto the purpose and intricacies of his compass and sextant. Bello even requested a gift of a world map so that he could find himself on it and learn about other lands.⁸³³ The stance assumed by the British during their enquiries was thus intended to accentuate their enlightened intentions.

Shortly before his return to Africa, Clapperton was asked to provide Alexander Gordon Laing with advice for his mission to Timbuktu. As the presentation of exploration to Africans was understood to be of great importance, Clapperton recommended that Laing introduce his expedition in a manner which emphasised Britain’s curiosity:

⁸³¹ Bowditch, *Committee* (1819), 18.

⁸³² NA CO 2/9, f.62, George Francis Lyon to Lord Bathurst, Tripoli, 25 March 1820.

⁸³³ Denham, *Narrative* (1826), 26, 32; Clapperton’s “*Journal of an Excursion, etc etc*”, 85, 109, 127.

[T]o see the Country, its People, Animals, Productions, & Curiosities; and to ascertain precisely, the part of the Globe in which it is situate: The Major might add that in his Country almost every Person can read & write, & consequently that Englishmen are most desirous to obtain every information respecting distant and Foreign Climes.⁸³⁴

The culture of exploration and enquiry which characterised the mapping of West Africa in the early-nineteenth century ultimately changed in response to the discovery of the Niger Delta and the possibility of a sea-route into the interior. The history of exploration before 1830 had only generated fleeting glimpses of different places and few travellers had remained in one place long enough to affect any sort of “civilizing” change. Macgregor Laird’s attempt in 1832-34 to establish a commercial intercourse via the river was intended (so Laird later declared) to have been for the benefit of all Africans by promoting viable alternatives to the slave trade.⁸³⁵ However, the nature of British contact with the interior perceptibly shifted following the failure of that effort. Lieutenant Allen, who accompanied the venture and filed his reports to the Admiralty upon his return, addressed his concerns for the future of the British mission in Africa if more attempts were made in a similar manner:

Our arts and manufactures can never be effectually introduced to the interior of Africa ... by dazzling the Natives with a transient [display] of them in short-lived and disastrous expeditions up the River...⁸³⁶

To affect that desired change, he argued that a permanent presence would need to be established, one that was directed by the resources of the British Government.

I will venture to suggest that no undertaking formed by private individuals, for purposes purely commercial, can prosper in the interior of Africa...no establishment there can thrive, unless it originates with Government and be under its immediate protection and authority – Such an establishment however, if found by judicious colonisation on a small scale, with free & emancipated Negroes, combined with the total abolition of the Slave Trade in the River Niger, would form a centre of civilization which might be of incalculable advantage to Africa as well as to this Country⁸³⁷

These warnings were transmitted by Barrow to the Colonial Office and may have featured in their calculations for the 1841 Niger Expedition; there are certainly stark similarities with Thomas Fowell

⁸³⁴ NA CO 2/13, f.331, Hugh Clapperton to Robert Wilmot Horton, London, 5 June 1825.

⁸³⁵ Laird, *Narrative (Volume 1)* (1837), vi.

⁸³⁶ NA CO 2/19, f.56, William Allen to John Barrow, London, 6 October 1834.

⁸³⁷ NA CO 2/19, f.55, William Allen to John Barrow, London, 6 October 1834.

Buxton's later proposals. The shifting focus towards a defined area of British authority represented by Allen's concerns in 1834 were expressed in his careful labelling of the landscape he traversed. His naming and renaming of the Niger's geography (which is discussed in more detail below) marks the dawning of a new attitude towards the mapped West African region.

More so than any previous venture, the 1841 Niger Expedition debated at length the nature of its interactions with Africans along the Niger and it remained a popular assumption that their presence would be one of value to the region. Their preparations thus demonstrated the innocence of their mission and the superiority of their civilization in the face of their limited geographical knowledge; as Buxton wrote:

We are too much in the dark about Africa to foresee where the Instruments are to be found, which are capable of executing our purpose – but we know this – that if we shall find a Sovereign who has an extensive territory of fertile land – we can teach him how to become wealthy and powerful...⁸³⁸

The imagery of Africa and its contrast with the desired British presence there was so powerful by the end of this period that it naturally became part of Buxton's rhetoric to the Home Office: "Those of old who carried into barbarous countries, the spade & the plough were ranked with the Deities."⁸³⁹

Mapping ownership, mapping meaning

Even as cartography developed to support the grand symbolism of Britain's interaction with West Africa, map-making facilitated more practical discussions concerning the British position. Using maps to denote ownership of one form or another emerges hand-in-hand with the history of cartography because they help imbue land with value, purpose and meaning. Consequently, maps enabled European governments to establish and legitimise their authority over the non-European

⁸³⁸ NA CO 2/21, f.217, Thomas Fowell Buxton to Constantine Henry Phipps, Northrepps Halls, 20 April 1839.

⁸³⁹ NA CO 2/21, f.219, Thomas Fowell Buxton to Constantine Henry Phipps, Northrepps Halls, 20 April 1839.

world in both “practical and symbolic” terms by defining the limits of their power there.⁸⁴⁰ Frontiers were drawn onto maps as a way of establishing territorial rule and as visual guide to distinguish between nations. The issue of boundaries in West Africa during this period is a subject that has received relatively limited attention beyond the recognition that European and African concepts of territory were different. Donald Wright, for instance, has noted that such a distinction was profound and reflected the circumstances of African societies whose population remained small in contrast to the amount of land there was available for their use; “people were the critical element, and control of people was far more important than control of land.”⁸⁴¹

Jordan Branch has observed that the experience of claiming colonies in the New World had demonstrated the importance of mapped boundaries being respected on the ground, particularly when they were governed by the Old World.⁸⁴² In the eighteenth century, the European notion of territorial sovereignty consolidated within the cartographic discourse to become one which recognised borders as the jurisdictional extent of government authority. This contrasted with earlier forms which had been characterised by power centres radiating control outwards. The naturalisation and movement of cartography within European society, Branch argues, was instrumental in effecting this outcome; “Maps have shaped, and continue to shape, how people understand the world and their place in it.”⁸⁴³ It was in response to the nationalism inspired by the French Revolution in the 1790s, however, that this new model of statehood was enshrined as common practice at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.⁸⁴⁴

British efforts to define their position in West Africa developed from the basis of their forts and factories there. Irrespective of the fact that they paid regular tributes to local rulers for the land on which their settlements were built and precluding their actual ownership of those sites, there remained an assumption of possession over surrounding lands and its inhabitants. For instance,

⁸⁴⁰ Akerman, ‘Introduction’ (2009), 3.

⁸⁴¹ D.R. Wright, “‘What Do You Mean There Were No Tribes in Africa?’: Thoughts on Boundaries: And Related Matters: In Precolonial Africa’ in *History in Africa* 26 (1999), 414.

⁸⁴² Branch, “Colonial reflection” (2010), 1-21.

⁸⁴³ Branch, *The Cartographic State* (2014), 3.

⁸⁴⁴ *ibid*, 29-34.

during the resolution of conflicts between the Dutch and the officers of the African Company around Dixcove in the 1750s, reference was made to the “Laws of Guinea” which considered Busha town (modern-day Busua) to be “English Territory – it lying under the reach of Dixcove Guns & no other which circumstance determines Property – no Flag has been hoist there since English Colours.”⁸⁴⁵ The depiction of national flags over sites of interest had appeared often on African cartography as a mechanism which allowed map-makers to distinguish between the various forts scattered along the coast. William Smith’s “New & Correct Map of The Coast of Africa” (1744) is a good example.

It was the capture of Senegal in 1758 and the founding of the Province of Senegambia in 1765 which illustrated to Britain the importance of coherently defining its territorial claims. The range of cannon and the presence of flags continued to define most efforts to identify authority but it was quickly apparent that France did not respect the British assumption of power in the region. Joseph Debat, commander of James Fort in the mouth of the Gambia, warned his superiors: “we can’t help thinking a French Flagg[sic.] flying in the reach of Our Guns an Invasion of our indisputable rights to the Trade of this River.”⁸⁴⁶ Elsewhere, merchants called on the British government to establish “some mark of Possession” over towns and ports around the Senegal where European competitors were still trading in defiance of the 1763 Treaty of Paris.⁸⁴⁷ That Peace agreement had granted Britain all the “rights and dependencies” of the river and the act of Parliament which joined the Senegal and the Gambia into a crown colony extended that exclusivity north and south along the coast between Cape Rouge and Cape Blanco.⁸⁴⁸ It is observable then that

⁸⁴⁵ BL Egerton MS 1162 B, unnumbered, c.1750s, “Laws of Guinea” – underlined words appear in original.

⁸⁴⁶ NA SP 78/263, f.200 – Joseph Debat to the Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 27 February 1764.

⁸⁴⁷ NA SP 78/263, f.190 - Sam[uel] Poirur to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Undated [c.1764?].

⁸⁴⁸ “The definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship between his Britannick Majesty, the Most Christian King, and the King of Spain. Concluded at Paris the 10th day of February, 1763. To which the King of Portugal acceded on the same day” - http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris763.asp [accessed: 21/07/2016]; D. MacPherson, *Annals of Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries, and Navigation, with Brief Notices of the Arts and Sciences Connected with them. (Volume III)* (London, 1805), 413.

the hostility which continued throughout the colony's brief existence between Britain and France was rooted in the French rejection of the British claims.

Senegambia's constitution was written to reflect the colonial administrations in the Americas but in practice the authority of its government at Saint Louis was limited to a few small enclaves scattered across the region. Cartographically speaking, there remained significant problems resulting from the poor quality of maps which did not and could not correlate with any reality on the ground thereby limiting the ability of British administrators from to demarcate the area as they saw fit. Regardless, Thomas Jefferys' "Senegambia Proper" (1768) boldly demarcated the "Southern Boundary of Senegambia" stretching into the interior and even shows two forts built supposedly in 1766 to indicate to shipping at the coast the extent of Britain's territorial claim.

The act of defining borders and mapping them is, as Jeremy Black has said, about both the "mechanisms" by which frontiers were established on the ground and the "consent" between all parties.⁸⁴⁹ As Wright argued, this is where confusions arose because African rulers were happy to cede land to Europeans but not their control over people.⁸⁵⁰ In terms of the cartographic discourse, it seems to have been the case that whilst maps may have illustrated these territories for a home audience, they were of little use in the settling of boundaries between the British and the French, or with their African neighbours. Efforts to draw attention to the colony's landed authority consequently focused on what could be achieved on the ground rather than illustrated on the map. The Governors of the Senegambian colony, therefore, were regularly employed with the repair and construction of river defences, the patrolling of the coast and, at times, physically opposing European competitors.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁹ Black, *Maps* (1997), 121.

