

Florian Krobb

(National University of Ireland Maynooth)

FROM TRACK TO TERRITORY: GERMAN CARTOGRAPHIC
PENETRATION OF AFRICA, C. 1860–1900

I

On page 130, the *Cambridge History Atlas* juxtaposes two maps of Africa. The larger, page-filling map shows the African continent's political division in the first decade of the twentieth century: apart from Morocco, Liberia and Abyssinia, the entire landmass and all adjacent islands are shaded in the characteristic colours of their European owners. Geographical features, mountains, rivers and the names of those features which do not lend themselves to graphic representation, such as the Kalahari Desert, appear very much subordinate to the bold reds, yellows and blues of the European nations. History, at the beginning of the twentieth century, is the development of nation states, and Africa had been integrated into its trajectory by being partitioned into dependencies of those very nation states. The *Atlas* integrates itself into, on the eve of the First World War even represents a pinnacle of, the European master narrative of the formation of nations, their expansion beyond domestic borders in the process of colonisation, the consolidation of these possessions into global empires, and the vying for strategic advantage and dominance on the global stage in imperialist fashion.

On the inset in the bottom left corner, the same geographical region is depicted as it was in the year 1870. The smaller size leaves even less room for geographical information: some large rivers and lakes are marked in the white expanse that is only partly surrounded by thin strips of land shaded in the European nations' identifying colours. Only French Algeria and Senegal, the British Cape Colony and Ottoman Egypt are marked by larger, not merely coastal colouration. The vast internal space is, by virtue of its non-colouration, declared to be 'empty' in terms of the logic that informs the production of a historical atlas: while it is acknowledged that a geography exists there, no political structure that would be familiar to European users, or would lend itself to cartographic representation, is granted these parts. The inset visualises a situation that was not only facilitated, but was probably seen as having demanded a historical development that resulted in the situation visualised in the large map. The inset itself refers back to map 65 of the *Atlas*, depicting Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries, where the coastal strips and marginal territories identified as 'belonging' to someone are still smaller; geographical features such as mountain

ranges and rivers, though, are more pronounced in the whiteness of the vast interior, yet indicators of habitation are conspicuously absent. The juxtaposition of the two maps on the one page, the reminder of the beginning of development, whose provisional conclusion is indicated by the larger image, illustrates a teleological narrative: it tells readers about the extension of European control over African lands from the coastal strongholds that had existed since the age of discoveries into the interior; it speaks of the culmination of this development by way of almost complete seizure and partition amongst European colonial powers of an entire continent in the span of little more than a generation. The absence of European control beyond coastal regions in depictions of earlier conditions focuses attention on the spread of the European colours; it draws attention to the German orange, the Belgian brown and the Italian purple that have joined the traditional British red, French blue, Portuguese dark green and lighter Ottoman green. The extension and proliferation of European colours amounts to a visual *mise-en-scène* of history, i.e. the passing of time which brings about a significant and manifest alteration of status and meaning. The later map visualises borders where earlier there was allegedly nothing of the kind, no political dominion that would manifest itself in territorial demarcation. It imposes a history on the African continent which is framed entirely in the European terms of the development of nation states that are characterised by territoriality, and the organisation of life within the borders of this territory in an identifiably homogenous, mono-coloured way.

The page furthermore reflects the process of coercing an area which had remained beyond the reach of the European power, if not knowledge, speculation and desire, into the European political system of nation states and their dependencies. It also displays the process of appropriating the area to the European logic of representation and demarcation. As the shaded territories – distinguished by a colour scheme which, at that stage, had become ubiquitous – are bordering one another, the impression is created of the complete division and the thorough and stable delineation of the dividing lines. The territorial units thus outlined, identified by their colouration as political, are defined by the area they cover, by their expanse and their territoriality, and this, in turn, is defined as being finite, as possessing borders which surround it completely. The vast majority of Africa before the colonial conquest, in contrast, was denoted by a small number of selected geographical features, most prominently the course of rivers and the contour lines of some prominent mountain ranges (even more pronounced on the larger map 65); the only traces of human habitation are some larger cities, such as Cape Town and Cairo, which sit in the few peripheral areas where coloured shading signals non-African occupation. Very striking and telling is the fact that even those autochthonous political entities which, around 1870, were recognised as commensurate with European notions of statehood, remain unacknowledged; Abyssinia, the sultanates of Dar Fur, Wadai and Bornu, the Fulbe states, the kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda are ignored and not even the domains of the Zulu and Swazi kingdoms in Southern Africa, which put up so much resistance to the extension of British influence, are worth a mention in this British imperialist narrative.

