AGENT OF IMPERIAL CHANGE: JAMES MACQUEEN AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1778-1870

by

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the long and varied career of James MacQueen (1778-1870), a passionate and seemingly indefatigable Scotsman who spent his life attempting to consolidate British imperial power in the old empire of the West Indies, and introduce it to what he hoped would be part of a new empire in Africa. Although always a dedicated imperialist, his work in four specific capacities is highlighted: as a pro-slavery polemicist during the last decade of the emancipation debate, 1823-33; as an agent for the Colonial Bank 1836-38; as founder and general superintendent of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1837-44; and as a geographer, 1820-70. In each of these endeavours MacQueen acted as an "agent"--an imperial go-between--attempting to bind Great Britain closer to two of its peripheries. Although his grand plans for expansion into Africa never found much support, he did help consolidate central power through the establishment of metropolitan-controlled and government-chartered companies in the Caribbean colonies, and by filling in the so-called "blank spots" of Africa. On the one hand, MacQueen brought the metropolis to the periphery, and on the other, he brought the periphery to the metropolis.

As one born during the American War of Independence and dying on the eve of the partition of Africa, MacQueen lived in a period that historians once deemed "anti-imperial." More recent scholars have revised this view, mainly by redefining imperialism, and this thesis continues along this line by delineating some of the subtler mechanics of Empire; specifically, those with which MacQueen was involved: labour, banking, communications, and geography.

Acknowledgements

The first major lesson one learns in putting together such a large project is how little it is an independent endeavour. Several people offered helpful ideas, and sometimes a mere suggestion led to an entirely new line of approach. Others offered support. I cannot possibly acknowledge all of the influences on this thesis, but I would like to recognize some of the more significant.

The most direct assistance with this thesis came from my supervisor, Professor Michael Craton, who was always available, always encouraging, and always constructively critical throughout this long process. His guidance, and his own work, will in turn always be an inspiration.

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Of course, the most sustained support came from my wife, Machelle. It is fair to say that this thesis would never have materialized had she not taken care of our daughter for two months by herself while I was away on research overseas. She also read drafts, helped construct the maps, made copies, and remained encouraging throughout--which was all done with an empathy that could only come from someone who is in the process of finishing her own PhD dissertation.

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Introduction

Building Bridges in a Turbulent Empire:
The Life and Work of James MacQueen

James MacQueen[1] (1778-1870) was a dedicated imperialist who devoted the major portion

of his career attempting to preserve, defend and expand the British Empire at a time when it was

of little interest to most people in his country.[2] He had grand plans for expanding the Empire,

especially in Africa. In the tradition of Richard Hakluyt, arguably Britain's first great armchair

imperialist, MacQueen could wax sentimental about the Empire in the hope of inspiring his

countrymen to action. In the "Epistle Dedicatory" (to Sir Frances Walsingham), in the first

edition of *The Principal Voyages of the English Nation* (1589), Hakluyt wrote:

> For, which of the kings of this land before Her Majesty, had their banners ever seen in the Caspian Sea? Which of them hath ever dealt with the Emperor of Persia, as Her Majesty hath done, and obtained for her merchants large and loving privileges? Who ever found English consuls and agents at Tripolis in Syria, at Aleppo, at Babylon, at Basra, and which is more whoever hear of Englishmen at Goa before now? What English ships did heretofore ever anchor in the mighty river of Plate? Pass and re-pass the unpassable (in former opinion) straight of Magellan, range along the coast of Chile, Perus, and all the backside of Nova Hispania [Mexico], further than any Christian passed, traverse the mighty breadth of the South Sea, land upon the Luzones [principal island of the Philippines] in despite of the enemy, enter into alliance, amity and traffic with the princes of the Moluccas, and the isle of Java, double the famous Cape of Bona Speranza, arrive at the isle of St Helena, and last of all return home most richly laden with the commodities of China, as the subjects of this now flourishing monarchy have done?[3]

Hakluyt's *magnum opus* was meant to persuade the government and the public to sponsor and

support overseas expansion. Likewise, in 1821, in what was also ostensibly a geographical work,

MacQueen addressed his readers directly:

> Unfold the map of the world. We command the Ganges--fortified at Bombay, the Indus is our own. Possessed of the islands in the mouth of the Persian Gulf, we command the outlets of Persia, and the mouths of the Euphrates ... We command at the Cape of Good Hope; Gibraltar and Malta belonging to us, we controul the Mediterranean. Let us plant the British standard on the Island of Socotora[4]--upon the island of Fernando Po[5]--and inland upon the banks of the Niger, and then we may say Asia and Africa--for all their productions and all their wants--are under our controul. It is in our power. Nothing can prevent us.[6]

1

But also much like Hakluyt, MacQueen died before his country realized any of his grand dreams. The government flatly refused to sponsor large-scale expansion into Africa in this period, and there was never enough sustained public interest to mount major private endeavours on the scale that MacQueen advocated. Thus as a driving force behind direct territorial expansion--in imperialism in its traditional sense--MacQueen was largely a failure.

Instead, MacQueen's contributions to the British Empire were to be in the much humbler and more mundane fields of banking, mail, and geography. Although his Africa plans run as an undercurrent throughout, this thesis focuses on MacQueen's work in four specific capacities: as a pro-slavery and West Indian polemicist, as an agent for the Colonial Bank, as the founder and agent of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and as a geographer of Africa. It analyzes how these contributions influenced the shape and development of the British Empire on an individual level, and what they can tell us, when examined collectively, about the Empire generally in the period between the so-called "first" and "second" British empires.

I have used the word "agent" to characterize MacQueen and his varied work because the term singularly describes his role relative to the Empire on a number of different levels. Firstly, MacQueen was literally an agent for at least two companies, the Colonial Bank and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, in addition to being solicited by the Colonial Office to be its agent for the Niger Expedition of 1841. Secondly, he was more of an unofficial agent for other groups, such as the Scotch Distillers and more significantly, the West Indian colonists as a whole. Along these same lines, his constant promotion of Africa, in the hopes of "selling" the public and the government on the continent's potential to Britain, was much like an agent's. In a broader sense of the definition. MacQueen also either represented or acted directly as a motivating force through

individual lobbying and public writing. And finally, even a "chemical agent" does not seem inappropriate when thinking of MacQueen because of the belligerent and caustic nature of much of his writing, which--as will be seen in the thesis--often had an effect similar to something like agent orange regarding public debates over complicated issues.

Before introducing the nature and significance of MacQueen's work, it would be useful to provide a brief sketch of MacQueen's life, to provide both flesh to the subject as well as a personal context for his work.

MacQueen was a Scotsman born near Glasgow. Of course, the Scottish educational system, as well as Scottish connections to the Industrial Revolution and colonial trade, undoubtedly had an enormous influence on MacQueen. But except for the occasional Gaelic phrase in his writing, MacQueen's national heritage is invisible in his work. After looking at his life in retrospect, MacQueen must be described as more British than anything else, and supports Linda Colley's conclusion that the Empire, in addition to the long war against Napoleon, provided an important opportunity to unify Scots and English into "Britons."[7] And indeed, MacQueen spent virtually all of his life hating the French, and the majority of his life in London, fighting for a specifically British Empire.

MacQueen was also a man of little means, with no family connections of consequence. Over the years, he did build up a network of influential friends, from powerful West India merchants and banking men, such as John Irving and Lord Ashburton, to important publishers and cartographers, such as William Blackwood and John Arrowsmith. MacQueen even became allies with Thomas Fowell Buxton, the eminent antislavery leader, who, along with these other men,

would help further MacQueen's numerous ideas and schemes regarding the Empire. But his lack of personal influence also meant that MacQueen was forced to rely largely on his expertise and polemical skill as his only means of exerting leverage. He usually tried to lobby individuals privately first, but if this did not work, he would "go public" in the hopes of bringing "pressure from without" to bear on his cause. MacQueen even used this tactic for defence, as seen during his bitter falling out with Irving and the RMSP Company in 1842. After resigning from the Company, MacQueen continued to send reports on the Company from the outside, much to the irritation of the management. After being criticized for this activity, and failing to get a cooperative response to these reports, MacQueen threatened that "unless I receive a distinct, satisfactory, and civil answer, I will at once lay the communication made [i.e. the report submitted] before the public."[8]

On the other hand, MacQueen also had a strong sense of social rank and propriety. For example, during his dispute with Royal Mail, MacQueen was blamed by Irving for most of the Company's current problems at a meeting of shareholders, a meeting in which MacQueen himself was in attendance. MacQueen responded with a series of published letters to clear his name because, he explained, "when the respected Chairman's rank and station in society are considered, something more becomes necessary from an humble individual like myself than [a] bold and simple denial."[9] Furthermore, MacQueen made it a point not to criticize Irving directly, but aimed his fire at "humbler" subordinates. As we shall see, these common conceptions about the social order would also influence his work in defending slavery, and affected his vision of the Empire overall. MacQueen's own acceptance of his subordinate position in this hierarchy, which helped define his role as an "agent" for powerful metropolitan interests, adds a West Indian

variation to the thesis recently forwarded by P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins regarding the predominance of "gentlemanly capitalists" in London in directing British overseas expansion at least until 1850.[10]

One reason MacQueen made a good agent was because he was an indefatigable worker with a hardy constitution. Perhaps working fifteen years as a plantation manager in the West Indies "seasoned" him in a sense. Most of his significant work regarding the Empire took place after 1821, the year he published, at age forty-three, *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern and Central Africa*. Over the next decade, he published two more books, fifteen articles in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and innumerable other articles, addresses and open letters in various colonial journals such as the *Royal Gazette* (Jamaica) as well as the *Glasgow Courier*, of which he was owner and editor between 1821 and 1831. He toured the entire Caribbean three separate times in the 1830s and early 40s, spending little more than a few days in each island. He was busiest in the late 1830s, as in 1838, when he was an agent for both the Colonial Bank and RMSP Company, and an adviser to both Buxton and the Colonial Office regarding Africa and the slave trade. In 1840 he published *A Geographical Survey of Africa*, and turned to making detailed maps of the continent. By the time he joined the Royal Geographical Society in 1845, aged sixty-eight, he had become one of the country's leading experts on Africa. He would present six papers to the Society over the next fifteen years. In the 1860s, MacQueen worked as a correspondent for the London newspaper, the *Morning Advertiser*, and co-authored a book with the explorer Richard Burton on the Nile question in 1864 (by which time he was eighty-six years old) with some of the reprinted articles.

The image of MacQueen spending his life poring over stacks of parliamentary papers, and

scribbling late into the night to produce a steady stream of dry works such as his *Statistics of the British Empire* (1836) makes him appear almost as a caricature from a novel of his famous contemporary, Charles Dickens. Like a Scrooge or Thomas Gradgrind, there is no evidence in his published work of any sense of humour or any interest beyond the confines of "business." Instead, MacQueen seems to have seen the world largely through statistics--in terms of miles, degrees, shillings and pence--and analyzed it only in terms of potential profit or state strategy. His writings also often have an extremely angry and paranoid tone to them--which could erupt into fury at times--as one fighting against the world. His life of undeniably hard and dedicated work often seems to have been done only in spite of humanity, not because of it. Perhaps this public demeanour helps explain why, as an activist for grand schemes in distant lands (like Mrs. Jellyby), he failed to find much sympathy amongst the British public.

Of course it is unfair to characterize MacQueen the man too much since polemical writing hardly offers accurate information about the author himself. I have only provided a general sketch of him to try and bring my subject to life. Moreover this thesis is not a biography of MacQueen's life, but a description and analysis of his work which related to the British Empire. What little information has survived about MacQueen's personal life is utilized only when it impinged on this work.[11]

Excepting an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, there has been no scholarly examination solely on MacQueen and his career. He has remained in the footnotes of histories, with several references to his individual endeavours, especially in geography and the debate over slavery, but no comprehensive analysis. Philip D. Curtin has probably done the most extensive

review, devoting just over twenty pages of his seminal work on British attitudes toward Africa to MacQueen's geographical and strategic ideas.[12] Others have also acknowledged MacQueen's significance in lesser degrees. K. Onwuka Dike placed MacQueen in his "constellation of illustrious names," a list of famous Britons interested in Africa, which included Sir Joseph Banks, Mungo Park and the Lander brothers.[13] G.E. Metcalf also provided a good analysis of MacQueen's influence on T.F. Buxton's ideas and plans regarding the Niger Expedition in his introduction to the reissue of Buxton's 1840 book, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*.[14] But most of MacQueen's work as a geographer with interest in Africa has been little more than mentioned in a number of other studies.[15]

So, too, with MacQueen's work defending slavery and the West India colonies, where historians have often referenced MacQueen, without examining his work critically itself. While some scholars such as Christopher Fyfe have recognized MacQueen as "a champion of the West India interest,"[16] he is usually only mentioned to provide a representative of the pro-slavery side in the emancipation debate. For example, William Green calls MacQueen's attack on Sierra Leone (the abolitionist settlement for freed slaves in West Africa), "the classic tirade against the colony."[17] Martin Lynn labels MacQueen a "major protagonist" in the emancipation debate,[18] while David Geggus uses him to represent the pro-slavery lobby in the public debate over Haiti.[19] He is also mentioned in both W.L. Burns' dated history of emancipation and apprenticeship, as well as in Joseph Lowell Ragatz's classic study of the West India interest for his notable participation in the pamphlet war over emancipation.[20]

Finally, MacQueen's role in the establishment of the Colonial Bank and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company has been almost ignored, though in this case largely because these topics

themselves have received little examination. The official history of the Colonial Bank only briefly mentions MacQueen, while that for the RMSP Company does not mention him at all.[21] A more recent, though largely non-scholarly, book on the Royal Mail line at least notes the essential role MacQueen played in the formation of the Company.[22]

Thus, my first goal in this thesis is to provide an examination of MacQueen's contribution to these individual endeavours themselves. Chapter One is mostly a background chapter to provide a context for MacQueen's later work. It describes MacQueen's early career and tries to locate the formative influences on his ideas and skills before the 1820s. Fédon's Rebellion, and the French Revolution generally, figure prominently as major influences on MacQueen's beliefs, particularly those regarding authority and property, while life in Glasgow gave him a stronger appreciation for the colonies and imperial opportunities generally. And as owner and editor of the *Glasgow Courier*, MacQueen sharpened his skills as a public polemicist in the oftentimes ruthless world of newspaper warfare.

Chapter Two describes MacQueen's participation in the last decade of the emancipation debate, 1823-33, when he came to prominence as a public defender of slavery and the West India colonies. The nature of MacQueen's propaganda, set in the context of other mainstream defences of slavery, helps pinpoint the fundamental points of the pro-slavery position, which has been largely stereotyped, if not ignored, in any analysis of the debate. We find both a position that in some ways did not differ significantly from the antislavery viewpoint, as well as tensions between the various West India interests in the metropolis, provinces, and colonies. MacQueen's supposed extremism regarding slavery is also assessed in light of later developments in the West Indies. as well as his own subsequent acceptance by the government and even by the abolitionists.

Finally, MacQueen also brought out issues of trusteeship during the emancipation debate by implicitly asking that if the West India colonies were indeed on the decline, what should be done with them?

MacQueen's strong and steadfast defence of the colonies gave him a great deal of credibility and authority amongst West Indian colonials and metropolitan merchants, and consequently made him one of the few credible "bridges" for post-emancipation reconstruction. Chapters Three and Four focus on two aspects of this reconstruction with which MacQueen was involved between 1836 and 1844. The former examines some of the financial restructuring of the West Indies through MacQueen's experience in forming the Colonial Bank. The latter concerns West Indian communications through MacQueen's far more involved role with the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, a firm of which he was both founder and general superintendent. In each case, MacQueen worked as the principal agent for metropolitan mercantile elites (in fact, many of the directors overlapped both companies), and was responsible primarily for erecting an infrastructure in the various West Indian colonies. These two companies remain his most tangible legacies to the British Empire.

Chapter Five covers MacQueen's career as a geographer in the last half-century of his life. Examining his geographical work and tracing its evolution over such a long duration provides valuable insight into the nature and development of British geography as a whole between 1820 and 1870. This was a truly unique period for British geography, as it became a professionalized discipline at the same time that Africa was being "opened" by British explorers, missionaries and traders. MacQueen himself became interested in Africa from travel literature and the prospects for commercial gain, and initially used geography in a deliberate way to promote his own scheme

to start an Africa company. His plan never materialized, but MacQueen did become one of Britain's few experts on Africa, even before he became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1845. I use MacQueen's career as a geographer to argue that for the first time since geography had become a recognizable discipline in Britain (that is, from about the end of the sixteenth century), it was no longer the conspicuous partner of British imperialism.

MacQueen played a significant role in each of these individual fields and his contributions to them merits being told for the fresh light that his work can throw on them. On the other hand, it is no coincidence that MacQueen embarked on these seemingly disparate endeavours, and his story offers a unique opportunity to compare different episodes in British imperial history that might not otherwise have been examined together. What we find is that MacQueen's successes and failures in the slavery debate, with the Colonial Bank, the RMSP Company, and as a geographer do indeed share a common thread regarding the nature of British imperialism and the British Empire generally at this time, and I have tried to highlight and trace this thread through each chapter.

Generalizing about the period between the first and second British empires has challenged imperial historians for more than one hundred years. From the very birth of British imperial history in the Victorian age, scholars have found even the concept of the "British Empire" between 1783 and 1870 problematic. A hodge-podge of territories collected over 300 hundred years for various reasons, the "Empire" seemingly had no common history, no unifying structure, and no uniform policies. Sir John Seeley's famous comment made in 1881, that "We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in fit of absence of mind," shows that from

the beginning of the discipline, British imperial historians have had difficulty in making sense of the Empire.[23] In a similar vein, more recent historians such as D.K. Fieldhouse have described the modern British Empire as "a multiplicity of possessions [which] had nothing in common but their subjection."[24] Other British imperial scholars have even mused whether or not there was an empire at all in the nineteenth century, noting the lack of an organized and efficient central authority. After describing the Colonial Office as a "glorified Circumlocution Department," Ged Martin went on to argue (in a review essay) that "on the test of central control, the Empire comes to look less like one monolithic structure but rather a bundle of relationships between a strong power and a diversity of weaker territories."[25]

Historians have had even more difficulty in characterizing British imperialism—that is, the nature of British expansion—between the two empires. For a number of seemingly solid reasons, scholars such as R.L. Schuyler used to describe this period as one characterized by "anti-imperialism," where the mother country was relinquishing power to the old colonies, and remained uninterested in acquiring new ones.[26] The loss of the American colonies, the growing influence of Adam Smith's ideas regarding laissez-faire economics, and the development of industrial capitalism, changed, if not soured, attitudes toward formal empire well into the nineteenth century. For example, in 1808, the *Edinburgh Review* announced its conclusion regarding the Empire: "Independence is a stage at which all distant and prosperous colonies are destined ultimately to arrive. If foresight does not voluntarily relax the ties of the metropolis, force will in time assuredly break them."[27] More importantly, policies changed drastically. The central government by and large refused to sponsor formal expansion as it had for the past three centuries—that is, by granting a charter to an individual or company, with rights to monopoly and

annexation. The mercantilist system was also eroded from the 1820s onward, culminating with

the Sugar Duties Act of 1846[28] (the imperial equivalent of the repeal of the Corn Laws) and the

abolition of the Navigation Acts in 1849. For the white settlement colonies, "anti-imperial"

sentiments manifested into the idea of "responsible government," represented by Lord Durham's

Report of 1839, whereby sovereignty would be gradually relinquished by the mother country as

the colony "matured"--perhaps to eventual independence. As early as 1825, William Huskisson,

President of the Board of Trade 1823-27 and driving force behind the first curtailments to the

Navigation Acts, argued the case for "freedom" from the imperial bond for Canada, in the hopes

of avoiding the American precedent:

> I cannot doubt, that without any other encouragement than freedom of trade, and a lenient administration, these [i.e. North American] Provinces will, henceforward, make the most rapid strides toward prosperity;--that connecting their prosperity with the liberal treatment of the Mother Country, they will neither look with envy at the growth of other States on the same Continent, nor wish for the dissolution of old, and the formation of new, political connexions ... [L]et us, as the parent state, fulfil our duties with all proper kindness and liberality. This is true wisdom; affording us, on the one hand, the best chance of perpetuating a solid and useful connexion, and on the other, the best hope if (which God avert!) in the progress of human events, that connexion is ever to be dissolved, that the separation may not be embittered by acrimony and bloodshed.[29]

In 1952 Vincent Harlow revised the "anti-imperial" interpretation somewhat by questioning

whether the American Revolution was the real cause of this retreat from empire. He argued that

Britain had adopted a "trade, not dominion" philosophy of empire by the end of the Seven Years'

War, when developments in science, industry, and the British predominance at sea led "a self-

confident island people to search the oceans for new markets."[30] But in this search, British

administrations made a conscious effort to avoid creating another (white) settlement empire,

which inevitably involved costly and difficult responsibilities of imperial control. Instead, this

new empire would be an exclusively "commercial empire based on alliance with coloured

peoples."[31]

Most scholars have accepted Harlow's conclusion that the "swing to the East" and the foundations of the second empire came more as a result of the Seven Years' War, and not the American War of Independence; although, as Peter Marshall has noted, the demarcation line between the two empires depends on the criteria one uses, whether it be interest and aims, or wealth, trade, colonists and territory.[32] But were British administrations anti-empire, as scholars up to, and including, Harlow had suggested? A year after Harlow's book was published Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher effectively demolished this traditional interpretation altogether by first noting the simple fact that the British Empire grew enormously in this so-called period of "anti-imperialism."[33] Where in some places little more than toe-holds had once been in the late eighteenth century, entire continents and sub-continents were under British control by 1870, including all of Canada, Australia and India. All of this--plus territories acquired in Lower Burma, Cape Colony, China, West Africa, and scattered islands in the South Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans--was acquired before the onset of the "new" imperialism! The crux of their article, however, was in redefining imperialism, which was done by demonstrating how "free trade" policies were only a new means of exerting imperial control. In contrast to Seeley's famous quip, Robinson and Gallagher saw a conscious and deliberate expansion of the British economy into the world, in which political force would only be used (but used nevertheless) if a region somehow resisted "informal" integration with the British imperial nexus. Thus, the only difference between free-trade policies of the nineteenth century, and the mercantilist policies of before, was the British government's "willingness to limit the use of paramount power ... in contrast to the mercantilist use of power to obtain commercial supremacy and monopoly through political possession."[34] In their larger work on British imperialism in Africa, they expanded on

the conscious role played by the government, which they termed the "official mind," in designing

policies favouring British economic expansion:

> However liberal in principle, Victorian statesmen in practice never minimised the role of government in
> all this ... But now liberation, not acquisition, was more often the aim of power; and free trade, not
> monopoly, was its device. All over the world the Canningites and Palmerstonians exerted their strength
> to bring about political conditions favouring commercial advance and liberal awakening.[35]

Critics of Robinson and Gallagher have challenged their definition of imperialism as being too

broad, and have questioned, for example, whether or not Britain's involvement in certain regions

such as Latin America can really be classified as such.[36] Nevertheless, it is clear that very few

historians since the 1960s are willing to characterize this period as "anti-imperialistic."[37] In fact,

some scholars have sought to expose the "myths of 'Little England'," questioning even such

seemingly straightforward statements as Disraeli's oft-quoted comment made in 1852 that "these

wretched colonies ... are a millstone round our necks."[38]

With the existence of British imperialism in this period largely a given, most scholars

have now focused on refining the imperial dynamic with more sophisticated and detailed analysis

of both the "metropolitan" and "peripheral" forces at work.[39] Some have continued to see the

expansion of the British economy as the touchstone of early and mid-nineteenth century British

imperialism, and have examined, for example, the composition of the metropolitan leaders

directing this trade.[40] In fact, some scholars have gone a step further along these lines by arguing

that imperialist policies were merely handmaidens to a (supra-national) system of an expanding

modern capitalism.[41] Other scholars have examined how industrialization and developments in

metropolitan technology encouraged and facilitated expansion, particularly developments in

steam power from the 1820s onward, in medicine in the 1840s and 50s (especially quinine

prophylaxis), and in firearms (namely "the breechloader revolution" of the 1860s).[42] The

evolution of the Colonial Office also affected the development of the Empire. In its early years

at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was a small and reactive office; but after 1832, with

a reformed Parliament, three decades of experience, and able undersecretaries such as James

Stephen (the younger) or Lord Howick (later, the third Earl Grey), the Colonial Office became

a more organized, professional and proactive department of government, and one at least capable

of formulating long-term imperial policies.[43] Finally, one must not forget the humanitarian

impulse borne of the Enlightenment and the Evangelical revival. Missionary activity, the

formation of societies for aborigines protection, the antislavery campaign, etc. all had imperial

implications.[44] Even the government became more "humanitarian" by the late eighteenth century,

according to George Mellor, when "trusteeship" became the justifying principle underpinning

imperial control.[45] Edmund Burke first used the concept of trusteeship during the debate on

Charles James Fox's East India Bill in 1783, in which he explained that:

> all political rule which is set over men, and that all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them,
> being wholly artificial, and for so much, in derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large,
> ought to be in some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit ... such rights or privileges, or
> whatever else you choose to call them, are in the strictest sense, a *trust*; and it is of the very essence of
> every trust to be rendered *accountable*."[46]

The concept was soon applied beyond India to British dominance anywhere. The principle had

revolutionary implications for nineteenth-century British imperialism. On the one hand, the idea

of trusteeship implied that colonies were no longer viewed as merely economic units to be

exploited to their maximum for the sole benefit of the mother country. On the other hand,

trusteeship added a fresh impetus to imperial expansion as well as an entirely new dimension to

the justifications for imperial rule.

