

Mungo Park's search for the River Niger

RENNELL, James.

The Route of Mr Mungo Park, from Pisania on the River Gambia, to Silla, on the River Joliba, or Niger; With his return by the Southern Route, to Pisania. Compiled from Mr Park's Observations, Notes, & Sketches.

London: James Rennell, 1798. Some original outline colour. 255 x 660mm.

£500

The official map of the route of the Scottish explorer Mungo Park (1774-1806) in search of the Niger, here published in his 'Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa'. Under the patronage of Sir Joseph Banks and the African Association, Park travelled to Africa to seek the source of the River Niger (1795-7). His expedition was delayed by captivity and illness (he spent seven months convalescing in a man's home), and he was believed dead when he returned to Britain. Park had little experience as a cartographer, so the job of compiling the maps for the official account fell to Major James Rennell, former cartographer to the East India Company in Bengal. He too had fallen foul of locals and had to retire from active service because of the wounds he had received. He became a research cartographer, becoming a pioneer of oceanography. He used a variety of sources to compile this map and in doing so made his greatest cartographic error: he extrapolated a single mountain seen by Park into a huge range, creating the 'Mountains of Kong', which blighted maps of West Africa for most of the nineteenth century. Here they are referred to in a note 'A Chain of Great Mountains extends along these Parallels'.



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