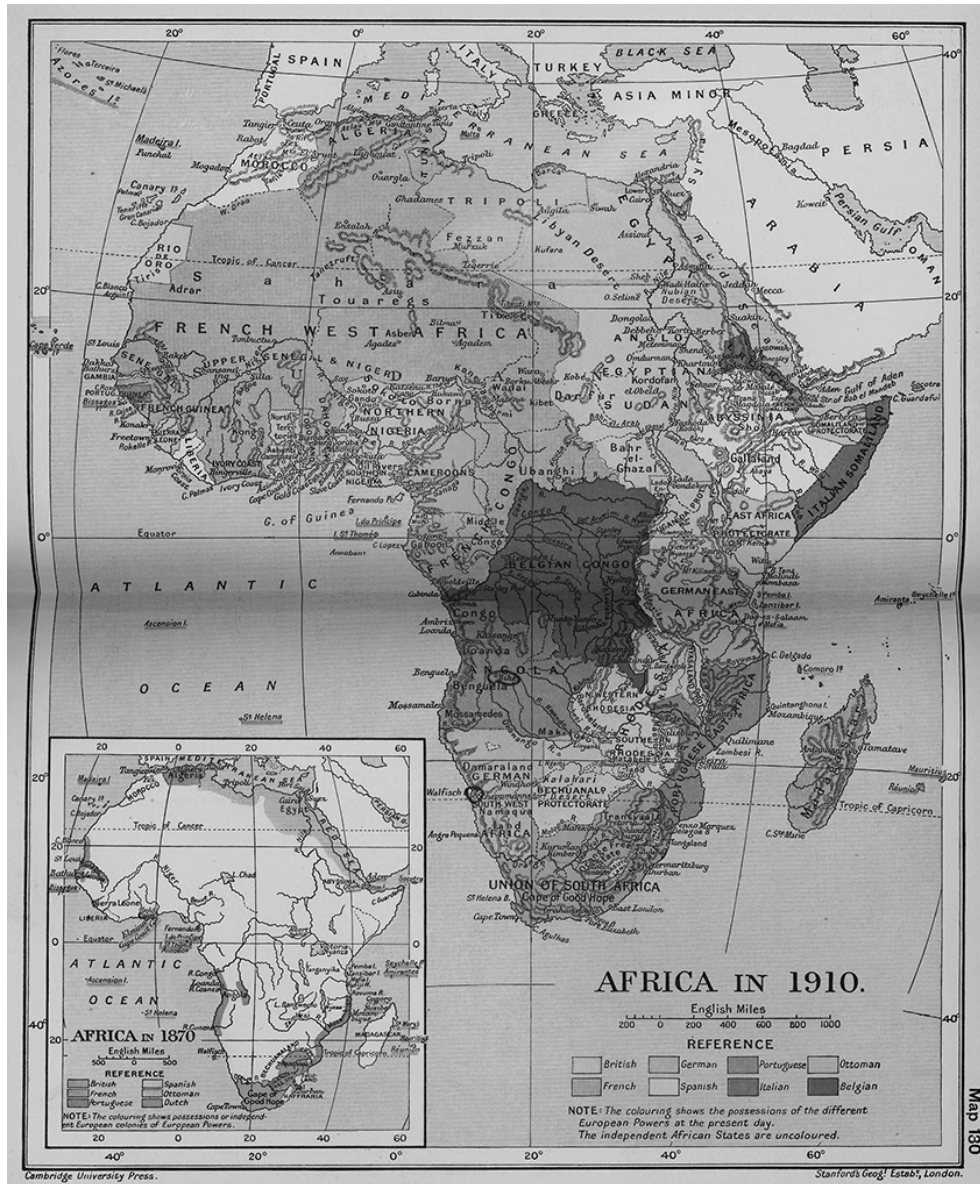


Figure 1: *The Cambridge Modern History Atlas*, ed. by A.W. Ward, G.W. Prothero and S. Leathes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912, map 130.

The German equivalent, *Stielers Hand-Atlas* of 1906, illustrates the radicality of the imposed concept of statehood in even stronger ways. As it is not a historical atlas, but a general resource which intends to inform broadly and comprehensively about the world as it was at the time, it does not attempt to visualise historical ‘development,’ and hence reduces the territorial colouration to the contours of the borderlines, which makes room to fill the white interior (here: not of the continent, but of individual territories) with more detailed

geographical information. In certain areas, the borders are broken so as to indicate that they are not fixed or final, thus for example that between Abyssinia and Italian Somalia, or that in the Sahara Desert between Ottoman Tripoli and British Egypt. But this, since it seems to depict uncertainty and thus a deficiency, only accentuates the importance of borders even more; it serves as reminder that this mode of territorial and demarcatory thinking does not permit fluidity and uncertainty (such as existed in 1870 and had almost been ‘remedied’ by the first decade of the twentieth century), that indicative borders demand to be fixed, ambiguities settled, clarity achieved. Partition means that no gaps are allowed and that there may be no interstices between the lands that the European masters lay claim to.



Figure 2: *Stielers Hand-Atlas*, 9th ed., Gotha: Perthes, 1906 [reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007], p. 68 (excerpt).

From the European perspective, both the British and the German map chronicle the unfolding of a huge success story, the conquest of an entire continent and its incorporation into European empires. The power on which this success is built is not only conceived politically, militarily and economically, but also very much intellectually, through the generation, ordering and representation of knowledge. The blanks on the maps of Africa since the eighteenth century, regarded by many “as an insult to the enlightened age,” also exerted “huge political suggestions: the continent,” they propose, “is wide open for conquest; the indigenous population, such as it exists, can have no claims to the unmapped territories, and will therefore present no resistance to subjugation”¹.

In the act of representation, the cartographer and the community in whose name he frames his objects, assert intellectual authority by assuming the right to describe and display their objects in conformity with their logic and in pursuance of their interests. In reality, though, the territoriality of the map might only reflect

¹ S. Garfield, *On the Map. Why the World Looks the Way it Does*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 214.

an aspiration: even in the first decade of the twentieth century, a generation after the start of the formal process of allotting African lands to European powers around the time of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, the demarcated areas were by no means completely conquered, furrowed, opened up or ‘pacified’ and ‘developed’ – there remained uncertainty with regard to the course of borders, or where the line on the map actually ran on the ground, and there were areas of limited or no political control, without any administrative infrastructure to speak of, let alone economic benefit for the European masters.

Maps reduce complexity and uncertainty; they solidify in representation what might remain fluid in reality. Yet they offer an inventory of knowledge at a given moment in time, albeit an aspirational one. The knowledge displayed by maps defines the represented space; it is fair to say that in their abstraction, in their indexical, deictic and stylized nature they *create* the space they depict². The map is not only witness to seminal (‘historical’) transformation, it is also an instrument in effecting this very change. The inherent logic of map-making is an integral component of the bundle of factors that provided “the impetus to delve deeper and to widen the scope of knowledge and representation”; expressly or involuntarily, map-making served all the interests (economic, military, political) that we summarise as colonialist³.

And yet, the map visualises a (provisional) end point, namely the completion of the process of pushing European knowledge and European power inwards, of encompassing the entire continent and thereby consolidating possession. Concurrently, the map forms a point of departure for the development of the individual territory, the opening up and imposition of the European logic of usefulness, efficiency and order upon a demarcated national dominion, protectorate or ‘possession.’ In the scenario of “direct European colonial rule,” distinguished by “parochial nationalism and exclusivity,” regional maps became a “functional administrative tool” in the hands of the colonisers⁴; with regard to land rights, aligning space and controlling populations, maps took on the function of ‘disciplinary technologies’ of ‘governmentality’⁵. Now the continent is no longer a whole, but an accumulation of a specific number of separate entities. And it is no longer bereft of inhabitants as was the case when the land was depicted as rife for seizure; now populations are acknowledged – as subjects of foreign sovereigns.