Peripheral analyses have focused on the "pulling" forces which drew the metropolis into

more control over certain regions. In his later years, for example, Ronald Robinson himself became more convinced of the primacy of these forces in explaining European expansion, and developed theories emphasizing the role of native collaboration and other "excentric" forces.[47] A theory incorporating more than economic imperatives of imperialism is John S. Galbraith's "turbulent frontier" thesis.[48] Galbraith found the British drawn into more and more control over regions (he used India as his case study), not as a result of calculated decisions for economic gain, but to quell various crises. D.K. Fieldhouse applied this thesis more comprehensively to explain all European expansion between 1830 and 1914.[49]

The "peripheral" explanations of nineteenth-century imperialism came partially from pioneering regional studies. MacQueen's two areas of interest, West Africa and the West Indies, provide excellent examples. K. Onwuka Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885* became a classic because it was one of the first detailed studies of Nigeria. But it was also one of the first peripheral explanations for British expansion. Dike examined how the decline of the slave trade and the British suppression of this trade gradually undermined native authority to the point of collapse; consequently, British consuls were induced to fill the vacuum, which ultimately led to crown colony administration by the central government.[50] In his study of Old Calabar, the town on the south-eastern coast of Nigeria and peopled largely by the Efik, A.J.H. Latham affirmed this view of Britain as the "reluctant imperialist": "the last thing which Britain wanted was to become involved in Efik politics, still less to assert political control. Yet very gradually Britain was drawn into Efik affairs, almost without being aware of the fact."[51] A.G. Hopkins also insisted that British expansion into this region can only be explained by indigenous conditions, primarily unstable economic conditions brought on by the transition to "legitimate commerce."[52]

The peripheral explanation can also be applied to the "old" parts of the British Empire, such as the West Indies. Indeed the concept of the "turbulent frontier" works very well here. The turbulence brought on by "the slavery question" seems a classic example of how the British government reluctantly found itself taking on more control in reaction to certain difficulties. D.J. Murray's detailed study of British colonial policy 1801-34 is the story of government officials content at the "general supervision" of the West India colonies until compelled to organization and action from outside sources, such as the sudden windfall of ceded territory in need of administration after the Napoleonic Wars, and the pressure exerted by the humanitarians to introduce antislavery measures in the colonies.[53] Intervention increased markedly after emancipation to supervise apprenticeship and to create new, uniform, legislation in place of the old slave codes. Initially, then, emancipation brought government involvement to protect the freedmen, but, argues William Green, after the labour crisis of the late 1830s, the government intervened to defend the plantocracy: "the priorities of Glenelg and Stephen [Colonial Secretary and Undersecretary, respectively, at this time]--namely, protecting the liberty of freedmen against encroachments from the planters--were supplanted by an official determination to reinforce the planters and preserve plantation agriculture."[54] Pieter C. Emmer goes further to describe how the government became involved in the West Indies at the political, economic, judicial and social levels for both the planters and the freedmen.[55]

I have briefly sketched a some of the salient characteristics of the British Empire during MacQueen's lifetime, and outlined how historians have characterized its expansion and maintenance at this time, in order to provide a better understanding of what MacQueen's

experience can tell us. MacQueen's work as an agent--for the West Indian colonials, for the Colonial Bank and Royal Mail, and even "for" Africa (as a geographer and promoter)--working in Britain for British-based interests, for the purpose of forging more permanent bridges with the colonies and the wider world, suggests a significant shift in the nature of the Empire and imperialism in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The ties with which MacQueen helped bind the periphery and the metropolis, not only facilitated greater assimilation of the latter to the former, but helped centralize power in the metropolis. Growing up in a world shaped by mercantilism and war, MacQueen had always fought for strong central authority. His plans for Africa called for state-sponsored protection, and to a lesser extent, administration. And his first proposal for the RMSP Company requested that all management and control lay with the government. These requests were not granted. But MacQueen was part of a more general process of centralizing authority in the metropolis, if not always with the central government. In MacQueen's experience, this shift took three basic forms: 1) private companies with colonial interests, as with the new multinational banks and steam packet companies, backed by government charters and Empire-wide government regulations; 2) renewed interest in examining and mapping the wider world, which was encouraged and aided by renewed official support for exploration and by the professionalization and institutionalization of geography as a discipline; and 3) increased government intervention in the form of important policies and regulations which affected the colonies, either directly, as with emancipation and apprenticeship, or more indirectly, as with the banking and postal regulations. Many of these developments were outgrowths of larger centralizing trends in Britain, such as the (re-) organization of the Post Office in the late 1830s, or the muscular antislavery policies of the

government, represented most clearly by its Antislavery Squadron as the enforcement arm in the campaign to suppress the foreign slave trade. MacQueen's long and diverse career allows us the opportunity to see these developments together.

Thus MacQueen's contribution to the Empire was not in acquiring vast tracts of territory, or even starting a commercial company, as he had always hoped and fought for. This is not the story of gunboats, of flags planted, or of "man-on-the-spot" adventures. Instead, this is the story of one man's much less glamourous work of forging links between Britain and two of its peripheries, the West Indies and Africa, whose instruments of imperialism were mail, currency, regulation, maps, schedules and the chartered company.

Notes to Introduction

1. Also spelled M'Queen or McQueen. I have used MacQueen throughout, except when different in some direct references.

2. There is no scholarly consensus on the meaning of "imperialist," which only originated in the 1850s as a British epithet for Napoleon III. Now, "imperialism" can mean anything from forcible territorial acquisition to the marketing practices of the Disney Corporation. See Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: the Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (Cambridge, 1960); Michael Twaddle, "Imperialism, the State and the Third World," in *Imperialism, the State and the Third World*, ed. by Michael Twaddle (London: British Academic Press, 1992), 1-19; Charles Reynolds, *Modes of Imperialism* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), esp. 1-16; Katherine West, "Theorising about 'Imperialism': A Methodological Note," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972-73), 147-54. Although I will explain the nature of MacQueen's "imperialism" in detail below, here I define the word simply as the expansion and maintenance of an empire, using the traditional denotation of empire as a geo-political entity.

3. Quoted in the 1982 Penguin edition, p. 33.

4. Today, Socotra, South Yemen; located off the coast of Somalia, about 100 miles east of the Horn.

5. Today called Bioko and part of Equatorial Guinea; located in the Bight of Biafra, about twenty miles off the coast of Cameroon.

6. *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern and Central Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1821), 184.

7. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994; orig. pub. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1992), esp. 24-25 and 124-32.

8. *Mr. MacQueen's Reply to the Chairman and the Directors of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (London: R. Clay [printer], 1844), 9.

9. *Ibid.*, 11.

10. "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas: I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 34, 4 (1986), 501-25. See also their more recent book, *British Imperialism I. Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993). Critics have questioned whether or not the concept really works as the primary expansionist dynamic in this period, and whether one can separate "gentlemanly" from "industrial" capitalists. See Andrew Porter, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism' and Empire: the British Experience since 1750?," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18 (1990), 265-95 and M.J. Daunton, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism' and British Industry 1820-1914," *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), 119-

58.

11. This thesis may have turned into more of a biography if I had been able to locate the "two-volume, semi-autobiographical manuscript" mentioned in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, a work that MacQueen had supposedly composed shortly before his death and had planned to publish. After extensive inquiries at libraries, archives, government offices, and search facilities in Scotland and England, I unfortunately did not locate the manuscript. I can only conclude that it is either in private hands or does not exist.

12. Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 162, 196, 205-6, 281, 284-85, 300-2, 428-30, 434-38, 452-53, 458, 467, 469. I owe much of my interest in MacQueen, and to British involvement in Africa, to this work.

13. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 14 and 61.

14. (London: Frank Cass, 1968; orig. pub. 1840), x-xii, and xx.

15. E.g. David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave* (New York and Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1987), 23, 300n, 339n; Martin Lynn, "Britain's West Africa Policy and the Island of Fernando Po, 1821-43," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18, 2 (1990), 195; R.C. Bridges, "W.D. Cooley, the RGS and African Geography in the Nineteenth Century," *Geographical Journal*, 142 (1976), 27; Ian Cameron, *To the Farthest Ends of the Earth: the History of the Royal Geographical Society 1830-1980* (London: Macdonald, 1980), 81 and 87; Howard Temperley, *White Dreams Black Africa: the Antislavery Expedition to the River Niger 1841-42* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1991), 18 and 19; Christopher Lloyd, *The Search for the Niger* (London: Readers Union, 1973), 128; Christopher Hibbert, *Africa Explored: Europeans in the Dark Continent 1769-1889* (London: Penguin, 1982; 1988), 223; Sanche de Gramont, *The Strong Brown God: the Story of the Niger River* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 176.

16. Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford U.P., 1962), 164-65.

17. William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: the Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976; 1991), 267n.

18. Lynn, "Britain's West Africa Policy," 195.

19. David Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists: Opinion, Propaganda and International Policies in Britain and France, 1804-1838," in *Abolition and its Aftermath: the Historical Context, 1790-1916*, ed. by David Richardson (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 131-32.

20. W.L. Burn, *Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 100; Joseph Lowell Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (American Historical Association, 1928; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1963), 428.

21. *Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial & Overseas) 1836-1936* (for private circulation, 1938), 26; T.A. Bushell, *Royal Mail: a Centenary History of the Royal Mail Line* (Southampton, 1939).

22. Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great Steamers White and Gold: A History of Royal Mail Ships and Services* (Southampton: Ensign, 1993), 9-13.

23. From "Lecture I" of a series of lectures delivered at Cambridge, 1881-82, and later published as *The Expansion of England* (London, 1883). Peter Burroughs has argued, however, that Seeley was attempting to bring coherence as well as enthusiasm to the idea of Empire, and must be considered as "the pioneer" of British imperial history. See "John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972-73), 191-211.

24. D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparitive Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966; orig. pub. 1965), 242.

25. Ged Martin, "Was There a British Empire?," *Historical Journal*, 15, 3 (1972), 565.

26. Robert Livingston Schuyler's *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: a Study in British Free Trade 1770-1870* (London: Oxford U.P., 1945) is the classic interpretation of the period between 1770 and 1870 as one of "anti-imperialism" along with C.A. Bodelsen's *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (London: Heinemann, 1960; orig. pub. 1924). See also Sir Reginald Coupland, *The British Empire After the American Revolution* (1930); Howard Robinson, *The Development of the British Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 160-64 who labels this period the "nadir of empire"; and James A. Williamson, *A Short History of British Expansion: the Modern Empire and Commonwealth*, 6th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1967; orig. pub. 1922), 14-24.

27. Page 153; quoted in Bodelsen, 13.

28. Although protection was not entirely removed until 1854.

29. Speech in the House of Commons, 21 March 1825; quoted in *The Concept of Empire: Burke to Attlee 1774-1947*, 2nd ed., ed. by George Bennett (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962; orig. pub. 1953), 88.

30. *The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-93*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1964; orig. pub. 1952), 3.

31. *Ibid.*, 61.

32. Peter Marshall, "The First and Second British Empires: A Question of Demarkation," *History*, 64 (1964), 18-19 and *passim*.

33. "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 6, 1 (1953), 2-3.

34. "Imperialism of Free Trade," 6.

35. *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1974; orig. pub. 1961), 4.

36. E.g. D.C.M. Platt, "The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some Reservations," *Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), 296-306; "Further Objections to an 'Imperialism of Free Trade'," *ibid.*, 26 (1973), 77-91; and *Business Imperialism 1840-1930: an Inquiry based on British Experience in Latin America*, ed. by D.C.M. Platt (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); B.A. Knox, "Reconsidering Mid-Victorian Imperialism," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972-73), 155-72.

37. Exceptions would be Oliver Macdonagh, "The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, 14 (1961-62), 489-501 and Martin Lynn, "The 'Imperialism of Free Trade' and the Case of West Africa, c. 1830-c. 1870," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15, 1 (1986), 22-40. For an introduction into the impact of Robinson and Gallagher's thesis on imperial history, see *Reappraisals in British Imperial History*, ed. by Ronald Hyam and Ged Martin (London: Macmillan, 1975) and *Imperialism: the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, ed. by R.W. Louis (New York, 1976).

38. This comment was made in a letter to another Cabinet minister, Lord Malmesbury, and was first publicized by John Morley, the biographer of Disraeli's political rival, W.E. Gladstone, in 1903. Stanley R. Stembridge examined Disraeli's attitude towards the Empire in detail, and argues that this "offhand comment applied only to the North American colonies and was written in a moment of irritation over the 'bad business' of the eternal fisheries question." See "Disraeli and the Millstones," *Journal of British Studies*, 5 (1965), 125. Regarding other "myths," see John S. Galbraith, "Myths of the 'Little England' Era," *American Historical Review*, 67 (1961), 34-48.

39. Though an excellent general history of the Empire in the period is Ronald Hyam's *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1976) which has recently been republished.

40. Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 81-192; Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism," 505-8.

41. Immanuel Wallerstein is the most famous proponent of this theory. See especially volume three of *The Modern World System* series: *The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World Economy, 1730s-1840s* (San Diego and London, 1989). This essentially deterministic theory has its roots in Marxist and neo-Marxist conceptions of the capitalist dynamic, which see capitalism inevitably penetrating every corner of the world and converting all "peripheral" regions to serve the capitalist "core". See V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International, 1939; orig. pub. 1916); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York: Monthly Review, 1969).

42. Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1981). See also David S. Landes, *Unbound Prometheus: Technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1969), which deals mostly within the confines of Europe, but does outline some of the implications of industrial development to imperialism pp. 34-37.

43. R.B. Pugh, "The Colonial Office, 1801-1925," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, III, ed. by J. Holland Rose et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1959), ch. 19; Helen Taft Manning, *British Colonial Government After the American Revolution 1782-1820* (New Haven, Conn: Yale U.P., 1933) and "Who Ran the British Empire 1830-1850?" *Journal of British Studies*, 5 (1965), 88-121; D.M. Young, *The Colonial Office in the early Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1963); J.W. Cell, *British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the Policy-Making Process* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1970).

44. Andrew Porter, "Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the Long Nineteenth Century 1780-1914," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20 (1992), 370-90; Howard Temperley, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Conn: Archon, 1980), 335-50; Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1991).

45. *British Imperial Trusteeship 1783-1850* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).

46. Speech on Fox's East India Bill, 1 Dec. 1783; quoted in *The Concept of Empire*, 52.

47. Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, ed. by R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), 117-40 and "The Excentric Idea of Imperialism, with or without Empire," in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. by Wolfgang. J. Mommsen and Jurgen Osterhammel (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 267-89.

48. "The 'Turbulent Frontier' as a Factor in British Expansion," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2 (1959-60), 150-68.

49. *Economics and Empire 1830-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).

50. He states his thesis on pg. v. See also David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), esp. p. 190; Martin Lynn, "Consul and Kings: British Policy, 'the Man on the Spot', and the Seizure of Lagos, 1851," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10, 2 (1982), 150-67.

51. *Old Calabar, 1600-1891: the Impact of the International Economy Upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 134.

52. *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973), Ch. 4.

53. D.J. Murray, *The West Indies and the Development of Colonial Government 1801-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), esp. chs. 1, 6, and 11.

54. *British Slave Emancipation*, 171. Thomas C. Holt describes the same government turn-about in a more detailed study of Jamaica. See *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1992).

55. Pieter C. Emmer, "The Price of Freedom: The Constraints of Change in Postemancipation America," in *The Meaning of Freedom: Economics, Politics, and Culture after Slavery*, ed. by Frank McGlynn and Seymour Drescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 26-41.

Chapter 1

The Making of an Imperial Agent:
Experience and Opportunity in Grenada, Glasgow and Africa,
1796-1821

Little is known about MacQueen's early life, but what few details are available provide

valuable insight into his later career. Born in a particularly tumultuous period in British imperial

history, MacQueen sought to defend, maintain, and expand the British Empire. He did this

conveniently by looking for opportunities for himself under the aegis of the imperial system. His

early career in Grenada and Glasgow are good examples of how he gravitated to areas within the

Empire which afforded such opportunities. Moreover, his dream of establishing a commercial

company in the interior of Africa also demonstrates his entrepreneurial spirit. This chapter will

show how his work in Grenada, his plans for an Africa company, and his early work in Glasgow

were all influenced by the imperial system within which he moved, and which, in turn, shaped

many of his future ideas, attitudes and goals regarding the British Empire--an empire which he

would have some part in shaping.

**'Seasoning Time' for an Imperialist: Grenada Plantation Manager in the Age of Revolution,
1796-1810**

Parish records show that MacQueen was born on June 21, 1778 to William M'Queen and

Peggy Cranston in Crawford, Lanarkshire, about 100 miles southeast of Glasgow.[1] MacQueen

was born in a volatile period for the British Empire, a time when it faced serious challenges from

both within and without. Before he was twenty one, the British Empire had already gone through

a successful rebellion of British colonists in North America, several rebellions of slaves in the

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West Indies. and conflict with France which had lasted for more than half of his lifetime up to that point. These direct and indirect attacks on the British Empire influenced MacQueen deeply. Even more significantly, he began his career working within the British imperial system itself, and saw firsthand the results of some of these challenges.

In 1796, at the age of eighteen, MacQueen went to the West Indies and eventually became a plantation manager on a large sugar estate in Grenada. Like many lower middle-class Scotsmen had done since the Act of Union in 1707, MacQueen sought the great opportunities afforded by the now "British" colonial empire. By the late eighteenth century Scotsmen had already become famously successful colonists, for several reasons. The end of the Jacobite threat by mid-century, population pressures, enclosures, a low standard of living, patronage, and by the 1770s, the Scottish Enlightenment and heavy promotion for the colonies, all encouraged and aided a large number of Scotsmen to emigrate; while the superior Scottish educational system greatly helped their prospects for success when in the colonies, even if originally without independent means.[2] Eric Richards even argues that Scottish success in colonization, in "cultural extroversion," as he calls it, can be explained mainly as a defence mechanism against the encroaching hegemony of the English.[3]

Thus Scots colonists in the West Indies often started poor, but soon prospered. Richard Sheridan has observed that "not a few of the Scottish servants rose to a higher rung of the plantation ladder than that of salaried overseer or manager. John Luffman wrote from Antigua in 1787:

> The negroes are turned out at sunrise, and employed in gangs from 20 to 60, or upwards, under the inspection of white overseers, generally poor Scotch lads, who, by their assiduity and industry, frequently become masters of the plantations, to which they came out as indentured servants."[4]

And a century later, an anonymous writer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* likewise noted:

> When colonisation came into vogue [?], he [the Scot] was foremost among colonists ... Invariably fortune attended his steps. He opened up new channels for trade; he wrestled with savage nature, and tamed her into a submissive servant; whenever money was to be made, the proverbial Scotchman had not long to be looked for.[5]

Grenada in particular offered several inducements for an enterprising young man in MacQueen's situation. First, the four islands ceded by France after the Seven Years' War-- Grenada, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Dominica--were well publicized in Scotland to attract settlers. MacQueen himself may have been influenced by John Campbell, an influential Scottish lawyer whose works regarding the ceded islands were published even before the treaties had been signed in Paris in 1763.[6] Whatever the inducements, however, it is clear that Grenada acquired a sizeable and vocal Scottish population very soon after cession. They made themselves known by passionately objecting to the religious toleration granted to the remaining French Catholic settlers, and, according to a contemporary, they "wanted to demolish all the French churches in the island."[7] For MacQueen, a large anti-French Scottish population would have been one powerful incentive to emigrate.

A second incentive was the vast amount of relatively unexploited land on Grenada, making it suitable for large-scale sugar production, the most lucrative enterprise of the eighteenth century. The French, who had controlled the island ever since their conquest (and near extermination) of the Caribs in the mid-seventeenth century, had established small freeholder plots raising indigo, coffee, cocoa, cotton, as well as sugar.[8] Immediately following cessation, however, the British began amalgamating ceded plots into larger estates for more effective monocultural exploitation. As a result, by 1780 sugar production had already increased by 200 percent and Grenada overall had become Britain's second most important export island in the

Caribbean after Jamaica.[9]

A third factor pulling men like MacQueen was the fact that Grenada suffered from a severe shortage of whites in proportion to the black slaves and free coloreds--a chronic problem for the British West Indian plantocracy throughout the colonial period. Comparatively speaking, however, Grenada had an acute shortage, which can be attributed largely to the island's instability following its cession: the French capture of the island in 1779, its return to Britain at the Treaty of Paris in 1784, and especially Fédon's rebellion of 1795-96.

Fédon's Rebellion was the French-backed armed rebellion of Grenadian slaves and francophone free coloureds and whites, led by the free-colored planter, Julien Fédon, between March 1795 and July 1796.[10] After a brief period of toleration immediately following Grenada's secession to the British in 1763, the French population on the island struggled under mounting legal restrictions on their language, religion, and right to hold public office. Free-coloured francophones suffered additional constraints which barred them from voting, holding any civil or military office, or acquiring more land. Matters only worsened in 1793 after France declared war on Britain, and the staunch Protestant Scot, Ninian Home, became Lieutenant Governor. Fédon and other free-colored settlers began plotting a revolt throughout 1794 and sought help from Jacobin agents working in the Caribbean. In February 1795, Fédon was made commandant general of Grenada for the revolutionary army, and on March 1, captured three of the island's settlements in a surprise attack. There were several bloody engagements over the next year, during which time most of the anglophone whites fled to the capital, St. George's, while many of the island's slaves joined the rebels in the hopes of attaining freedom. By January 1796, Fédon's forces controlled all of Grenada save the capital. After the arrival of massive

reinforcements, the British were able to finally capture Fédon's camp (near his estate at Belvidere) in June, though not Fédon himself, who escaped and whose subsequent fate remains a mystery. The British carried out summary executions on most of the blacks caught, while rebel free coloureds faced show trials before their executions. Many of the rebel whites as well as some of the free-coloured officers were deported to non-British territories along the coast of Honduras. Rooting out all of the remaining insurgents took nearly another year. In all, the revolt involved 150 whites and free coloureds, and over 7000 slaves, roughly half of the island total.

Naturally, such a catastrophic upheaval greatly accelerated a trend where the ratio of whites to the rest of the population had progressively widened from one to two in 1700 to one to twenty-five in 1783, to one to sixty by 1806. By contrast, Jamaica and Dominica had ratios of one to eight and one to twelve, respectively, by the latter date.[11] Beginning in the 1790s, the Grenada Assembly began passing a number of so-called "deficiency laws" to try and stem a twenty-year decline in the absolute number of whites. Though unsuccessful in the long run, the laws at least pressured planters to offer incentives to prospective white immigrants such as MacQueen.

Finally, Fédon's rebellion may paradoxically have been a further inducement to patriotic opportunists such as MacQueen. While the rebellion caused an estimated £2.5 million worth of damage according to one of the three surviving prisoners of Fédon,[12] it also brought many forfeited estates and a much weakened French Catholic influence on the island.

MacQueen got a taste of the rebellion firsthand since rebels were still being sought out and prosecuted (i.e. executed or transported) well into 1797.[13] Details of MacQueen's activities on Grenada until his return to Britain in 1810 are almost non-existent, mainly because there are

few surviving records from this tumultuous period.[14] He later noted that he managed Westerhall

Estate (southern Grenada) for "several years" and thus knew "every cane hole in it." The year

that MacQueen arrived the estate had passed from Lady Johnstone, widow of Sir James

Johnstone, to Sir William Pulteney. While with the estate, MacQueen mentions that he

experimented with cultivating sugar by the plough, but abandoned the practice because of expense

and the unsuitability of the land.[15] MacQueen's analysis is probably correct for the most part,

although Sheridan reminds us that planters were always fearful of the plough because it would

unbalance the labour force by displacing the field hands during the off season, thus creating large

numbers of idle slaves.[16] Grenadian planters after Fédon's rebellion would have found such a

situation intolerable.

While specific details on MacQueen in this period are lacking, the effects of Fédon's

Rebellion on him and all of the whites are fairly clear. The extensive damage undermined any

hopes that Grenada would become a major sugar producer. In fact, the island largely reverted to

small-scale plantations and peasant agriculture.[17] The material devastation coupled with the

psychological shock of the rebellion induced many whites to leave. Their population dwindled

to an all-time low of only 633 in 1810, the year that MacQueen himself left. The slave

population, too, began an unbroken decline after Pitt's 1805 Order in Council which abolished

the slave trade to the newly acquired colonies and restricted any slave imports to three percent of

the slave population.[18] The effects of the rebellion, in addition to abolition and the island's

impatient planters who sought only to maximize short-term profits, rendered Grenada a dead end

career for MacQueen.

While this part of his career was over, the long-term effects of the age of revolution on MacQueen would last a lifetime. The American and French revolutions sowed a permanent distrust in MacQueen's mind, while at the same time reinforcing his "British" identity.[19] This distrust would also, when coupled with his mercantilist background, give his later promotional work a sense of urgency about it, as MacQueen constantly insisted that Britain must be quick to get its share of the imperial pie. But Fédon's Rebellion had the most powerful, as well as personal, impact on MacQueen. The experience of attempting to rebuild Grenada into a viable sugar producer after the most serious upheaval in the island's history, and perhaps the most serious rebellion in British imperial history, clearly influenced his views regarding authority, property, slavery, and the French. For MacQueen, the Rebellion was the most hideous outgrowth of an age convulsed by revolutions in the name of "freedom" and "liberty." When these terms were used later in domestic debates over issues such as Catholic emancipation, slave emancipation, and the repeal of the Navigation Laws, sugar duties and Corn Laws (for commercial emancipation), we can better understand MacQueen's violent reaction.

Glasgow Merchant and Promoter

Upon his return to Britain, MacQueen settled in Glasgow, where he immediately married and by 1813, had two children.[20] While Glasgow was close to where MacQueen had been raised, it was also another place where opportunity beckoned, especially for those with West Indian interests. The last two decades of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of Glasgow's "meteoric" rise in industrialization, and Glasgow became one of Britain's most important ports, entrepôts. and manufacturing centers. Glasgow had prospered earlier in the eighteenth century

by importing tobacco from the mainland colonies and exporting manufactured goods to the West Indies. But after the triangle trade with America was broken, at least temporarily, in 1776, sugar became the new money maker, and thus the West Indies occupied an even more important position for Glasgow. From this point until the end of the Napoleonic wars would be the "apogee of Glasgow's West India interest."[21] The city also became an integral part of the cotton boom at the turn of the century--as an importer, exporter, and manufacturer--when Britain made the transition from linen to cotton textiles.[22] Cotton would soon replace sugar as the most lucrative raw material. The West Indies were the first to export cotton to Glasgow, and became themselves a chief market for cotton manufactures, especially the cheap "slave cloth."

MacQueen maintained his West Indian connections through the wine and spirits trade. In the 1813 Glasgow *Directory*, MacQueen is listed as a proprietor of a "spirits-cellar" working with the wine and rum merchants Mather, Carnegie, and Co. at their office in the Tontine Back Buildings, which was in the heart of commercial Glasgow.[23] By the 1820s, MacQueen had made a name for himself in the Scottish spirits industry--though not as a merchant, but as a publicist and lobbyist. Sometime before 1826 he became a "deputy" for the spirits interest and corresponded with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the unfairness of the high duties on spirits coming from England into Scotland. He was unsuccessful, at least in the short run, since he admitted to leaving the trade himself because of the high duties.[24] Nevertheless this part of MacQueen's life is significant because it marks the beginning of his career as a professional agent fighting for a particular cause. Also characteristically, MacQueen was rewarded for his "disinterested" efforts by the group he represented, even if he was not successful in their cause. On June 21, 1826, he was given a dinner and a silver cup, on which it was inscribed:

A Tribute
from Scotch Distillers
To James M'Queen, Esq.
For his efficient and disinterested exertions as a Public Writer, in support of a Free Trade in
Spirits between Scotland and England. 1826[25]

By the time that the Scottish distillers acknowledged MacQueen, he had already been

writing publicly for more than a decade, primarily through the medium of the newspaper. His

first polemical writing endeavour, however, goes back to 1813, when he published a pamphlet-

sized regional study of the Russian Empire.[26] Such a work may not seem polemical at first

glance, until one traces its evolution. The next year MacQueen incorporated this work into a

much larger book on the military events between 1812 and 1814, which he revised yet again the

succeeding year.[27] At one level, this huge work, spanning over 1000 pages, was simply another

mediocre narrative of contemporary events. As part of what Linda Colley has identified as "the

new cult of élite heroism" which began at the end of the eighteenth century, MacQueen's book

emphasized the deeds of the great men of the military struggle against France.[28] But as the

subtitle suggests, the book is also a catalogue of the destruction resulting in the wake of the

French Revolution, both from Napoleon's armies and from the subversive effects of the ideas of

the Revolution. In fact, the book can be seen as sort of a personal catharsis, and a public rejection

of all that MacQueen had experienced during the "Age of Revolution," especially all of the

rebellions fought in the name of "liberty." It is also significant because it was the first public

expression of his views, and marks the beginning of a method he would employ the rest of his life

in order to comment, to promote and to defend.