⁸⁵⁰ Wright, "What Do You Mean There Were No Tribes in Africa?" (1999), 416.

⁸⁵¹ J.D. Newton, 'Naval Power and the Province of Senegambia, 1758-1779' in *Journal for Maritime Research* 15:2 (2013), 129-147 – In 1766, Governor Charles O'Hara began a project of repairing the fortifications at Saint Louis and James Fort for the defence of the river mouths. In 1773, 'many thousand feet of Timber' were obtained for the construction of a chain of magazines along the coast to protect trade whilst instructions were sent in 1775 to 'assert His Majesty's exclusive Right[s]' wherever foreign ships were intercepted on the coast. See NA T 1/490, f.15, Reports of the plan to build magazines on the coast appeared in the summer of

In contrast to this example of two European nations attempting to define a boundary between their respective interests, British efforts to establish a colony for agricultural plantations and freed slaves from the 1780s adopted a different tactic by purchasing land directly from local Africans. The area negotiated for was identified by its presumed potential and often appeared on the map as a blank space, ready for European activity. The optimism of these humanitarian schemes was based on the availability of territory which could be acquired and subsequently brought to order. Henry Smeathman's proposals in 1786, for example, noted that a suitable area could be found and purchased with relative ease. The advantage of uncontested ownership was, he argued, the freedom that it permitted colonists as they managed their share of the region and reclaimed it from the wilderness.

Each person will be allowed, by common consent, to possess as much land as ... he or she can cultivate, to which they will always be at liberty to add as much more as their necessity, or convenience may require; and of which they may enjoy the possession and produce, of security and freedom.⁸⁵²

Smeathman's plan was broadly adopted by the London Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor whose own Grenville Sharp quickly published *A Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations* for the projected colony.⁸⁵³ Sharp's scheme, founded on an old English system of *Frankenpledge*, is illustrative of efforts to impose forms of spatial organization onto the idealised community that would take root in Africa. Kate Hodgson has drawn similar parallels between a model suggested by Wadström in conjunction with his abolitionist friends in 1789 (noted above) and what Benedict Anderson described as the "totalizing classificatory grid" of colonial administration.⁸⁵⁴ Not only did they lay out the roles and responsibilities of the proposed government into an ordered model, they

1773, see *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post* (London, England), July 31, 1773 - August 3, 1773; Issue 678; NA CO 268/3, Earl of Dartmouth to Charles O'Hara, 20 April 1775, Whitehall.

⁸⁵² Smeathman, *Plan* (1786), 6.

⁸⁵³ G. Sharp, *A Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations (Until Better Shall Be Propossed) For the Intended Settlement on the Grain Coast of Africa, Near Sierra Leona. (Second Edition)* (London, 1786).

⁸⁵⁴ K. Hodgson, "'Dedicated to the Sound Politicians of all the Trading Nations of Europe': Sierra Leone and the European Colonial Imagination" in P.E. Lovejoy & S. Schwarz (eds.), *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone* (New Jersey, 2015), 150-151 – reference includes quote from Benedict Anderson.

also illustrated a view of the land which would be imbued with purpose and design as it was brought under the control of its settler population once its ownership had been established.

The land purchased for the colony at Sierra Leone in 1789 amounted to twenty square miles.⁸⁵⁵ Rather than rely on the definition of territory using the map though, its founders chose sites with natural boundaries and Freetown was backed by a mountain range, the most significant geographical feature on that stretch of the coast. Its borders were extended further in 1791 to the banks of rivers to the east and south, complementing its containment between the Sierra Leone River to the north and the sea to the west. Those boundaries advanced again in May 1819 to cover the whole peninsula, separated from the interior by more rivers and a path which physically marked its easternmost limits. Further treaties in 1824, 1825 and 1827 hugely increased the colony's territory up the Rokel River towards Port Loko and beyond. The expansion of British authority, however, continued to be anchored to physical features and many of the treaties in question refer to the cession of sovereignty one mile inland from specific rivers.⁸⁵⁶ To illustrate the British possession of the region, place-names and towns were overwritten with familiar English labels such as Bathurst, Hastings, Kent, Wellington and Waterloo (figure 41).

From Branch, there is some significance to be attached to those treaties which stipulated boundaries (natural or artificially drawn on a map) as they helped map-readers recognise the geographical limits of authority.⁸⁵⁷ Clearly demarcating British authority in the region signified the extent of Britain's rights and laws which, by their very nature, contrasted with the perceived lawless wilderness of the African continent. Yet efforts by the colonial administration to impose that authority and recognise the freedom of any individual as soon as they entered its territory imbued the land with a meaning which was difficult to explain or enforce. Sharp, for example, had envisioned that the territory acquired for a so-called Province of Freedom should be able to guarantee the freedom of any slave who arrived there.

⁸⁵⁵ Martin, *The British West African Settlements* (1927), 104-105.

⁸⁵⁶ Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty: British Colonies, Protectorates and Possessions in Africa, Third Edition, Volume 1* (Oxon, 1967), 30-36; NA CO 700/westafrica8.

⁸⁵⁷ Branch, *The Cartographic State* (2014), 32.



Figure 41: Detail showing the English place-names around the Freetown Settlement of Sierra Leone from W. Spence, "Plan of the Colony of Sierra Leone" (1824). University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library CMS Maps SL1

...if any slave who has escaped from his master, (in the neighbouring country, where slavery is allowed,) should fairly get within the boundary of the new settlement, he is afterwards to be considered as a *free man*.⁸⁵⁸

It is no surprise that a discourse which was so heavily rooted in European cartographic conventions should fail to translate completely in the West African context.

It was commonly assumed that the benefits of commerce, agricultural and other elements of civilization would take root at the peripheries of the region, at the frontiers where Britons and Africans met, from where it would disseminate throughout the societies beyond.⁸⁵⁹ Wilberforce

⁸⁵⁸ Sharp, *A Short Sketch* (1786), 35.

⁸⁵⁹ Joseph Corry, a merchant and self-professed philanthropist, for example, believed in 1807 that "the history of nations and states clearly demonstrates, that the never-failing influence of commerce and agriculture united, has emanated from the frontiers, and progressively spread their blessings into the interior countries. See J. Corry, *Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa, the Religion, Character, Customs, &c. of the Natives: with a System upon which they may be civilized, and a Knowledge attained of the Interior of this*

had remarked in 1792 that the desired purpose of Freetown was the “Civilization of the Natives, & still more the bringing them acquainted with the great Truthes of Christianity (tho’ these two can hardly be separated)...”⁸⁶⁰ The marked growth of the Sierra Leone colony in the 1820s followed Parliament’s decision to consolidate the governance of all Britain’s West African settlements at Freetown. Moreover, it reflected a renewal of policies to engage with the wider region through diplomacy and trade which was characteristic of Sir Charles MacCarthy’s governorship before his death fighting the Asante in 1824.⁸⁶¹ Expanding the colony inland offered a mechanism for its agents to transport its evangelization and civilizing teachings. By the late 1820s, the dispersal of missionaries to the colony’s borders was both a means of spreading religion and consolidating the British position and territorial authority. As one example in 1827 illustrates, the discussion of where to locate new missionaries remained conscious of these boundaries:

He [Governor Sir Neil Campbell] considers that District [Waterloo] of greater importance than either the Mountain Villages or Wellington as it is the extreme frontier boundary, the only road from the colony which leads into the interior and by which the Natives, in passing either from the eastward or from the Sherbro to the southward, can have examples of civilization.⁸⁶²

The frontier was consequently a line which symbolised to a British audience, through their cartography, the extent of their ongoing evangelising projects in West Africa and the supposed cultural improvements that entailed. To Africans, it marked a point on the ground beyond which Britons conducted their activities.

Of the imperial map, Matthew Edney has argued that it is ultimately an ironic discourse in which the people and lands mapped for the benefit of a distant reader have no knowledge of their place on the map.⁸⁶³ In the context of this discussion then, cartography helped produce an interpretive reality for its British audience “within which empire can be conceptualised and

Extraordinary Quarter of the Globe; and upon the Natural and Commercial Resources of the Country: Made in the Years 1805 and 1806 (London, 1807), 20.

⁸⁶⁰ BL Add MS 41262 A, f.82, William Wilberforce to John Clarkson, 27 April 1792.

⁸⁶¹ See McGowan, ‘The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade’ (1990), 25-41.

⁸⁶² CRL CMS B/OMS/C A1 04/74, Henry Rishton to Reverend Charles L.T. Hainsel, Sierra Leone, 21 July 1827.

⁸⁶³ Edney, ‘The Irony of Imperial Mapping’ (2009), 13.

advocated, and a geography of power, within which empire can be physically constructed.”⁸⁶⁴ The argument follows that to support the assumption of territorial authority around Sierra Leone (and elsewhere in Africa where detailed surveys were impossible), it was apparently necessary to imbue the land with meaning which contrasted with neighbouring regions.

Efforts to define sovereignty as an agreement that could exist between European and African powers had characterised the British response to the expansion of the Asante after 1806 when treaties were signed in 1817 and 1820 to define their respective territories. The recognition of African borders was subsequently an interesting feature of Bowdich’s illustration of the Asante state’s administrative reach from its capital Kumasi.⁸⁶⁵ The core disagreement which led to later conflict originated in the Asantehene’s claims to the sovereignty of the Fante lands on the coast near Britain’s Cape Coast Castle. As Tom McCaskie has observed in his study of deteriorating relations on the Guinea Coast prior to the early 1820s, part of the problem was the confusion surrounding the African Company’s role there post-1807 which continued to justify its existence by emphasising its ability to deliver civilization.⁸⁶⁶ It was then the case that whilst Bowdich’s first treaty was rejected by London, Dupuis’ was disregarded by Company Officers in part because it abandoned Britain’s responsibility to the Fante who had a long-established position as middlemen between Europeans and the interior. When the British government took formal control over the remaining forts and settlements on the coast in 1821, the Colonial Office was actually careful to avoid defining the territorial extent of its authority. The new administration, however, clearly saw the necessity of guaranteeing protection to Africans living in the environs of Britain’s possessions and condemned Dupuis’ treaty once more. For MacCaskie, the rebuttal of that agreement indicates

⁸⁶⁴*ibid*, 44-45.