² Cf. S. Günzel and L. Novak, *Das Medium Karte zwischen Bild und Diagramm. Zur Einführung*, in: S. Günzel and L. Novak (eds.), *KartenWissen. Territoriale Räume zwischen Bild und Diagramm*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012, pp. 1–32, here esp. pp. 3–8.

³ Cf. J.C. Stone, *A Short History of the Cartography of Africa*, Lampeter: Mellen, 1995, p. 68 and 79.

⁴ J.C. Stone, *Imperialism, Colonialism and Cartography*, in: *Transactions of the Institute of Geographers*, NS 13 (1988), pp. 57–64, here p. 58 f.

⁵ Cf. C. Harris, *How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from the Edge of Empire*, in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 94.1 (2004), pp. 165–182, here p. 174.

II

In the course of the nineteenth century, the normative European category for the organisation of communities in the space they occupy became that of the nation state. Zbigniew Białas rightly claims that “cartographic production, at its most basic level, is an application of epistemologically conditioned belief-systems or a colonial [...] projection of wish-fulfilment”⁶. The nation state is the episteme that determines European political engagement with African space; the territorialisation of this space represents the desired outcome of this engagement. The logic of cartographic representation of African space adheres to, and forms an integral component of, the dynamics of national-territorial desire. A number of examples from German cartography may serve to illustrate some of the developments involved here. They are, of course, part of a larger narrative; yet they display the distinct language and mentality that reflect a specifically cartographic logic and dynamics.

Cartography accompanied, accelerated and perhaps even facilitated the process of territorialisation; cartography also constitutes a mirror both of the ideology which informed this historical process, and of its actuality, i.e. the encroachment of Europeans and of European power onto the continent. Cartography reflects the shifting borders of European perception and European reach in many respects. It reflects the broadening of the horizon from the limited vision of the individual traveller or expedition to a collective, shared European horizon which was defined, described and depicted within shared parameters and governed by shared principles. It also reflects the process of subjecting indigenous phenomena, most importantly populations, to the rationale of territoriality: the medium of the map turns them into subjects.

The map of the African interior was not always empty and the African populations were not always either obscured or subsumed. The summative map that accompanies Heinrich Barth’s travelogue *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Central-Afrika* foregrounds indigenous political division as the dominant structural feature. The emirate of Bornu that provided a base for Barth and several travellers in his footsteps is granted centre stage, but the map also delineates the borders of neighbouring Baghamiri, Wadai and the various Fulbe states to the West. Yet, this politico-geographical map, which acknowledges indigenous African political structures, is according to its legend primarily designed to record the European traveller’s routes (“Verzeichnis eines Theils von Africa zur Übersicht von Dr Barth’s Reisen”). This hybridity of focus highlights that indigenous (political) conditions are dependent on the cartographer’s observation which, in turn, is determined by his movements; this linkage of indigenous conditions to the observer’s gaze suggests that there is no preceding information available on the dimensions of the various ‘states’ covered, let alone verifiable and cartographically representable data. The itineraries distinguish Barth as eye-witness, but they also implicitly speak of the limitations of his knowledge – the location of the majority of the featured borders are not based on first-hand intelligence but,

⁶ Z. Białas, *Mapping Wild Gardens. The Symbolic Conquest of South Africa*, Essen: Die blaue Eule, 1997, p. 13.