The actual research or writing was poor in places, but MacQueen wrote forcefully, and

persuasively, making especially good use of statistics to support his many claims. In his "Abstract of the Destruction of Mankind Since the French Revolution," for example, MacQueen figured that 7,204,340 people were killed or wounded as a result of the French wars. Even more impressive, or incredible, are his calculations for the destruction of property: £2,727,748,000 for "Robberies and Confiscations in France," and a grand total of £7,119,307,446 damage to all European nations. He concluded "such is a faint and but a faint sketch indeed of the system of robbery and oppression exercised in France during the *golden days* of Liberty and Equality ... From the General downwards, plunder was the order of the day; and the Liberty and Equality which they carried along with them, entitled them, as they conceived, to make everyone alike, with regard to property."[29] One cannot help but think that memories of Grenada were at the back of MacQueen's mind when writing these passages. Though never mentioned directly in the book, Fédon's rebellion is never far from the surface. By seeing this work as a polemic reaffirming the sanctity of authority and property, the opening chapter on Russian "geography" makes more sense. According to MacQueen, both the Russian land and the Russian people dealt Napoleon his first serious defeat because Russia "was well adapted for protracted warfare, her population less contaminated with those baleful principles, which had taught the other nations of Europe that any other government and authority was better than their own."[30] MacQueen's admiration of the Russians and revulsion of the French would last his entire lifetime. For example, his book on the causes of the Crimean War written nearly forty years later had to be one of the few which defended the Russians (who had only expanded their empire modestly compared to the French and English) and blamed the conflict on the French. Among the reasons found by MacQueen for the French aggression was revenge for Napoleon's defeat in 1812 and a Catholic conspiracy.[31]

Promoting an Empire in Africa, 1820-21

In 1821, MacQueen published another book, this time on African geography. A *Geographical and Commercial View of Northern and Central Africa* was not such a radical change from his earlier work as its subject suggests.[32] An analysis of this book as a work of geography, and where it fits into British geography, will be dealt with in detail in chapter five; and as a polemic for justifying slavery will be examined in the next chapter. Here I wish to explore MacQueen's scheme for establishing a British empire in Africa, a dream which informed virtually all of his future work.

It was no coincidence that MacQueen became interested in African geography specifically. Firstly because he "discovered" the continent in the completely conventional way of reading Mungo Park's immensely popular *Journey into the Interior Districts of Africa in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (London, 1799), a work which went through four editions within a few years, and has since never been out of print.[33] But as much as Park's *Travels* may have been an interesting read in itself, it was the context in which it was read that was the deciding factor for MacQueen's geographical career. At the beginning of *Northern and Central Africa* he described how his initial inspiration came while he was managing Westerhall Estate:

> [There] I had Mandingo Negroes under my charge, who were well acquainted with the Joliba.[34] They knew the name perfectly from hearing me pronounce it in reading Mr. Park's book. I also knew a Houssa [i.e. Hausa] Negro, who said he rowed Mr. Park across the Niger. These things naturally attracted my attention; and being fond of geographical subjects, I endeavoured to collect all the accounts which I could concerning the features of that country on the Upper Niger, as well as from Negroes as from gentlemen of my acquaintance, who had obtained their sources from similar information.[35]

Britain's transatlantic imperial nexus within which MacQueen worked exposed him to Africa directly. Though he would go on to become a leading authority on this part of the world, MacQueen's tenure as a plantation manager in the West Indies would be the closest he would

ever come to Africa.

MacQueen devoted most of *Northern and Central Africa* to outlining a grand though fairly specific plan for erecting a new British empire in the interior of West Africa. In other words, the British Empire was still at the heart of his public work; only now he was providing specific proposals, not just a general commentary on the state of things. MacQueen's Africa scheme would remain a lifetime pursuit, and marks his transition from merely a writer, to a publicist, lobbyist, and critic, hoping to use his writing to effect specific changes in policies as well as attitudes.

Though MacQueen later became bitter about receiving almost no recognition for his geographical theories, it soon becomes clear in *Northern and Central Africa* that geographical discussions were only a abstract means to a material end. As his title suggests, much of the book is devoted to the "commercial" view of West Africa, which meant a simple description and analysis of a region's potential commercial value to Britain. Thus interspersed with MacQueen's specifically geographical sections are more general descriptions of certain regions' resources, manufactures, and inhabitants (noting especially whether they were peaceable or warlike, traders or farmers). One of the criticisms that MacQueen later levelled against the journal of the popular explorer Hugh Clapperton[36] was his failure to provide both a "geographical and commercial view" of Sokoto (a region in central West Africa): "Not a syllable is said about the countries to the northward and to the westward, whether they were fertile or barren, mountainous or plain; nor is a syllable said about their people, their cities, their rivers, if they have any, or the distances and bearings, from *Sackatoo* [Sokoto], of any one of them."[37] Put together, the "geographical and commercial views" were designed, MacQueen stated bluntly, to encourage Britain, specifically

the British government, "to explore Central Africa to its deepest recesses--[and] to acquire command and control over the whole of its trade."[38] In other words, MacQueen put forward a blueprint for informal imperial control.

The Niger River was the highway by which exploration and control would take place, since, "rivers are the roads in the Torrid Zone."[39] Thus MacQueen's entire plan--which takes up nearly half of *Northern and Central Africa*--hinged on the Niger emptying into the Bight of Biafra. Recognizing this, a contemporary reviewer suspected MacQueen's convenient assumption that all of the major rivers emptied into the Niger (and the Niger into the sea).[40] Indeed, according to MacQueen's map and his logic, the Niger Delta provided access to virtually the entire interior of Northern Africa, south of the Sahara and west of the Nile. (Map 1.1)

MacQueen proposed that after acquiring a charter from the government, the newly created commercial company would control and exploit those interior regions where the Niger and its branches reached. Only two stations would be needed: an inland base to be used as a depôt, and presumably for maintaining internal control, which could be put at the fork of the Niger and the Gir (Benue); and a station at the mouth of the Oil Rivers--which MacQueen was arguing was the outlet of the Niger--to control access and maintain Britain's monopoly of the interior trade. The "station that nature points out," argued MacQueen, was the island of Fernando Po, little more than 100 miles away in the Bight of Biafra.[41] With informal control established through collaboration with native princes, the British could commence forming plantations to grow produce, using indigenous slave labour. The scheme would benefit both Britain and Africa: the former by giving her fresh colonies to replace the old ones (colonies being the basis for national power), and the latter by teaching her "civilization" through "legitimate" industry. Civilization, contingent upon

the end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery itself, would not come, argued MacQueen, "till the native princes are taught that they may be rich without selling men--and till Africa is shown, that it is in the labour and industry of her population, and in the cultivation of her soil, that true wealth exists."[42]

What ever else one may say about MacQueen's position on slavery, he did have a sophisticated enough understanding of the subject to see it in its larger context--that is, a system of labour serving a larger imperial structure. For MacQueen, slavery was only one element within a web of relationships within the British Empire: between the slaves and the ruling class in the colonies, the colonies and the mother country, other British colonies with the Empire, and Britain's relationship to other imperial countries. Slavery could not be separated from these other elements (though as seen in the next chapter, as the emancipation debate became more heated, MacQueen's scope narrowed considerably). At this time, however, his discussion of slavery and emancipation was inextricably linked to his genuine attempt to fit them into the British imperial system generally.

From the beginning of his public writing on the subject, MacQueen claimed to desire the ultimate emancipation of all slaves. When Britain erected its empire in Africa as he hoped it would, he maintained that "it must never be forgotten, that not time and nor opportunity ought to be lost in making freedom universal in Africa."[43] But true liberation in Africa, MacQueen believed, would only come when "legitimate trade" became a real alternative to selling slaves. What retarded African progress, as any good self-interested entrepreneur understood, was a lack of stability wrought by the slave system itself:

> Nothing can be done--nothing will ever be done, to alter their [the Africans'] present indolent and inactive mode of life, till justice and general security are spread throughout these extensive regions. It

would be vain to expect industry or exertion on their parts, in order to procure the comforts and luxuries of life, when no one can call any thing he may possess his own, or where the superior wealth which he does possess serves only to mark him out as the prey of the unfeeling robber or sovereign despot.[44]

MacQueen's solution for this uncertain environment was the British and the stability of the colonial system: "colonization, fixed and stable, can alone render ... [Africa] any permanent benefit." MacQueen advocated a policy of informal rule in Africa, where existing native structures would be utilized as much as possible to fit the British imperial system. This arrangement of informal domination would gradually "create the labour in which freemen would be employed," and thus the old system would slowly but inevitably give way to a new system based on free labour. But the transition would be a natural evolution, not a forced--and thus violent--change. In other words, emancipation would not come

till time prepared ... [the Africans'] minds for the change, and till a general system of industry, and influx of wealth from labour, enabled the freemen and their chiefs to emancipate their slaves, without reducing themselves to beggary and want: In short, till the one could procure labour to earn his subsistence, and the other free labourers to keep up his [sic] former rank and independence.[45]

The last quotation best exemplifies MacQueen's lack of understanding of indigenous slavery in Africa, which differed greatly from the plantation slavery used by Europeans in the New World. MacQueen assumed that indigenous African slavery was basically like the European colonial slave system, where slaves were simply the labour element (as well as chattel) in a larger economic system. In fact, at the risk of oversimplification, African slavery was a form of "social death," to use Orlando Patterson's phrase, where slaves formed a separate caste outside of society, yet remained a contributor to that society at all levels--slaves were indeed labourers, but also step-brothers and sisters, civil administrators, soldiers, generals, even rulers owning a great number of slaves themselves.[46] Like most of his countrymen writing on Africa at the time, MacQueen got most of his information from ancient scholars such as Ptolemy, and European

travellers and traders in Africa, particularly the explorer Mungo Park. Most of this information was unsubstantiated theory at best, and even the eye-witness observations made by Park were treated simply as colourful details with which MacQueen could paste onto assumptions based on West Indian slavery and his own conservative views of the social order. When he argued that the indigenous slave system must be maintained for the time being so as not to reduce native landowners "to beggary and want," one cannot help but think that he was referring to West Indian planters.

On the other hand, MacQueen's analysis of the African-European slave trade, and the best means to suppress it, was more perceptive. The corollary to his assertion that only legitimate commerce could eliminate African slavery in any meaningful way was that force was useless. Thus the British policy of suppressing the slave trade via the naval patrol along the African coastline was not only a waste of money and men, but a hopeless cause as well. The suppression campaign was partially based on the premise, forwarded by the abolitionists, that cutting off the external market would dry up the internal sources in Africa itself. MacQueen rejected this logic entirely:

> Were the European abolition rendered ever so effectual--were all the traffic with the other places previously enumerated abolished, still this would scarcely dry up one tear that flows to swell the tide of African misery. Millions are still slaves--slaves to slaves in Africa. It is in Africa, therefore, that this evil must be rooted out--by African hands and African exertions chiefly that it can be destroyed. It is a waste of time and a waste of means and an aggravation of the disorder, to keep lopping off the smaller branches of a malignant, vigorous and reproductive plant, while the root and stem remain uninjured, carefully supplied with nourishment, and beyond our reach.

MacQueen suggested that the money spent on suppression could have been spent much more usefully on imperialism to eradicate slavery:

> Half the sums we have expended in this manner, would have planted us firmly in Interior Africa, and rooted up slavery forever. Only teach [the Africans] and shew them that we will give them more for their produce than for the hand that rears it, and the work is done. All other methods and means will prove

ineffectual.[47]

MacQueen adamantly opposed Britain's suppression campaign until late in his life. Britain never gave it up; in fact, it was expanded greatly in the 1840s. But in that time the campaign also created a large number of critics who ranged from Thomas Carlyle to Joseph Sturge.

In these early years of the 1820s, MacQueen's ideas and interests bridged both the colonial and humanitarian sides of the slavery question. On the one hand, MacQueen's prescription for freedom in Africa was the British colonial system. If African freedom and civilization were the--at least professed--goals of British policy, then only a British empire in Africa could establish the security, structure and "civilization" necessary for such goals. Moreover, this empire, like its predecessors since the reign of Elizabeth I, had to be a monopoly, at least in the first few years of the charter. Already aware of anti-mercantilist sentiments in Britain, MacQueen argued that "the reasons urged against the exclusive privilege of trade to a civilized state do not apply in this instance. The trade, open to all, would create conflicting interests, which would retard and endanger, if not altogether prevent the accomplishment of the ... ultimate object in view."[48] The British West Indian planters used the same arguments to justify slavery and their protective duties on sugar. Furthermore, for MacQueen and the West Indians, the whole imperial system had to be underpinned by the principle of the inviolacy of property and authority--indeed the lack of this principle was the root of the problem of African progress, as well as a threat to the West India colonies. Finally, MacQueen also agreed with the West Indians that the continuation of the foreign slave trade also jeopardized the colonies. He told Viscount Melville that without the complete stoppage to the transatlantic flow of slaves to Britain's colonial competitors, "ruin swift and inevitable will overtake all our West India Colonies, and with their fall a deep and perhaps

incurable wound must be inflicted on other Colonial establishments."[49]

On the other hand, MacQueen may have had more in common with the humanitarians at this point in his life since they made up the major portion of those British who were interested in Africa at all. Their chief concern was Sierra Leone, the colony founded by the African Institution in 1787 for freed slaves, and taken over by the government in 1807. Moreover, British policy toward Africa throughout most of the nineteenth century was conducted through the Slave Trade Department (telling in itself), a special department of the Foreign Office created in 1819, and which was dominated by antislavery proponents. MacQueen never tired of publishing Zachary Macaulay's comment made in 1807 to the governor of Sierra Leone, Thomas Ludlam, that: "I have no doubt that the government will be disposed to adopt almost any plan which we may propose to them with respect to Africa, provided we will but save them the trouble of thinking."[50] The most notable antislavery influence in the government was James Stephen, Jr. (1789-1859), however, who dominated colonial policy from this period until the late 1840s.[51]

In the end, however, MacQueen differed considerably from both sides. The antislavery concern for Africa really did not extend beyond Sierra Leone, and even barely here, until after British emancipation in 1833. This indifference made their preponderant influence over Britain's Africa policy even more problematic for MacQueen. Furthermore, he wholeheartedly objected to Sierra Leone as a British base for anything—as a colony for freed slaves, as a base from which to expand into the interior, or even as a base for the antislavery blockade to which MacQueen also objected: "[Sierra Leone] is a grave for Europeans; and whoever turns his eye to the map, will readily perceive that it is the worst chosen station on all the coast of Africa for an extensive political or commercial establishment ... it has nothing in it or about it that ever can give it an

ascendancy in Africa."[52]

In light of his later fame as a West Indian spokesman, MacQueen's differences with the West India interests stand out more prominently. His objection to the antislavery blockade was a major difference between them. After abolition, the West Indian merchants and planters became the Antislavery Squadron's most avid supporters, since it was engaged essentially in suppressing foreign competition by curtailing the flow of labour to the West Indies. While MacQueen agreed that the foreign slave trade would ultimately be the death of the British West India colonies, he disagreed as to the remedy to stop it. Another difference was MacQueen's interest in Africa, a place which the West India plantocracy could not have cared less about after abolition of the slave trade in 1807. (Even before then their interest only extended to superficial assessments of the different African ethnic groups in an effort to know which were good labourers and less likely to rebel.[53]) This same marginal interest resurfaced in the late 1830s when West Indian planters once again looked to Africa for labour, only at this point for "emigrants"--another policy which MacQueen opposed.

MacQueen's interest in Africa revealed a far more fundamental difference, though. While the West India lobby was looking to prop up a 200-year old system, MacQueen was looking to erect an entirely new empire elsewhere. Why? Because in 1821 he recognized that

> Our West India colonies are ... on the decline. The system that made them is destroyed; and it is quite certain, that a revolution of internal establishments, violent or gradual, is not far distant, either of which will work such a change as will render these possessions of little value as commercial colonies. They are also daily getting more and more into contact with dangerous and ambitious neighbours, which must render the tenure of these possessions more insecure, and perhaps force us into future contexts, the expences attending which, the parent state may, from their altered economy, grudge to bear.[54]

At first this seems a stunning admission in light of MacQueen's reputation as the champion of the West Indies only four years later. MacQueen believed that Britain's West India colonies

retained their value for the time being, but without a steady supply of labour, with revolution and rebellion having convulsed the Caribbean for more than thirty years, with every other European power firmly planted in the region, and with a great dependence on the United States, the economic potential of these colonies would only decline further. Yet the transition to a new empire in Africa did not mean that the West Indies were to be abandoned. The maintenance of the plantocracy's authority and property was not only guaranteed under British law, but essential to future imperial endeavours elsewhere.

MacQueen claimed that the new plantations under the control of his African company would reap even larger benefits for both Africa and Britain than the old colonies because all of the conditions would be the same except transporting the labour across the Atlantic. In fact, the slave trade, MacQueen argued, was a large mistake because it both retarded African civilization and kept the price of planting high: "The great error committed by her [Africa's] Princes, and all Europeans who have hitherto held communications with Africa, is, that they withdraw the labours of Africa to cultivate other quarters of the world, in place of fixing its exertions to the soil which gives it birth."[55] With only minor adjustments, this plan would remain MacQueen's imperialist manifesto for the next four decades, as he ceaselessly lobbied private and public individuals to adopt it.

Indeed MacQueen began pressuring influential people before the publication of *Northern and Central Africa* in 1821. In 1820 MacQueen went to London temporarily, and presented the various departments of the government with a memorial that outlined the same basic principles as the plan forwarded in his book. After lobbying the Colonial Office, the Board of Trade, the

Board of Control, and the Admiralty, MacQueen still failed to attract official support for his plan.

MacQueen's plans for Africa are interesting because of how they bridge both the old British empire and what was to be the "new" or "second" British Empire. On the one hand, MacQueen saw the vast commercial and imperial opportunities to exploit in West Africa at a time when British interest in the continent could hardly have been lower, and anticipated several British policies toward Africa late in the century. His plan for an inland empire, with the Niger as its primary artery, was eventually adopted by some of Britain's most influential Africa enthusiasts, most notably, Thomas Fowell Buxton and the Africa Civilization Society in the late 1830s and early 40s. By this time Buxton was arguing (with consultations from MacQueen) that the "remedy" for the slave trade was "self evident: we must obtain the positions which command the Niger."[56] MacQueen's oft-repeated observations that rivers were the strategic points for imperial control and the "highways" into the commercial heartland of Africa reminds one of H.M. Stanley's similar attempt at strategic-river promotion, in his famous letter published in the *Daily Telegraph* (London) in 1877 regarding the Congo river:

> I feel convinced that the question of this mighty water-way will become a political one in time ... I could prove to you the Power possessing the Congo, despite the cataracts, would absorb in itself the trade of the whole enormous basin behind. The river is and will be the grand highway of commerce to West Central Africa.[57]

And MacQueen's argument that only the pursuit of legitimate commerce would eradicate indigenous African slavery, and thus the slave trade, was most famously promoted by the missionary-explorer David Livingstone, who adopted the "commerce and Christianity first" approach to the problem of African slavery in the 1850s.[58] Ironically, later British imperialists were more accepting of indigenous slavery in Africa; as Michael Twaddle has recently observed,

> For the Englishmen ... who brought many of the remaining independent areas of Africa under British

colonial control in the late nineteenth century, the abolition of Caribbean slavery in the 1830s appeared to have been largely 'a failure'. The British partitioners of Africa were determined not to repeat this 'failure'. Though 'anti-slavery' was one of their principal watchwords ... British officials were concerned to preserve indigenous slave systems in Africa for as long as possible, provided that the grosser methods of slave-acquisition by plunder or purchase were phased out, because of their convenience as sources of labour for the new order.[59]

This acceptance of slavery while professing antislavery platitudes had been MacQueen's strategy from the beginning. Finally, MacQueen's call for the imposition of imperial control as the panacea for an unstable environment wrought by war and slavery, which had hitherto prevented Africans from pursuing any legitimate livelihood, was echoed very clearly three-quarters of a century later by Joseph Chamberlain, when contemplating war with the Asante:

I think the duty of this country in regard to all these savage countries over which we are called upon to exercise some sort of dominion is to establish, at the earliest possible date, Pax Britannica, and force these people to keep the peace amongst themselves ... The people are not a bad people. The natives are, on the whole, perfectly willing to work ... but in such cases as that which we are considering [i.e. war with King Prempe of Asante], the government is so atrociously bad that they are not allowed to do so. No man is safe in the enjoyment of his own property, and as long as that is the case, no one has any inducement to work.[60]

On the other hand, the kind of empire MacQueen hoped to establish, as well as the methods he hoped to establish it by, were thoroughly mercantilist. He hoped to get a charter from the government, which granted his company monopoly rights as well as government protection, in order to establish plantations worked by slaves. These ideas were almost as old as the British Empire itself, dating back to the very first British colonies in North America and the Caribbean, though they would resurface as "neo-mercantilist" ideas in the new empire.[61] Living in a period between the two mercantilist empires, MacQueen failed to get any official support for state-sponsored expansion. A potential patron told him as much while he was lobbying in London. After examining MacQueen's plan, James, Duke of Montrose (1755-1836), noted that he was impressed with MacQueen's research and agreed that his geographical theories "seemed consistent with the facts," but ultimately could not grant his support, for reasons similar to the

government's. He explained to MacQueen: "I believe Individual Enterprise is the only chance of making these discoveries, as the Government of this country does not appear inclined, and is not perhaps well calculated to embark on expeditions of this nature or even to settle Establishments on the Island near the Shore, much less the Interior."[62]

Undeterred by Montrose, MacQueen returned to Glasgow at the end of 1820, convinced that the problem was not with his plan, but with its promotion. Like all imperial ventures since the days of Queen Elizabeth, MacQueen's plan relied on both government protection and public investment, both of which by the turn of the nineteenth century, could be shaped by external pressure--the campaign against the slave trade being the greatest example of this. MacQueen's first step in applying this pressure had been to publish *Northern and Central Africa*. His second was to acquire a newspaper.

Initiation into Public Polemics: Editor of the *Glasgow Courier*, 1821-

In the early 1820s, probably 1821, MacQueen became editor and proprietor of the *Glasgow Courier*, which he ran out of his wine and spirits business office.[63] That he initially entered the newspaper business to promote his Africa scheme is suggested by a comment he made to his friend, fellow conservative, and publisher, William Blackwood, in 1820: that from this period on his "chief object with regards to Africa is publicity."[64] Blackwood himself had only just recently started his own monthly magazine in 1817 as a "massive reinforcement for the Tory counter-attack on the Whig press."[65] Both Blackwood and MacQueen understood that owning a newspaper provided the perfect medium by which to air one's views on numerous issues. MacQueen not only focussed on Africa, but as we have seen, fought for free trade in spirits, and,

as we shall see in the next chapter, increasingly wrote on slavery and "colonial" (usually West Indian) issues generally. Here I would only like to examine how MacQueen's ten years in the newspaper business shaped his skills and methods as a polemicist, as well as the general significance of the *Glasgow Courier*.

Newspapers in early nineteenth-century Britain had most of the component parts of one today, only interests have shifted and the journalistic standards seemed to have been somewhat looser, or at least looser in different areas. As MacQueen's experience shows, a paper's proprietor, publisher, printer, and editor might be different, or they might be one and the same.[66] Most of the news was commercial or political, with some local news, the occasional arts section, "curious" stories, and letters to the editor filling in elsewhere. In the main, the news came from either a "private" correspondent, or was "borrowed" from another paper. The former was a vague catch-all phrase to make any source sound legitimate. Oftentimes these sources were not private, or at least not exclusive, as several papers relied on the same source. For example, one scholar points out that the *Courier* shared a London correspondent with its liberal rival, the *Glasgow Chronicle*.[67] A more common practice among newspapers was simply to clip out articles in other papers, edit them if need be, and print them with or without acknowledgement from the original source. Many of MacQueen's articles got wide circulation throughout Britain and especially throughout the colonies in this way.

Because of the emphasis on political and commercial news, which centered, of course, on the metropolis, and without independent access to the Parliamentary chambers for their reporters until 1881, Scottish newspapers suffered from a particularly vulnerable position. Thus they were forced to rely heavily on these practices and borrowed liberally, especially from London papers.

The *Courier* defended this 'mutual appropriation system' as late as mid-century. Cowan concludes that "so long as the Scottish newspaper was merely parasitic, editing differed so little from typesetting that one control [i.e. manager] sufficed for the two processes."[68]

The tri-weekly *Glasgow Courier* had been one of the many Scottish newspapers born out of the tumult of the revolutionary period, which became a real awakening for Scottish political consciousness. As Bruce Lenman notes, in 1782 there were eight newspapers in Scotland; by 1790 there were twenty-seven.[69] The *Glasgow Courier* had always been a conservative paper ever since William Reid and Company founded it in 1791, and remained so until the paper's demise in 1866. The paper's circulation was never great (about 400 in 1837 and peaking at 1025 in 1843[70]); but it was during MacQueen's tenure as editor that it became a paper of some repute, known for its unswerving opinions and forceful prose. One Victorian writer stated in the 1870s that "I know of no journal, past or present, better deserving the name of 'Conservative' than did the Glasgow Courier. It upheld everything."[71] By 1823 , the *Courier* had become the bastion of high Toryism in the Scottish West because of MacQueen's work and because the two other "militant Tory" papers, the *Glasgow Sentinel* and the *Clydesdale Journal*, had, by then, both failed.[72] The *Courier* opposed every major reform in this period, including Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform, but the *Courier*'s defence of slavery until the very last day before emancipation made its longest lasting impression. In 1890, twenty-five years after the paper had folded and nearly sixty years since emancipation, one Glasgow editor still described the *Courier* as "hyper-Tory in its politics, as well as pro-slavery."[73]

MacQueen's work at the *Glasgow Courier* taught him the skills and methods for fighting in a public medium, which were to become immensely important assets for his career. He

developed an even sharper edge to his style, making him appear strong and unswerving to supporters, and extreme and ruthless to his enemies. The experience also made him far more political: public issues and arguments were taken personally, and personal issues often were made public. Nothing was off limits, nothing too personal, no language too extreme. For example, in the summer of 1826 MacQueen published details about a domestic dispute between James Cameron, a local Glasgow bookseller, and his wife. Such tabloid-level stories were rare, though not unheard of. But we soon learn that MacQueen ran the story not to exploit a good piece of gossip, but to punish someone who had allowed an antislavery petition into his bookshop. When Cameron complained about this thinly-veiled breach of public trust, MacQueen responded by offering more lurid details of the case. He concluded with a piece of sarcastic advice which demonstrates well how politics (in this case, the politics of slavery) had infected MacQueen:

> we would counsel *James Cameron*, as he evidently wants that 'sense and good feeling' which could direct him and prompt him to treat a *white woman*, his wife, as he ought to treat her, to apply to, and this without delay, to his African brothers (all men are brothers) ... for one of his spare wives. Being the colour at present most in vogue, and which obtains the highest consideration, she might be more to his taste.[74]

After a similar incident only two months earlier, another victim hoped to be pointing out the obvious when he attacked MacQueen and his co-publisher for "prostituting the advantage which you possess as the publishers."[75]

As petty, extreme and ruthless as we find these examples now, and as many readers did then as well, the above incidents and ones like them nevertheless contributed to MacQueen's reputation as a powerful polemicist. In fact, it seems that MacQueen was even tame by newspaper standards, and was universally praised as editor of the *Glasgow Courier*, except by

the abolitionists. For example, when it seemed that MacQueen was going to leave Glasgow and start a newspaper in London in 1825 (an idea from grateful colonials in the West Indies that ultimately did not materialize), the liberal and antislavery journal *The Glasgow Free Press* had this to say about MacQueen:

> although we differ from Mr. M'Queen on many questions connected with West Indian slavery, as well as from his Tory opinions, yet we have always been disposed to pay tribute to the zeal and perserverence with which he uniformly advocated the cause he thought right. As a political opponent, we have found Mr. M'Queen decided and fair; and opposed to us as the Glasgow Courier is ... we cannot avoid seizing this opportunity of stating that, personally, we shall part with its present Editor without an unkind feeling, as we shall find, we suspect, few so calculated as he, to soften the asperity of newspaper warfare, by candour and fairness--however strongly tinctured by the prejudices of the party. We wish we could say as much for some of our contemporaries ..."[b]

For those whom MacQueen supported, he was an invaluable champion of their cause, demonstrated clearly by the number of "rewards" MacQueen received. Already by 1826, after only five years of serious public writing, he had been rewarded by the London Committee of West India Merchants and Planters, the Jamaica Assembly, the Grenada Assembly, and as noted, the Scotch distillers--all for his "disinterested exertions as a public writer." Thus MacQueen's work at the *Courier* marks the real beginning of his public life as either a spokesman or a target on conservative issues. Though he had published before--between 1813-15 and in 1821--the *Courier* provided MacQueen with both a reliable medium through which to air his views, as well as a guaranteed audience. More importantly, though, the newspaper business allowed him to apply short, sharp, and direct pressure on lesser issues of public policy, which had more chance of success than the grand plans made in a monograph.