⁸⁶⁵ Ivor Wilk’s analysis of the Asante state observed that its territorial extent was defined by the length of time taken for communications to be delivered from the administrative hub at Kumasi by specially trained couriers, and reinforced by the maintenance of several road networks across the empire. The territory was, therefore, not thought of strictly in terms of its geographical distances, but in the measurable times it took for these messengers to move from one place to another. Bowdich observed in 1817 the length of time taken for couriers to travel between Cape Coast Castle and the capital to be nine days. See Wilks, ‘On Mentally Mapping’ (1992), 175-190.

⁸⁶⁶ McCaskie, ‘On Mouri Beach’ (2011), 254-256.

Britain's emerging paternal attitude towards certain groups which outweighed the commercial benefits of simply agreeing.⁸⁶⁷

The question of sovereign authority which had been raised in Senegambia and Sierra Leone took on special significance during the preparations for the 1841 Niger Expedition. Buxton maintained that whilst Sierra Leone had not lived up to the expectations of its founders, it had provided the only source of positive humanitarian action in West Africa and could therefore be used as a model for his proposed mission to the interior. He was careful to allay fears that the purpose of his scheme was to encourage the establishment of a British empire like that in India. Instead, he focused much of the mission's prospects for success on its ability to take possession of a small patch of ground for an educational settlement which could provide an example of order and proper agriculture to locals. He argued that the expense of that venture would be far outweighed by the value of the resources which could be grown and the markets that would be opened in the heart of Africa as a result of its success.⁸⁶⁸ For Buxton, defining sovereignty meant establishing law and order, without which the project was doomed.

It appears to us indispensable that the Territory thus acquired should belong in Sovereignty as well as Soil to Great Britain. Without this we see no means of arriving at that degree of security of personal Freedom – and that due Administration of just laws which are integral parts of the plan.⁸⁶⁹

Buxton asked that instructions be written for the expedition's leaders regarding their authorisation to purchase a suitable site and proposed that a scientific team accompany the mission who could survey any chosen location to properly identify its quality and map its limits.

In September 1840, Lord John Russell (the new Colonial Secretary) resolved that the mission should only make a "conditional bargain of a site of land on the Quorra [Niger] for the erection of a fort" and forbade it from assuming any sovereignty.⁸⁷⁰ He was concerned that the

⁸⁶⁷ *ibid*, 271.

⁸⁶⁸ NA CO 2/21, f.221-226, Thomas Fowell Buxton to Constantine Henry Phipps, Northrepps Halls, 20 April 1839.

⁸⁶⁹ NA CO 2/21, f.245, Thomas Fowell Buxton *et al* to Constantine Henry Phipps, London, 27 August 1839.

⁸⁷⁰ John Russell's use of the term "fort" rather suggests that he was not entirely familiar with the plan.

establishment of such a position could be received as a hostile act by neighbouring Africans and be virtually impossible to defend.⁸⁷¹ Therefore, when a Model Farm was built upon land acquired in the region of the Benue's confluence with the Niger in September 1841, the status of that territory was left for the British government to decide, pending the success of the whole venture.⁸⁷² In terms of the site chosen, similar to the example of Sierre Leone, natural features were used to demarcate the area rather than relying on cartographic conventions of linear borders.

The tract of land fixed on, and agreed to by the agents, extends about sixteen miles from its margin. The boundaries were pointed out to be, - on the north, a rivulet flowing between the mountains, named in [William] Allen's chart, Victoria and Pattèh: on the south, by the first stream, which may empty itself into the Niger, to the southward of the island named Bàrraga, and including within the said limits the mountains called Etse (Soracte), and Erro (Saddleback); on the east, by the river Niger; and on the west, by straight lines joining the western bases of the mountains, laid down in the same chart as Outram and Deacon (the native names being unknown), and Etse (Soracte), to the nearest points of the aforesaid rivulets.⁸⁷³

As the expedition continued to explore the river, a detachment was left at the farm to survey the area and begin planning its agricultural future as Buxton had suggested.⁸⁷⁴

Cartography following the acquisition of land for the Model Farm (figure 42) poses an interesting comparison of how ownership in Africa was mapped and it is arguable that a variety of strategies were adopted reflecting Britain's experiences elsewhere. In the first instance, natural features were identified to illustrate to an African audience the physical boundaries of Britain's claims on the ground, whilst the charts produced of the area by Allen drew borderlines in an artificial box extending from the river in the fashion of European mapping. On a larger scale, however, because the site was so small relative to the size of the continent, there was no way to illustrate the British position beyond a small marker indicating its general location. Therefore,

⁸⁷¹ NA CO 2/21, f.282, Lord John Russell to "Her Majesty's Commissioners of the Expedition to the Niger", 7 September 1840.

⁸⁷² Allen, *A Narrative* (1848), 303-305.

⁸⁷³ *ibid*, 349-350.

⁸⁷⁴ CRL CMS B/OMS/C A1 04/320c.



Figure 42: In this map showing the boundaries of the Model Farm, we can see the overwriting of the landscape with more familiar labels. Mountains Franklin, Michael and Saddleback stand alongside Soracte (which retained its local name). In smudged pencil near the confluence of the Niger and "Tchadda" is an area which Richard and John Lander had called "Sterling". William Allen, "Part of the River Quorra or Niger" (1841). National Archives MPG 1/321

Britain's subsequent cartography took possession of the landscape by renaming it in a manner which had only occurred around Sierra Leone. Allen had previously marked the most impressive

area of what he believed were the Kong Mountains as “King William’s Range” in 1834.⁸⁷⁵ In 1841 though, several mountain ranges were also labelled after Rennell, the Admiralty and Earl Grey. On more detailed maps other features appeared, with names such as Adelaide, Barrow, Erskine, Franklin and Victoria.⁸⁷⁶ The mapping of the region therefore contributed towards the overwriting of the indigenous landscape in order to project an image of the interior which reflected Britain’s presence (or desired presence) there.

In the absence of any long-term instances wherein borders were successfully understood and respected between British and African territories, it can be concluded that map of West Africa could not develop to support the establishment of territorial sovereignty during this period. Therefore, the drawing of boundaries existed solely for the benefit of its home audience in order to present an image of the land which made space for British activities.

Robin Law has observed that European abolitionism at this time acted as a precursor to the Empire-building of the nineteenth century because through its naval actions it violated African sovereignty and promoted a relationship between Britain and African rulers which paved the way for later imperial advances.⁸⁷⁷ However, the mapping of ownership complemented that discourse of symbolism noted earlier wherein Britain’s self-appointed role as civilizer to the inhabitants of the region was supported by imbuing the land with purpose and meaning, by delineating it and assigning new labels.⁸⁷⁸ That cartographic discourse is inseparable from the later narrative of colonisation and it is one which relied on the scientific appearance of maps which indicated the quality of its makers. We come then to the issue of cartographic “accuracy” and are left with the question of what such a map offered the British engagement in this period?

⁸⁷⁵ NA CO 2/19, f.61, William Allen to Lord Auckland, London, 27 October 1834.

⁸⁷⁶ For example, see NA MPG 1/320, 1/321.

⁸⁷⁷ R. Law, ‘Abolition and Imperialism: International Law and the British Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade’ in R. Peterson (ed.), *Abolition and Imperialism in Britain, Africa & the Atlantic* (2010), 150-169.

⁸⁷⁸ See Stone, ‘Imperialism, Colonialism and Cartography’ (1988), 57-64.

No more “fillings-up”: finding utility⁸⁷⁹

In 1777, William Faden published a book of geographical exercises intended to instruct others (particularly Britain’s youth) about the principles of geography and the study of the planet.⁸⁸⁰ As the Royal Geographer he provides a useful example of popular contemporary thought. His book outlined the various continental and environmental divisions of the globe and demonstrated the mathematical grid of latitude and longitude which could be filled with correct and precisely-located knowledge where available. As an educational tool, these *Exercises* were illustrated by several maps from his own stock. Having established a business with Thomas Jefferys’ son by 1773, Faden had access to a variety of materials from both British and French sources.⁸⁸¹ Interestingly for this discussion of images and impressions, each map was accompanied by a practice sheet, blank except for the graticule, which allowed readers to copy or draw their own continental cartographies, to effectively construct their own ideal of Africa should they so wish (Figure 43).

We have seen how this map was slowly filled with information in response to contemporary dissatisfaction with its unknown interior, and the culture of exploration which emerged to legitimise those discoveries. In consequence of the region’s potential tropical markets, the African Association formed in 1788 around the principle that knowledge was power; that a map based on hearsay and rumour was a hindrance to British interests. During what Philip Curtin has called the “classic age of European exploration in West Africa” which began with the publication of Mungo Park’s journal in 1799 and ended with the discovery of the Niger Delta in 1830, the image of the interior was revolutionised.⁸⁸² The aim of Britain’s enquiries was ultimately to obtain enough reliable knowledge to positively influence the course of its interactions in West Africa. However, it was arguably not until the locating of Bornu and Lake Chad, and the positioning of those places within British

⁸⁷⁹ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXIII)* (London, 1826), 543.

⁸⁸⁰ Faden, *Geographical Exercises* (1777).

⁸⁸¹ See Worms, ‘The Maturing of British Commercial Cartography’ (2004), 5-11.

⁸⁸² Curtin, *Image of Africa* (1973), 144-146, 206.