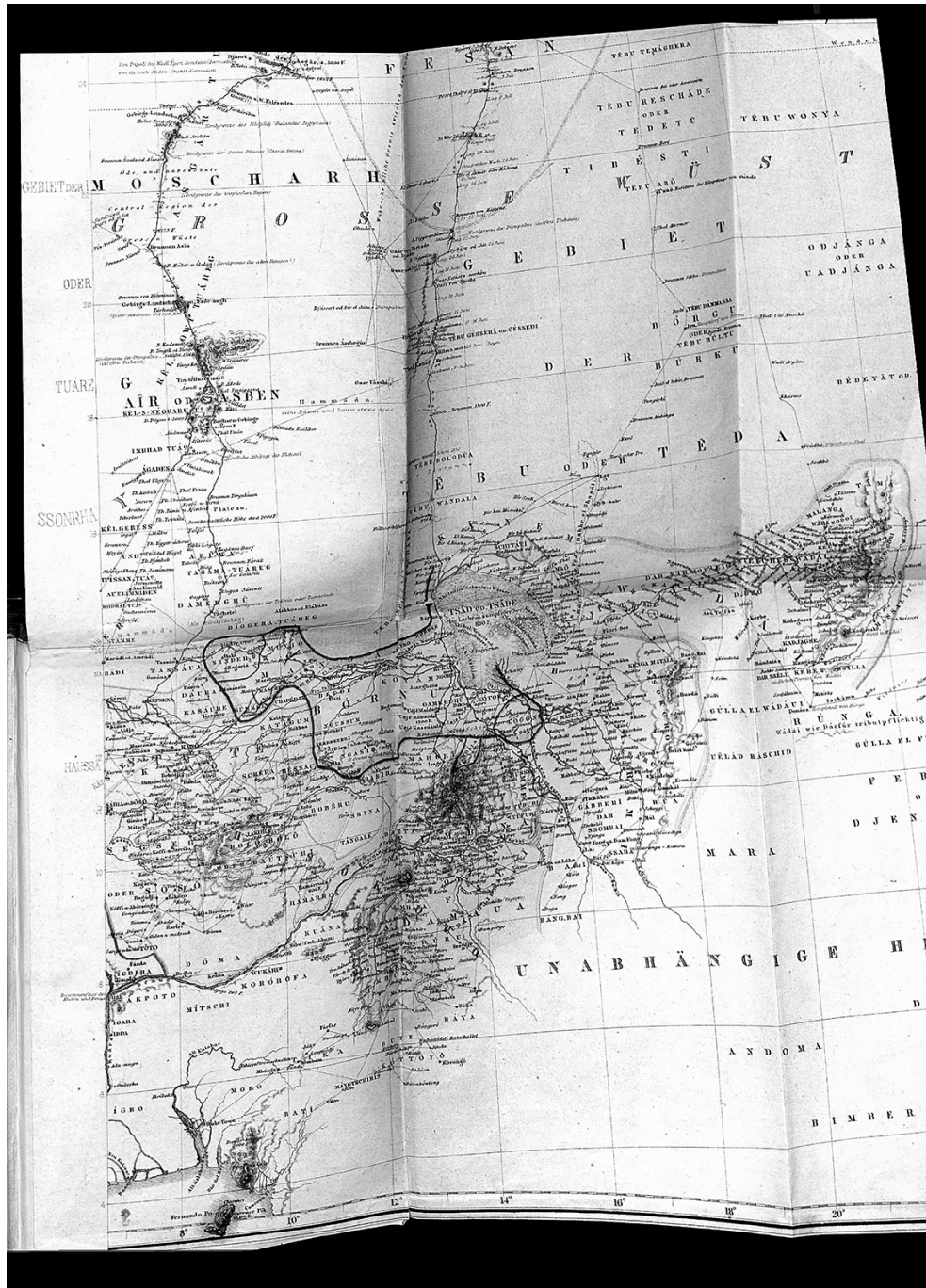


Figure 3: Karte eines Theils von Africa zur Übersicht von Dr. Barth's Reisen, 1850–55 und der von ihm gesammelten Itinerarien, entworfen und gezeichnet von A. Petermann. In: Heinrich Barth, *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Central-Afrika in den Jahren 1849 bis 1855. Tagebuch seiner im Auftrag der Britischen Regierung unternommenen Reise*, 5 vols, Gotha: Perthes, 1857–58, fold-out map at the end of vol. v.

as the narrative frequently testifies, on the reports and explanations of his local interlocutors – and were thus accepted as unreliable, provisional or at best indicative. The African borders owe their existence on the European map to the combination of local knowledge and autopsy, but the adaptation and inclusion of local knowledge relies not only on the translation of local information into European systematics and modes of representation (distinguishing, for example, between an ethnic or cultural group like the ‘Tuareg’ and a politically defined community like the ‘inhabitants of Baghirmi,’ i.e. between ‘tribe’ and ‘country’), but even more on his judgement of the credibility and trustworthiness of the information received – an act of self-empowerment which corresponds to a relegation of local knowledge to the status of hearsay. The fact that boundaries between ‘countries,’ between settlement areas of ‘tribes’ and between demarcated and open terrain (e.g. between the sultanates and the desert) remain indicative as they describe broad curves through uncharted lands, is a key element in the intellectual and representational appropriation of the continent. A tentative inter-communal demarcation underlines the European desire to define and delineate; at the same time it unmasks a perceived deficiency of autochthonous Africa, namely a notorious uncertainty and instability.

A map which displays autochthonous conditions derived, largely, from autochthonous sources, raises all kinds of questions, many of them akin to the questions implied by the vagueness of the demarcations and borderlines – questions of definition and of converting local phenomena into European categories. For example, does the fact that a local ruler pays tribute to a regional ruler mean that the former’s lands are part of the latter’s territory?; does a formal relationship akin to European concepts of vassalage exist?; which degree of dependency or independence warrants the designation of a territory as a separate political entity or unit? While similar questions might have arisen in feudal times in Europe itself, the ideal of the nation state, indeed the very notion of statehood, put paid to such an ambiguity in the European arena and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, almost everywhere else in the world but Africa. The authority to determine questions such as these was assumed by European travellers, indeed the motivation of many successors to the original trail blazers such as Barth was the verification of speculative or indicative geographical and political information gathered by the pioneers.

The cartographic exploits of individual expeditions remained the essential basis of cartography well into the colonial era⁷. The nucleus of exploratory cartography is the itinerary map of individual routes, and this remained the case even after more complete and comprehensive pictures had been assembled on the basis of individual exploratory surveillance. The itinerary map depicts a track, a mere line through terrain which mainly lies beyond the reach of the surveying subject. Itinerary maps typically record what is in the traveller’s vision, what can be accessed by way of short excursions and what can be safely deduced by extrapolating from personally surveyed areas.

⁷ Cf. R. Hafeneder, *Deutsche Kolonialkartographie 1884–1919*, Diss. ing., Universität der Bundeswehr Munich, 2008, p. 40.

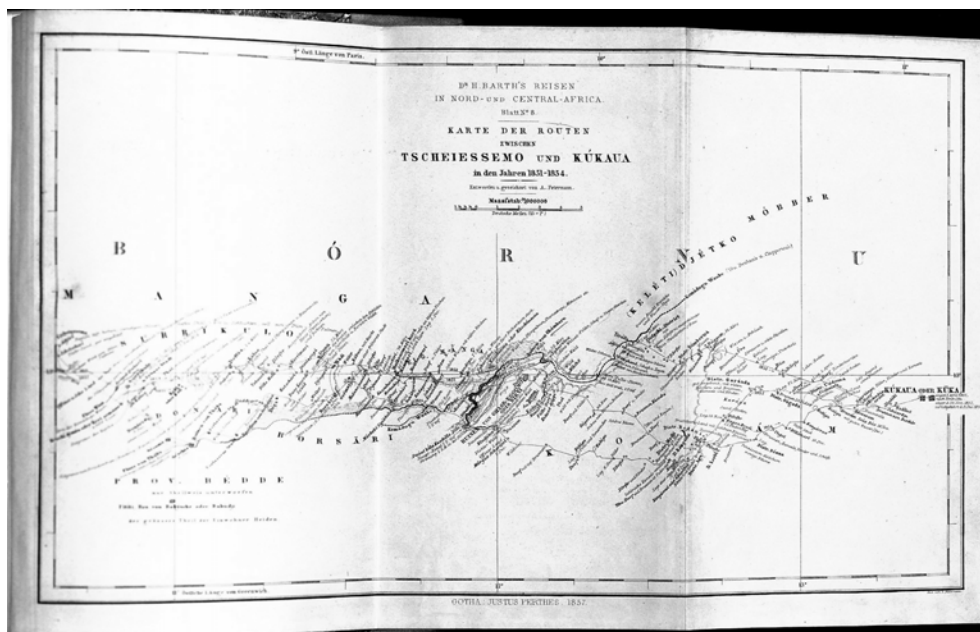


Figure 4: Heinrich Barth, *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Central-Afrika in den Jahren 1849 bis 1855. Tagebuch seiner im Auftrag der Britischen Regierung unternommenen Reise*, 5 vols, Gotha: Perthes, 1857–58, fold-out map at the end of vol. ii.