These plans remained a lifetime pursuit, but already by 1820 it was apparent that they were anachronistic. That MacQueen anticipated several ideas and justifications regarding

expansion into Africa during the second empire, based on his experience with the first empire, highlights the similarities between the two, especially the emphasis on state control. Unfortunately for MacQueen, however, he would not live long enough to see any of these ideas come to fruition, but instead, as the succeeding chapters will show, left his legacy on smaller projects of empire-building, either in the old empire of the West Indies, or in the groundwork for imperial endeavours in a new empire in Africa.

With experience from the West Indies, opportunities in Africa, and skills acquired in Glasgow, MacQueen began his public career as an imperialist. In 1821 he was already forty-three years old. Yet his work in attempting to shape the post-war British Empire would span the next forty-three years.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Old Parish Records, Lan/635 (Crawford), Mitchell Library, Glasgow. My thanks to Paul Archibald, Assistant Librarian of Local Studies at the Clydesdale District Council, for pointing me in this direction.

2. Gordon Donaldson, *The Scots Overseas* (London: Robert Hale, 1966), 91-92; John M. MacKenzie, "Essay and Reflection: On Scotland and the Empire," *International History Review*, 15. 4 (1993), 718-19.

3. Eric Richards, "Scotland and the Uses of the Atlantic Empire," in *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins in the First British Empire*, ed. by Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill and London: U. of North Carolina Press, 1991), 67-114.

4. *A Brief Account of the Island of Antigua* (London, 1789); quoted in Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. P., 1973), 380.

5. Anon., "Scottish Capital Abroad," *Blackwood's*, 136 (Oct. 1884), 468-80; quoted in R.H. Campbell, "Scotland," in *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise, 1750-1914*, ed. by R.A. Cage (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 1.

6. *Description and History of the new sugar island in the West Indies* (London, 1762); and *Candid and impartial considerations on the nature of the sugar trade, the comparative importance of the French island in the West Indies: with the value and consequence of St. Lucia and Grenada truly stated* (London, 1763); ref. in Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 454.

7. John Borrow, *The Earl of Macartney*, vol. 1 (London, 1807), 51; ref. in R.P. Devas, *The Island of Grenada (1650-1950)* (St. George's, Grenada 1964), 73.

8. Devas, 51-65.

9. Lowell J. Ragatz, *Statistics for the Study of British Caribbean Economic History, 1763-1833* (London: Bryan Edwards Press, 1927), 14-17.

10. This paragraph is based on Edward Cox, "Fedon's Rebellion 1795-96: Causes and Consequences," *Journal of Negro History*, 67 (1982), 7-20; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 1982), 183-90, 207-10; Devas, ch. 10.

11. Edward L. Cox, *Free Coloreds in the Slave Societies of St. Kitts and Grenada, 1763-1833* (Knoxville: U. of Tennessee Press, 1984), 14-16; George Brizan, *Grenada: Island of Conflict: from Amerindians to People's Revolution, 1498-1979* (London: Zed Books, 1984), 81.

12. Rev. Francis McMahon, *Narrative of the Insurrection in Grenada* (St. George's, Grenada, 1823).

13. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 209.

14. The PRO contains almost no government documents for Grenada during the revolutionary period. There are no sessional papers or shipping returns between 1788 and 1807, no blue books before 1821, and no government gazettes before 1834.

15. *The Colonial Controversy, containing a refutation of the columnies of the Anticolonists; the state of Hayti, Sierra Leone, India, China, Chochin China, Java, &c &c; the production of sugar, &c. And the state of the free and slave labourers in those countries fully considered in a series of letters to the Earl of Liverpool; with a supplementary letter to Mr. Macaulay* (Glasgow: Khull, Blackie & Co. [printers], 1825), 36-37.

16. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 111.

17. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 209.

18. The slave population peaked at 32,181 in 1805 and steadily declined (with one slight exception in 1810) to 23,377 on the eve of emancipation. See Cox, *Free Coloreds*, 14.

19. Linda Colley, "British and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (Oct. 1992), 309-29.

20. Old Parish Records, Lan/644 (City of Glasgow), 9 Oct. 1811 and July 1813. His wife's Christian name was Elizabeth, but unfortunately, their marriage certificate has not survived, and thus her maiden name and family background are unavailable. Their children were named Jean and William.

21. Gordon Jackson, "New Horizons in Trade," in *Glasgow: vol. 1: Beginnings to 1830*, ed. by J.M. Devine and Gordon Jackson (Manchester U. P., 1995), 214- 38.

22. Bruce Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialization: Scotland 1746-1832* (U. of Toronto Press, 1981), 125.

23. *The Glasgow Post Office Directory* (Glasgow: W. M'reat, 1813). Copy held in Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

24. MacQueen recalled this as a witness before an 1832 select committee on the commercial state of the West Indies. PP, 1831-32 (381) XX, 114.

25. From the *Glasgow Courier*, 24 June 1826.

26. *Population, Soil, and Climate of the Russian Empire* (Glasgow, 1813).

27. *A Narrative of the Principal Military Events during the Memorable Campaigns, 1812, 1813, 1814, in Russia, Germany, Spain, France & America, compiled from original documents: with Accurate Tables of strength of the contending Armies, and the losses which they sustained. To which are added, the Causes and Consequences of the French Revolution, from 1792, till 1814: Exhibiting in a Connected View, the Tragic Scenes, and Demoralization and Destruction it has occasioned among Mankind* (Glasgow: W. Sommerville, A. Fullarton, J. Blackie & Co., 1814). Republished the next year as *The Campaigns of 1812, 1813, and 1814. Also, the Causes and Consequences of the French Revolution. To which is added, the French Confiscations, Contributions, Requisitions, &c. &c. From 1793, till 1814* (1815).

28. *Britons*, 177-93; quotation on p. 182.

29. Pp. 890-91 and 957.

30. *Campaigns*, 18.

31. *The War: Who's to Blame? or The Eastern Question Investigated from the Official Documents* (London: James Madden, 1854), 1-14.

32. Published in Edinburgh by William Blackwood, 1821.

33. Lloyd, *The Search for the Niger*, 46.

34. In MacQueen's day, the African name for roughly the first half of the Niger River.

35. Pp. v-vi.

36. Co-authored with Dixon Denham, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823, and 1824*, 2 vols. (London, 1826).

37. *Blackwood's*, 19 (1826), 694.

38. *Northern and Central Africa*, 173.

39. p. 181.

40. *Quarterly Review*, 36 (1822), 55.

41. p. 174.

42. p. 188.

43. *Northern and Central Africa*, 191.

44. *Ibid.*, 205-6.

45. *Ibid.*, 190, 191, 193.

46. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: a Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1982). Obviously this is a vast topic, but for a further introduction, see *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. by Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1977); Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1983); *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, ed. by Paul Lovejoy (Beverly Hills, 1981). See also Frederick Cooper, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," *Journal of African History*, 20, 1 (1979), 103-25.

47. *Northern and Central Africa*, 188-89.

48. *Ibid.*, 276-77.

49. Memorial to Melville, 18 Aug. 1820, GO 51/2/619, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.

50. E.g. see MacQueen's letter to the Earl of Liverpool in the *Glasgow Courier*, Oct. 8, 1824. Macaulay's letter is dated Nov. 4, 1807, CO 267/25.

51. Stephen's powerful influence on the Colonial Office lasted from 1813 to 1847, where he was counsel to the Colonial Department, though in private practice 1813-25; permanent counsel to the CO and Board of Trade, 1825-34; assistant under-secretary for the colonies, 1834-36; under-secretary, 1836-47.

52. *Northern and Central Africa*, 176.

53. For English preferences, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 150, 154-62; Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (London: Temple Smith, 1974), 73-77; Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 50.

54. *Northern and Central Africa*, 212-13.

55. p. x. Ironically, MacQueen's diagnosis of Africa's problem (though not the solution or the blame) is essentially the same as that of the pan-Africanist, Walter Rodney as well as other modern neo-Marxists and African scholars such as J.E. Inikori. See, for example, Rodney's section on "The European Slave Trade as a Basic Factor in African Underdevelopment," in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouveture, 1972), 103-11; and Inikori's introduction to *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies*, ed. by J.E. Inikori (London: Hutchinson U. Library for Africa, 1982), 13-60.

56. *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: Frank Cass, 1969; orig. pub. 1840), 347.

57. Quoted in the introduction to *The Scramble for Africa*, 2nd ed., ed. by Raymond F. Betts (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1972), x-xi.

58. George Shepperson, "David Livingstone 1813-1873: A Centenary Assessment," *Geographical Journal*, 139 (1973), 204-19; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, 263-66.

59. "Visible and Invisible Hands," *Slavery and Abolition*, 14 (1993), 3.

60. Quoted in Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 273.

61. C.C. Wrigley, "Neo-Mercantile Policies and the New Imperialism," in *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and Asia*, ed. by Clive Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (London: Althone, 1978), 20-34.

62. Montrose to MacQueen, London, 18 May 1821, MS Gen. 531/16, University of Glasgow.

63. *Glasgow Directory*, 1821-23.

64. MacQueen to Blackwood, 9 Dec. 1820, Blackwood Papers (hereafter BP).

65. Lenman, 134.

66. A more general word, usually used to describe the highest ranking person in the business, was "conductor," a term which was also used commonly as a verb--e.g. MacQueen "conducted" the *Glasgow Courier* for nine years.

67. R.M.W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: A Study of Its First Expansion 1815-1860* (Glasgow: George Outram, 1946), 27.

68. *Ibid.*, 28.

69. Lenman, 101.

70. *The Waterloo Directory of Scottish Periodicals, 1800-1900* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier U.P., 1991), 626.

71. James Grant, *The Newspaper Press: Its Origin--Progress--and Present Position* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1872?), 459.

72. Cowan, 39, 61-66.

73. Andrew Aird, *Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the last Sixty Years* (Glasgow: Aird and Coghill [printers], 1890), 13.

74. *Glasgow Courier*, 18 July 1826.

75. *Glasgow Courier*, 30 March 1826.

76. *Glasgow Free Press*, 17 Dec. 1825.

Chapter 2

Informal Agent:
Defending Slavery and the West India Colonies, 1824-1833

"And who is this Mr. MacQueen?" So asked the somewhat bewildered London newspaper, *The New Times*, in September 1824, which found itself and the antislavery cause under siege by a new voice in the emancipation debate.[1] Although MacQueen had written publicly about slavery in *Northern and Central Africa* in 1821, 1824 is the year when he came to national prominence--either as a powerful and "disinterested" authority, according to those with West Indian interests, or as an obnoxious and radical pro-slavery "mercenary," according to antislavery proponents. From 1824 until the final passage of the Emancipation Act in the summer of 1833, MacQueen maintained this dual image with a prolific output of material written in a style he had learned from the newspaper business: forceful, personal, and antagonistic.

As mentioned in the introduction, MacQueen has held a somewhat anomalous position in slavery and antislavery scholarship as well, with numerous references but little critical analysis of his views or significance. The weak analyses of MacQueen's contribution to the slavery issue are related to the scholarship of the pro-slavery interests in Britain at this time generally. The overwhelming focus of most historians of this subject has been on antislavery, which has enjoyed a lively and innovative scholarship, especially after the publication of Eric Williams' controversial *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944.[2] On the other hand, the assessments of pro-slavery proponents--their motives, arguments and methods--have been based largely upon assumptions, if not ignored altogether. With few exceptions, they have been portrayed as the established and monolithic defenders of the status quo. For example, Williams' chapter on the West India interest

in his classic work is essentially a long list of various opulent merchants and planters, who, through their rotten boroughs, bought with rotten money, scrambled to block abolitionist initiatives, particularly in Parliament.[3]   David Brion Davis, who has traced the contours of the antislavery debate with the most precision, still describes the West Indian planters as men "who were still living in an eighteenth-century world, [and] had little comprehension of the changes taking place in English society."[4]   Along a similar vein, Seymour Drescher argues that "the antiabolitionist response followed a fairly set pattern during the entire half-century after 1788. Occasionally, the slave interest could mount a vigorous counter-attack at the beginning of a new escalation in the campaign or in the wake of slave uprisings."[5]   These general conclusions represent the limits of mainstream analysis on this side of the slavery debate.

But these summary statements about the West India interest have obvious shortcomings. What was the West India interest's "counter-attack" based on? What status quo were they trying to defend?--the one in which they ceaselessly claimed "distress"? Or the one in which they faced the constant public criticisms of their system?

Furthermore, the few studies that have focused on the proponents of the slave system after abolition in 1807, such as those by Ragatz, Douglas Hall or Barry Higman, have shown that the West India body suffered from a great deal of internal conflict and disorganization, and mounted anything but a strong and consistent defence of their cause. Still, these works concentrate on the metropolis, especially the work of the Committee of West India Merchants and Planters in London.[6]   Such a focus distorts the importance of the Committee and the "interest" generally, glosses over tensions between the metropolis, the provinces and the colonies, and diminishes the importance of other pro-slavery advocates.

An examination of MacQueen's work throughout the 1820s and early 30s advocating slavery and defending the West India colonies themselves highlights some of the weaknesses and gaps in the scholarship. MacQueen was not an official member of the Committee of Merchants and Planters, nor any formal West India "interest," not even the local Glasgow West India Association in his home city, and thus does not fit the traditional anti-antislavery mould. He only became a plantation owner himself in 1829, a fact he and other West Indians emphasized to demonstrate his objectivity. MacQueen also differed considerably from the main West India body because he himself believed and stated that the West India colonies were on the decline, and looked to Africa for new commercial and imperial opportunities.

Yet despite his differences with the established West India interests, MacQueen was well known as one of the staunchest defenders of slavery and the West India colonies. One poetical pamphleteer, parodying the antislavery viewpoint, singled out MacQueen by name and put him alongside the West India Committee and other pro-slavery publications:

> For we've had many a bruising rub,
> From the abhorr'd West India club,
> We've been tormented, by M'Queen,
> By newspaper, and magazine ...[7]

And at times MacQueen was considered the only defender of the colonies. The strongly conservative journal, *John Bull*, replied to an assertion in the *British and Colonial Weekly Register*, which had claimed that the emancipationists faced no opponents, with: "No opponents!--let them read the Glasgow Courier--let them try to reply to the manly and avowed cuttings up and cuttings down of Mr. M'Queen."[8]

Part of this chapter will elucidate the basis of the West Indian position in the slavery debate, and how MacQueen reflected, differed and contributed to this position. Not only does his

work enrich our understanding of the emancipation debate, and the West India lobby generally, but it is also crucial for understanding MacQueen's later successes in the West Indies. His work for the Colonial Bank or the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in the late 1830s depended heavily on his reputation both as an expert on West Indian matters to investors in Britain, and as an authority and ally to the colonists.

The Defence of Slavery in England and Scotland after 1823

Although slavery had existed in the British Empire since the early seventeenth century, there was little need to justify it in the mother country until there emerged an organized and serious challenge against slavery, which did not occur until the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The few justifications for slavery before this time were largely philsophical in nature. They emphasized that slaves were part of a fixed social order, sanctioned by God and ancient tradition, and that Africans could be made these slaves because of inherent inferiorities. Hebrew and classical history, the Bible, and Christian theologians such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas all provided support to this view of "absolute and perpetual slavery," which was last seriously explained and defended in the late seventeenth century by John Locke.[9] With the rise of the antislavery movement in Britain in the 1770s and 80s, pro-slavery arguments were forwarded more or less constantly until the Emancipation Act of 1833. Over the course of the sixty-year struggle, the main lines of the pro-slavery defence remained generally the same, with only a shift in emphasis over certain issues—mainly a shift from philosophical justifications which argued the need to retain slavery in order to "civilize" a savage people, to more material defences, economic and legal, which focused on the inevitable "ruin" of the West India colonies without

slavery, on individual liberty (i.e. for white Britons), parliamentary interference, and property rights.

The defence of slavery in the decade between 1823 and the passage of the Emancipation Act in 1833 was primarily a reactionary measure to not just a revived antislavery campaign, but a campaign that went from a gradualist platform to an immediatist one very quickly. David Brion Davis has argued that immediatism had been a part of antislavery thought since the eighteenth century, though for reasons explained below, it was not until the 1820s when the majority of emancipationists adopted this position.[10] Davis credits the Quaker East India merchant from Liverpool, James Cropper, with reviving the antislavery campaign to a national level.[11] Heavily influenced by Adam Smith, Cropper formed the Liverpool Abolition Society in 1821 and published "The Impolicy of Slavery" in 1823, which became the classic attack on West Indian slavery based on the doctrine of laissez-faire economics.[12] He cited the duty placed on all non-West Indian sugar as the best example of how the West Indian planters needed an artificial prop for their immoral and inefficient system. If the West Indian system was truly efficient, why did it need the protection?

> Is then the present system of colonial cultivation advantageous to the Planters? If it be, of what do they complain? Have they not the unrestrained use and full control of their Slaves? Have they not the privilege of importing their produce at a less duty than other countries? Have they not bounties also on its re-exportation? Yet we hear every day that West Indian cultivation is no longer profitable, and that, without further sacrifices on the part of the mother country, the Planters will be ruined. But can the Planters suppose that this country is prepared to make these further sacrifices? To submit to still heavier burdens, for not other purpose than to support an unjust system, which is at the same time unprofitable, not only to the country, but to themselves?[13]

At the same time that Cropper was forwarding his economic arguments against slavery, other antislavery proponents were seeing that their high hopes regarding British abolition of the slave trade (1807) and slave registration (1819[14]) were not going to be realized. In fact, quite the

opposite was the case. Shocking slave mortality rates demonstrated clearly that British planters were not meliorating the condition of their slaves, and that emancipation was certainly not close at hand. Furthermore, the foreign slave trade was increasing to fill in the vacuum left as a result of the British withdrawal from the trade.[15]

For these economic and humanitarian reasons, then, the old abolitionists[16] led by William Wilberforce formed the broad-based Society for Mitigating and Gradually Abolishing the State of Slavery throughout the British Dominions in 1823. Initially the Anti-Slavery Society, as it was known, endorsed modest goals, such as promoting easier manumission laws and providing religious instruction for slaves.[17] With breath-taking speed, however, the antislavery movement as a whole quickly became radicalized. Thomas Fowell Buxton, the Quaker brewer, took over from Wilberforce as the antislavery leader in Parliament. In May, two months after Wilberforce's moderate Anti-Slavery Society petition, Buxton introduced a motion for the emancipation of all blacks henceforth born in the West Indies.[18] In August the massive slave rebellion in Demerara and the subsequent debate over the complicity of Reverend John Smith, greatly intensified and polarized the debate.[19] In 1824, Elizabeth Heyrick published, anonymously, *Immediate, Not Gradual Emancipation*, a popular pamphlet which forwarded, among other inflammatory proposals, that the slaves, and not the planters, should be compensated.[20]

West Indian polemicists responded by debating the specific points raised by Cropper and others: the duty on this product is X and not Y, the law in this colony is A and not B, person Z's statement has been misrepresented, etc. The basic economic argument was more difficult, however, because Cropper had put his finger on a crucial paradox within the pro-West Indian argument. Polemicists such as MacQueen found themselves in the unenviable position

throughout the 1820s of having to claim West Indian "distress" and the need for government support, at the same time that they attempted to prove that the West India colonies were valuable, productive, and worth keeping. MacQueen's series of articles in the latter 1820s, "The British Colonies," littered with his hallmark statistical tables, illustrate this fundamental contradiction.[21]

Other long-standing arguments would erupt over issues as old as the antislavery movement itself, such as disputes over Biblical passages, or comparisons with English workers.[22] These were important issues that drew passionate responses from both sides. But it is important to be clear about the general position of the pro-slavery interest at this time, and the foundation of its defence. It was not as different from the antislavery position as one might guess, and it was certainly not as clear-cut as presented by some emancipationists, who argued that "*Slavery is a bad thing and ought to be abolished. How stands the counter argument? ... Slavery is a good thing and ought to be continued.*"[23] On the contrary, West Indian advocates had long since relinquished the moral high ground regarding the slave question. By the early 1820s, no serious polemicist argued that slavery or the slave system was something "good," and even the most conservative parties in the debate at least claimed, like MacQueen had in 1821 and later, to oppose "slavery in the abstract." Likewise, despite whatever personal views of race that pro-slavery advocates may have held, no serious polemicist argued that Negroes were inherently inferior beings, thus justifying any kind of cruel treatment. Indeed, as will be seen below, West Indians were at pains to show how much they had meliorated the condition of the slaves.

The nature of these rebuttals regarding "slavery in the abstract" and amelioration provide a clear indication of who had defined the terms of the debate by the early 1820s. For example, largely in response to Cropper's offensive, the West India Association in 1824 published a

collection of papers, articles and letters by various people, mainly John Gladstone, who had been a friend of Cropper's up to this point, to clarify the West Indian position on the slave question. Gladstone, a Liverpool merchant, M.P. (for Berwick, 1818-27), and planter, with immense investments in Demerara,[24] and father of the great liberal leader of the Victorian era, prefaced his response to Cropper's "Impolicy of Slavery" with "it is not my intention to advocate Slavery in the abstract ..." He also made a point to note up front that he was "ready to join with Mr. Cropper ... to assist in practically endeavouring to improve the condition of the Slaves, *where improvement is necessary*, so as, to increase the comforts of which their situation may, from time to time, admit."[25] Gladstone spent much of his time attempting to prove that the condition of the slaves had been improved--so much so in places, he added, that it led to rebellion, as in Demerara in 1823, where "the ringleaders in the insurrection almost wholly belonged to estates which were most distinguished for kind and indulgent treatment"[26] (including one of Gladstone's own[27]). Included in the collection are a series of first-hand accounts testifying to the meliorated condition of the slaves in the colonies. When Foreign Secretary George Canning introduced the government's amelioration bill in March of 1824, one member with West Indian property claimed that "no other consideration of equal weight [to amelioration], with regard to the management of his property, had pressed upon his mind, during the last ten years."[28] By 1830, the West India lobby felt the need to publish a list of all the ameliorative measures that had been passed in the colonies since the bill of 1824.[29]

The primary argument against emancipation, then, was not one of principle, but of timing. That is, the planters did not oppose emancipation per se, but immediatism. As MacQueen had done in 1821, the Liverpool polemicists justified the slave system with the only philosophical

position left to them: that slavery was a crude but necessary means for assimilating Africans into

a more developed economy and "civilized" culture. Artificially emancipating them now, it was

argued, before they had learned the ways of this more advanced system and way of life, would

mean their own ruin and the destruction of the whole of the British West India colonies because

emancipated Africans would not work on the plantations.[30] Thus pro-slavery advocates were

willing to grant that emancipation was a worthy and desirable goal, but just not now, or in the

immediate future. Another Liverpool writer, "T.F.," with moderate views on slavery, told

Cropper in an open letter that "I have no objection to your position, that Christianity clears

Slavery away; for I, too, am for its ultimate abolition; but it must not be a forced measure. To be

beneficial, it must be cautious, extremely gradual, and carried on with the voluntary consent of

the proprietors."[31]

The sincerity of these arguments is immaterial for my purposes here. I want to emphasize

the philosophical justifications for slavery which were forwarded to rationalize and defend very

material interests in the West Indies. What we find is that slavery proponents conceded the

essential point regarding the nature of slavery: that it was "unnatural," by which was meant that

it was not a fixed part of some abstract hierarchical social structure. They were no longer arguing,

as some such as John Saffin had in the early eighteenth century, that to even challenge slavery

was tantamount "to challenge the entire structure of orders and degrees which God had

established for men."[32] Philosophically, then, the West Indians were very close to agreeing with

the Anti-Slavery Society's central premise, that slavery was "opposed to the spirit and precepts

of Christianity as well as repugnant to every dictate of natural humanity and justice."[33] Defending

slavery in the 1820s meant defending a system that was admittedly crude and temporary. By

granting that they opposed "slavery in the abstract," defenders of the slave system were forced

to fall back on arguments regarding property rights.

In material terms, defending the sanctity of property translated into demanding

compensation. The bottom line for the West Indian planters was that if emancipation should

come, forced from above onto the colonies in an unprecedented form of parliamentary

interference,[34] then the British slave owners were to be given "just compensation" for property

that was attained legally, under the sanction of British law. Gladstone proclaimed:

> I consider the title of the West India Planters to their property in their Slaves to be as strong and valid as the law of the land can make it; and that if, for any purpose whatever, the public should interfere with, injure, or take their property from them, they are bound to make full compensation, as is the practice in every other case of interference with private property for a public purpose. To admit the principle of requiring any higher title than that which the law recognises, would be to strike at the root of all property throughout the kingdom. *In the question of compensation, the Slave is no party; that is between the proprietor and the Legislator only.* The law must, at least, be binding on those that made it; but it is not for either party to fix the value; that, as in all similar cases, ought to be done by a jury, not of emancipators, but of honourable, unprejudiced, disinterested men.[35]

Again, Gladstone was willing to concede that slavery was wrong, but he stood firm on the issue

of property. And his defence is exemplary. Of the over 150 pro-slavery works written after 1823,

roughly a quarter specifically dealt with property rights and compensation.[36] Virtually every

defence of slavery until emancipation in 1833 followed the same formula: the professed shared

revulsion of slavery, but the appeal to the sanctity of property and British law, and the subtle but

very important qualifier, that if (when?) emancipation should come, renumeration for property

legally attained must be forthcoming.