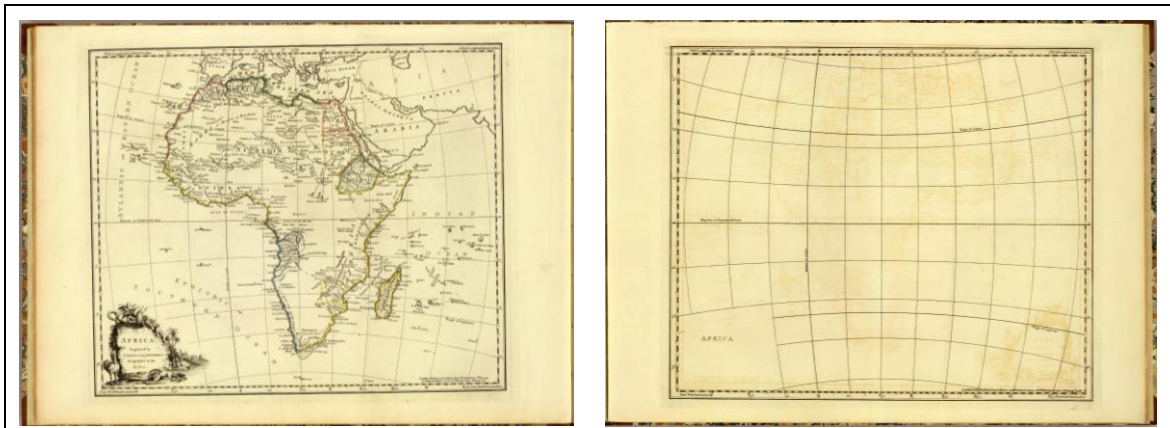


Figure 43: William Faden, “Africa. Engraved by Faden, and [Thomas] Jefferys Geographer to the King” in W. Faden, *Geographical Exercises; calculated to facilitate the study of Geography, and by an expeditious method, to imprint the Knowledge of the Science on the Minds of Youth. With a Concise Introduction, explaining the Principles of Geography* (London, 1777). David Rumsey Map Collection

Cartography that this was even remotely a possibility. Park’s journey to the Niger in the 1790s might have revolutionised the appearance of the map but there have been mounting instances in this study leading to this expedition and others of the 1820s wherein map-makers were forced to acknowledge the limits of their rationalisations and focus on the reality as it was observed.

Europe had first learnt of Bornu from Leo Africanus in the sixteenth century and it existed in the British imagination long before contact was made in 1823. The African Association had collected information regarding it in 1789 and Rennell had supported d’Anville’s positioning of it on Egypt’s western border near one of the rumoured sources of the Nile in 1790.⁸⁸³ During his researches in 1819, however, Ritchie struggled to correlate the data he was collecting about the route to Bornu with the maps he had in his possession. With reference to one of Arrowsmith’s maps he observed that:

Besides the position of Wangara, which must be materially altered on our maps if the information I have obtained is to be depended on, that of the City of Bornou also will require considerable correction. By combining together our knowledge of the distances from Kashna, Tombuctoo, and Mourzouk to Bornou, with the circumstance of the latter town being left considerably to the right hand in travelling from Fezzan to Waday, it will be rendered probable that we shall come near the truth in assigning to that Capital 16 Degrees

⁸⁸³ Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 205-209.

of North Latitude and 16 Degrees of Longitude East from Greenwich, from that which it occupies in Arrowsmith's map with the latest additions. The City of Kanem also seems to be very erroneously laid, & by placing it in Latitude 18 °N. & Longitude 17 E. we should perhaps approach much nearer its real situation.

In the journal of Lyon and Ritchie's mission, Bornu was simply identified as a "large tract of land" lying 700 miles south of Fezzan and its map does not show areas beyond Lyon's personal observations.⁸⁸⁴ Ritchie's approximation of 16°N 16°E actually locates a spot close to the North-east of Lake Chad as it was drawn on Clapperton's map a few years later. Of a body of water, Lyon reported irregular descriptions of a river or lake known as the "Tsad" which was said to be full or dry depending on the season.⁸⁸⁵ The instructions issued to Walter Oudney by the Colonial Office prior to his departure from London in 1821 consequently included a request that he examine "the nature and extent of the large Lake described to be within the [Bornu] Sultan's Dominions".⁸⁸⁶

As they moved south from Murzuq in the company of their guides and escort, Oudney and his companions were surprised to find their course was taking them south, even west, when they had expected from their maps to be trending eastwards. Writing from Bilma, to the North of Bornu, Oudney noted: "The course here has been to the Westward of South[,] a circumstance we do not a priori expect we were led to believe it would have [been] to the eastward."⁸⁸⁷ Furthermore, from their barometric observations it seemed as if the country was sinking the further inland they travelled, possibly corroborating the notion of an internal lake or swamp as Rennell had hypothesised. Despite being aware that a body of water might be found the expedition was nevertheless surprised when they were confronted by it. Oudney's description of their approach to Kukawa (the capital of Bornu) reveals his shock:

From the rising ground we had a view of the Shad[sic.] the great lake of Bornou I was truly struck with astonishment as I had not the slightest idea of finding it here.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁴ Lyon, *Narrative* (1821), 123.

⁸⁸⁵ *ibid*, 125.

⁸⁸⁶ NA FO 8/7, f.68, Lord Bathurst to Walter Oudney, London, 29 August 1821.

⁸⁸⁷ NA CO 2/13, f.295, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, Bilma, 14 January 1823.

⁸⁸⁸ NA CO 2/13, f.298, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, "Kuka", 28 March 1823 – underlined word in the original.

This was not their only discovery of note. It was with further wonder that near the shores of Lake Chad the Bornu Mission made contact with the seemingly cultured Sheikh al-Kanemi. Consul General Hanmer Warrington in Tripoli later reported that they had “discovered in the Heart of Africa & “Wilds unknown to Public View” a Man who appears to possess a Benevolent mind & generous feeling that would do honor to any country.”⁸⁸⁹ The presence of al-Kanemi, and of Sultan Bello whom Clapperton later met, challenged the assumed image of Africans in the interior so much that *The Quarterly Review* argued if the rulers of Bornu and Sokoto could be so cultured, there was no longer any reason to generalise about the people of the interior; “While such men as this rule in the heart of Africa, let us no longer consider the people as uncivilized barbarians...”⁸⁹⁰

Although it was a diplomatic mission at heart, Oudney had originally been employed for his services as a naturalist. Consequently, his description of their approach on Bornu in concert with Clapperton’s cartographic surveys is particularly interesting because he recognised the influence of periodical rainfall, without which he recognised the landscape would have been as “sterile” as the desert.⁸⁹¹ His studied assessment of the interior is worth quoting in some detail because it was ultimately omitted by Denham in their edited journals.

The whole of Bornou possesses the same geological structure as the great desert we have traversed – all is sand, and every part would be equally destitute of animal & vegetable beings were it not for the tropical rains and the rivers & lakes with which it abounds. The boundaries of the rains are well marked by the vegetation which increases as we advance southerly – There is not that diversity of animal & vegetables that one would a priori expect in a tropical country, the uniformity of soil and elevation accounts tolerably well, perhaps for that fact. There are no high grounds, I do not believe there is a difference of 100 feet in the whole Kingdom. As yet I have not found 200 different plants, insects are even less numerous but birds particularly water fowls are in greater variety. I have not seen a moss, a lichen or a fern and only two species of Fungi. I expected to have seen some of these near the rivers or lakes but I was mistaken for I could not discover one by the most minute examination. Thus we have but a scanty field for the naturalist, the rains which are now beginning to set in may produce a change, and bring to light beings now dormant.⁸⁹²

⁸⁸⁹ NA FO 76/18, f.189, Hanmer Warrington to Robert Wilmot Horton, Tripoli, 18 August 1824 – The quote is from “The Hermit” by Thomas Parnell. Its first stanza begins:

Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a rev'rend hermit grew...

⁸⁹⁰ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXI)* (London, 1825), 459n.

⁸⁹¹ NA CO 2/13, f.308, Walter Oudney to Hanmer Warrington, “Kuka”, 15 May 1823.

⁸⁹² RGS LMS 0/3, Walter Oudney to John Barrow, “Kuka”, 14 July 1823.

Details such as this might appear uninteresting in the first instance but they contributed important data towards the studied image of the African interior by describing it in more scientific terms. Oudney's surprise at the lack of diversity amongst the flora and fauna indicates the problems associated with trying to fix unknown lands within the generalised world geographies and popular descriptions which characterised British scholarship.

The longer it remained in Africa, the Bornu Mission continued to be confronted with a geography which simply did not reflect what they expected. When the rains did arrive, Oudney was amazed at the change in the landscape; "what appeared as a dry barren waste before is in a few days changed into a fine green field – vegetation is so rapid that one would almost believe he saw the process going on."⁸⁹³ More incredibly, as he and Clapperton journeyed west from Bornu towards Sokoto they encountered sub-zero temperatures which confounded their audience in Britain and further complicated the geographical image of the interior between the Sahara and the northern side of the supposed Kong Mountains.⁸⁹⁴ Between them, Oudney, Denham and Clapperton (with the help of their assistants and African informants) provided so much information that the map of West Africa, and the British impression of that region, were changed forever. As they crossed the Sahara, Clapperton recorded their route with unprecedented precision, declaring in January 1823 that:

I have I trust got the best materials for making a correct chart of this route as I have taken observations every 40 miles & in some places every 20 and sketched[sic.] all the mountains &c on the route so that I will have as correct a chart as can possibly be made...⁸⁹⁵

John Barrow's several articles in *The Quarterly Review* which often contained details from the Bornu Mission's latest dispatches helped encourage popular interest in this new and potentially more accurate view of the West African interior. During Denham's successive attempted circumnavigation of Lake Chad, for example, Barrow had assured his readers that the Major's

⁸⁹³ NA CO 2/13, f.314, Walter Oudney to Robert Wilmot Horton, 12 September 1823.

⁸⁹⁴ Bovill, *Niger* (1968), 125-126 - That dramatic change was readily associated with the Oudney's death near Kano shortly afterwards as contemporary medical thought understood such variation of hot and cold to be particularly damaging to European constitutions. See NA PRO 30/26/141, Hugh Clapperton to Dixon Denham, 3 February 1824; *The Quarterly Review*, Volume XXXI (London, 1825), 456.

⁸⁹⁵ NA FO 76/19, f.53, Hugh Clapperton to Hanmer Warrington, Bilma, 14 January 1823.

success would mean that “our charts of northern Africa will no longer disgrace the geography of the nineteenth century.”⁸⁹⁶ After the return of the mission’s surviving members in 1825, another article appeared in *The Quarterly Review*, celebrating the new map of Africa.

It was justly observed, a few years ago, by Major Rennell, that, ‘in the wide extent of near thirty degrees on a meridian, between Benin and Tripoli, not one celestial observation had been taken to determine the latitude.’ That reproach has been wiped off; and we have now observations in almost every degree of latitude from the Mediterranean to within three of four degrees of Benin. We now know where the great kingdoms of Mandara, Bornou, and Houssa are to be placed on the map; what space the several provinces occupy; in what latitude and longitude are situated the various cities and towns, whose names we had heard of, and one of which, Bornou, had been guessed out of its place more than 600 miles.⁸⁹⁷

In fact, the map was so improved by comparison with former times that Barrow even noted with reference to Jonathan Swift’s famous poem that “[w]e need not now have recourse to those *fillings-up* which, we are wittily told by the poet, were employed in his time...” The assertion is clear: there was no longer any need for guess-work, supposition, rationalisations from peripheral data, nor indeed for any “*fillings-up*” which the map-maker might have done in former years. The map of West Africa was in fact so informative, and rooted in observed reality, that it could now (in theory) be put to work, spelling a new era for Britain’s engagements there.