The cartographic recording of individual expeditions is always beholden to larger contexts. The phoric (relational) concept of positionality ('so many miles from point of departure'; 'after a day of travel'...) cannot suffice when, as it inevitably applies to any published travel writing and itinerant cartography, the explorer is on his journey in pursuit of a trans-personal purpose, a purpose which might stretch from contributing to European knowledge of the world to combating slavery – two aims which, incidentally, were intimately interlinked. Any knowledge of the world that transcends the individual and particular can only be expressed within agreed or accepted parameters; hence one of the foremost concerns of any expedition was the verification of the exact location according to indices or grids which could lay claim to universal applicability, i.e. a universal matrix. This indexing on a grid of latitudes and longitudes complements phoric travel knowledge⁸. Both forms of self-positioning represent acts of establishing relationships to wider referents – whether the starting point of a journey or an agreed measure of location. Relating position and movement (track) to universal coordinates or simply to larger spaces creates connections and expands horizons. For the historical process of eliminating blank space on the map of Africa and instead coating the map with the colour scheme of European possession, the phoric mode of designating positionality is of central significance since, in its movement from here to there, it performs in space what the double map from the

⁸ A discussion of phoric versus indicial concepts of position, the implications for cartography and for the creation of imagined topographies can be found in R. Stockhammer, *Kartierung der Erde. Macht und Lust in Karten und Literatur*, Munich: Fink, 2007.

Cambridge History Atlas depicted in time: the demolishing of boundaries between known and unknown, between claimed and unclaimed.

Another related but subordinate act of transgressing the particular and connecting it to wider contexts consists of extending the scope of knowledge and notation beyond the vicinity of the actual itinerary, that is of widening the track. Strategies to achieve this include expanding the field of vision (by accessing elevated vantage points, seeking out clearances)⁹, incorporating second-hand knowledge (from the growing European archive or from local sources as Barth did when extending the scope of his maps beyond the boundaries of his observation), or by speculation and conjecture¹⁰. The geography adjacent to Barth's tracks in Figure 3 is thus more densely filled with information than other areas; tracks have the tendency to become wider, to grow together and to form corridors or clusters of knowledge. As the line becomes an expanse, the limited perspective is overcome and the possibility arises of imagining space in a territorialist fashion. A map design contributes to making this imagined space, if not real, then tangible, intelligible, conceivable.

III

The horizon of what is surveyed, recorded and depicted is determined by the surveying subject, the explorer. However, the reaches of their individual observations increasingly combined to shape the European image of Africa. When exploration is not framed as an individual undertaking, but as a communal one, tracks on the map can form clusters which suggest a unity of achievement. In the cartographic representation of the collective knowledge derived from expeditions, i.e. from a multitude of itineraries, patterns become visible, but obviously also lacunae and rifts which bespeak the necessity to fill them by bridging the divided and connecting the disconnected¹¹. Maps such as these have the capacity to de-individualise itineraries, to integrate them into larger compendia of 'travel' as such, of foraging and surveying. In the abstract (and time-collapsing) logic of cartographic representation, parallel, concurrent and completely unrelated expeditions and their itineraries can be conjoined to form a consolidated panorama of an area in its entirety according to one overriding criterion, namely whether

⁹ The connection between the vantage point of observation and mastery of the surveyed area is implicit in the adage of the "monarch of all I survey." In fiction, this viewpoint can be created by artificial means, for example by taking to the air like the explorers in Jules Verne's *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863). Cf. F. Krobb, *Weltreisen im Ballon. Jules Verne und Mark Twain überfliegen Afrika*, in: *Forster-Studien* 20 (2016), pp. 179–192.

¹⁰ How persistently erroneous information could be is illustrated by the myth of the Mountains of Kong. Cf. Th.J. Bassett and 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), pp. 367–413.

¹¹ I have discussed the obsession of African travel writing and adventure fiction with connecting, particularly in the most striking and prestigious form of continental traversing and crossing, in F. Krobb, *Family Reunions in German Adventure Literature on Africa – A Vision for Colonial Intervention: Karl Burmann and Karl May*, in: *German Life and Letters* 67.3 (2014), pp. 301–319.

a given region has come under the purview of European surveillance or not. The map attached to the volume outlining the scope and task of another expedition into the ‘white’ interior, *Th. v. Heuglin’s Expedition nach Inner-Afrika, zur Aufhellung der Schicksale Dr. Eduard Vogel’s und zur Vollendung seines Forschungswerkes* (1860), imagines, through its uniform colouration, the entire space traversed by any European explorers at any time as a unified space. As a component of a publication which provided a manifesto for the first all-German exploratory into Africa, this map visualises a programme, sets an agenda. The design of the map encourages the challenge to the boundaries of the known as it foregrounds Eduard Vogel’s route into the sultanate of Wadai in 1855–56. Vogel, a companion of Barth’s since 1854, had not returned from his lone journey into this mysterious land. The follow-up expedition’s primary aim was to retrieve his notes, amongst them the itinerary maps recorded in his diaries, so as to gain material for the expansion of the common horizon.



Figure 5: *Kartenskizze von Afrika*, from *Th. v. Heuglin’s Expedition nach Inner-Afrika, zur Aufhellung der Schicksale Dr. Eduard Vogel’s und zur Vollendung seines Forschungswerkes*, Gotha: Perthes, 1860, p. 11.

On the map, designed to familiarise the German public with the state of African exploration and to offer a broad spatial context of Vogel's presumed whereabouts and possible routes to find him, the itineraries of all previous major expeditions on the whole continent are fused and, through colouration, combined into a unified area of 'Africa conquista.' The map is, of course, pure fantasy; it contradicts fundamentally the information contained in the *Cambridge History Atlas's* pre-colonial maps regarding the tiny depth of European coastal possessions: vast areas of the Western Sahara, of the western part of southern Africa, of the western Sudan and many others shaded red here had never been entered by any European explorer. The separation of Africa into two distinct parts is thus revealed to serve not representational, but ideological and propagandist purposes. It provides a visualisation of a 'territorialised' Africa, one where the linearity of tracks is expanded into extensive territory and where the many borders of individual vicinities are superseded by one, and only one, remaining border, horizon or frontier. Tracks mark this border as they skirt and close in on it.