The debates over slavery and the West Indies which took place in Liverpool and London

in 1823 and 1824 radiated out to the rest of the country in the following years. The debate

reached Scotland by 1824 and 1825, and paralleled the earlier English debates very closely, with

the same arguments being used and even the same cases for details--e.g. the Nottingham case in Tortola, or the Steele case in Barbados. What differed in Scotland was the suddenness of the whole issue.

The speed and scope of the revived antislavery campaign seemed all the more radical in Scotland because antislavery was a relatively new movement. C. Duncan Rice has argued that despite a number of critics and moralists influenced by the Enlightenment and religious radicalism in the eighteenth century, slavery never faced a serious threat in Scotland before the 1820s because so many interests were tied to the slave system.[37] In fact, there was no meeting held against slavery until 1814, and the first abolitionist societies were not formed until 1823, first in Edinburgh, with Glasgow and Aberdeen following.[38] This antislavery vacuum helps explain why MacQueen was so casual with the issue in 1821 in *Northern and Central Africa*, and also may partially explain why he reacted so violently when the debate did reach Scotland in full force.

MacQueen's Contribution to the Slavery Debate: Methods and Substance

As seen in the previous chapter, the earliest record of MacQueen's views on slavery, the West India colonies and related issues, are in his 1820 memorial to Viscount Melville concerning his proposed Africa company, and more significantly in 1821, when he published a more elaborate case for his plan in *A Geographical and Commercial View of Northern and Central Africa*. MacQueen was distinguished from most other writers on slavery at this time in that he dealt primarily with African slavery, not West Indian slavery, though his view of the former essentially came from his experience with the latter.[39] Because slavery was under no serious threat in the very early 1820s, MacQueen spent little time discussing it; and when he did, his

position was moderate and his tone was non-confrontational, even conciliatory. All of this changed after 1823, when the antislavery campaign remobilized. Except for discussions on Sierra Leone, Africa was largely left aside, in order to concentrate on defending the West India colonies, and the slave system in particular. Moderation and conciliation were abandoned to apocalyptic pronouncements, recrimination, and bitter public attacks on individual emancipationists. This inflammatory style propelled MacQueen from an unknown Scotsman promoting a fantastic plan for Africa, to the most notorious spokesman of the pro-slavery lobby. Though he differed from the main body of planters on some key issues, he nevertheless became their "champion," enjoying the prestige and financial renumeration accorded to a valued spokesman.

MacQueen had made enough of a name for himself by 1823 through the *Glasgow Courier* that the West India Association in London solicited his polemical services. They paid him one hundred guineas to answer an article on the "sugar question" which had appeared in the new liberal journal, *The Edinburgh Review*.[40] The subsequent publication of *The West India Colonies* in 1824, and *The Colonial Controversy* in 1825, catapulted him into the national debate, as well as earning him further financial recompense. The *Barbadian* exclaimed that the *West India Colonies* "ought to be in every man's library" and suggested "that meetings ought to be held in every Colony, to vote an address to Mr. M'Queen, expressive of our grateful sense of his labourious and disinterested exertions ... calculated, *if any human effort can*, to undeceive the British public on a subject, connected with our future existence as part of the British dominions."[41]

The debate over emancipation was a bitter campaign, but MacQueen set a new standard for its intensity--in terms of output and method--even amongst radical polemicists. As noted,

MacQueen's position on the issues had not changed since 1820, though it seemed it had since his arguments became increasingly hardened, extreme, personal and narrow as the emancipation debate progressed through the latter 1820s. Once he turned his attention to the issue, he never let up. He was a tireless researcher and writer, and, in addition to his two books, he flooded the *Glasgow Courier*, *Blackwood's*, and several of the colonial journals with pro-colonial (i.e. West Indian) articles. Between 1827 and 1833, for example, MacQueen published no fewer than fourteen articles in *Blackwood's*. As editor of the *Courier*, he had the luxury of maintaining a constant focus on the latest turns, no matter how small, in the slavery debate. In fact, he discussed the issue so much that even the conservative readers of the *Courier* began complaining. In March of 1826, a subscriber of over twenty-two years wrote to the editor in exasperation about the "valuable columns of late being so much taken up by the slavery question."[42]

MacQueen was also good at self-promotion. Although a prolific pamphleteer and assertive newspaper editor, he also believed in the old method of agitation, which was to contact key individuals, hoping to exert pressure and influence "from within." He periodically gave Blackwood a list of "official and important people" whom he, MacQueen, wanted to receive a personal copy of his articles. Most of the people on this list were those most able to influence colonial policy, such as the prime minister, the colonial secretary, the colonial undersecretaries, and a miscellaneous group of M.P.s, naval and military men, and personal friends who were interested in the defence of the colonies. For example, in 1829 MacQueen told Blackwood to send copies to: the Duke of Wellington, P.M., Sir George Murray, Colonial Secretary, Horace Twiss, Colonial undersecretary, Sir Robert Hay, Colonial undersecretary, and interested Lords such as the Marquis of Sligo, Lord Eldon, and the Duke of Newcastle. M.P.s were also included.

most importantly, Joseph Hume.[43] MacQueen would also hand out copies of *Blackwood's*, with

his articles in them, when in London himself. Finally, and perhaps most importantly in the long

run, MacQueen made sure that his articles circulated (or more accurately, re-circulated) around

the colonies as well.

MacQueen also had access to at least one inside source of information. In 1824 Thomas

Moody, who had held numerous posts in the West Indies as well as the home government, was

brought in as expert to the Colonial Office, by then undersecretary R.J. Wilmot Horton.[44] Moody

was a colonial sympathizer and a friend of MacQueen's. Once inside the Colonial Office, he had

"all its archives open to him," and periodically wrote MacQueen with valuable information.[45]

Thus MacQueen's method of agitation can be seen as a combination of pressure from

"within" and "without." He believed in the former as the right and proper way of agitating, but,

as a Scots merchant of little means or consequence, he usually made few inroads this way, and

was therefore forced to exert external pressure.[46] On the other hand, it is evident that MacQueen

had not become completely aware of the power of mass agitation. While his method of individual

contacts made him more personally well known (he was almost universally referred to by name),

this method could hardly combat the organized and public campaign of antislavery, which was

Britain's first national mass movement.[47] As Howard Temperley has argued, while antislavery

undoubtedly had its powerful allies within the establishment, it was the movement's "pressure

from without" that was decisive, both for abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and emancipation

of the slaves in 1833.[48] MacQueen's faith in the "old guard," in gentlemen's agreements made

behind closed doors,[49] and his revulsion to mass agitation is indicative of the West Indians

generally, and helps explain its "disorganization" in the face of antislavery. Interestingly, one

might draw a parallel between the West Indian form of "gentlemanly agitation" and its distaste

for popular agitation, with the "gentlemanly capitalists'" "contempt for the everyday world of

wealth creation and of the profit motive" of the ordinary "industrial capitalist," identified by Cain

and Hopkins.[50]

The manner in which MacQueen expressed his views is what set him apart from other

polemicists in the debate. Despite repeated claims of employing no *ad hominem* attacks, and

bearing none of the emancipationists any personal ill-will, one of MacQueen's distinguishing

strategies was, in fact, to single out and publicly expose individuals. We have already seen this

humiliating exercise in Glasgow. MacQueen repeated this tactic with even more vengeance,

especially as the debate became more heated through the 1820s. In the *West India Colonies*--the

book in which he began by stating that "it was not my intention ... to hurt the personal feelings

of any man"--MacQueen attacked antislavery hypocrisy by using Buxton and one William Smith

as personal examples on a subject he knew from experience:

> Mr. Buxton stands in the foremost ranks to declaim against, and denounce what he calls a West India monopoly, while at the very moment he, as a brewer, is concerned in a trade which ... forms the greatest monopoly, and under the most galling and grinding fetter, ever witnessed in any country. Mr. William Smith of Norwich, one of the bitterest enemies of the Colonies, adopts the same strain of argument and pursues the same line of conduct at the moment when (if public report speaks true) he himself, or a *branch of his family*, with other colleagues, as distillers for the English market hold and participate in one of the most injurious monopolies in the spirit trade that ever existed .. From which they derive an extra gain of £600,000 per annum.[51]

MacQueen later traced some of Buxton's background to connect him with money made from

Barbados. His mother had inherited a great deal of money from her father, Mr. Osgood Hanbury,

a London banker, and his sister, both of whom had sold "several" slave estates in Barbados

around the turn of the century. MacQueen then suggested that Buxton himself had continued to

be remitted from Barbados for this property right up to the time that "he produced his resolutions

[in 1823], declaring personal slavery criminal; and consequently, every one who touched such property, or the proceeds from such property, as aliens from God, and as infamous amongst mankind."[52]

The Stephens and Macaulays were singled out for even more personal exposure. MacQueen publicly criticized the appointment of James Stephen, the younger, as the law adviser to the Colonial Office, and later, his growing influence over colonial matters. "It may not be deemed irrelevant to ask," MacQueen disingenuously queried, "if it is true, that he [Stephen] interferes with everything that is colonial, whether it related to the colonies or their affairs, as connected with the commercial or political interests of the country? If it is true, ... by the way in which he touches off every subject, and by the advice he has given, has agitated Canada ... and sown dissension in every colony which communicates with the office where he is?" And bringing in Zachary Macaulay, "if it is true, that not only Mr. Stephen, but Mr. Macaulay, have been seen ranging through the [Colonial] office, almost at pleasure--the latter generally on the eve of a parliamentary debate on colonial subjects, till even inferior clerks trembled to be held as the responsible keepers of colonial papers?" A page later MacQueen provided a list of all the Stephens connected with the colonies, with their salaries, in order, he noted, "to see what pay they or their friends received for their labours and active hostility carried on against the West India Colonies."[53] He accused the Macaulays (namely Zachary, "the Leviathan of the band," though his son J.B., and his cousin, Kenneth, were mentioned), of making money on Sierra Leone and the slave trade, as founders of the colony with influence in the government, and as the prize agents for the Antislavery Squadron.[54]

Most of MacQueen's actual arguments were not original. His responses to "Anglus" of

the *New Times* throughout the fall of 1824 closely paralleled the exchange between Gladstone and Cropper in Liverpool the previous year. What distinguished the substance of MacQueen's argument was the incorporation of Africa, specifically Sierra Leone, into the debate. His unique attack did not delay emancipation, but it did prompt a select committee hearing which concluded that the colony was, indeed, quite unsuccessful in achieving any of its professed goals, that it was useless for British needs, and that a new base should be formed.

Except for vague references to the "misery of Africa" or the "barbarity of Africa" by each side in the slavery issue, the continent itself had no bearing on the course of the debate. The "slavery question" was exclusively a West Indian question despite attempts by MacQueen to alter the course of the debate. In fact, the debate did not even concern all of British slavery—slavery in India for example. As noted in the previous chapter, abolitionist interest in Africa extended only to their colony in Sierra Leone, and would not extend further until after British emancipation in 1833, when they turned their attention to the foreign slave trade. Interest in all of the continent--that is, beyond the coastline--really only began once quinine came into use in the 1840s, and missionaries and explorers began to penetrate the interior with more frequency.[55]

On the other hand, MacQueen had always been passionately interested in Africa ever since 1820. As demonstrated by his lobbying efforts of 1820-21, his personal interest in the British Empire was ultimately not in saving the old colonial system in the West Indies, but in erecting a new one in West Africa. However, the struggle over the "slavery question" had distracted MacQueen enough to put these plans on hold until well after emancipation had been effected. But he found that part of his plan was still very useful for combatting the emancipationists. He had decided that Sierra Leone was, conveniently, the soft underbelly of the antislavery cause.

The colony of Sierra Leone had always faced problems ever since its founding by Granville Sharp in 1787 as the "Province of Freedom," a home for freed slaves. After one year, half of the original European and Negro settlers died.[56] The same mortality rates continued in the first years after the Sierra Leone Company, a partnership whose directors came mostly from the "Clapham Sect" of antislavery advocates (including Henry Thornton (its first chairman) and William Wilberforce), acquired the colony in 1792. And despite the hopes of its proprietors, the colony did not make any money in these early years either. In fact, Fyfe notes that the original subscription offered by those such as Thornton and Wilberforce in 1790 to keep the colony afloat were more "an act of kindness rather than ... an investment;" and that only through their influence with powerful friends were they able to keep the colony running over the next years.[57] And again, the colony's fortunes had not improved when the government took over in 1807. A report on the settlement by government commissioners in 1811 concluded that "the nature of the soil" and the "indolence of the population" had "greatly retarded the progress of cultivation."[58]

Public criticism did not begin to surface, however, until after Britain embarked on its campaign to suppress the illegal slave trade via a naval blockade along the West African coast--a policy officially begun in 1808. This policy committed the governments in London and Freetown to vastly more responsibility: the British government now had to expend far more money and men for the patrols, while Freetown now became the hub of the West African squadron, the location of the Court of Mixed Commission where captured slavers would be tried, and the new home for any freed slaves from illegal slavers--an enormous responsibility for any colony, let alone one already struggling. Joseph Marryat, M.P. for Sandwich and former agent for Trinidad,[59] lambasted the colony in Parliament for making the public pay "for the maintenance of those very

captured negroes who are said to maintain themselves"[60] (an argument similar to Cropper's criticism of the West Indies!). Sir James Yeo, the commander of the West African squadron, claimed that Sierra Leone "was the most unfit, and worst situation on the whole coast." Other officers later complained of the constant shortages as well as the high mortality rate.[61] The conservative press also made occasional references to the "pest house."[62] On the whole, however, criticism remained scarce, as Africa, including Sierra Leone, was a subject of little interest to anyone.

MacQueen's crusade throughout the 1820s was to change this. He hoped to increase interest in Africa, and later to discredit Sierra Leone as a viable British base in the process. As noted in the previous chapter, he had sought since 1821 to change public ignorance and apathy in order to promote his own company; and at that time he had mildly questioned the value of the colony in *Northern and Central Africa*. Now, in the mid-1820s and in the heat of the emancipation debate, he hoped to expose Sierra Leone as a landmark abolitionist failure. He attacked the colony mercilessly and at any opportunity afforded him. The colony appeared frequently in the columns of the *Glasgow Courier*, and made up the subject of a substantial part of the *Colonial Controversy*. But MacQueen's most devastating criticism was reserved for three articles he published as letters to R.W. Hay (the colonial undersecretary) in 1826 and 1827 in *Blackwood's*.[63] This tri-partite offensive on Sierra Leone marks the first systematic criticism of the colony in public--criticism which eventually led to two parliamentary inquiries and a government commitment to withdrawal.[64]

Demonstrating the colony's numerous problems and failure was not difficult, though MacQueen exaggerated these negatives to the extreme. Mortality was the easiest point to expose,

having used the common description of the colony as a "grave for Europeans" as early as 1821. In the articles in *Blackwood's* he employed more colourful details to drive home the point. For example, he hoped to incite further fears of disease with the suggestion of yellow fever (the disease which "boils the blood"). And to personalize the horror of the climate in this part of Africa, he provided a list of officers who had died between October 1824 and March 1826, with their ages and time spent in Sierra Leone—most had been in their twenties, and had spent less than a year in the colony—as well as a list of the cost for all of the funerals (mainly the cost of constructing coffins) since 1825.[65] Using information from parliamentary returns, Sierra Leone gazettes, and the *Quarterly Review*, MacQueen estimated that the colony cost Britain no less than £500,000 a year, and, after a list of twelve different tables, concluded that it had cost the country £16,342,645 since 1807.[66] And despite massive government subsidies, he emphasized that Sierra Leone was still unable to produce any article for export, noting the slave commissioners' report of 1824, which found that almost all of the colony's export returns were actually re-exports.[67] Native religion, culture, and what MacQueen called "civilization" generally, all remained at the "barbarous" level, except among the Jamaican Maroons and the Nova Scotian blacks, "who brought with them, though I can scarcely say, improved, the civilization which they had learned from their acquaintance and connexion with civilized life."[68] On the other hand, the white population had descended "to the rank of the savage" because of the brutal and degraded environment, and most importantly, because the Africans were "taught to believe that they are equal in rank, rights, privileges, and power" to the British. In fact, the mixing of racial and social classes seemed to be the colony's most repugnant characteristic for MacQueen:

> Those whites who are fortunate enough to survive a few years, acquire all the slovenliness and much of the indolence and extreme vulgarity of the African female house-keepers whom they are compelled to

employ, and with whom alone they can associate in hours of relaxation. No union between a white man and an unlettered African negress can ever take place, but such as saps, not consolidates, the basis of human society and of social order.[69]

Here MacQueen hoped to illustrate how emancipation threatened far more than just economic interests, and appealed to his audience's sense of social stability and propriety. Indeed, this point is made in a recent biography of the radical Quaker antislavery reformer, Joseph Sturge, which argues that the radical 1824 pamphlet, *Immediate, Not Gradual Emancipation*, was a watershed not only in the antislavery campaign, but in British political agitation generally, where disenfranchised elements in British society sought a real voice in politics: "Using the pressure groups as their vehicle, sections of society (businessmen, Dissenters, provincials and women) which had previously been told to be content with 'virtual representation' were assuming a right to influence national policy-making directly."[70] For social conservatives such as MacQueen, these challenges to the social order made the debate over slavery much more than a debate over economic systems, and helps explain his intense responses to these challenges.

MacQueen also attacked Sierra Leone's effectiveness as a base to stop the slave trade, the whole reason for the massive government commitment to the region. He announced that the trade "Instead of being diminished is QUADRUPLED."[71] In a powerful conclusion, MacQueen listed the results of Britain's colonization of Sierra Leone:

Africa stands the same as it stood forty years ago, and Sierra Leone with the blacks congregated there, and maintained at a vast expense by this country, produces nothing from its soil--in fact, it has no soil fit to produce any valuable produce, while pestilence so irresistible and destructive dwells in the place, that no skill can baffle it, no medicine can cure it, and no human constitution withstand it! The civilization of the settlement is found to be a phantom, its improvements many dreams, its industry an idle tale, and only the extravagance of its expenditure true. From authority which cannot be controverted, from information which cannot be contradicted, while truth is adhered to, the facts here stated have placed before you and before the public.[72]

Only two years after the previous inquiry, the government called for another inquiry of

the colony in 1827. MacQueen privately claimed credit for the move, a claim which may have some validity. He made sure to circulate his articles among anyone concerned in London. After arriving back from there in May 1827, he wrote to Blackwood that "what I have stated ... has made a deep impression. The thing now most under consideration is how to get out [of Sierra Leone] with any appearance of honour."[73] In December of 1827 he noted that Joseph Hume, the money-conscious M.P. and fellow critic of Sierra Leone, was urging MacQueen to finish another article on the subject.[74] And in April 1828, MacQueen remarked that the Finance Committee was considering the value of Sierra Leone, claiming to Blackwood that "Your magazine with my details are their textbook."[75]

In June of 1830 Hume entered a motion in Parliament to quit Sierra Leone, noting "it had been tried to twenty years by individuals, and for twenty years by Government. That was enough for a fair trial; and ... [the colony] had failed."[76] The subsequent Select Committee, chaired by Hume, recommended that liberated Africans should be landed on the island of Fernando Po, in the Bight of Biafra, and that the European staff in Sierra Leone should be minimized "as far as possible" and replaced by Africans.[77] MacQueen seemed to have been vindicated.

However, the government did not follow through on the Committee's recommendations. Various complications had hamstrung any moves to change the government's current policies toward West Africa. The news of another outbreak of yellow fever on the West African coast in 1829 (which had reached Fernando Po by May), undermined a central argument for moving to the island.[78] Furthermore, both the Colonial and Foreign Offices had misgivings, if not outright objections, of moving to Fernando Po. The former, which had taken over the operation of the infant British settlement already in operation there (since 1827), was furious to learn that Captain

W.F.W. Owen, the commander of the new settlement, had not only annexed territory on the island (against Colonial Office, but not Admiralty, orders), but also had been landing Africans from captured slave ships before they had been properly adjudicated in Sierra Leone.[79] Meanwhile, the Foreign Office still had not settled negotiations with Spain, the acknowledged owner of Fernando Po by this point—negotiations which were complicated by Owen's aggressive actions and by the strong Sierra Leoneon interests within the department.[80]

Nor was MacQueen in a position to celebrate at this time. Although always pessimistic about the political climate, he became especially gloomy as he sensed worse trouble to come. In March 1829 he wrote Blackwood: "Although all is apparently quiet in the political atmosphere ... I am assured that things are not to be—that it is the calm before the storm which is about to originate a total change in our Councils and in our policy."[81] The next month, Parliament passed Catholic emancipation (opening all offices of state, except Viceroy and Chancellor, to Catholics), a cause which MacQueen had fought with only slightly less vigour than slavery.

In the midst of this tense and demoralizing atmosphere, MacQueen had become extremely busy in the late 1820s with personal business in the West Indies and at home. By September 1828 he was complaining to Blackwood that "my extensive West India Business will from all I can see lead me either to settle in London or to be very frequently there. In either case I must have a person who can take a share in and the management of the Glasgow Courier."[82] In late 1831 he finally gave up the editorship to an equally staunch conservative, William Motherwell, although MacQueen retained part ownership of the paper (he also added defiantly that the emancipationists would be "dreadfully mistaken ... if they think that because I have finished the magazine they are clear of the subject [of the colonies].").[83]

Reaction to MacQueen in Britain

The reaction to MacQueen's increasingly broad offensive throughout the 1820s ranged as wide as his own targets, from conservative Glasgow readers with little interest in slavery, to the national leaders of the antislavery campaign, to the West Indian colonists. In Glasgow, the same "Constant Reader" who had complained about the amount of coverage of the slavery issue, went on to point out, and politely criticize, another important part of MacQueen's polemical style:

> The scurrility and improper language used in these discussions of late, are such that loudly call for the interference of your readers ... I give you every credit for the sincerity of your motives, and I believe few can argue the question better, but still it is hard that a great majority of your readers should be doomed to have, day after day, the paper half-filled with arguments, to them so uninteresting ..."[84]

If MacQueen was getting complaints from the readers of his own ultra-conservative newspaper, one can imagine the reaction of those Glaswegians on the other side of the emancipation debate. Not surprisingly, MacQueen had become the lightning rod for antislavery counterattacks, as demonstrated by this placard which was posted around the city in 1826:

<div align="center">

Wanted Immediately
MANUFACTURING LABOURERS
to go out to the West Indies
3000 Manufacturing Labourers, who will engage to go out to the West Indies, will receive of course
NO wages but all the kind attention, treatment, comfort, indulgences and privileges, etc., etc. ... with
the addition of a LARGE CART WHIP, frequently and powerfully to their bare bones ... For
particulars, apply to
James M'Slavery[85]

</div>

More mainstream antislavery responses to MacQueen began in 1824 and grew in number and intensity to match his attacks. Most of them criticized his acidic style, and almost from the start singled him out as one of the leading spokesman for the pro-slavery lobby. "Anglus" of the *New Times*, whom MacQueen believed to be Zachary Macaulay, seemed set on his heels somewhat by this new firebrand, who displayed "a degree of heat and asperity, a strength of prejudice, and a consequent eagerness of misrepresentation." "Anglus" concluded that

MacQueen was indeed, by this early date, "the very fiercest partizan of the West Indian system."[86] This same year, Thomas Cooper, a Unitarian missionary from Jamaica whom MacQueen had criticized in the *West India Colonies* and threatened to expose further, credited MacQueen with commencing the pro-slavery offensive in Britain. Cooper also added a personal rebuff which only seems appropriate to MacQueen: "I beg ... to assure him [MacQueen], that I neither fear his threats, nor his publications."[87] In 1826, the elder Stephen, who claimed that he normally eschewed engaging in personal attacks, noted that for MacQueen, "I will for once make an exception ..." And by 1830, Stephen was calling MacQueen "the Goliath of the Colonial Host."[88] The defence of Sierra Leone was headed by Kenneth Macaulay, cousin of Zachary and the prize agent for the Antislavery Squadron in the colony itself. In 1827 he published a long pamphlet entitled *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. McQueen of Glasgow*, which focussed on the narrow details of MacQueen's articles.[89] Attacks on MacQueen continued well beyond the passage of the Emancipation Act in 1833, and well past MacQueen's own interest in the issue, emphasizing how much bitterness he had invoked in these years. We find the antislavery journal, the *Colonial Reformer*, sarcastically advising MacQueen as late as 1840 that "habitual lying is exceedingly injurious to a man's morals. It is high time for Mr. M'Queen to reform all such evil habits ..."[90]

MacQueen's opponents eventually zeroed in on his credibility, believing this to be his most vulnerable point. Critics almost universally branded him a West India mercenary, since it was well known that he had been renumerated for some of his exertions. The accusations became more elaborate, however, as the debate intensified. In 1826, Stephen simply criticized MacQueen for only writing "in the interest of his employers."[91] In 1829, the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*

devoted an entire section to "the West India Committee, and its Mercenaries in the Press," which included the *Quarterly Review* (though admittedly tamer by this time), *Blackwood's, John Bull,* the *Morning Journal* of London, the *London Courier,* and of course, the *Glasgow Courier. (Fraser's Magazine,* which ranked with the *Glasgow Courier* for its passionate defence of slavery, did not begin until 1830.) The most active individuals the *ASMR* identified were James Franklin, from Kingston, Jamaica,[92] and MacQueen, who was "supposed to have received £15,000 in all from the West Indies,"[93] making him the highest paid mercenary in the cause. By the next year, the secretary of the Dublin Anti-Slavery Society, Joshua Abell, asserted that MacQueen was receiving an annual subsidy of £3000--money, Abell insisted, "which is robbed from the slaves, in order to bribe him to write against law, justice, and the rights of the British people."[94]

By my estimation MacQueen received somewhere on the order of £6000 total for his writings on slavery,[95] and the suggestion that he was receiving a regular wage was groundless. Nevertheless, any payments fed the perception that MacQueen was simply a slavery hack. This image changed somewhat in 1829, when the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter* discovered that MacQueen had acquired West Indian property in both land and slaves. With witty sarcasm, it observed that "this circumstance may now give a sharper and louder tone to his vituperations; and it may also render it unnecessary for the West India body to fee advocates so highly as it has hitherto done."[96]

MacQueen's increasingly caustic and reckless articles and addresses eventually, perhaps inevitably, created legal problems. In December 1831, William Blackwood was charged for libel by Thomas Pringle, then Secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society, on account of an article

MacQueen had written the previous month. The charge against Blackwood can be traced back to an ex-slave named Mary Prince. Born in 1788, she had been the slave of five different masters, most of them abusive, in Bermuda, Turk's Island, and Antigua before she escaped while visiting London with her last owners in 1828. She soon came into contact with members of the Anti-Slavery Society, notably George Stephen, the younger son of the elder Stephen, and Secretary to the Society at the time before Pringle took over. With the assistance of the Society, Prince fought first for her own legal freedom, and then for emancipation generally. Before her death in the early 1830s, she recounted her story to the Society, which published her autobiography in January 1831. Edited by Pringle, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* was a popular (if not a critical) sensation, going through three editions before March.[97]

Attached to the tract was a "Supplement" written by Pringle, where Prince's authorities were substantiated and critics were discredited. Here MacQueen's past began to catch up with him. One authority was Joseph Phillips, a twenty-seven year resident of Antigua who had distributed charitable goods to the slaves on behalf of the Ladies' Society of Birmingham for the Relief of British Negro Slaves. After seeing a report of the Ladies' Society in 1826, MacQueen responded in the *Weekly Register of Antigua* (among other journals), where he claimed that there were no such Negroes in need, and therefore, the Society must have been "duped out of its money" by its agent Phillips, whom MacQueen went on to describe as "a man of the most worthless and abandoned character." Pringle published Phillips' account of this episode in *The History of Mary Prince*, as well as the 1830 report by Ladies' Society of Birmingham, in which they affirmed that "Mr. McQueen, the Editor of the Glasgow Courier," had been "COMPLETELY REFUTED."[98]

Once the lawsuit was filed, MacQueen admitted to Blackwood that "Pringle's labours ... have done great mischief," but that he planned to counter with his own pen. He also noted that he would write an open letter to Earl Grey, Secretary to the Treasury, as well as "get the West India Body to give you a sum of money ... and to present it separate and circulate it as an advertisement ... Pringle must be met with his own weapons."[99] The subsequent pamphlet, published in November 1831 in *Blackwood's*, was devoted to defaming Prince, Pringle, Phillips (now described as an "anti-colonial *fungus*"), and anyone else associated with the case and the making Prince's *History*.[100] At the same time, MacQueen attempted to vindicate Prince's former owners, Mr. and Mrs. John Wood of Antigua. "Pringle," MacQueen sneered, has "given to the world the history of the profligate slave mentioned, for the purpose of destroying the character of ... her owners." MacQueen added that "Pringle may conceive himself to rise beyond the reach of human laws, but let him rest assured that there is a tribunal superior to human tribunals, where the intentions of the heart and the works of the hand, in the guilty labour of bearing 'false witness against your neighbour,' will be impartially tried, and terribly punished."[101] The charge of libel was almost immediate. Ironically, MacQueen had admitted to Blackwood that he was not able to say all that he had wanted to for fear of a libel suit. Perhaps even more ironical, and surely more painful for MacQueen, was that Pringle's lawyer was none other than a Stephen--George, in this case.