Finding a purpose for the map

In 1789, Henry Beaufoy (the African Association’s first secretary) informed John Ledyard of his proposed route into the interior:

I spread the map of Africa before him, and tracing a line from Cairo to Sennar, and from thence Westward in the latitude and supposed direction of the Niger, I told him that was the route, by which I was anxious that Africa might, if possible, be explored.⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁶ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXI)* (London, 1825), 465.

⁸⁹⁷ *The Quarterly Review (Volume XXXIII)* (London, 1826), 543.

⁸⁹⁸ Beaufoy (ed.), *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa* (London, 1790), 18.

Even with his admittedly limited knowledge of the physical and political landscape of the interior, Beaufoy's instructions were ludicrously vague. Having recognised the inadequacies of contemporary cartography, it almost appears as if the Association conceived the route of their travellers without any thought to potential obstacles; after all, the map was now blank.⁸⁹⁹

Irrespective of the impediments which prevented a coherent image of West Africa from developing, the cartography which emerged between 1749 and 1841 was often presented as accurate to encourage confidence in its content and, therefore, its value. Due to the difficulties of travel, these maps could not serve as detailed guides, only as broad indications of the physical and political landscape.⁹⁰⁰ Particularly in the aftermath of diplomatic contact, we can observe instances where the developing image of the region's several power centres was considered in contemporary discussions. The establishment of Bornu and Sokoto's respective frontiers and the lawless space between them on Clapperton's map, for example, was a significant development for the content and intent of British cartography. Considering Britain's desire for peaceful engagement with the interior, such knowledge was obviously useful. It was discovered, however, during Clapperton's return to Sokoto in 1826 that, Shaikh al-Kanemi and Sultan Bello had declared war against one another. The frontier between them now marked a significant division around which Britain's interests would have to be conducted and in 1829 Barrow and the Colonial Undersecretary were exchanging practical views as to whether Bornu or Sokoto would make the more valuable ally in the interior given their relative accessibility from the Guinea Coast or Tripoli.⁹⁰¹

Cartography thus existed primarily as a reference tool which in this particular context reaches something of a milestone event in the late 1820s when a Report from the Select Committee on the State of the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po (published in 1830) included the

⁸⁹⁹ James Bruce communicated similar sentiments to Joseph Banks in 1789 by advocating an alternative route from the Red Sea towards the Portuguese settlements on the south-west coast between Angola and South Africa. He reasoned that it would have complimented his own journeys in search of the Nile, and, significantly, it "would have needed little language..." See NHM JBRP DTC 6, f.117-118, James Bruce to Joseph Banks, Kinnaird House, 5 January 1789.

⁹⁰⁰ See C. Delano-Smith, 'Milieus of Mobility: Itineraries, Route Maps, and Road Maps' in J.R. Akerman (ed.), *Cartographies of Travel and Navigation* (London, 2006), 16.

⁹⁰¹ CO 2/18, f.56, John Barrow to Robert William Hay, 19 September 1829.

latest Admiralty charts derived from Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen's surveys in 1825 (figure 44).⁹⁰² It is clear that these maps had been at the centre of the committee's investigation as an aid for their interviews with knowledgeable people. This image of the fledgling Clarendetown settlement experiment ultimately projected a more positive prospect where there are areas labelled simply as "paradise" and large stretches of cleared and elevated land which supported the island's claims to be a more healthy site than Freetown and of its agricultural potential.

As for cartography's navigational qualities, it is often expressed that explorers rarely travelled with maps to guide them; though MacQueen was adamant Clapperton had carried a chart of the delta region with him to the Guinea Coast which was copied from the map which MacQueen had published in 1820.⁹⁰³ Despite map-makers' historic efforts to delineate paths across the desert to the trading hubs of the interior though, there was no possibility that they could actually direct British caravans. Even the maps which accompanied travellers' accounts developed so as to illustrate the narrated itinerary rather than as tools to facilitate other attempts.⁹⁰⁴ Moreover, we have even seen that the detailed sketches such as Major Peddie's failed route up the Rio Nunez were reduced to their very basics for publication because that amount of information was of limited use. The only maps which existed to help navigation in any practical sense were hydrographic charts of the coast or, after 1830, drawings of the lower course of the Niger which aided merchants attempting to ascend the river.

Following the Landers' discovery of the Niger Delta, Britain's subsequent sponsorship of West African cartography was characterised by the question of how to best utilise the opportunities it entailed. Rennell's Kong mountains had proven to be less than the unsurpassable obstacle it had formerly represented on the map, and the Landers had observed a fertile, well-watered and populated landscape (though their estimations as to how populated were swiftly shown to be

⁹⁰² *Report from the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po* (London, 1830), 139-140; see also NA CO 700/WESTAFRICA7.

⁹⁰³ See Keighren, Withers & Bell, *Travels into Print* (2015), 155; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review (Volume 31)* (Edinburgh, 1832), 214.

⁹⁰⁴ Akerman, 'Finding Our Way' (2007), 58.



Figure 44: William Fitzwilliam Owen & James Badgley, "A Plan of the Establishment of Clarence in the Island of Fernando Po" (1827). National Archives CO 700/WESTAFRICA7. See also Report from the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po (London, 1830), 139-140

exaggerated). For all intents and purposes then, the quest to gain access to the markets of the interior was fulfilled and the purpose of the map seemed obvious now that such opportunities were within reach. Yet even this discourse was complicated because the possible profits which retaining exclusive access to the Delta offered British merchants argued against the wider dispersal of valuable new cartographies. As had been the case ever since the African Association first identified a route into West Africa, the various agenda which drove British activities complicated the developing map for all involved.

The establishment in 1832 of the African Inland Commercial Company (AICC) financed Laird's venture up the Niger in two steam boats to establish trading links with the interior independent of any government funding or direction. In 1833, Laird and Lander witnessed the failure of an American expedition of three ships attempting a similar ascent of the river during which it was discovered that they were led in their efforts by an enlarged copy of the chart that had

accompanied Richard and John Lander's earlier narrative of their discovery of the Delta.⁹⁰⁵ But whilst the American leaders were "very sanguine of getting up the Niger into the Eboe country," Lander remained confident that it was his celebrity and previous interactions with local rulers which granted Britain access to the main trunk of the river.⁹⁰⁶ Knowledge of the river, therefore, was not necessarily enough to guarantee success whilst the issue of way-finding and cartography is evidently complicated.

After Laird's expedition had been engaged on the river for some time with little communication with their colleagues in London, a representative of the Company was obliged to approach the Government in 1833 for any information regarding the fate of the mission. Reports had recently appeared in national newspapers from information transmitted by officers at Fernando Po and Cape Coast Castle to the Colonial Office detailing the death of crewmembers and describing various confrontations with hostile Africans.⁹⁰⁷ The Company was concerned that they had not received similar notifications so they asked that any new correspondence from Africa not be made public until they could verify those reports themselves. Shortly afterwards, the AICC learned that Lander had sent a letter to the Colonial Office from Fernando Po (despite his instructions avoid such correspondence), prompting the Company to ask once more that their contents not be publicised, and that they be allowed to "reap the fruits" of their expenditure on the venture before other competitors should attempt to use their hard-won knowledge of the area.⁹⁰⁸

The quest for the Niger had always been tied to commercial ambition but, after the discovery of its termination, the desire by some to keep the route through the delta a secret conflicted with the now established tradition of presenting the products of exploration to a national

⁹⁰⁵ Laird, *Narrative (Volume 1)* (1837), 344-345.

⁹⁰⁶ NA CO 2/19, f.26-27, Richard Lander to Robert Hay, Fernando Po, 9 May 1833.

⁹⁰⁷ NA CO 2/19, f.263, Thomas Forsyth to Robert William Hay, Liverpool, 11 July 1833.

⁹⁰⁸ NA CO 2/19, f.265, Thomas Forsyth to E.G.S. Stanley M.P., Liverpool, 22 August 1833 - Written shortly before his death, Lander's communications detailed the high mortality of the expedition's crew but maintained his confidence that there was valuable trade to be found there. See NA CO 2/19, f.26, Richard Lander to Robert William Hay, Fernando Po, 9 May 1833.

and international audience. Following the establishment of the RGS, there were worries within commercial circles that valuable geographical knowledge would be printed in the interest of scholarship but at the expense of Britain's mercantile activities. In 1837, the Chairman of the reformed West African Company contacted the secretary of the Society after hearing that surveys of the Niger Delta gathered by Company agents and left at Fernando Po had been mistakenly sent to him. Citing the intense competition to monopolise any aspect of trade with West Africa, the Company hoped to keep any knowledge of a safe route to the river's main trunk confidential. He wrote:

The West African Co[mpany] possess a map of the Niger, with its reaches, and their bearings, and accurate Soundings for at least, 400 Miles up that River, which Chart will probably some early day be brought into active use. The Company however obtain these valuable Documents at a very great expense, naturally look for the first use of them. In due time, there cannot be a doubt, that members of the Company will consent, that the Public may be gratified by Information so interesting, as the course of the immense Niger, and of the populations located upon its banks.⁹⁰⁹

Restricting the appearance of new information pertaining to the map obviously ran counter to a tradition of cartographic development which had begun when Rennell's chart of Park's first journey was displayed in Pall Mall to generate interest in his forthcoming narrative. As it became clear that any news of the Niger Delta or British activities there could not be suppressed, Laird's journal was published with Allen's nautical chart and dedicated to the "Merchants and Philanthropists of Great Britain" in the interest of encouraging an extension of British commerce up the river.

When Buxton turned his attention to the problem of the internal slave trade, his plan to direct a British mission up the Niger and establish a model farm rested on the assumption that the lands either side of the Niger and extending far inland were both as fertile and accessible as Lander and Laird had asserted, and as MacQueen had predicted twenty years earlier. There were, however, two problems which brings this discussion of cartographic utility to a head. The first was that Buxton had to convince parliament and the British public to support the scheme. We have seen how publications such as Allen's *Picturesque Views of the Niger* appeared to provide calculated images

⁹⁰⁹ RGS CB2/72, John Blunt to the Secretary of the Geographical Society, London, 16 January 1837.

that were locatable by the latest chart of the river. Buxton also committed groups to which he was affiliated such as the newly established Royal Agricultural Association to popularise the mission by publicly vindicating his plan to farm the interior.⁹¹⁰ But it was the production of the “Niger Texts” (as David Lambert terms them) from the late 1830s which ultimately provided all materials for the public’s reference and they involved the manipulation of existing geographical discourses to argue their case.⁹¹¹ The second problem leads from the first: how was the proposed expedition to be directed to this fertile land? Charts had been produced to accompany the Landers’ descent of the Nun branch in 1830 and Allen’s survey of the same route with Laird was available. Yet the debate which arose over the navigability of the river saw MacQueen challenge these observations in favour of his own assessment.