The map conveys a strong sense of potentiality. In this visualisation, tracks no longer form the centre of a corridor of vision and information, but the demarcation of an idealised version of charted territory. Thus, a common and abstract frontier is constructed and offered up for overstepping. By doing so, the net of knowledge surrounding the 'empty' centre can be woven even tighter. The incitement is all the more compelling since it not only arises from the invitation implicit in the whiteness, but also from the moral imperative to solve the mystery of one of the martyrs of science¹². As the various tracks encircle the white emptiness of uncharted Africa, a unified frontier of combined itineraries is defined as a frontier of knowledge that is visualised cartographically as a divide between the territorialised and the non-territorialised. On a map which uses the same aesthetics of pink and white, produced in 1875, the white interior, basically the Congo basin, is labelled "to be explored by the German African Society." In conjunction with the earlier map, a history of encroachment ensues which illustrates to the German public – almost simultaneously with the actual exploratory journeys – how the horizon of perception shrinks the non-territorialised interior from all directions: by Gustav Nachtigal from the North (1869–74), Georg Schweinfurth from the North-Eastern Sudan (1869–71) and David Livingstone from the South-East (1866–73)¹³.

The illusion of unified mastered space in the pink areas of the map is supported by a network of nodal points, ganglia and corridors (the Nile, but also the preferred trans-Saharan route south from Tripoli via Fezzan to Lake Chad, access routes through the centre of southern Africa towards the Zambezi, caravan routes from the East-African coast opposite Zanzibar towards the Great Lakes). The combined and connected itinerary map provides a glimpse of the possibility

¹² On the trope of being lost in colonial space cf. K. Stüssel, *Verschollen: Erzählen, Weltverkehr und Literatur in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: M. Neumann and K. Stüssel (eds.), *Magie der Geschichten: Weltverkehr, Literatur und Anthropologie in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011, pp. 265–281; F. Krobb, "An dem glühenden Ofen Afrika's, da ist mein Plätzchen": Eduard Vogel und die Wege ins Innere, in: H. Uerlings and I.-K. Patrut (eds.), *Postkolonialismus und Kanon*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2012, pp. 181–206.

¹³ Map reproduced in I.J. Demhardt, *Die Entschleierung Afrikas. Deutsche Kartenbeiträge von August Petermann bis zum Kolonialkartographischen Institut*, Gotha and Stuttgart: Klett-Perthes, 2000, p. 35.

of tightening the net even further, so that the individual horizons of itinerary vicinities can eventually overlap not only in the imaginary stylization of the overview map, but in reality. Since this process is advanced, as the blank white spaces diminish in a flurry of exploratory activity, borders no longer demarcate territory from non-territory. The conceptualisation of land as unified territory makes the territorial division of the continent conceivable. Even though the Berlin conference of 1884–85 did not itself seal formally and legally the partition of Africa amongst colonial powers, it marks the flipping point when the density of spatial knowledge, based on the ever tightening net of itineraries and their expanded horizons, had become so great that a territorialist visualisation of space could determine political aspirations and decisions. Within a matter of months, the autochthonous political division present in Barth's map and the pretence of emptiness suggested by the *Cambridge History Atlas* for 1870 had *both* been superseded.

IV

Barth's depiction of African space as populated and even organised into indigenous political units, raises the questions as to what happened to these, as the colours of the European powers displaced the colours of indigenous polities and how individual itineraries relate to a now territorialised space.

An example of supplanting both indigenous order and evocative whiteness with European representational power is supplied by the cartography of the southern Sudan. Egypt, under the rule of ambitious Khedives (viceroys) Muhammad Ali (ruled 1805–48), Ismail Pascha (ruled 1863–79) and Tawfiq (ruled 1879–92), was engaged in a process of modernisation and westernisation, part of which consisted of its own brand of 'adjacent colonialism' (colonisation of neighbouring regions), specifically a push south to incorporate the vast area that became known as the Sudan¹⁴. In this respect, the Egyptian expansion into the interior foreshadows the extension of European control inwards from coastal strongholds. The southern Sudan, a province known as Hatt-el-Estiva or Equatoria, featured very highly in the German colonial imaginary since the German citizen Eduard Schnitzer, who acquired international fame under the assumed name of Emin Pasha, was appointed governor of this province in 1876. Some maps relating to his rule foreshadow the process of territorialisation that announced itself as completed in the *Cambridge History Atlas* and *Stieler's Handatlas*. On the one hand, Egyptian rule in the Sudan (as yet provisional and incomplete) represented a trial run for prospective European colonisation; on the other hand, the enormous interest in the region was heightened by the most serious and overwhelming

¹⁴ R.O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; R.O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan in Historical Perspective*, 2nd ed., New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2007. Other aspects of the German and Austrian discourse on Mahdist Sudan are discussed in: F. Krobb, 'The starting point for the civilisation of the Dark Continent.' *Austrians in the Sudan: Ernst Marno and Rudolf Slatin as Agents of African Conquest*, in: *Austrian Studies* 20 (2012), pp. 142–160.

interruption to the trajectory from track to territory ever experienced in the course of African conquest, namely the Mahdist uprising that culminated in the fall of Khartoum in January 1885 which established an indigenous territory in a space claimed by the European imagination as their own (even though their control was by Egyptian proxy). The difference to former indigenous polities, such as those appearing on Barth's map, lies in the fact that this one was new and had superseded a colonial one, thus reversing a trend which, until then, was accepted as inevitable and irrevocable. Many European maps depict the area as it presented itself before the rise of the Mahdists, i.e. they provide a snapshot of colonial development and colonial cartography before the actual acquisition of protectorates by Europeans, yet they depict very similar trends.