MacQueen's response to the *History of Mary Prince* is indicative of his polemical work in the years immediately preceding emancipation. It demonstrates how he differed from most of the mainstream pro-slavery advocates such as Gladstone or "Vindex" (Thomas Moody and Hyde Villiers, both connected with the Colonial Office) who generally utilized calmer language as well

as pseudonyms. It is for these reasons that even provincial ladies' clubs knew of "Mr. MacQueen, the Editor of the Glasgow Courier."

MacQueen took full responsibility for the suit, and promised Blackwood that the West Indians would come to their aid for "what is in reality their cause."[102] The West Indian response is indeed telling. A month after his promise, MacQueen wrote to Blackwood stating "I do not expect the London West India Committee to intervene in this matter. One of the lies of my anticolonial opponents was that I was dictated to and paid by them."[103] Most likely MacQueen solicited the help of the Committee, and creatively chose to interpret a negative response as proof that he was an independent writer. He promised continued help, though in June of 1832 he left on a year-long business trip to the West Indies, explaining that his business partner Alexander Macdonnell, fellow pamphleteer and by this time Secretary of the West India Committee in London, would keep him informed on the libel suit. When MacQueen arrived back in England in July the next year, he saw that Blackwood had lost the case.

Prince's case is a classic illustration of how issues became politicized in the emancipation debate. On the one hand, her story was at least greatly shaped by her abolitionist benefactors. Moira Ferguson notes that "many aspects" of Prince's narrative "do conform to fairly propagandistic slave narratives."[104] Furthermore, the controversy which erupted after the publication of her book involved members of the Anti-Slavery Society, not her individually. For example, it was Pringle who sued Blackwood, not Prince, even though MacQueen's abuse of her far exceeded his attacks on Pringle. Furthermore, Prince's book sparked a counter libel case five days after the initial one had been filed; this one involved John Wood v. Pringle.[105] Again, why did not Prince's former owners sue her for libel for her book? On the other hand, MacQueen's

use. or more accurately abuse, of the Prince case was simply another shameless attempt to discredit the emancipation cause as a whole through slandering individuals. Like Sierra Leone, MacQueen hoped to use Prince to bring out the worst stereotypes of blacks, and to tap into the British public's fears about emancipation, especially the prospect of a toppled social order. For MacQueen personally, the case likely brought back feelings from his days in Grenada. Prince's engagement in the emancipation debate was yet another terrible manifestion of "freedom" gone awry. Like Fédon's Rebellion, it was a challenge to the social order made more serious for the simple fact that Prince was a Negro woman, or even worse, a recent ex-slave.

By the 1830s, MacQueen's polemical work over the past decade had gained him the reputation of an authority on the West Indies, even if a highly partisan authority. In early 1832 he was summoned to testify as a witness before a Common's committee on the commercial state of Britain's Caribbean colonies. At this point, MacQueen may have felt somewhat reassured that the government thought him to be a credible authority on the colonies, despite what he always believed to be the strong antislavery influence within several key government offices. Unlike those posed to his business partner, Macdonnell, who had also been summoned before the Committee, the nature of the questions put to MacQueen were of a general nature. Essentially the Committee wanted MacQueen to voice his opinion on the cause(s) of, and remedy for, the "distress" of West Indian colonists. He identified four main causes for the difficulties: 1) the increase in the foreign slave trade; 2) the government's policy of emancipation; 3) the fiscal regulations of the colonies; and 4) the laws forbidding the transfer of slaves from island to island.[106] These problems, he claimed, not only affected planters, but inevitably their slaves; and

if the pressure was not alleviated in some way soon, the colonies would be ruined, which would also affect British naval superiority, and the security of British imperial interests elsewhere. Parliament had heard these problems before over the last decade at one time or another by different members, although this was the first time they were stated comprehensively. The first and last points dealt with the labour problem that abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 had introduced, and that the suppression of the intercolonial trade in 1827 had exacerbated, especially amongst the frontier colonies such as Demerara and Trinidad.[107] David Eltis estimates that these colonies paid two to three times more for their labour than, say, Cuba, which had unlimited access to fresh labour.[108] The fiscal regulations referred to the high tax on colonial sugar which had been imposed as a war time measure but had never been removed, where it stood at 24s. in 1832.[109] The issue had arisen twice in Parliament in 1828, with a petition and a motion to lower the duties, but to no avail.[110] The West Indians were to remain frustrated on this point, as the only real change was to equalize the duty with East Indian sugar in 1835, and with all sugar, regardless of origin, in 1846.[111]

In my view, MacQueen's second point is the most significant of the four, if the least clear. When MacQueen listed "the government's policy of emancipation," he was not referring to a specific proposal to emancipate the slaves because, as yet, there was none, though Buxton was to introduce a resolution for immediate emancipation within three months of MacQueen's testimony. MacQueen may have known about this move, or he may not have. His point here was that the government's "policy" had kept West Indian colonists in a state of uncertainty over the past decade. As Canning had outlined in Parliament in 1823, the government was pledged to the ultimate emancipation of slaves, but a "gradual" emancipation. How long is gradual? Canning

also insisted that the government respected the "rights of private property." Mainstream

abolitionists also supported these rights because, although slavery was a sin, they insisted, it was

a sin that had been sanctioned by British law. In 1828 Buxton declared "I am a friend to

compensation."[112] But was this a guarantee of what all West Indian proprietors since the early

1820s had called "just" compensation? Neither the government nor the humanitarians would ever

be pinned down on the point. Meanwhile there were more radical antislavery advocates clouding

the issue by questioning the principle of compensation altogether. We have seen this proposal

suggested as early as Heyrick's *Immediate, Not Gradual Emancipation* in 1824, but by the latter

1820s, some M.P.s began questioning the principle as well. Brougham suggested that there

should be no discussion of the issue until after emancipation: "let the House do that which they

thought right; and when persons could make out that they had been damnified by the measures

so adopted, *then* would come the time for talking of compensation" [my emphasis].[113] A year

later, Otway Cave moved for emancipation, arguing that compensation was immoral.[114] Thus,

the decade following the government's 1823 resolutions became an agonizing waiting game for

slave owners, who could not foresee any further than the immediate future because they did not

know if emancipation would come the next day, or the next generation, and whether they would

be compensated when it did come. MacQueen made this point at the inquiry, noting the

proprietors' "apprehension that their property is to be taken away, that capital annihilated, credit

destroyed," of which "the consequence is, inevitable misery to all in the Colonies, and to all

connected with them."[115] From all of the defences of slavery in this period, beginning with

Gladstone's in the early 1820s, one senses that most planters would have traded their land and

slaves in an instant if they had been offered a fair price for them; the uncertainty of the future

outweighed any potential profits to be made. David Brion Davis has concluded as much, at least regarding the absentee planters in Britain in the early 1830s: "the absentee proprietors were prepared to settle for cash and let the colonists deal with the consequences."[116] Davis' observation also highlights again the disjunction between the metropolitan and colonial West India interests.

Perhaps all of the colonial interests held out the fleeting hope for a government commitment to keep the slaves bonded, at least for a specified time, and MacQueen may have nurtured this hope. When asked about his suggested remedies for West Indian distress, he argued for a reduction on sugar duties, a bounty on exports, "but above all, and before all, and without which all other remedies are vain, is, the protection of property must be secured." The Committee then asked:

> What do you mean by the protection of property?
>
> MacQueen: That the property established in the Colonies shall be considered secure and legal property, and not to be taken from them as is now threatened to be done...
>
> When you say that, do you refer to the consideration of manumission or emancipation of the slaves?
>
> MacQueen: Emancipation in part, compulsory manumission is one of those regulations attended with evils...[117]

MacQueen went on to argue that compensation would be almost impossible to estimate, which implied that the government had no "just" option in this matter except to pledge its support for legal property.

MacQueen's bold, if quixotic, stance was grounded less in principle than in politics. He most surely did want the continuation of slavery, especially considering his own new investment. But his later actions suggest this uncompromising stand was a bluff.

The Committee published its report in April. It concluded that the duties on West Indian

did not seriously burden the colonists, though it recommended a decrease in the duties on sugar, as well as cocoa, castor oil, ginger and pimento. More importantly, the Committee agreed that the current laws regarding slaves (which the report referred to tellingly as "abolition laws") had resulted in some distress for the colonists:

> Having thus given their reasons for apprehending, that the estimate of loss by the abolition laws, is somewhat exaggerated, Your Committee have no hesitation in submitting to The House their opinion, first, That some loss, and consequently some part of the distress of the Colonists, is occasioned by those laws; and, secondly, That such loss constitutes a fair ground of claim for compensation.[118]

For MacQueen and the West Indian slave owners, the Committee's conclusions were wholly inadequate, and hardly settled anything. The principle of compensation had been agreed to by most everyone; the problem had been in specifying and committing to a just compensation. The Committee did not advance this issue at all.

MacQueen in the Colonies: Colonial Perceptions and Personal Business

As we have seen, the reaction to MacQueen's polemics in Britain was mixed, but generally negative. To the majority of those interested in emancipation--and even to some who were not--he was considered extreme and obnoxious, though an authority and a force to be contended with. Even the West India Association seemed to have weakened its support for MacQueen by not coming to his aid during the Pringle case. As one would expect, however, MacQueen's image in the colonies was far different. The white colonists viewed his polemical defence as one of the few strong and steadfast bulwarks against the antislavery juggernaut. Furthermore, MacQueen's acquisition of his own West Indian property in 1829 only strengthened his involvement in colonial affairs, which in turn bolstered his credibility amongst the colonists even more. He helped to unify the planters in their last defence against emancipation of the

slaves, a defence which did not stave off emancipation, of course, but did help define some of its terms. MacQueen's popularity in the colonies is most significant, however, in that it laid the foundation with which to enact future schemes for the West Indies in a post-emancipation world.

Before the 1820s, MacQueen had numerous individual contacts in the West India colonies, having lived there for fifteen years and having conducted business connected with them since. His refashioning of the *Glasgow Courier* into a staunchly pro-colonial organ introduced him to a wider audience, but it was his monographs published in 1824 and 1825 that made him well known throughout the colonies, just as they had in Britain. In early 1825, the *Barbadian* announced that "in our humble opinion, Mr. M'Queen stands above ALL who have entered the lists in the defence of the West Indian character, and in affording the British Public the most correct and valuable information on Colonial subjects."[119] The colonists, however, gave MacQueen additional credit for simply forwarding the arguments at all, and his popularity in the colonies highlights the tensions which existed between the West Indians in the metropolis and their colonial counterparts. Basically, the colonials felt abandoned, betrayed, and/or that incompetents were defending their interests in Britain. The occasional and quiet rebuttals by Gladstone in Liverpool and J. Clayton Jennyns, the head of the West India lobby's "literary committee" since 1824, were not good enough to answer the offensive launched by those such as Cropper, especially considering what was at stake. In 1825 the *St. Jago de la Vega Gazette* (Jamaica) complained: "What are we to make of, or how much can we depend upon, what we call the West India interest at home? There is an infatuation, folly or stupidity, that hangs about them it seems impossible to account for. We can place no reliance upon them ..."[120] However, the *Gazette* continued, "... but we do look for something favourable from the pen of our able and

indefatigable friend, Mr. MacQueen, as well as from John Bull [the conservative London journal]." After 1824 MacQueen became one of the few voices from "home" that could be relied upon to defend the West Indies on every point, no matter how seemingly small, and launch an offensive of his own against the antislavery campaign. In other words, he was viewed as sort of an informal agent for all of the British West Indies.

The colonists tried to make use of their ally right away by exploiting his popularity in the colonies and his experience in the newspaper business. Many colonials believed that he could defend their interests more effectively by conducting a London newspaper, and in 1825 a campaign was launched toward this goal. The *Barbadian* originally suggested the idea, arguing that "the confined circulation of a Provincial [i.e. the *Glasgow Courier*], compared with that of a Metropolitan, Journal lessens considerably the usefulness of Mr. M'Queen's friendly exertions."[121] Subsequently, on September 23rd, there was a public meeting at the town hall in Bridgetown, where the inhabitants resolved to start such a paper, and enlist MacQueen as its conductor. Two months later, colonials in Port of Spain, Trinidad met and resolved the same, noting that MacQueen was "universally considered to be the Gentleman best fitted to conduct."[122] By November, Berbice planters had raised over £500, and Demerara planters had just started their own campaign.[123] Jamaican colonials followed suit by opening a subscription in December, sorry that they had not done so earlier. In commenting on the subject, an editorial in the *Royal Gazette* reinforced the view that MacQueen was the last and only hope for the colonies:

> Many Gentlemen would be desirous of evincing their respect for him [MacQueen], and of contributing to the *only means now left us* for drawing the veil of delusion from the eyes of the people of England on the subject of Colonial Affairs. It is much to be regretted that the proposals of Mr. M'Queen were not taken up here at an earlier period ... Let us hope that it is not too late, and that the exertions and talents of our most able Colonial advocate *may yet be able to rescue us* from the imminent danger in which we are involved."[124] [my emphasis]

The speed with which this plan for a newspaper run by MacQueen was put into effect, and the universal praises for MacQueen as the leading colonial champion confirmed his role as a one of the leading, if not the leading, spokesman for the West Indian colonies in this period. But more significantly, the whole project betrays a certain unpreparedness, and even desperation, on the part of the colonials. Why was MacQueen "the only means left"? Why did he have to "rescue" the colonies? Furthermore, despite all of the hopes and money, the newspaper never materialized, for reasons that are a little mysterious. MacQueen wrote to the *Royal Gazette* in April 1826, sounding almost as if he were writing secretly from a prison: "I must be guarded in what I do now about a London paper, which, if ever accomplished, must be an evening one. If I cannot make it out with safety, I have another thing in view, which may be safer to myself, and almost as useful to you."[125] Presumably, MacQueen's alternative was to publish pamphlets instead, as well as launching an unprecedented anti-emancipationist barrage of articles in *Blackwood's*. Nevertheless, what does it say about the West India interest when it cannot even get a newspaper off the ground? It was not even the first such paper which never materialized, and can be added to the list of failed attempts to establish a pro-colonial paper, such as Jennyns' *Common Sense*, or to the list of papers which blamed their failures on their support of the colonial cause, such as the *Sunday Herald* and *The Phoenix* (both of which subsequently sought compensation from the West India Committee!).[126]

Although the newspaper project failed, MacQueen continued to grind out articles and pamphlets for the colonial cause. He became much more materially involved in the West Indies,

though, after 1829 when he acquired his own property.

Between 1829 and 1834 MacQueen had acquired ten plantations on the small island of Tortola (part of the Virgin Islands). Eight of the ten estates were formerly owned either by Ruth Lettsome or George Martin, both previously prominent landowners whose heirs had fallen on hard times.[127] Both families owed money to George and Robert Dennistoun of Glasgow, which is probably how MacQueen became interested in the property. With capital borrowed from the prominent merchant-banking house of Reid, Irving and Co. of London, MacQueen assumed the debt on the first three estates in February 1829 with his old business associates from MacQueen, Mackay, and Co., i.e. Hugh Mackay, Patrick Macdougall and William Boyd. Again with money from Reid and Co., an additional seven estates were purchased with Alexander Macdonnell at auction just prior to emancipation. Thus by 1833 MacQueen was part owner of 2000 acres of land and over 1000 slaves, making him and his business partners the largest owners of land and slaves on the island virtually overnight, as well as substantial planters in the British West Indies generally.

MacQueen's motivation for such a massive purchase so quickly remains unclear. Tortolan sugar production had been on the decline ever since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when the Virgin Islands ceased to be of strategic importance for British privateering.[128] In September 1819 a devastating hurricane ripped through Tortola, killing over eighty blacks and fourteen whites, and causing more than £300,000 (currency) of damage to property. Consequently, the remaining whites began to emigrate and the packet system was removed to the neighbouring island of St. Thomas, thus providing the government with even less incentive to intervene. Thereafter, Tortola's most valuable commodity was its slave labour, as British planters on more productive

islands, especially the recently acquired and fairly unexploited colonies of Trinidad and British

Guiana, frantically searched for slaves in other British colonies to meet their needs. Tortola

became a prime target of labour "speculators" acting on behalf of labour-short planters. After the

intercolonial slave trade was made illegal in 1828, such speculation could no longer take place.

In the face of all of this, however, MacQueen made his purchases and, by 1832, had apparently

cut all of his ties with Glasgow, intending to devote all of his energies to his West Indian

business.

MacQueen's new stake in the West Indies clearly affected his public writings, which

became even more radical than before and were addressed more directly to the colonies

themselves. After Lord Howick, the parliamentary undersecretary and son of the Prime Minister,

Earl Grey, made a speech in Parliament outlining the government's plans for emancipation in

April 1831, MacQueen immediately penned a long and inflammatory address to all of the

colonies, in an attempt to unify them, though it is clear his ultimate goal was to stave off the

government's plans for manumitting the slaves. With the refrain "Colonists and Shipowners!"

in every paragraph, he explained "you are no longer considered of any advantage to your country.

You are injured, and about to be sacrificed to the monster, THEORY, and to the hydras,

Expediency and *False Philanthropy*."[129] The gap between the West Indian colonies and the

metropolis no doubt grew wider with MacQueen's interpretation of how the they, the colonists,

were viewed at home:

> The honest individual, or individuals, who have hitherto been appointed to enquire into your case, have, whenever they told truth, been forsaken by a feeble, truckling Government, and surrendered to the merciless persecution and calumnies of a mendacious and venal faction.[130] Your friends are forsaken-- your enemies rewarded. Every interested knave and hypocrite, and every literary rush light, pushes himself into notice by reviling and calumniating you. Nor is this all.-- While every anonymous accusation, and slander, and every *ex parte*, partial and vindictive charge, has been, with aggravations, produced against you, every document which has come from you in vindication of property, character,

and political rights. has been suppressed. garbled. and mutilated, at the will and pleasure of your enemies,
and this, too, WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, and under the very eye, of Government...

    Colonists! ... The Department of Government which has been appointed to guard and protect
you [i.e. the Colonial Office], is ruled and dictated by irresponsible men. It is filled with men who ARE
YOUR FOES...

    Colonists! ... You--all of you--are held up as an *incubus* upon, and most of you are represented
as a disgrace to your country. You are from the Pulpit, at the Bar, and in the Legislature described and
denounced as robbers, murderers and monsters of vice and iniquity,--multitudes of your deluded
countrymen would *cheer* the messenger who brought the intelligence that your were engulphed in the
ocean, or massacred by your servants.[131]

And finally, after setting this context, MacQueen claimed that the government's plans for

emancipation did not include compensation. This was a selective reading of Howick's speech

at best, since the undersecretary did not even mention the subject. Furthermore, MacQueen's

attack on Howick was either based on ignorance or insincerity, since Howick believed that

emancipation had to be adopted with at least a modicum of consent from the planters, who, he

would argue later, should be the ones enforcing any scheme.[132] As is obvious from the preceding

hyperbole, however, MacQueen's purpose was to rouse and unify the West Indian colonists to an

extent unprecedented in their history. "Wherever situated, though your properties may be

differently constituted, your interests are one. You must sink or swim together."

    Near the end of this long diatribe, MacQueen finally offered practical, if still vague,

advice, noting that Parliament has just dissolved, giving the colonies some breathing space.

Make the proper use thereof. The next Parliament, if it can pass the constitution destroying bill [i.e. the
Reform Bill], will not last many months. Another, in that case, must be chosen. Amidst the turmoil of
anarchy and changes at home, you may be forgotten for this season, by which time you must be prepared
to convince our new Legislature and arbitrary popularity exciting and hunting Government [*sic*], that
their measures pursued against you are wrong, or submit to be deprived of both your property and liberty,
or else you must have secured an asylum and protection under the sway of some other nation than your
own.[133]

The threat of the West Indian colonists seeking "asylum and protection under the sway of some

other nation" was an empty threat, but one that would be employed, along with recollections of

the American Revolution, over the next two years.

MacQueen's arguments here are fascinating in how similar they are to emancipationist arguments; MacQueen simply turns the arguments on their heads. Like the abolitionists, the basis of MacQueen's argument stemmed from his appeal to a person's "natural rights." However, whereas the humanitarians appealed to the natural right of every human being to liberty, MacQueen argued for the natural rights of Britons, and their right to "liberty, protection of property, and taxation, with representation." Thus, in the world of colonial logic, MacQueen put the suffering colonist in place of the suffering slave, thereby justifying appeals for government protection, or, failing that, separation: "The Government which arbitrarily or capriciously invades the rights of private property, releases the oppressed sufferer from obedience and allegiance." Such "oppression" could also justify (non-violent) resistance, paralleling yet another emancipationist argument:

> Will you submit to be made, by arbitrary power, political slaves to your own bondmen? No, never! Tell your country, like the brave Spartans, when she goes to deprive you of your property and your liberties, "COME AND TAKE THEM." But raise no your arm against her. Let her complete injustice by the application of physical force.

MacQueen's argument highlights a larger issue that underpinned the colonial position regarding the slavery question: trusteeship. This question went beyond the realm of legalities and even of rights. The West India question was one of duty and obligation. Trusteeship has traditionally been understood in terms of British subject peoples of colour, e.g. Indians, Africans (either in Africa or the West Indies), Australian Aboriginals, etc.[134] But where did the West Indies, now apparently in their decline, fit into the future of the British Empire? The emancipation debate in this period can be seen in part as a struggle to answer this question. At this point, slavery proponents focussed on the past and present. MacQueen and the West Indian plantocracy understood there to be, in fact, a "trust" between the colonies and the mother country,

but MacQueen spent the last decade trying to focus on the debate on the one which centered on the imperial government and the white colonists, not the black slaves. And indeed, the whites of the British West Indies were ruled with restrictions from the home government in exchange for certain protections and obligations from the mother country--namely, the colonists gave up their right to sell their produce to anyone but the mother country in exchange for physical and fiscal protection. In effect, MacQueen was arguing that to abandon the colonies now, in their time of distress, after keeping them bound during 200 years of prosperity, was the height of exploitation, like divorcing one's wife after she is no longer a young beautiful bride. Had the country no sense of obligation?

MacQueen left for the West Indies in the summer of 1832, primarily for personal business, but could now make his appeals to the colonists as one of them. He used his year-long stay there as an opportunity to try to inform, inspire, unify and direct the colonists in the fight for their property. He arrived in St. Kitt's in July, and immediately composed a third address which, when printed, covered over three and a half pages of Jamaica's *Royal Gazette*. Having failed to receive any reassurances from official authorities about the nature of the emancipation plan, MacQueen continued the same themes he had developed in his first two addresses: noting the low esteem the colonies were held in Britain, emphasizing the need for unity, especially the need for the formation of a formal delegation, and underlining the fact that their fates were in their own hands.[135] In fact, the gap between the West India colonies and the mother country could not have been wider in MacQueen's view. Not only had the "anti-colonists" stepped up their attack, but the West India Committee was, alas, still of little use. The Committee could provide some support to the colonists when their delegation arrived in Britain, but not direction, "because they

[the Committee] are not particularly acquainted with the subject [of the colonies]." MacQueen had apparently resigned himself to the fact that after ten years of intense debate over slavery and the colonies, the West India Committee had never been able to rise to the occasion, and would never be able to gain the confidence of the colonists themselves.

MacQueen watered down his own solution to the colonial problem to a more realistic level than that offered in his first addresses. No talk of revolt, or joining another country, although the anxious "Colonists!" begins almost every paragraph. MacQueen may have realized that some of his initial panic was unjustified, because now he made a point to note that "I am not counselling you to rebellion." But he did counsel the colonists to try everything up to rebellion:

> Colonists!--Tell your misguided country that if slavery is a sin, a shame, and a crime, it is she, not you who is the criminal, because it was she, not you, who created it for the Colonies. It is your country, not the Colonies, who was, who is, and who, till she acts justly and honourable by you, must continue to be the actual slave trader, and the only slave proprietor. Throw these facts in her teeth in the proudest language of indignation and reprobation. Tell her that you have no irremovable affection for the system of personal bondage, but that you have an honest and invincible attachment to your property, and that you never can, and never will, be brought willingly to relinquish that property until your country pays you back every farthing which you paid unto herself ...

Strong language, but strong language was about the only weapon the colonists had left, as MacQueen realized. He also advised that the colonists make their case everywhere, in public, in Parliament--"leave no stone unturned"--but they needed to meet with ministers of the government above all, and make sure not to "allow themselves to be handed over to the lower and inveterate organs of the Colonial Office." Still, MacQueen had no delusions about easy, or even probable success. In fact, he added that it was probably too late: "I do not say that this course adopted will *now* save you, but I know that if it had been adopted at an early period, that it would have saved you, and I cling to the hope that it will yet save you, while I firmly believe that if such a course is not taken, your doom is certain."