The publication of *The African Slave Trade* in 1839 outlined Buxton and MacQueen’s computation of the internal market for slaves and secured the Government’s commitment to an expedition. Allen’s personal account from his earlier venture on the Niger also made a timely appearance in *The United Service Journal* edition of 1839, describing his “contemplation of the neglected state of this beautiful country”.⁹¹² Concerned at the slow pace of preparations and to galvanise public interest, Buxton and his colleagues in the African Civilization Society (ACS) prepared *The Remedy* in 1840. Its purpose, amongst others, was to address common misconceptions about West Africa that were perceived to hinder European efforts in that quarter.⁹¹³ More so than any former expedition discussed here, the Niger Expedition’s hopes for success were dependent on the West African reality matching the descriptions that were available in Britain. Members of the ACS wrote that they were “deeply anxious to circulate it [*the Remedy*] throughout the Empire as best calculated to invoke public attention to the detestable traffic in slaves and the desolate state of Africa.”⁹¹⁴ In doing so, however, they walked a fine line between galvanising public support on the

⁹¹⁰ NA CO 2/21, f.227, Thomas Fowell Buxton to the Marquis of Normanby, 18 July 1839.

⁹¹¹ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 192-196.

⁹¹² *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine, Part III* (London, 1839), 60.

⁹¹³ Sir T.F. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London, 1840), 318.

⁹¹⁴ NA CO 2/22. f.235, Thomas Fowell Buxton *et al* to Lord John Russell, London, 3 January 1840.

one hand, and revealing their intentions to lay claim to Fernando Po as a base of supply to the Spanish who owned it.⁹¹⁵ Because of the complications to Britain's international relations, an embargo was placed on the printing of *The Remedy*.

A petition appeared (with support from individuals such as the Bishop of London) to persuade the Government to rethink this decision. Amongst its signatories was Captain Henry Dundas Trotter (Commander of the Niger Expedition) who acknowledged the expediency of secrecy to delay any European opposition to the venture, and his desire to avoid any possibility that hostile Muslims would learn of the mission and turn other Africans nearer the coast against them. Despite his reservations though, he was in favour of Buxton's book and its geographical conclusions; "an important advantage will be gained in the publication of the work in question by enlisting the public opinion in favour of the undertaking."⁹¹⁶ From the opinions expressed in several periodicals shortly afterwards, it is apparent that this positive image was well-received, and the interior was increasingly discussed in terms of how Britain could help it to realise its potential as a producer of tropical goods. Hallet draws attention to the developing image of Africa as a "Neglected Estate" (echoing Allen's sentiment) in publications such as the *Edinburgh Review* indicating the opportunity for British agency to correct Africans' perceived mismanagement of the land's natural fertility.⁹¹⁷

Whilst Buxton's reports and Allen's *Picturesque Views* testified against the popular image of Africa's bleak interior, recent expeditions had also reinforced in the public mind the prevalence of disease in those parts. In particular, the swamps and mangroves of the delta region were commonly recognised as especially unhealthy to Europeans, putting pressure on the identification of the fastest route through them.⁹¹⁸ After his return from the AICC's attempt on the Niger in 1834,

⁹¹⁵ Britain's former settlement of Clarence Town had been established without Spain's permission but the Foreign Office was more conscious of their position in 1841. See Brown, 'Fernando Po' (1973), 253, 263-264.

⁹¹⁶ NA CO 2/21, f.20, Henry Dundas Trotter to the Bishop of London, 22 January 1840.

⁹¹⁷ Hallet, 'Changing European Attitudes' (1976), 485-487 – Hallet referred to an article appearing in *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal (Volume 72)* (Edinburgh, 1841), 457.

⁹¹⁸ The Admiralty actually funded a study in 1839 into the causes of tropical sickness which focused on the properties of the water itself. The conclusion that diseases common to the Niger Delta were the result of gases released by contact between freshwater and the vegetable matter it carried with saltwater at the coast led to the inclusion of fans and filters on-board the expedition vessels to purify air for the crew's safety. This was a problem then which was understood to be concentrated at the coast, meaning that further emphasis

Allen had submitted his conclusion that the Nun (which the Landers had descended and Laird's mission had ascended) was the best route to the main branch of the river, indicated by both its depth and strong current.⁹¹⁹ In contrast, however, MacQueen proposed the Formosa river to the west as preferable and drew a detailed chart of the delta region in 1839 (figure 45) which labelled the Nun as "more unhealthy" than any of the other major outlets. True to form, MacQueen compiled several cartographic sources into one image to support his case.⁹²⁰ Buxton and his compatriots addressed the Home Secretary stating their confidence in the Formosa but requested that "the Government will submit the facts ascertained upon this subject to the professional persons best qualified to decide upon them."⁹²¹

The question as to which route was most navigable was still being debated in the final months before the expedition's departure. Even the Colonial Office could offer no wisdom and Robert Vernon Smith (the Colonial Undersecretary) admitted that "It would be absurd for me to pretend to have any opinion at all on that point. I could hardly exaggerate my own ignorance of the geography of this part of Africa. It is a subject to which I never till now had occasion to attend."⁹²² The decision therefore fell to Trotter and Allen as they would be leading the venture on the ground. Fortunately, fresh intelligence reached London in early 1841 which apparently settled the issue. Information grudgingly submitted by an independent merchant formerly of the AICC named Robert Jamieson described the observations of John Beecroft (then in his employ) who had recently

was placed on route from the sea to the comparatively healthier lands beyond it. See Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa* (1991), 49-63.

⁹¹⁹ NA CO 2/19, f.59-64, William Allen to Lord Auckland, London, 27 October 1834.

⁹²⁰ In this instance, MacQueen listed the following references on his map:

"An old Portuguese map; a superior French Chart of 1810; Bosman 1702; The African Pilot; Capt. Dalzells surveys 1785; Capt. Matthews [surveys] 1776; Capt. Clemiston [surveys]; Mr Norris; Mr Woodville; Capt. T. Clarke 1780; Capt. Fairweather 1790; Capt. Latham 1790; Capt. Penny [;] Lander; Laird; Oldfield; Hill; Beecroft; Owens survey; Capt. Cumming; and from various private communications and conversations with individuals who and Traded in & navigated almost all the Rivers & Creeks in the Delta."

See RGS MR NIGERIA S/S.61, "A Map of the Niger Constructed from the best Authorities and Drawn August 1839 – James MacQueen".

⁹²¹ NA CO 2/21, f.245, Thomas Fowell Buxton *et al* to the Marquis of Normanby, London, 27 August 1839.

⁹²² NA CO 2/22, f.427, Memorandum written by Robert Vernon Smith, 21 September [1840].



Figure 45: Detail from James MacQueen, "A Map of the Delta of the Niger constructed from the best Authorities and drawn August 1839" (1839). This was a sketch of the final piece which was printed later that same year under the title "The Delta of the River Kowara or Quorra, the Antient Niger". © Royal Geographical Society MR NIGERIA S/S.61

conducted an ascent of the Nun to Aboe. There he had observed a branch of the river split off in the direction of the Formosa but had found no evidence of it connecting to it.⁹²³ Jamieson offered this information in recognition of the harm that might be done to the future of any similar undertaking should the wrong course be followed and disaster befall the expedition. Whilst still maintaining his preference of the Formosa, MacQueen was forced to acknowledge in 1840 that the expedition would likely attempt the Nun as the only proven route inland.⁹²⁴ He defended his *Geographical Survey of Africa* and its attendant cartography by stating that:

⁹²³ NA CO 2/22, f.310-311, Robert Jamieson to Lord John Russell, Liverpool, 21 January 1841.

⁹²⁴ MacQueen, *Geographical Survey* (1840), vi, 133-146.

...complete geographical accuracy is not pretended to in the map accompanying the subsequent narrative... The object held in view was to present to the public a rational, and as nearly as possible, a correct delineation of the great physical features of Africa...⁹²⁵

Still unconvinced, his “New Map of Africa” (1841) continued to reflect his belief that the Formosa was the better option and its channel is shown clearly to the Niger.

Considering his experience of submitting his theories in the 1820s, MacQueen’s work between 1839 and 1841 indicates that there still existed a fundamental argument between “compilers” and “travellers” (as Rennell termed them). Lambert has suggested that the decision to ascend the Nun branch is an indication that MacQueen had “lost the geographical argument” during the final months of the Niger Expedition’s preparation.⁹²⁶ In this context of utility, the argument follows that the desire to guide the mission using the most reliable knowledge available (namely: Allen’s survey) required there to be faith in the information which it showed. The Nun branch was known to connect to the main trunk of the river whilst the Formosa was not. The Admiralty certainly, and Britain by degrees, had little desire to entertain rationalised geographies when it could turn to the reality which had been fixed to their map through surveys in the field.

Yet we see how these cartographies-in-conflict ultimately served various important roles during the final years of this study and they were explicitly drawn for several reasons. They appeared in support of Buxton’s ambitions for the interior, they helped frame the carefully manipulated images as they appeared in Allen’s *Picturesque Views*, and they guided the Niger Expedition through the Delta and into the interior. By 1841, the map, the act of mapping, and the significance of its reading were at the heart of Britain’s activities in West Africa.

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⁹²⁵ *ibid*, 272.

⁹²⁶ Lambert, *Mastering the Niger* (2013), 203.

Conclusion

Britain and the map of West Africa

D'Anville said that "[t]o destroy false ideas, even if one can put nothing else in their place is one of the ways of contributing to knowledge."⁹²⁷ His sentiment underpins the evolving culture of map-making which served as a rejoinder to Jonathan Swift's famous jibe against geographers who drew "Savage-Pictures" and "Elephants for want of Towns" in place of verifiable knowledge. The cartography which developed from that foundation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was one that presented the world in a manner which had the appearance of truth or, at the very least, probability. Britain's cartography of this period was complicated though by the way new information was assimilated and the historic map of West Africa was one which did not necessarily reflect the reality as it was recorded (even removing unverifiable information from the map was complicated). Rather, it emerged within the context of existing cartographies and in response to the several agenda which characterised Britain's engagement with the region.