Richard Buchta's work *Der Sudan unter ägyptischer Herrschaft* (1888) is a history of events and developments leading up to the Mahdist storm. The book's map of the two provinces of southern Sudan, Emin's Ekuatoria and the neighbouring Bahr-el-Gazal, might be considered an equivalent in detail of the overviews provided by the big atlases in that it represents a picture of the provinces in the midst of a process of integration into a European-style image of the world. The main feature in Figure 6 is the administrative subdivision of the province, the external borders of which (i.e. its actual territoriality) still remain somewhat vague; the broad curve (reminiscent of borders on Barth's map) is only broken when an itinerary, and a prospective frontier inviting expansion in southerly direction, follows the course of a river. The shaded core of the province on the banks of the Nile, coloured similar to the 'Known' areas in Figure 5, demarcates an area of actual control which, in turn, designates any claim to possessions further afield as merely aspirational.

A map attached to a popular account of Emin Pasha's life and times from the beginning of his posting in the Sudan as a medical officer until his departure from the province in the company of Henry Morton Stanley in 1890 shows exactly the same outlines and internal subdivision as Buchta's map, yet it adds into this design the itineraries of Emin's travels in his capacity as a governor. Emin's routes mostly follow a line that either occupies a position in the very centre of administrative districts or skirts their borders, most prominently the north-western border. The former feature indicates that the indicated subdivision of the province largely describes an extension of the area covered by the itineraries, thus replicating the movement of widening itinerary corridors; yet here political significance is attached to these spaces. The quintessential corridor of the Nile, where actual control was established, forms the nucleus: on either side territory is incorporated, and as travels pierce the Hinterland, the same principle is applied. The horizon of the early travellers' extended and augmented vision now becomes almost synonymous with the terrain that is designated and consequently cartographically depicted, a colonial possession or administrative district. The excursions further afield towards the frontiers clearly served the purpose of securing and enforcing imagined borders. Emin's internal trips were depicted in the attendant literature which flooded the German book market from about 1888 onward¹⁵, not only in terms of administrative affairs, but also as

¹⁵ Some examples targeted especially for the market of young readers are analysed in: F. Krobb, "...ein Vorbild deutscher Tüchtigkeit, deutscher Gewissenhaftigkeit und deutscher Treue." *Die Gestalt des Emin Pascha in jugendliterarischen Texten um 1890*, in: *Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung* 21 (2014/15), pp. 11–28.

pursuing the scientific activities of collecting, describing and surveying. The reach of colonial control here coincides with that of scientific-geographic endeavour.

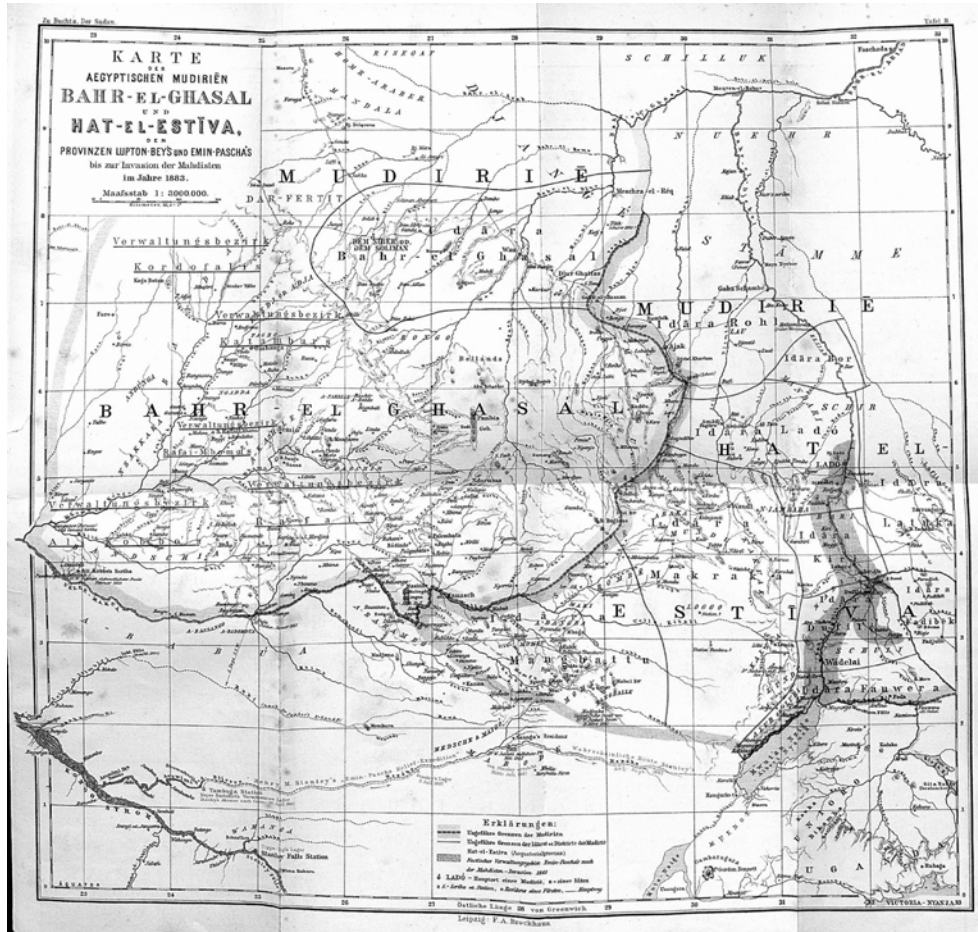


Figure 6: Richard Buchta, *Der Sudan unter ägyptischer Herrschaft. Rückblicke auf die letzten sechzig Jahre. Nebst einem Nachtrage: Briefe Dr. Emin-Pascha's und Lupton Bey's an Dr. Wilhelm Junker 1883–85*, Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1888, n.p.

Emin was hailed, particularly amongst the German public, for combining in an ideal fashion the qualities of an administrator and a scientist. The dual function of his travels, on the one hand devoted to collecting new species, verifying the course of rivers, encountering new ethnicities, and on the other hand showing colonialist presence, inspecting garrisons, solving local conflicts and undertaking other governmental tasks (many geared towards the stated mission of eradicating the slave trade in these regions), marks the transition from track to territory. Yet, while a relatively limited scientific horizon stayed in place as plant species and topographical particularities beyond the physical proximity of the routes remain uncharted, the administrative measures undertaken en route claim legal force beyond this radius. The maps' inscriptions convey information of the most diverse

recognised and even feared by Europeans as stable and powerful political entities, the attendant maps deny these two kingdoms actual borders and thus refuse to acknowledge them as equal in political status. Even more outlying regions, vigorously pursued by European nations, hotly contested as influence spheres but at the time still seen as unclaimed, are completely obscured.