MacQueen wrote one final address before leaving the West Indies, which reiterated his earlier message. Although this address showed signs of desperation by relating numerous gruesome stories of slave treachery, it also showed MacQueen was facing certain realities. For the first time, he appealed to the free coloureds to join in the colonial struggle: "Union is strength! Let all classes, but more especially the white and the free coloured population, be united, and I am delighted!"[136] MacQueen's invitation to the free coloured is only the last in a series of measures that serve to show that at bottom, MacQueen was looking for a way--the least humiliating way--that the colonies could bind themselves closer to a mother country that did not want them. Despite all the strong language, he urged the colonists to ameliorate the condition of their slaves as far as possible.

The reaction in the colonies to MacQueen's addresses varied from cautious criticism to enthusiastic support, gratitude and acceptance. Charles Thomson, the Attorney-General of St. Kitt's at the time, was much more willing to give the home government the benefit of the doubt, and believe that it would not abandon the colonies. Indeed, he insisted that the government would "take such steps, as are in their judgment best calculated to save and to protect the colonies."[137] Thomson argued that MacQueen was too cynical and paranoid, and that the "tone and character" of his addresses hurt the colonial cause more than helped it. Finally, Thomson added that not only did MacQueen not offer anything new, but that he also encouraged rebellion, despite his denial to the contrary:

> "'Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
> To such a sudden flood of mutiny,'"[138]

was the expression used by Anthony, according to Shakespeare," urged Thomson, "when goading the Roman people to acts of violence and plunder." Thomson's critical points were also

expressed by "A Creole" writing to the *St. Christopher Advertiser*,[139] as well as by Young Alexander in *The Colonial Observer*.[140]

The dissension did not last, however, as MacQueen responded to these criticisms with his usual ferocity. In a long letter, he discredited Thomson by announcing that, as an attorney-general, Thomson was "not a Colonist." Addressing Thomson personally, MacQueen pointed out, "You do not possess, and you cannot possess, any Colonial property, and you consequently can never be injured by any measure on the part of Government, however mischievous, dangerous, and destructive they may be."[141] In a strategic reversal from his writings in Britain, MacQueen staked his authority in the fact that he was now a West Indian proprietor, admitting "all that I have in the world [is] vested in and dependent upon the fate of the West-India colonies."

Generally, however, judging by the reception MacQueen received in the colonies which he visited, it is clear that the majority of colonials appreciated, respected, and ultimately followed much of his analysis and advice on their situation. After his speech at a dinner given in his honour in Antigua, where MacQueen reassured his audience that the new king (William IV) was on their side,[142] an editorial noted that "coming from so respectable a quarter, [MacQueen's speech] is sufficient to cheer the heart of every West Indian proprietor, and to chase despondency from our shores."[143] Over the course of the next two months, he was treated to public dinners in Barbados, St. Vincent and Tobago.[144] The dinner in St. Vincent was a subscription dinner, where 183 guests paid eight pounds each in a strong demonstration of support for MacQueen. Finally, in Grenada, a "deputation of several respectable Gentlemen waited upon him," but, having not enough time to organize a public entertainment, presented MacQueen with 200 guineas instead.[145]

More than the rewards, MacQueen's addresses seemed to have sparked more serious attempts at colonial unification. Obviously some colonists took MacQueen's warnings and suggestions more seriously than others, but it seems clear that this address, and those that followed, did serve as a catalyst to at least get the colonists more mobilized than before. Less than three weeks after MacQueen's first address had been published in Jamaica (May 1831), the July 16 edition of the *Royal Gazette* published the resolutions of no less than eight meetings which had taken place around the island. The paper also ran, for the first time, an advertisement for the formation of a "colonial union."

By the end of July, 1831, all but two parishes in Jamaica had held meetings to consider the crisis and to protest, as strongly as possible, the British government's intervention. The tone of these meetings varied from those who only demanded just compensation, to some even threatening separation from the Empire. At a meeting in Montego Bay (parish of St. James), the freeholders asserted that any move by the imperial government to deprive them of their properties "will compel them to petition his majesty to absolve them from their allegiance, that they may seek the protection of some other power able and willing to secure to them the enjoyment of their rights, and the peaceable possession of their properties."[146] The resolutions adopted at a meeting in Mandeville (parish of Manchester) ranged from mild to radical: after admitting that they would "readily resign" their slaves if compensated, the colonists also forwarded to the government a bold, if hollow, threat: "deny us that [compensation], and although we may be too weak to prevail, still we may prove powerful enough to injure our oppressors."[147]

The first calls for a more formal all-West Indian organization were also made. The idea seems inspired from MacQueen's calls for unity and organized pressure on the government.

Clearly influenced by American precedents, the "Colonial Union" was to be a central body where delegates from each colony would attend, and eventually go to London to represent the interests of all the West Indies. As it stood, the West Indian islands all lobbied the government individually through individual agents, or sympathetic M.P.s.[148] The West India Committee was supposed to represent all of the colonies, but, as noted earlier, it had never been seen to do so effectively. MacQueen's call to bypass the Committee seems to have been taken up at this point. In May 1833, delegates were elected from around the West Indies, with MacQueen chosen to represent the Leeward Islands. The news of his election was announced with great optimism:

> The talents of Mr. M'Queen are well known both in England and Scotland; and as a Delegate from the West India colonies we augur good things. He is intimately acquainted with British and Colonial affairs; nor is he to be deceived by the tinsel which may be held out to allure him from the path which he conscientiously pursues. His ability, associated as it will be with that of other Delegates, is to be inferred will go some way in further securing the right of compensation now admitted by some of the staunchest of the Anti-Slavery Party; if, indeed, it does not alter the tone assumed by many of them. Time will show the result of such an occasion both of mental strength and energy.[149]

In fact, time did not show the result of MacQueen's work as a delegate because the crucial negotiations with the government over emancipation occurred precisely at this time by the traditional representatives of the West India cause. Between April and June 1833, the Colonial Office dealt with the usual prominent metropolitan merchants with West India connections, which were now formed into a formal delegation of their own and included, among others, William Murray, Sir Alexander Grant, George Hibbert, John Irving, Andrew Colvile, and Hugh Hyndman.[150] The delegation, as well the Saints, finally accepted a plan for emancipation, drafted by Stephen, in June 1833, which included major concessions to the West Indians: a staggering twenty-million pound grant, an apprenticeship period for the slaves, and continued protection for West Indian sugar.[151]

Thus MacQueen was able to rally the troops just in time to witness signing of the peace.

He arrived back in London in July, a month after the Emancipation Act had passed. But while his efforts in the West Indies can be seen, at best, as a heroic failure, the *Royal Gazette's* commentary on what he brought to the colonial cause is revealing. His reputation, knowledge (of both Britain and the colonies), and unswerving loyalty would form the basis for MacQueen's future work in the West Indies--work which would be accomplished under the auspices of some the very same metropolitan merchants who had negotiated in place of MacQueen and the other colonial representatives.

In examining the mainsprings of the defence of slavery in Britain in the last decade before emancipation, especially MacQueen's contribution to it, we find that slavery advocates actually did not differ significantly from antislavery proponents in theory. The debate centered chiefly on timing. And even the most extreme addresses written by MacQueen were based on the same logic as those by his emancipationist counterparts. In practice, of course, most philosophical positions, especially those from the pro-slavery side, sprung from material interests, as seen by the arguments of MacQueen or Cropper. Nevertheless, by the 1820s, the debate over slavery was about *when* it should take place, not *if.* Most colonial hacks were at pains to show how much the condition of the slaves had been meliorated. Conveniently, most argued that continued progress and development through amelioration, ultimately ending in emancipation, would have to be "very gradual" if the colonies were not to be completely ruined. But the concession is a quantum leap from the idea that slaves are a fixed and permanent part of the social structure.

MacQueen covered all of these arguments and in this sense is highly representative of the pro-slavery position. On the other hand, he was also a maverick. He did not belong to any of the

formal West India associations, and did not have a personal interest in the colonies until after many years of loyal defence. Though never publicly acknowledged, this independence arose from his personality as well as his own ideas, especially those regarding the government's suppression of the foreign slave trade, the imminent decline of the West Indies, and his interest in Africa. Indeed, his incorporation of Africa into the debate set him apart from everyone. One can say that both sides in Britain were uncomfortable with MacQueen. Obviously, antislavery polemicists would find his work objectionable in the extreme. But the volume and method of his offensive set him well apart from most supporters of slavery, even the West India Committee, who failed, in the end, to come to his aid during his legal battle.

It is important, however, to qualify how radical MacQueen would have been to those outside the emancipation debate. At the time the abolitionists labelled MacQueen an extremist, and especially today, his remarks, regarding the need to uphold the paternal authority of the planters, and about Africans, individual abolitionists and their supporters, are unsettling. But did the public or the government at the time really consider him an extremist? Did he really represent a radically conservative and out-of-touch faction? It is tempting to believe so in light of present-day attitudes towards these issues. For example, it now seems obvious that MacQueen's abuse of Mary Prince was nothing more than shameless and unmitigated racism. But we must remember that MacQueen was a propagandist (albeit a relatively independent one) and the attack was strategically planned to tap into the pervailing prejudices of British society. During the passage of the amelioration bill in 1824, for instance, George Canning, then President of the Board of Trade, and considered a liberal on slavery issues for his previous support of abolition in 1807, likened immediate emancipation to the irresponsiblity of Dr. Frankenstein in Mary

Shelley's recently published novel (1818) because, Canning explained:

> In dealing with the negro ... we must remember that we are dealing with a being possessing the form and strength of a man, but the intellect only of a child. To turn him loose ... would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of a recent romance; the hero of which constructs a human form, with all the corporeal capabilities of a man, with the thews [muscular development] and sinews of a giant; but being unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong, he finds too late that he has only created a more than mortal power of doing mischief, and himself recoils from the monster which he has made.[152]

Furthermore, MacQueen was hardly excommunicated from his official connections after the Prince article. It was not three months after it was published that he was invited to offer evidence before a Commons' select committee on the state of the West India colonies. And he continued to have access to the government for his future work. And how out of touch was his defence of plantocratic rule? The Colonial Office's change of policy from supporting the freedmen to supporting the planters during the economic crisis of the early 1840s suggests that when push came to shove, the government, too, would come to the defence of the traditional colonial authority structure, even well after the fight for emancipation was over. Indeed, in a recent re-working of Eric Williams' controversial decline thesis, Thomas Holt has argued that the Office did not support emancipation at all for humanitarian reasons; instead, officials viewed it simply as a "question of labour," which was the way that pro-slavery advocates such as MacQueen viewed it--only the plantocracy saw a different answer to the question.[153] Perhaps the most telling evidence regarding MacQueen's extremism, however, is provided by his acceptence by some of the abolitionists themselves later in his career. Less than five years after the Emancipation Act, Buxton was inviting MacQueen to his home for advice on Africa and the slave trade.[154]

Except for some of the high-density islands such as Barbados, the end of slavery led to permanent economic decline, largely because the freedmen refused to conform to the needs of the plantocracy. This economic hardship exacerbated other social problems perceived by the whites,

such as high crime, lax sexual mores, orphans, and a revival of African spiritualism. The perceived social and religious decline had become so chronic in most of the West India colonies by the 1850s, that even the white missionaries were complaining about the level of African "civilization."[155] In other words, the freedmen had failed to conform to the missionaries' view of responsible and respectable free people. Pro-slavery polemicists had argued as much ever since the debate over slavery began in the eighteenth century, perhaps knowing better than anyone that the freed slaves would not automatically submit to white needs or expectations, and that slavery was the only system capable of forcing them to conform. The similar reactions and explanations offered by the whites, whether planter or missionary, pro-slavery or antislavery, demonstrates that their views of the African were often not that far apart.

Most importantly, MacQueen's polemical work during the 1820s and early 30s had earned him the reputation as one of the West India colonies' most unflinching allies, and he emerged as one of the leading spokesman for the pro-slavery and colonial cause. Regardless of whether he was considered a radical, he was considered an authority by members of government, and became a lightning rod for antislavery counterattacks. Furthermore colonials overwhelmingly found his defence strong and consistent. Indeed, many had lost faith in the West India Committee in London as well as the other "colonial hacks," and increasingly turned to MacQueen as their sole saviour. This reputation that MacQueen had carved out for himself would be essential in making him one of the few credible bridges between the colonies and the metropolis in post-emancipation reconstruction.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. *New Times*, Sept. 23, 1824.

2. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944; rpt. London: Andre Deutsch, 1964).

3. *Ibid.*, 85-97.

4. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca & London: Cornell U.P., 1975), 450-51.

5. *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York & Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1987), 95.

6. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*; Douglas Hall, *A Brief History of the West India Committee* (Barbados: Caribbean U.P., 1971); Barry Higman, "The West India 'Interest' in Parliament, 1807-1833," *Historical Studies*, 13, 49 (1967), 1-19; Alexandra Franklin, "Enterprise and Advantage: the West India Interest in Britain, 1774-1840," Ph.D. diss., U. of Pennsylvania, 1992.

7. [Anon.] *False Sanctity [versified] or, the Modern Tartuffes* (London: Roake & Varty, 1831), 20.

8. Quoted in the *Royal Gazette* (Jamaica), Jan. 1, 1825.

9. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 29-124; *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 39-49.

10. David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Journal of American History*, 44, 2 (1962), 209-30.

11. David Brion Davis, "James Cropper and the British Antislavery Movement, 1821-1823," *Journal of Negro History*, 45 (1960), 241-58.

12. James Cropper, "The Impolicy of Slavery," *Liverpool Mercury*, Oct. 31, 1823; rpt. in *The Correspondence between John Gladstone, Esq., M.P., and James Cropper, Esq., on the Present State of Slavery in the British West Indies and in the United States of America; and on the Importation of sugar from the British Settlements in India* (Liverpool, 1824), 1-15.

13. "Impolicy of Slavery," 10.

14. Trinidad was to begin registering slaves in 1812 by an Order in Council, though the island's planters resisted the measure. Craton, *Sinews of Empire*, 270-71.

15. David Eltis, "The Export of Slaves from Africa, 1821-43," *Journal of Economic History*, 37 (1977), 409-33; *Economic Growth*, 56, 249; Curtin, *Census*, 234.

16. As David Brion Davis has noted, for British scholars, the term "abolitionist" usually has meant one who supported the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, while "emancipationist" is commonly used for one who supported emancipation in 1833. Antislavery proponents at the time did not make such distinctions, and therefore I, following Davis, have used the terms more generally and interchangeably. See his "Notes on Terms," in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 21-22.

17. Craton, *Sinews of Empire*, 272-73.

18. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 2nd Series, IX, 285-86.

19. Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (London: Vergo, 1988), 424.

20. [Elizabeth Heyrick] *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition; or, an inquiry into the shortest, safest, and most effectual means of getting rid of West-Indian Slavery* (London, 1824), 13. In a similar vein, see also [Anon.] *Letters on the necessity of a prompt extinction of British colonial slavery, chiefly addressed to the more influential classes. To which is added thoughts on compensation* (London, 1826). For analysis of the impact of Heyrick's pamphlet on radicalizing the debate, see Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 1986), 103-18; Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 183-84.

21. A series of six letters published in *Blackwood's* between June 1828 and November 1831.

22. Davis provides the best analysis of both issues. For the comparisons drawn between slavery and English working life, see *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 357-61. For the ambivalence of slavery in the Bible, see ibid., 523-56, though it is set in the context of the American debate. Davis' highly detailed research into the "religious sources of antislavery thought" can be found in his earlier book, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell U.P.), 291-390.

23. Revd. Dr. Wardlaw writing in the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, 74, 5 Jan. 1831.

24. S.G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: a Family Biography, 1764-1851* (Cambridge U.P., 1971), ch. 19. Checkland notes (pp. 179) that Gladstone's investments in Demerara plantations amounted to nearly £300,000 after 1821. After 1826 he also became involved in Jamaica plantations (pp. 196-97). Gladstone also had interests in East India, thus demonstrating the complicated web of "interests" involved in the slavery debate. On the friendship and collaboration between Gladstone and Cropper before the slavery debate of the 1820s, for example, see pp. 190-92.

25. First published in the *Liverpool Courier*, Nov. 5, 1823; rpt. in *Correspondence*, 10. For other works attempting to demonstrate the improved condition of the slaves, see Rev. John Hampden, *A Commentary on Mr. Clarkson's Pamphlet, entitled 'Thoughts ... '* (London, 1824);

Robert Hibbert, *Facts Verified Upon Oath, in Contradiction of the Report of the Rev. Thomas Cooper, Concerning the General Condition of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London, 1824); Alexander M'Donnell, *An Address to the Members of Both Houses of Parliament* (London, 1830).

26. *Correspondence*, 24.

27. Success estate, which became a major focus in the passionate debate over the Demerara rebellion. Checkland, 185-90.

28. Watson Taylor, *Hansard*, 2nd ser., X, 1176.

29. *An Abstract, of the British West Indian Statutes for the Protection and Government of Slaves* (London, 1830).

30. E.g. Alexander M'Donnell, secretary to the Inhabitants of Demerara, and later, a business partner of MacQueen, argued this point forcefully in *Considerations on Negro Slavery, with Authentic Reports, Illustrative of the Actual Condition of the Negroes in Demerara* (London, 1824). See also [Anon.] "West Indian Slavery," *The Gentleman's Magazine* (May 1824), 420-21; and [Anon.] *An Address to the Members of the New Parliament, on the Proceedings of the Colonial Department, in Furtherance of the Resolutions of the House of Commons of May 15, 1823 ...* (London, 1826).

31. Dated Dec. 4, 1823, in *Correspondence*, xiii. See also J.F. Barham, *Considerations on the Abolition of Negro Slavery and the Means of Practically Effecting It* (London, 1824); [Anon.] "Six Months in the West Indies," *Quarterly Review* (March 1826), 490-517; and [Anon.] *A Plan for the Abolition of Slavery consistently with the Interests of All Parties Concerned* (London, 1828).

32. These are Davis' words summarizing Saffin's argument which he forwarded in *A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet, Entitled, The Selling of Joseph ...* (Boston, 1701). See *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 345.

33. *Prospectus of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions* (London, 1823); ref. in Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 408.

34. For an analysis of the eighteenth-century precedents regarding parliament and slave property, see P.J. Marshall, "Parliament and property rights in the late eighteenth-century British Empire," in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, ed. by John Brewer (New York: Routledge, 1995), 536-39.

35. Dated Dec. 4, 1823, in *Correspondence*, 70.

36. Based on Ragatz's compilation in *A Guide for the Study of British Caribbean History, 1763-1834, including the Abolition and Emancipation Movements*, vol. 3 of the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1930* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office,

1932), 405-572.

37. *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State U.P., 1981), 19.

38. *Ibid.*, 22.

39. He admitted as much many years later when giving evidence as an Africa expert before a select committee on the slave trade. After testifying to the climate of Africa, he was asked if he had ever been to the continent. He replied, "No, I have never been to Africa myself, but I have been in tropical climates, so that I can very easily judge what the climate of Africa is." PP 1849 (Lords), XXVIII (32), 345.

40. Minutes of the Society of West India Merchants and Planters, Dec. 22, 1823; in Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 427.

41. *Barbadian*, 9 Nov. 1824.

42. *Glasgow Courier*, 21 March 1826.

43. Others on the list included: James Wilson, Captain Johnson, Theodore Hooke (?), James Calquhan, and William Holden. MacQueen to Blackwood, 29 April 1829, in BP.

44. For Moody's involvement with the Colonial Office, see Murray, 122-24.

45. Quotation from MacQueen to Blackwood, 5 Aug. 1827, BP. Unfortunately, the information was also "confidential" and MacQueen would not reveal to Blackwood in a letter what information Moody had passed on to him. On December 9, 1827, for example, MacQueen wrote Blackwood that he had "some letters from Moody that would fill you with indignation" but would show them only in person.

46. Philip D. Curtin makes an interesting comparison between MacQueen and Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a more famous imperial polemicist: "Both men were able to influence the Establishment, though neither was fully accepted by it, and the practice that followed from their theories was something less than the full-strength dose they prescribed." *Image of Africa*, 284.

47. James Walvin has done the most work on the role of the public in the politics of slavery. See *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Jackson: U.P. of Mississippi, 1986); "The Public Campaign in England against Slavery, 1787-1834," in *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade* ed. by David Eltis and James Walvin (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 63-79; "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery," in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*, ed. by James Walvin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 49-68; and "The Rise of Popular British Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832," in *Antislavery, Religion and Reform*, 149-63. See also Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, ch. 5.

48. Howard Temperley, "Anti-slavery," in *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England*, ed. by Patricia Hollis (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 27-51.

49. Williams describes this "old method" well in ch. 4 of *Capitalism and Slavery*.

50. "Gentlemanly Capitalism," 504-10; quotation on 504.

51. *West India Colonies*, 366.

52. "The British Colonies--Letter to his Grace the Duke of Wellington," *Blackwood's*, 23 (June 1828), 902.

53. "The British Colonies--Letter Third," *Blackwood's*, 27 (Feb. 1830), 45-47. MacQueen's list:

James Stephen, senior, Master in Chancery	£3500
James Stephen, junior, Law Advisor to the CO and Lords of Trade and Plantations	2000
Mr. Sergeant Stephen, one of the Common Law Commissioners	800
Mr. Geo Stephen, Solicitor and Sec. To the Anti-Slavery Society, and other African pickings	uncertain
Mr. John Stephen, bro to James, one of the Judges in the Supreme Court of New South Wales	2000
Mr. Alfred Stephen, lately acting Attorney-General in New South Wales	1000
Mr. John Stephen, junior, one of the Commissioners of Crown Lands in New South Wales	800
Mr. --- Stephen, Clerk to the Supreme Court in New South Wales	500
Francis Forbes, Chief Justice of Supreme Court in New South Wales, a relative of Mr. Stephen's	3000
Colonel Arthur, Governor of Van Diemen's Land, appt'd by interference of Mr. Wilberforce	4000
	£17,600

54. *Ibid.*, 250.

55. Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), chs. 9 and 12.

56. R.R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire, Volume I: West Africa* (London, 1948), 43-45; quoted in Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 483.

57. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 26-28.

58. "Report of the Commissioners appointed for investigating the State of the Settlements and Governments on the Coast of Africa," PP, 1812, X, 281.

59. Also author of *Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Civilisation of Africa* (London, 1816); *More Thoughts ...* (1816); and *More Thoughts Still ...* (1818).

60. *Hansard*, 1st ser., XXXIV, 19 March 1819, 1105 and 1109.

61. *Quarterly Review*, 26 (1822), 81.

62. *The Times*, 13 Oct. 1823, 21 March 1825, and 3 Aug. 1825; and *John Bull*, 9 and 16 May 1824; *Quarterly Review*, 26, 51 (1822), 51-82. References from Lynn, "Britain's West African Policy," 195.

63. "Civilization of Africa--Sierra Leone. To R. W. Hay," *Blackwood's*, 20 (Dec. 1826), 872-92 ["Letter I"]; 21 (March, 1827), 315-29 ["Letter II"]; 21 (May 1827), 596-629 ["Letter III"].

64. Robert Brown argues that "the combined agitation of the West Indian interests, the Royal Navy, the Liverpool palm oil traders, and the economy-minded Radicals pressured the British government to reduce its support for Sierra Leone" in "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6, 2 (1973), 251. Though the majority of his evidence comes from MacQueen, he does not pursue the question of why this combination came together only after 1826.

65. "Letter I," 887; "Letter II," 324; "Letter III," 600.

66. "Letter I," 875, 881-82.

67. PP, 1825 (520), 49; in "Letter I," 885.

68. *Ibid.*, 884.

69. "Letter II," 327.

70. Alex Tyrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London: Christopher Helm, 1987), 50-51.

71. "Letter II," 318.

72. *Ibid.*

73. 25 May 1827, BP.

74. MacQueen to Blackwood, 3 Dec. 1827, BP.

75. 30 April 1828, BP.

76. *Hansard*, 2nd ser., 399.

77. Report from the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and the Island of Fernando Po, PP, X (1830), 1-3.

78. Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign," 260.

79. Robert Thomas Brown, "William Fitzwilliam Owen: Hydrographer of the African Coast 1774-1857," Ph.D. diss., Syracuse, 1965, 253.

80. Brown, "Fernando Po," 262-63.

81. 31 March 1829, BP.

82. 6 Sept. 1828, BP.

83. 25 Dec. 1831, BP.

84. *Glasgow Courier*, 21 March 1826.

85. Reprinted in the *Glasgow Courier*, 9 March 1826.

86. *New Times*, 23 Sept. 1824.

87. Thomas Cooper, *Facts Illustrative of the Condition of the Negro Slaves in Jamaica* (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1824), iv.

88. *England Enslaved by Her Own Slave Colonies* (London: Hatchard & Son, 1826), 46; *The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated*, vol. 2 (London: Saunders & Benning, 1830), 185.

89. (London, 1827; rpt. by Frank Cass and Co., 1968).

90. Quoted in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 18 (Dec. 1840), 327.

91. *England Enslaved by Her Own Slave Colonies*, 46.

92. Author of two pro-slavery pamphlets, published in London in 1828: *A Short View of the West India Question* and *The Present State of Hayti (Saint Domingo), with Remarks on the its Agriculture, Commerce, Laws, Religion, Finances, and Population, etc.*

93. *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, 2, 45 (Feb. 1829), 427-29.

94. *Dublin Morning Post*, 14 April 1830.

95. MacQueen's "rewards":

West India Committee, 1823	£ 100
West India Committee, 1824	100
West India Assoc. of Glasgow, 1825	404
Grenada Assembly, 1825	1000
Jamaica Assembly, 1826	3000
Colonists of St. Elizabeth Parish, Jam., 1830	Eperne (worth an estimated £100)
Grenada colonists, 1833	200

plus newspaper subscription money, dinner subscription money, etc.

Antigua Assembly, 1825	300
Berbice planters, 1826	500
St. Vincent dinner subscription	1464

Sources: W.I. Assoc. of Glasgow, Minutes, 12 Jan. 1826, v. 1, 512; *Royal Gazette*, 31 Dec. 1825, 13 Sept.1826; 29 Oct. 1831; 13 April 1833; *The Times*, 17 Jan. 1825, 21 Jan. 1825; Ragatz, 428.

96. Vol. 2, 45 (Feb. 1829), 429.

97. Published in London by F. Westly and A.H. David. See the recent edition, edited by Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1993).

98. "Supplement," pp. 102-3.

99. MacQueen to Blackwood, 12 Oct. 1831, BP.

100. "The Colonial Empire of Great Britain--Letter to Early Grey," *Blackwood's*, 30 (Nov. 1831), 744-64.

101. *Ibid.*, 744, 750.

102. MacQueen to Blackwood, 22 Nov. 1831, BP.

103. 25 Dec. 1831, BP.

104. "Introduction," *Mary Prince*, 23-24.

105. See Ferguson's "Introduction," 22-23. Pringle lost the case because he could not produce any witnesses from the West Indies. See Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 16.