By acknowledging the historic relativity and the several powers implicated in the map-making process, I have subscribed to the traditions of cartographic history which Brian Harley helped define in the late 1980s and early-1990s.⁹²⁸ Doing so has enabled me to situate the cartography of this period within the historical circumstances of their construction and circulation in a manner which avoided a simple discussion of their changing content. This suited my desire to engage with the extant archives in Britain, and I have used much of the scholarship surrounding several themes discussed here to frame the evaluation of these primary sources. Furthermore, it encouraged an evaluation of the foundations of Britain's knowledge and representations of West Africa from the mid-eighteenth century. I have thus contended that the history of Britain's

⁹²⁷ Quoted in Hallet, *The Penetration of Africa* (1965), 94.

⁹²⁸ Harley, 'Text and Context' (2002), 33-49.

interaction with West Africa between 1749 and 1841 was strongly associated with developing cartographic culture which found expression in several ways and so I examined the development of map-making in relation to the demands which changing relationships with the region created.

In this study, cartography has been traced to contemporary efforts to direct and rationalise their actions, to explain the land and its inhabitants, and to identify the British purpose in being there. I began by discussing in chapter 1 a range of literature surrounding several practical and conceptual themes stemming from the two focuses of critical cartography today: map-making processes and map-content. Though it goes without saying that the two are interrelated, identifying the links between them provided a framework around which the role of map-making during the events of this period could be analysed. It became apparent that the discussions most important to my research were those relating to the manufactured geographical image of West Africa and the contemporary quest for accuracy. In both instances there were common issues of power (over the map's content and making), economy and the circumstances of the map's audience which contributed to the final nuanced appearance of the map. Together they influenced the "discourse function" of cartography as Denis Wood calls it, which enabled the map to mediate between readers and the land in question in order to affect a particular understanding.⁹²⁹

Between d'Anville's "Afrique" and the cartography accompanying preparations for the Niger Expedition such as MacQueen's "New Map", West Africa was revealed to contain a vast and varied geography and a complex political landscape of different ethnicities, religions and receptiveness towards Britain's advances. By beginning with a French map, it was possible to examine how British map-makers adopted (in the absence of material of a similar quality at home) the empirical qualities of that European cartography which supported growing interest in the expansion of their position along the coast. Culminating in the events of 1841, the image presented by the most recent maps (in conjunction with various texts) was distinctly different from that which had existed a century before and was now one which supported Buxton's proposed Model Farm at

⁹²⁹ Wood, 'The map as a kind of talk' (2002), 142.

the confluence of the Benue and Niger Rivers and the negotiation of anti-slave trade treaties with Africans. The emergence of this image was discussed in chapter 2 alongside my assessment of the character of British enquiries and the importance of evolving conceptualisations of the West African area. Transitioning from points of isolated toeholds around the coast towards ambitions for a permanent presence in the interior, British activities developed in conjunction with the idea of West Africa as an interconnected land with lines of communication stretched across its length and breadth. By 1841, it was a region in which the British could establish a position for themselves within a known inhabited landscape in the knowledge that their presence would be felt far beyond the reach of their immediate authority.

In all this time, the map was never static; its content and the pressures exercised over its archive were constantly changing. Even though there was a growing demand for the map to be an accurate depiction of reality, cartography continued to reflect considerable external forces as chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated. Regardless of the map's rhetorical claim to scientific objectivity, it was clear that significant power was exercised by what I termed "sponsors" (itself an imperfect term) and circumstances in the field. Sponsorship in this sense referred to the financial and logistical participation of individuals who helped direct enquiries as well as the historical contexts which made demands of map-makers to subscribe to certain scholarly attitudes and presentational techniques. The map was sponsored as it were by the circumstances of its historical context. In either case, cartography reflected several variables which prove too numerous to attempt to examine in this study. It is clear though that maps did not automatically appear in the wake of new information and mapped geography was not the straightforward output of scientific enquiry.

British cartography in this period was never a simple record or narrative of accumulative investigations because the information that contributed to it was limited by technological, scholarly and practical issues. As the culture of exploration emerged to legitimise the physical and mental stresses which limited the quality of geographical data gathered in the field, there was a discernible distinction made between epistemic value of maps drawn from travellers' perspectives and those

by solitary academics which showed the broader region through reference to several sources. This theme was developed in chapter 5 to show how cartography could be manipulated by those in a position to do so, or by those travellers who bore in mind their desired audience's preferences for certain information when drawing their own charts.

Chapter 5 analysed further how the map was subject to its historical context and the participation of people who could influence its construction and appearance. Regarding certain examples wherein maps were made to accompany texts, I examined the conflict inherent to cartographic history: despite its appearance as such, the map is not an objective representation of reality. The contrast between the first-hand observations of travellers and the accumulated scholarship of the compiler continued to exist, yet both evolved to define themselves by their respective merits in opposition to each other. As was discussed in the case of the Niger River's course and termination, however, there were pressures outwith the desire for reliable survey and measurement of geography which influenced the final cartographic image. In these instances, it was the overriding presence of conflicting theories and sources of information that were qualified by their age and reputation which took precedence. It was the case therefore that the British map of West Africa between 1749 and 1841 did not fit into a straightforward or predictable model of enquiry – interpretation – representation.

Public engagement with the products of travellers and compilers helped stress the need for methodological accuracy yet in this period there was still reason to distrust the objective appearance of the map. Those themes of reliability and the quest for utility were analysed in chapter 6 in terms of the contemporary reader's interaction with a supposedly correct map. Per the previous discussions, Matthew Edney concludes that "maps are thoroughly intertwined in their instrumentality with all other ways in which an individual or group or party exerts its control over property or territories, and over tenants and populace."⁹³⁰ The idea that a useful map is one which reproduces reality with precision is undeniably problematic in this period. With reference to

⁹³⁰ Edney, 'The Irony of Imperial Mapping' (2009), 31.

cartography's "discourse function", however, I argue that by finding purpose as a mediator between the reader and the land the mapping of West Africa informed Britons about themselves as much as it provided guidance to that region. The pursuit of accuracy in this instance is then a subject which should be framed by looking at the readers' understanding of cartography and its symbolism as a product of cultural achievement. Regarding the British map of India where colonization and trade went hand-in-hand, Edney ultimately established that the "empire might have defined the map's extent, but mapping defined the empire's nature". It did so by acting as an administrative tool and by focusing images of the subcontinent's otherness into a more coherent, symbolic and definable geographical truth which Britons could engage with.⁹³¹ We see comparable themes at play in the context of West Africa, but in the absence of a similar colonial purpose for being there at this time, the cartography resonated with the humanitarian agenda and the fight against slavery.

Maps, and the image of the land as it was mapped, were at the heart of all preparations for the 1841 Niger Expedition. Though that was not the sole conclusion which this study arrived at, it is no less indicative of the several developments considered in these pages.

Evaluation and moving forward

I set out to demonstrate that maps and map-making were intertwined with Britain's engagement with West Africa. I began my research by drawing connections between maps and the texts or correspondence which accompanied them until, having identified the chronology of the map's changing appearance, I started to look closer at the mechanisms behind those changes and the powers that shaped them. In doing so, I recognised the vast complexity of events and people which helped produce the cartography considered here. So much so that even my titular focus of "British

⁹³¹ Edney, *Mapping an Empire* (1997), 340.

mapping of West Africa” seemed inadequate because it suggested a coherent, uncomplicated activity.

This study has addressed an established corpus of scholarship regarding the separate subjects of Britain’s historical engagement with West Africa and that of critical cartography. Combining the two provided a structure around which my research could develop and allowed focus to be directed at the small moments and individuals who moulded the map in significant ways. In this manner, Harley’s deconstructionism helped contextualise the cartography included in this study, though there was no simple reconciliation of the knowledge/power paradigm he described. Knowledge of West Africa as conveyed by maps was clearly unreliable so it is the illusion of knowledge which operates behind contemporary attitudes towards the region. In this respect, is it possible then for historians to discuss or reference historical cartography without first acknowledging the circumstances behind their appearance and circulation? Both the content of the map and its very existence are indicative of factors which suggest they cannot.

The various discussions of historical context in this thesis are naturally limited by its focus on West Africa. However, that focus emphasised the evolution of different engagements with the region and Britain’s attempts to build upon experience of it. Expanding this study to consider more global concerns would have complicated that chronology but it might also have allowed a more complete examination of many themes considered here and their broader implications. Whilst I have argued that episodes of exploration and attendant map-making should be discussed individually, it is important to remember that these events occurred alongside Britain’s engagement with the wider world. Themes of imperialism and trade, for example, are inherently embroiled in global contexts; so too is exploration.

Concentrating on West Africa, it is the stories and singular episodes of this period which have most interested me because they underscore the reality of Britain’s mapping of the region. There was no uniformity, consistency or even a reliable trajectory of improvement behind the cartography mentioned here, merely the input of individuals and events that affected changes to

the map's content. It is therefore the people who hold my interest and not just the relatively few privileged individuals who sponsored enquiries, travelled into the region, interpreted raw notes from the field and distributed a final product. I have shown and discussed how Britain's economic interest in West Africa encouraged the mapping of the region for trade benefits, how colonies were established, moralities defined; all because of a growing public engagement with representations of that region. That public interest encouraged the manipulation and moulding of a very particular mapped image.

I have argued that the map's audience remained one of the most significant factors to their changing appearance because so many concessions were made to their desired reception. However, the identification of that audience poses a problem when it is so hard to track the historical distribution of geographical texts and knowledge. It is certainly apparent that expanding "print culture" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed to the exposure of the British public to cartography and geographical information. Yet it is equally apparent that the movement of that knowledge was limited by several socio-economic factors as well as location.⁹³² Knowledge of West Africa cannot, therefore, be assumed to develop at a regular pace throughout all levels of society. Studies such as Livingstone's on the geography of geographical thought, and the various examinations of spaces or networks of knowledge-making and representation, combine to further demonstrate the individuality of different contributions to the map and its interpretation. In general, the size and quality of maps and books offers clues about their intended audience but without closer investigation it is hard to make any stark conclusions. Withers has drawn attention to the subscription lists accompanying the publication of Mungo Park's first journal in 1799 which illustrated the social dimensions of the book's earliest readership.⁹³³ Such lists fell out of fashion

⁹³² There are yet further complications when cartographies and geographical texts that were made available to the public made reference to sources that were often unavailable to that same audience. For example, Captain Philip Beaver's *African Memorandum* (1805) was published to feed interest in Africa's potential for colonisation but he directed his readers to review Aaron Arrowsmith's 1802 "Africa" for further information. In terms of how to review the public exposure to geographical information, however, it is instances such as this which complicate analysis because Arrowsmith's grand map was intended for only the wealthiest map-owners. See Beaver, *African Memoranda* (1805), 316n.