This example combines the logic of itinerary and territorial-political maps to assert the claim that ‘having been there,’ having visited or traversed a region on a charted journey in an official mission (cartography being one of the purposes of exploratory travel in a nation’s name) stages entitlement and bestows ownership. While imaginary mountains and rivers could never become real, imaginary borders could. And the prospective filling of white spaces with landmarks, presence, symbols of entitlement that would eventually bestow ownership, could indeed create realities: points and lines marked on maps could become the sites of towns, missions, garrisons, roads or railway tracks; borders of territories which were originally borders of vision on travels or approximate and hypothetical delimitations of virtual territories could be made real and physically manifest by geodetics in the employ of colonial administrations keen to turn the fantasy of the maps into reality.

V

If it is accepted that maps express ambition and, in pursuit of this ambition, are willing to distort¹⁶, by representing something not yet authenticated, something aspirational or idealised, then it is incumbent on the analyst to articulate the ideology served by the ambition and the strategies of ‘distortion’ employed in its pursuit. The study of the technical development of cartography and the concrete domestic socio-political contexts in which it is located¹⁷ cannot unravel cartography as a tool in the service of wider goals nor as a manifestation of a dynamic of ‘progress’ and possibility. But reading maps as text, as part of an accelerating and self-generating narrative, can help to understand how maps are evidence and engines of the development that we term colonialism. Maps certainly exert their authority by “conceptualising unfamiliar space in European terms”¹⁸. While the act of imposing forms of representation not only of the geography and topography of a given area, but also of its ownership status, has very concrete repercussions in local scenarios¹⁹, the mentality of translating survey into entitlement and eventually possession can be traced from early exploration to the creation of

¹⁶ Z. Białas, *Ambition and Distortion. An Ontological Dimension in Colonial Cartography*, in: M. Reif-Hülser (ed.), *Borderlands. Negotiating Boundaries in Post-Colonial Writing*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999, pp. 17–28.

¹⁷ Exemplary for German cartography and providing background on many of the travellers discussed here is I.J. Demhardt: *Die Entschleierung Afrikas* (note 13).

¹⁸ C. Harris, *How did Colonialism Dispossess?* (note 5), p. 174.

¹⁹ Discussed with reference to dispossession and the creation of reservations for Native Americans in Canada by C. Harris: *How did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from the Edge of Empire*, in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94.1 (2004), pp. 165–182, here pp. 174–175.

protectorates that are defined by their territoriality which, in turn, is evidenced by the clarity and firmness (at least in principle) of their borders. Itineraries, by evolving from lines through colonial space to corridors with expanded horizons, structure colonial space, impose meaning and perpetuate their own logic by constantly keeping awareness of their provisionality alive and by striving for connection, conjoining and overcoming limitations.

In finite space, boundaries can only be pushed back until they come up against one another from opposite directions. Then, horizontal knowledge generation has to change direction or intensity by penetrating ever smaller spaces and charting ever more detailed and specialised areas of knowledge. As knowledge generation perpetually invents new frontiers, so does cartography challenge its propositions and breach its horizons. The finality of the teleological narrative contained in the *Cambridge History Atlas* is thus rendered provisional.

In the contribution of 1892 on the future of German colonial cartography, Otto Kersten, a protégé of Heinrich Barth and companion of Carl von der Decken, one of the pioneers of the exploration of East Africa and a ‘martyr’ of science like Eduard Vogel, fuses the two aspects discussed above. More than half a decade after the partition of Africa amongst European nations became a reality, he emphasises the need to determine the exact course of inter-colonial borders as soon and as accurately as possible, “bevor noch Streitigkeiten entstehen” [before any conflict ensues]; he proposes to make this a common and considered enterprise “nach einem wohldurchdachten allgemeinen Plane” [in accordance with a considered mutual plan]. This obviously aims at removing uncertainty by finalising borderlines and eliminating the last remnants of territorialist uncertainty; but, quite clearly in the logic of the map in which the pan-European project of African exploration has created common frontiers and then shared borders, he envisions this as a shared project. In the further course of his article, he identifies a detailed cartographic survey of the eastern African coastline as “eine internationale Angelegenheit” [an international project] for all European nations with possessions on the east coast of the continent²⁰. Thereby, he envisages the definitive determination of the border of the continent as such. Now that at least notionally, no physical or intellectual frontier between the explored colouration and the empty whiteness is left on the landmass of the continent, another common border is found, namely that between land and sea, between the coloured and partitioned solid and an ‘empty’ and unclaimed ‘blueness.’ By defining another border through charting it, cartographic modernity’s quest for new horizons, or indeed new shores, continues.

²⁰ O. Kersten, *Unsere Kolonialgrenzen und ihre Vermessung*, in: *Koloniales Jahrbuch 5* (1892) [1893], pp. 68–74, quotations p. 68 and 71.

OD SZLAKU PO TERYTORIUM: KARTOGRAFICZNA PENETRACJA AFRYKI
Z PERSPEKTYWY NIEMIECKICH ŹRÓDEŁ, LATA OK. 1860–1900

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje próbę analizy kilku opracowań kartograficznych wraz z omówieniem wspieranych przez nie interesów i ideologii, w których to można było odnaleźć związki pomiędzy mapami wypraw badaczy Afryki a mapami politycznymi przedstawiającymi Afrykę jako kontynent podzielony pomiędzy europejskie mocarstwa kolonialne. Niemieckie źródła z drugiej połowy XIX w. ilustrują, jak horyzonty wizji, eksploracji terenu oraz kartograficznych prezentacji sięgają coraz dalej, aż do powstania konfliktu i wyznaczenia granic pomiędzy terytoriami politycznymi, nie pozostawiając przy tym obszarów, których nie naniesiono na mapę, a w konsekwencji do których nie wysunięto roszczeń.

Tłum. Izabela Ślusarek