Southern Africa's liberation movements in power will provide the reader with a transparent insight into the historical background leading up to present-day political conditions and is certainly worth a read.

doi:10.1017/S0165115315000613 Chris van der Aa, *Independent Scholar*

David Lambert. *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen's African Geography & the Struggle Over Atlantic Slavery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. 309 pp. ISBN: 9780226078069. £35.00.

David Lambert's latest monograph is an exploration of a geographer. But this geographer, the Glaswegian James MacQueen, was no explorer. He never travelled to the places that he famously mapped. Instead he produced his "A New Map of Africa" (1841), which accurately depicted the source and route of the river Niger, by collating together written records, accounts, older maps and, significantly, the testimony of enslaved people. MacQueen was no disinterested academic with only a theoretical interest in the topography and landscape of Africa. He was a trader, slave plantation owner and active participant in the debates and schemes that emerged from conflicts over slavery, the slave trade and the future of British colonialism in Africa.

The first part of the book, titled "Sources", examines not only the sources MacQueen used to develop his map but also the source of his interest in the Niger and West Africa. The first chapter of this part, "'Mr. Park's Book' and the Niger Problem", locates the origins of MacQueen's maps of the Niger in his vision of a British trading company in West Africa that would serve to weaken the transatlantic slave trade. MacQueen's commitment to the influence and knowledge of traders can also be seen in the attention he paid to their accounts of the West African coast. As the next chapter "Keeping Account of Atlantic Commerce" makes clear, MacQueen's interest was not in abolitionism in its fullest sense. He envisioned slave plantations in West Africa, which would give Britain the "exclusive privilege in trade" (79) needed to guarantee British industry independence from the U.S. and other European empires and because of what he regarded as the relative backwardness of West African society. MacQueen was no radical free or legitimate trade enthusiast. Instead, he adhered to protectionist principles that were already falling out of favour in the early nineteenth century. The next chapter, "Captive Knowledge", is at once the most speculative and the most intriguing. Lambert carefully teases out the fragments of West African knowledge embedded in the geographical accounts of the time and argues that MacQueen's position on the Westerhall Estate in Grenada gave him access to a range of knowledge about the Niger and its surroundings. In particular, Lambert locates MacQueen's encounter with an unnamed Mandingo boy in the everyday subjection of enslaved people in the Caribbean.

The second part of the book, titled "Courses", starts by examining the politics of truth making in the debates over slavery and the slave trade in Britain. MacQueen's method of "armchair geography" was under attack in a new age of exploration. At the same time, MacQueen was stoutly defending Caribbean slavery, particularly—by virtue of his long experience of the region—in his series of attacks on the slave narrative of Mary Prince, by

virtue of his long experience of the region. This seeming contradiction rested on MacQueen's faith in white plantation owners as reliable and, above all, British observers, while West Africa was, to him, a deeply and fundamentally "foreign" area. With this argument, Lambert brings us back to the theme of his first monograph and its focus on the geography of slavery and antislavery.[1] For scholars of slavery, this chapter encourages a focus on the production of knowledge and the process of publishing slave narratives. The next two chapters of the book's second section turn to the contested practical schemes of colonisation in West Africa. The first shows how and why MacQueen was such a virulent opponent of Sierra Leone as the location for a slave trade abolitionist trading project. He pointed to the island of Fernando Po as an alternative for a range of medical, geo-strategic and geographical reasons. His role in Buxton's ill-fated Niger Expedition is then explained. Lambert uses these debates over the sitting and planning of a British intervention to draw out the deeper conflicted ideological underpinnings of early colonialism in Africa.

The third part, "Termination", concludes with, on one hand, MacQueen's accession to the Royal Geographical Society, thanks to the prescient accurate detail of his maps, and, on the other hand, his financial and political decline. However, as Lambert highlights, MacQueen's pivotal role in Buxton's expedition means we can draw a genealogy of knowledge between the unnamed Mandingo boy, who informed MacQueen about the river of his homeland and the later expeditions of David Livingstone at the height of British imperialism.

Mastering the Niger is a book about methods and sources. Lambert's self-reflexive approach to his own sources and methods (as well as his critical analysis of MacQueen's) will be a useful example for early stage Ph.D. researchers or advanced Master's students of how to think through and interrogate their materials. The chapter "Credibility and Truth Making" will also make an excellent companion to seminars dealing with the narrative of Mary Prince. Throughout the book, Lambert constantly signposts and reiterates his key arguments. This occasionally becomes wearisome and repetitive for the interested reader, though it makes it easy to navigate for students.

For *Itinerario* readers, the work highlights the role played by the production of knowledge in colonial expansion. The "New Map of Africa" brought together particularities of the Scottish Enlightenment, with the experience of the Caribbean plantation and knowledge of West Africans, into one graphic and intended to inspire colonial settlement and trade. It suggests further research possibilities in the archaeology of historical sources and the individuals who produced them. Lambert's dedication to MacQueen and his world shine through in the richly textured detail and the range of contexts explored. At times, some of this detail could have been jettisoned in favour of a broader argument about slavery, abolition and colonialism, which would have increased the scope and audience for the work. Despite this fact, the book serves as an example of the role of detailed historical research in uncovering the complexities of colonialism.

Lambert's book is a biography, not of MacQueen, but of the map itself. By tracing the various sources that generated the map and its legacies in the early 1840s, Lambert delves, sometimes speculatively, into the global origins of British geographical knowledge. The resulting book ranges across the politics of the pro-slavery movement, the complicated relationship between the abolition movement and colonisation schemes, and development of geography as discipline. The book's key strength is how it illuminates the entanglements between academic

[1] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

practice, political ideology and projections of the future. By starting with the map and reaching outward in every possible direction, to the personalities and practices associated with it, Lambert uncovers a complicated web extending across the Atlantic, connecting British port cities like Glasgow with West African traders and slaves and Caribbean plantations.

doi:10.1017/S0165115315000625 Christine Whyte, *Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies*