



Portrait of the explorer Mungo Park from the account of his first Niger Expedition

EDRIDGE, Henry.  
Mr M. Park.

London: G. Nichol, 1799. Stipple engraving. Sheet 270 x 210mm.

£150

A fine stipple engraved oval portrait of the Scottish explorer Mungo Park (1774-1806), engraved by Thomas Dickinson after Edridge and published as the frontispiece to 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. His detailed account of his travels gave Europeans one of the first accurate descriptions of the African interior and its inhabitants. He wrote that the Mandinka he met being taken to the European slave ships believed they were going to be eaten by the whites! His summation that 'whatever difference there is between the negro and European, in the conformation of the nose, and the colour of the skin, there is none in the genuine sympathies and characteristic feelings of our common nature' did much for the Abolitionist cause. Park returned to the Niger in 1805; this time his luck deserted him and he drowned trying to escape a native attack.



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