⁹³³ Withers, 'Geography, Enlightenment and the Book' (2010), 209-212.

during this period, yet there is scope to further explore the borrowing records of libraries and the production of different narrative editions to appeal to different economic markets. However, this would only reveal local consumption patterns rather than a broader image of cartographic dissemination.

As significant as the public dialogue within Britain was, it is the encounter with Africans during this period which I find to be most fascinating. The map of West Africa flourished in response to the British confrontation with its populated landscape and the recognition of its multiple religions, cultures, ethnicities and prospects. I have thus thought of this study of mapping as a study of contact, building on King's argument that Europeans met non-Europeans on "ground" that was "as much theoretical as physical and one which had been mapped well in advance."⁹³⁴ I have shown that contemporaries projected images and rational possibilities (sometimes broadly accurate, often not) over mapped spaces which fundamentally influenced their approach to them. Moreover, I have considered in detail the necessity for British enquiries to incorporate African testimonies and engage with locals in a manner which supported their claims of innocent intent when conducting their investigations. Unlike the Americas with its more salubrious climate (in parts) and colonial potential, the landscape uncovered here through British agency retained something of its African identity through the preservation of its indigenous place names. Therefore, if the map is not simply a neutral object which mediated between reader and land, it was one of great capriciousness and variability that was dependent on the reader and the land in question to find a meaning unique to both.

Pursuing that theme of contact, I believe there is great scope to develop the presentation of map-making and exploration in general to Africans. I drew attention to the distribution of proclamations through trade networks and the consciousness behind travellers' clothing because they demonstrate how the process of cartographic enquiry as well as the final map were carefully calculated activities. More significantly though, these efforts to spread a specially constructed

⁹³⁴ King, *Mapping Reality* (1996), 141.

image of British exploration ahead of their arrival extends and complicates the field of contact beyond what we would regard as the initial encounter between strangers. This in turn should force us to ask new questions about meetings between travellers and Africans in this period, especially when considering the implications of those first episodes. Cartography and the evolution of the map provided much of the context and justification for these contemporary discourses so it would be a valuable task to examine their relationship further.

It was noted at the beginning that there has been a post-colonial re-evaluation of how we approach the European discovery and presentation of the non-European world. Questions are increasingly asked about the realities of exploration as an evolving cultural phenomenon with a particular focus on how developments were unique to particular engagements with certain places. Notably, Kennedy's recent *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World* invited contributions from historians to focus on the global variations of discovery. In doing so he argued that cultures who engaged in exploration were driven by similar stimuli, yet their enquiries were shaped by factors unique to their society and their experiences in the field were often related to the prior exposure of those places to the western world.⁹³⁵ I have shown here how the mapping of West Africa was subject to such considerations. There is, however, more which can be done in this field; particularly the subject of those cultures of enquiry which fuelled exploration and the developing map.

This thesis has examined the conflict between those centres of calculation as defined by Latour (or the hierarchical spaces of learning discussed by Outram) and the importance of field investigations. The personal agency of travellers, and the significance attributed to their experiences, became enshrined within the formula of exploration narratives which revelled in their first-hand account of distant places. Regardless of rhetorical claims to the contrary, however, there is no simple distinction between the value of geographies which relied on the analysis of several

⁹³⁵ Contributing chapters focused on the history of exploration in Russia, the Pacific world, East Africa, Central Asia and the Antarctic. D. Kennedy, "Introduction" (2014), 13.

sources and those which were derived from actual observation. This is an issue which was not resolved by the close of this period and so readers continued to be presented with the evidence of a map's construction were invited to make their own judgements as to their correctness. Because of the contextual nature of successive periods of enquiry and later publication, I argue that it is necessary to address these discussions on a case-by-case basis as I have done with the example of Alexander Scott. Doing so avoids the confusing application of broader trends and conclusions to instances when they are not applicable.

It is important to avoid generalising the importance of that culture of exploration which developed on a macro as well as micro scale as Britain came into contact with the unknown across the globe. The evolving demands of scientific enquiry that were applied to the discovery and mapping of West Africa undoubtedly reflected conditions elsewhere where travelling for knowledge had fewer obstacles to contend with. The activities of the African Association in the late eighteenth century, for example, reflected aspirations modelled on their knowledge of the Americas and James Rennell's experience of mapping India. Later, the roles of the Admiralty and John Barrow during the organisation of various expeditions was intertwined with their efforts to deploy the British Navy and its capacity for scientific exploration to all the unknown portions of the map (Barrow's involvement with successive efforts to find the North-West Passage are a well-known product of that grand project).⁹³⁶ We have seen here the influence of changing standards of scientific enquiry being exercised over the planning, direction, conduct and reception of successive expeditions and their products. Because of the difficulties inherent to African exploration though, British travellers were forced to adapt their approaches and, in doing so, encouraged the emergence of new methodologies which could be applied elsewhere. The use of new and advanced machinery to preserve travellers' health during the Niger Expedition in 1841 is a prime example.

As Britain's activities around the world expanded and the culture of scientific enquiry improved, incorporating places like West Africa into a growing archive of knowledge contributed

⁹³⁶ See Fleming, *Barrow's Boys* (1998)

towards several cultural expressions of superiority. There is value, therefore, in examining the nature of those attitudes in Africa which were fuelled by events elsewhere because doing so helps demonstrate the character and pace with which this region became part of a global economy with European powers at its heart. This is not to say that Africa was formerly isolated from the rest of the world but there was undeniable desire behind British expeditions in this period to identify and exploit its potential in a manner which reflected their dealings around the globe. Because cartography perhaps most aptly demonstrates the sum of contemporary knowledge, ideas and images of a place, its analysis provides the most appropriate framework for such an approach and this was why I pursued a discussion of how the map found meaning in this period. I have thus argued (for the purposes of this research) that identifying the utility of cartography ultimately requires examining the potential discourses which could exist between the map and the reader in the context of the map's claim to accuracy. Through the deconstructionism of post-Harleyan scholarship, it is possible to approach those themes of audience, accuracy and utility by analysing the construction and presentation of cartographic material.

And why are these discussions necessary? What I have demonstrated here is the several ways in which Britain's mapping of West Africa between 1749 and 1841 helped define national identities, and delineate the region into economic, environmental and ethnographical areas of interest. The evolution of these themes throughout the nineteenth century naturally paved the way for the onset of colonialism and defined relationships between Britain and West Africa, the repercussions of which still echo today. Approaching these themes from the perspective of cartographic analysis in the manner which I have done here, focuses attention on the conflict between what British people thought they knew and what they actually knew of West Africa. I have argued that it was the illusion of knowledge which empowered Britain's activities and drove forward their encroachments across the whole continent. It would be most interesting for this research to be carried further in pursuit of how these various discussions developed.

The nature of British mapping of West Africa

This study began with reference to the meeting of British travellers with Sheikh al-Kanemi near Lake Chad in 1823. In that instance, the question of the map's nature was raised, allowing me to expand on how it would be answered then and now. When Major Dixon Denham presented the Bornu Mission's edited journal and its illustrative map to the Colonial Secretary in 1825, he declared:

By the accompanying chart of our route on referring to the present maps of Africa, his Lordship will perceive the revolutions which the various alterations will make in the hitherto received opinions on African Geography.⁹³⁷

Denham's inference that the quality and range of information he and his companions had collected and the contrast with former cartographies was what determined the success of the expedition is very much one of his time. We have seen though how the map itself was not merely a product of observation and improvement upon an established archive. Yet the cartographic legacy of the Bornu Mission was significant and I have demonstrated how it redefined the map in a way that was as dramatic as d'Anville's blank map in 1749 and Rennell's compilation of the African Association's enquiries and delineation of Park's journey to the Niger in the 1790s. By the time of the Niger Expedition in 1841, the culture of map-making and the quest for cartographic accuracy for the purposes of utility was at the centre of preparations for that venture.

As I see it, the nature of Britain's pre-colonial cartography of West Africa is more than simply the changing detail on successive maps. It is a discussion of the mapping traditions that govern their arrangement, and the socio-political and economic agendas behind their conception and construction. It is the academic traditions which influenced the observations of individuals who mapped and the geographers that received their notes. It is the metaphorical map that symbolised a certain type of knowledge and engagement with geography, with foreign lands and people. It is the developing archive that all enquiries contributed to; and it is the conditions by which Britons navigated the obstacles of the West African interior to conduct their enquiries and make contact with its residents. All of which are rooted in historical contexts. Consequently, this history of

⁹³⁷ NA CO 2/13, f. 160, Dixon Denham to Earl Bathurst, London, 1 June 1825.

cartography is very much a history of thought and ideas, as much as it is a history of map-making activity.

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Add MS	Clarkson Papers Vol.1 Western Manuscripts
Egerton MS	Western Manuscripts
Kings MS	Western Manuscripts
RLF	Royal Literary Fund

National Archives – NA

ADM	Records of the Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and related bodies
CO	Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related Bodies
CO 700	Colonial Office and predecessors: Maps and Plans: Series I
FO	Records created or inherited by the Foreign Office
MPG	Maps and Plans extracted to flat storage from records of the Colonial Office
PRO 30/26	Public Record Office: Documents Acquired by Gift, Deposit or Purchase: Miscellaneous
SP	Records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782
T	Records created or inherited by HM Treasury
WO	Records created or inherited by the War Office, Armed Forces, Judge Advocate General, and related bodies

National Records of Scotland – NRS

National Library of Scotland – NLS

The John Murray Archives

Stuart de Rothesay Papers

Traill Papers

Natural History Museum – NHM

JBRP Joseph Banks Research Project (DTC – Dawson Turner Copies of Banks' correspondence)

National Library of Scotland

John Murray Archive

Traill Papers

Nottinghamshire Record Office – NRD

DD/S Staunton family of Staunton Hall

Royal Geographical Society – RGS

DD The Denham Collection

LMS Royal Geographical Society Library Manuscript Collection

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