106. Evidence before a Select Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies, PP, XX (1832), 104.

107. In 1825 the government severely restricted intercolonial movement of slaves by requiring special licenses from the Privy Council, before forbidding such movement altogether in July 1828. See David Eltis, "The Traffic in Slaves Between the British West Indian Colonies, 1807-1833," *Economic History Review*, 25 (1972), 56-57, 62; Barry Higman, *Slave Populations*, 79-85.

108. *Economic Growth*, 10.

109. Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, II (Chapman & Hall, 1949-5), 430.

110. *Hansard*, 2nd series, XVIII, 1 April 1828 and XXI, 25 May 1828, 1565-78.

111. The West Indian monopoly was first broken in 1825 when sugar from Mauritius was allowed into Britain at the same rate. See Philip D. Curtin, "The British Sugar Duties and West Indian Prosperity," *Journal of Economic History*, 14 (1954), 160.

112. *Hansard*, 2nd series, XVIII, 6 March 1828, 1044.

113. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 5 March 1828, 980

114. *Ibid.*, XXI, 4 June 1829, 1744.

115. Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies, 113.

116. *Slavery and Human Progress*, 195.

117. Report of the Committee, 113.

118. *Ibid.*, 11-14, 16-17.

119. Quoted in the *Royal Gazette*, 8 Jan. 1825.

120. *Ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1825.

121. *Ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1825.

122. Meeting held Nov. 17, 1825; recounted in the *Royal Gazette*, 31 Dec. 1825.

123. From the *Guiana Chronicle*; quoted in the *Glasgow Free Press*, 17 Dec. 1825.

124. 31 Dec. 1825.

125. 10 June 1826.

126. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 428-29.

127. Information regarding MacQueen's estates were gleaned from the slave registration returns for 1831 and 1834 (T71/314), slave compensation claims (T71/1040), the valuers' returns (T71/753), counterclaims (T71/1240), commissioners' hearings (T71/1462), and the ledger of claimants (T71/1573).

128. This paragraph is based primarily on Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the British Virgin Islands, 1672 to 1970* (Epping, Eng.: Caribbean U.P., 1975), x, 62, 64-65, 123-24, 127-33.

129. "Ships, Colonies, and Commerce: Address to the British Colonies," in the *Royal Gazette*, 25 June 1831, and signed Glasgow, 27 April 1831.

130. MacQueen is most likely referring to Moody, adviser to the Colonial Office since 1824 until a reorganization at the end of 1828. Moody's office was abolished because of, notes Murray, economy, and Moody's "unpopularity with the Saints." See p. 148.

131. "Ships, Colonies, and Commerce." In this last line MacQueen was surely responding to an article in the *Westminster Review*, a journal once moderate on slavery, but which now supported, amongst other radical proposals, emancipation without compensation and even armed resistance. The author announced, for example: "If the West-Indian islands with all their abominations were to sink into the sea to-morrow, the British people instead of being losers, would be immense

gainers;" and claimed further that "the universal British people would stand by and cheer on their dusky brethren to the assault [on their slave masters], if it was not for the solitary hope that the end may be obtained more effectually by other means..." Vol. 11, 22 (1829), 278 and 287.

132. Murray, 195-99.

133. "Ships, Colonies, and Commerce."

134. Mellor, *British Imperial Trusteeship*. Mellor took up the subject mainly in reaction to Williams' economically-determined explanation for emancipation.

135. Dated 2 Aug. 1832; pub. 22 Sept. 1832.

136. Dated 10 Jan. 1833, Port of Spain; rpt. in the *Royal Gazette*, 16 Feb. 1833.

137. Dated 8 Aug. 1832, Nevis; rpt. in the *Royal Gazette*, 20 Oct. 1832.

138. *Julius Caesar*, III.ii.210.

139. 7 Aug. 1832.

140. Reprinted in a pamphlet, *M'Queen's Address and Anderson's Reply on the West India Question* (Trinidad, 1833).

141. *Royal Gazette*, 20 Oct. 1832.

142. *Antigua Herald*, 17 Nov. 1832.

143. *Royal Gazette*, 29 Dec. 1832.

144. *Barbadian*, 24 Dec. 1832; *Royal Gazette*, 16 Feb. 1833.

145. *Grenada Gazette*; in the *Royal Gazette*, 13 April 1833.

146. *Royal Gazette*, 16 July 1831.

147. *Ibid*.

148. Lilian M. Penson, *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies: A Study in Colonial Administration, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (London: U. of London Press, 1924).

149. *Royal Gazette*, 4 May 1833.

150. See, for example, the negotiations with Colonial Secretary Stanley over the issues of compensation and the method of freeing the slaves in *The Times*, 14 May 1833.

These concessions were the three general demands that the lobby had forwarded as necessary for cooperation in March and April. See 2 March and 23 April 1833, CO 318/116; ref. in Murray, 201.

152. *Hansard*, 2nd series, X, 1103. See also James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro in English Society, 1555-1945* (London: Longmans, 1973) and Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1978).

153. *The Problem of Freedom, passim.*

154. See chapter 5.

155. W.A. Green, "Was British Emancipation a Success? The Abolitionist Perspective," in *Abolition and its Aftermath*, 192-94. See also *British Slave Emancipation*, 312-20 and 329-52.

Chapter 3

Emancipation and Economic Reconstruction:
MacQueen and the Colonial Bank, 1836-38

After settling his own compensation claims, MacQueen set about in the 1830s to settle

some of the affairs for the British West Indies after slavery. His own contribution was to help re-

define their relationship to the mother country in two key areas of the British imperial system:

finance and communication. From 1836 to 1838 he was the agent for the Colonial Bank, and

from 1838 to 1842 he was the agent for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. Though almost

nothing is recorded of MacQueen's work in these areas, they were probably his most significant

legacies to the British Empire. This chapter will help clarify the reasons behind the establishment

of a banking system in the West Indies in general, and MacQueen's contribution to the formation

of the Colonial Bank in particular.

Retreat to Personal Affairs and a Return to Public Work, 1833-36

For three years after the passage of the Emancipation Act, MacQueen did not publish

anything. He had not gone this long without publishing since before 1820, and would never do

so again before his death in 1870. What kept him silent in these years was his personal business

endeavours, which turned out to be a bureaucratic nightmare and ultimately, a financial disaster.

His career as a planter lasted roughly three years, and it took him this long again to finally settle

his compensation claims, for which he did not receive any of the money.

If MacQueen had entertained any thoughts about attempting to revive his Tortolan estates

into viable sugar producing plantations, these were soon dashed. MacQueen's claims for

compensation, complicated in themselves, were overwhelmed by a barrage of counter-claims, brought forth by everyone from MacQueen's creditors to the former slaves of his plantations. Indeed, if he had believed that he could make money from compensation he was here, too, sadly mistaken. When he purchased these plantations, he inherited their histories, which immediately came to light after emancipation.

Excluding MacQueen's creditors, the counter-claimants fell roughly into two categories: those who had money owed to them by the previous owners of the estates, and female ex-slaves, who, along with their mulatto children, had been guaranteed lifetime support. The former category only included the five estates formerly owned by Ruth Lettsome. Her son, William Paynes Georges, ran the property since his mother's purchase in 1813, but after 1820 hard times apparently led him to run up enormous debts, mainly with merchants from Tortola and St. Thomas, but also with his manager, Hugh Smith, whom he did not pay after December 1820. By June 1822, Georges had borrowed almost £4000 (sterling), which amounted to as much as the mortgage.[1] Subsequently, Georges abandoned the estates, leaving the debts hanging until MacQueen and Company sought compensation. MacQueen's dismay at seeing several claims such as that by John James Henry Vanburen, "practitioner of physic and surgery," claiming £32.0.1¾ against the old Lettsome estates, could only have been surpassed by the flood of counter-claims against his Brewer's Bay estate, filed by the former owner's concubines and their mulatto children. When George Martin died in 1818, he had granted annuities to five of his female slaves, plus support for all of the children he had sired by three of them. By January 1836, MacQueen faced eighteen counter-claims against the estate. Twelve of these came from former slaves or their children, and their claims totalled more than £16,000.[2]

All of these counter-claims, however, were secondary next to those filed by MacQueen's creditors. He and his partners owed upwards of £80,000 to Reid, Irving, and Company on the ten estates.[3] In the end, the slaves from the ten estates secured £13,589.15.9 as compensation.[4] The award was easily the largest from Tortola, where the average payment was £454½.[5] Clearly, debts far exceeded assets, and MacQueen and Co. were forced to turn over all the compensation money, as well as the estates, to their creditors at the end of 1836.

It was just well for MacQueen to make a fresh start, however, since the end of apprenticeship all but eliminated the already depressed Tortolan sugar industry. Demerara labour "speculators" had already drained some of the labour force since emancipation because the auxiliary Acts allowed apprentices to purchase their freedom without the consent of their masters.[6] In 1837, another hurricane hit the island and destroyed seventeen sugar works. And between 1837 and 1847, Tortola suffered from almost continual drought. When apprenticeship was abolished in 1838, several labourers began working their own plots. However, it was collapse of MacQueen's old creditors, Reid, Irving, and Company, Tortola's largest employer, in the wake of the passage of the Sugar Duties Act that completely finished the island as a sugar producer.[7] After 1846, most labourers turned to small-scale peasant farming.[8]

After this brief retreat to personal affairs immediately after emancipation, MacQueen returned rededicated to defending the West India colonies. He did this first with another pamphlet, entitled the *General Statistics of the British Empire*. This was MacQueen's attempt to quantify everything of value in the British Empire from poultry and rabbits to the colonies themselves.[9] He determined, for example, that Great Britain had no less than £60 million worth

of manure alone! But the statistics themselves are less important for our purposes here than his reason for publishing them. Though never stated explicitly, it becomes clear by the end of the tract that MacQueen hoped to defend the West India colonies by defending the value of agriculture, especially in relation to the obviously increasing importance of manufacturing.[10] He concluded that while manufacturing was no doubt important, it did not compare to the value of agriculture, which in fact underpinned manufacturing: "the result of the preceding researches, inquiries, and calculations is, that amidst the numerous and proud manufacturing concerns in Great Britain, which adds so much to her wealth ... the value and importance of land, and agricultural industry and produce, stand proudly conspicuous and preeminent." It seems that this conclusion was founded less on the statistics that he provided than from the assumption (stated in the very next sentence) that "the prosperity of every interest, in every country in the world, is based and dependent upon the prosperity and proper cultivation of the soil."[11]

Such an observation should not come as a surprise from one who cut his teeth in the old plantation system, defended that system in his prime, and was hoping to replicate a version of that system in Africa. That this pamphlet came from MacQueen is even less of a surprise since he had devoted virtually all of his energies over the past quarter decade in using his pen in an attempt to educate and persuade what he felt was an ignorant and unsympathetic British public and government. The pamphlet also bears MacQueen's hallmark statistical approach to polemical subjects which he had been developing since his first publication in 1813 and used extensively in his geographical and polemical works of the 1820s. On the other hand, there were some changes. It was a tame tract by his earlier standards: no fiery rhetoric, no names, no apocalyptic pronouncements. He did mention that Sierra Leone "stands as a living record of national folly

... [and] forms a blot on the page of British colonial history."[12] However, MacQueen reserved what little analysis there was in this tract for criticizing the larger West Indian planters, who, he claimed, had fleeced the smaller ones in the division of the £20 million compensation payment.[13] He did not go into detail, but the remark foreshadows more serious disagreements in the near future. Although MacQueen was a West Indian proprietor himself, the criticism nevertheless demonstrates that he was willing to break with most powerful elements of the West India body publicly. His work with the Colonial Bank, while strengthening his ties with some, alienated him still further from other colonials in the West Indies themselves, and represents the larger tensions created when the Colonial Bank became established in the colonies.

Though he had opposed emancipation with everything in his power, making a name for himself as one of slavery's staunchest defenders, MacQueen nevertheless accepted the reality of emancipation. He repeatedly told the British West Indians that they should now look ahead. At one of several public dinners in the West Indies given in his honour during his travels for the Colonial Bank in 1836-37, MacQueen reportedly told his audience:

> Much might at that time [during the emancipation debate] have been done by the all-powerful influence which the West India interest then commanded, had they acted with unanimity, but, unfortunately, they were divided amongst themselves, and thus fell easy prey to their enemies. He could say much on this subject, but would pass it over as equally painful for the company to hear, as for himself to recite. The evil had been done, and could not be undone; it was useless to dwell upon the past. Attention should now be directed to the future, and to the means of meeting the great and pressing dangers that were yet to come.[14]

Appropriately, MacQueen repeated this sentiment at all of his public dinners as an agent for the Colonial Bank, a situation symbolic of the fact that while his audiences were celebrating his past, MacQueen was working toward their future.

The British Background to the Establishment of the Colonial Bank

The formation of the Colonial Bank in 1836, along with several other smaller banks in the West Indies in this same period, was a watershed in banking history because, for the first time, there were "free-standing" banks in the colonies themselves. This development was the result of long-term developments in banking and the more specific needs of the British West Indies themselves.

Banks have exported their services across borders ever since the beginning of capitalism itself. Initially, Italian banking houses, and later south German or Dutch bankers, offered their products (such as capital or bank notes) and services (such as credit or exchanges) to foreign countries in one of two ways: either by sending a representative, or by making arrangements with a similar institution within the country in question.[15] These companies were usually owned by powerful families such as the Medicis or Rothschilds, and remained a significant banking model until the twentieth century. Financing in the British West Indies grew out of this tradition, with merchant-bankers in the metropolis responsible for financial arrangements in the colonies. These merchant houses would provide the massive amount of start-up capital needed for a new plantation—for transport, equipment, slaves and first year's provisions—as well as arrange for the resale of the crop once the plantation began producing.[16]

The evolution of the British economy provided the context for establishing a new financial arrangement. By the turn of the nineteenth century, industrialization, with its concomitant economic adjustments, brought, as Michael Collins has noted, "growth in both productive and trading sectors, the greater accumulation of wealth holdings and increased sophistication of economic relations." These developments in turn made

specialisation, including financial specialisation, more feasible and economic development called for more advanced mercantile and financial arrangements. Here, the commercial banker played a central role: in the provision of credit, media of exchange and remittance facilities; as well as providing the more traditional service as a safe repository for valuables.[17]

In his classic study of the imperial banks written more than sixty years ago, A.S.J. Baster also pointed out that British overseas investment began increasing markedly at this time, especially after the Napoleonic Wars.[18] The elimination of the Dutch East India Company in 1795 and the formal closure of the Bank of Amsterdam in 1819 (having been without funds since 1793) effectively eliminated Holland as a banking rival. The fall in money rates in Britain also encouraged capital overseas; for example, investment in the newly-independent countries of South America increased by nine million pounds per year between 1815 and 1825.

The British government adjusted to these general changes by changing banking laws at the same time that it tried to regulate the banking sector more closely. In 1826 it legalized joint-stock banking for all entrepreneurs through the Joint-Stock Banking Act, thus ending the Bank of England's exclusive right to joint-stock banking.[19] Throughout the 1830s the Treasury also developed a series of Colonial Banking Regulations. These regulations restricted issuing bank notes to a proportion of the company's paid-up capital, required the company to publish its annual accounts, applied controls on the opening and closing of branches, limited business to "banking," and specified a geographic location for the bank.[20]

The new banking legislation of the 1820s and 30s opened the door for a new system by reducing the risks to potential investors. The Joint-Stock Banking Act did this directly by allowing an unlimited number of partners for any banking company. The Colonial Banking Regulations never became law, but as Geoffrey Jones has explained, the essence of these regulations were usually incorporated into a banking company's charter.[21] Until unrestricted

limited liability legislation passed in 1857 and 1858, royal charters were a common way to further

minimize risks for new companies in the early nineteenth century, as MacQueen's numerous

lobbying efforts--ranging from his proposed Africa company to a British steam mail system--

attested. For banking companies, royal charters typically made shareholders liable to only twice

their investments. On the other hand, by granting the charters, the government sought to regulate

the banking industry and hoped to prevent banking failures. In addition to the rules of the

Colonial Banking Regulations, the government required periodic renewal of the charter. The

charters did not, however, grant monopoly rights.

By the 1830s, the culmination of these long-term economic and legislative developments

precipitated the formation of several "multinational" banks in the space of only a few years.

Multinational banks differed from "international" banks which had existed for centuries in that

the former established a branch in another country. Ownership and control remained in the

metropolis, but the branches themselves were "free-standing" banks, with no equity in domestic

banks.[22] Multinationals had no interest in the domestic market, and were, in fact, characterized

by their geographical and functional specialization; their charters usually circumscribed their

functions, and their services adapted to serve the needs of the local economy. And unlike their

merchant-bank counterparts, multinationals were run by a number of shareholders, not an

individual or small family circle.

Not surprisingly, the first British multinational banks were formed within the Empire,

where political, economic and institutional compatibility facilitated easier establishment and

greater security. The first overseas banks were in Australia, the West Indies, Canada and the

Mediterranean:

Australia:
>Bank of Australasia (1835)
>Bank of Southern Australia (1836)
>Union Bank of Australia (1837)

West Indies:
>Colonial Bank (1836)
>Bank of British Guiana (1836)
>Bank of Jamaica (1837)
>Jamaica Planters Bank (1837)
>West India Bank (1839)

Canada:
>Bank of British North America (1836)

Ionian Islands (British Protectorate 1815-64):
>Ionian Bank (1839)

The establishment of so many multinational banks in the space of only four years is also a dramatic demonstration of the centralizing trend in the British Empire. While power was not going directly to the government, as all of these banks remained in the private sector (though they were public companies), control was gravitating towards it as the author of uniform colonial banking regulations and the royal charters which underwrote these banks.

The West Indian Background to the Establishment of the Colonial Bank

The metropolitan forces pushing a banking system out to the colonies were complemented by local conditions within the colonies which pulled it in. Each of the major regions within the Empire had reached an important point in its own history and possessed its own unique reasons for establishing banks in the 1830s. For example, the development of colonial banking can fit easily into the context of Australian settlement or the evolution of responsible government in Canada.[23] Likewise, the British West Indies had their own particular reasons for requiring new financial arrangements--namely, emancipation of the slaves and the enormous changes which

accompanied it.

Virtually all historians who have dealt with the Colonial Bank recognize that emancipation in some way precipitated the Bank's formation, but their explanations vary in scope. Jones, for example, focuses exclusively on sugar prices, which may not even have been seriously affected by emancipation until the end of the apprenticeship system in 1838. He attributes the formation of the Colonial Bank simply to opportunistic British merchants hoping to take advantage of high sugar prices in the mid-1830s.[24] After recovering from a post-war recession, sugar prices, indeed, had increased since the early 1820s, from an average price of 31s. 10d. per hundredweight in London between 1821 and 1830, to 37s. 5d. between 1836 and 1845.[25] Furthermore, the cost of labour remained low until the end of apprenticeship; in some cases, labour was cheaper than during slavery. In Jamaica, for example, a hundredweight of sugar cost 10s. 5.5d to produce between 1832 and 1834, 9s. 2.25d. between 1836 and 1838, before sharply increasing to 29s. 2d. in the last two years of the decade.[26]

Thus it is true that optimism and opportunity were certainly present for those in the sugar business after emancipation, but only in the brief window of the mid-1830s. After 1838 the price of labour rose while the price of sugar fell before completely bottoming out in the wake of the Sugar Act of 1846.[27] Moreover, almost no colonials at the time referred to sugar prices as a compelling reason to establish a banking system.

Any explanation regarding the formation of the Colonial Bank must take the effect of emancipation on the local economy more into account. First, the twenty-million pounds awarded by the British government as compensation to the British planters, still the largest compensation award in British history, brought a sudden influx of capital into the West Indies unlike any other

time in their history. For many contemporaries, this enormous money transfer was reason enough

to explain the founding of a banking system. Indeed, Mary Butler has shown that both the

Jamaica and Colonial Banks cited compensation as their founding *raison d'etre*. She

convincingly argues that the connection between compensation and banking had been made by

metropolitan merchants as early as 1824, when they tried to form the West India Company at the

very time that compensation first began to be debated in public and in Parliament. These

merchants failed to get government support and the scheme soon died, but Butler concludes that

the West India Company's "foundation underscores the fact that the link between compensation

and the establishment of suitable banks was made almost immediately."[28]

While the compensation payment was significant, the end of the slave system itself

inevitably brought much more complicated financial activity in the colonies, and thus also

precipitated the need for a banking system. For example, hitherto there was little money in the

colonies. Foreign trade had always tended to drain specie, but more importantly, little money was

actually needed in the colonies: no wages were paid, slaves grew much of their own food, and

planters used metropolitan agents to sell their sugar, purchase their supplies, and advance them

credit.[29] As final emancipation approached in 1838, MacQueen explained how this old system

was completely inadequate:

> Hitherto every thing in the West Indies, but more especially in the British West Indies, has been
> transacted, as it were, by barter. Labour, except to a small extent, was not paid for in wages, and hence
> a very small quantity of metallic currency was sufficient to supply the wants of every colony. This,
> however, can no longer be the case. The general emancipation of the labourers changes every thing. All
> labour must henceforward be paid for in the colonies; and every article of supply necessary, either for
> estates or the population, must be purchased in the colonies, paid for in them, and the value remitted to
> other colonies; while by-and-by the most of the produce produced will also be sold and paid for in the
> colonies.[30]

The quotation from MacQueen also points to probably the most important issue which

necessitated the formation of the Colonial Bank: the problem of West Indian currency. The

system of currency in the British West Indies in the early nineteenth century can only be described

as chaotic: a mishmash of several currencies in circulation with no standard and fixed exchange

rates. Until the eighteenth century, all transactions in the British West Indian colonies were

conducted with tobacco or sugar. Furthermore, successive waves of Europeans colonizing the

West Indies, all with their own currencies, over three centuries, had created a complicated

intermixture of local currencies by the turn of the nineteenth century. The Spanish doubloon

(gold) and dollar (silver; also known by its earlier name, 'pieces of eight') still predominated in

the British colonies, even where accounts were kept in shillings and pence, according to

MacQueen.[31] Along side these were also Portuguese gold johannes ('joes') and half-johannes,

French pistoles, copper 'Leeward Island Dogs', fourpenny 'bits' and United States dollars.

Colonies also crudely minted their own currencies, mainly by cutting out a piece of a Spanish

dollar and stamping the letter of the colony on it--the 'stampee.' Cyril Hamshere gives an

excellent example of the difficulties that this currency hodge-podge created:

> In Trinidad at the opening of the nineteenth century there was a variety of coin, which might have delighted a modern coin-collector, but hardly facilitated local business: 'douro fuerte', quarter dollar, 'two-bit piece', the 'cinq sous clou' or 'cinq sous croix'--of irregular shape stamped with a cross--and often cut into quarters known as 'cinq sous coupés' or 'Moco pa Jim'. In St. Lucia they dealt in sols, deniers, livres, Louis d'ors, 'three-man pieces', British pennies and 'Leeward Island Dogs; in Grenada it was stamped colonial monetas and moidres; in Guiana, Dutch guilders and stivers.[32]

Paper money had been outlawed since the early 1760s,[33] while metallic currency, in MacQueen's

words, was "not only exceedingly scarce, but also ... exceedingly, nay, ruinously mutilated and

debased,"[34] despite laws in force forbidding mutilation on pain of death.[35]

Thus emancipation exacerbated old financial problems as well as creating new ones, at

the same time that it created new opportunities for potential creditors working under the new joint-stock company laws. In the summer of 1835 the editor of the *Grenada Free Press* summarized why the time had come for a banking system to be established in the West Indies. The biggest problem was the shortage of currency, and he noted that "we see not by what other means, but through the aid of Banks, the planter can find ready money to meet the weekly expenditure for wages."[36] Of course, banks would also provide "funds of deposit and credit" for the planter. In general, a banking system would bring benefits to all levels of colonial society: "Since we have shewn, that prosperity uniformly attends the establishment of Banks in every country: that commerce is extended, that agriculture is fostered, manufactures are enlivened, and by these combined operations the situation of the poor is ameliorated, need we say, that the West India Colonies offer a wide field for the beneficial action of such institutions?"

Interestingly, banking services for the lower classes, alluded to briefly in the *Grenada Free Press* excerpt, became a major focus in the colonies in the autumn of 1835, and further illustrate some of the goals that the colonial elite had in mind for banks. The push to establish a "savings' bank," modelled on those of the Friendly Societies, which helped the freedmen pool their money to purchase land, began in Barbados. It is immediately apparent that the upper classes wanted a savings bank to serve as a social safety net as well as an institution to help facilitate the assimilation of the ex-slaves into colonial society—all to be paid for by the ex-slaves themselves.[37] At a meeting in Bridgetown, the "monied men" urged "the very great importance of impressing on the minds of the labouring classes, especially the lately emancipated people, the necessity of industry and frugality" and predicted that "unless some early and effective measures be taken to improve the moral habits of the labouring classes, who, in a few short years, will be

thrown entirely on their own resources, misery and destitution will spread over the length and breadth of our land." They concluded that

> It is desirable ... that a Savings' Bank, approaching as near as is practicable to the principles of the institution in the Mother Country, should be commenced in this Island. A small deposit of money by every labouring man and woman, to be placed on interest, would, in a few years, amount to a considerable sum. The certainly of relief in old age, sickness, or inability to work, should be impressed on the minds of the labourers as an important consideration.-- Many a poor, industrious man, may be assisted too, with a small sum lent him to commence business with, or to build a shelter for his family in case of casualties by fire, or other calamities. Instances of this kind have occurred in the Friendly Societies, contracted as their means are.[38]

The savings banks never succeeded because most labourers never had extra money to put away, and because saving had never been a part of West Indian culture for any class, particularly the upper class.[39] But its promotion is important in demonstrating how the plantocracy tried abdicating any social responsibilities after emancipation, hoping that the local peasantry would develop their own institutions to cope with the new needs of West Indian society. When the savings bank scheme failed, the Colonial Bank was there to fill part of the vacuum.

Another reason the savings banks did not succeed was because no one had the means to found such an institution. In his article, the editor of the *Grenada Free Press* noted that the planters themselves could not raise the necessary capital to form any kind of bank, and he believed the only solution was for colonial legislatures to "form their Treasuries into local Banks." But the history of the establishment of a banking system in the West Indian colonies shows that the means and the will to establish them would have to come from the home country. The editor of the *Royal Gazette* appended a note to his colleague's article stating he had information that, indeed, "a Colonial Bank is about to be established in London, and that Branches will be formed in all the British West India Colonies."[40]

During his work for the Bank, MacQueen recounted that members of the metropolitan

West India interest began formulating plans for a banking system as soon as the Emancipation Act was passed in 1833. The plan made little, though some, headway with the government, and another meeting was called in August 1835 to discuss another government-supported bank, but one specifically for Jamaica—a meeting to which MacQueen was invited. The Jamaica plan, put forth by one Mr. Lindo and strongly supported by William Burge, the Jamaican agent in London, projected a bank whose primary business would be mortgages, consignments, and commissions on sales and bills of exchange—in other words, the scheme sought to institutionalize the century-old relationship between metropolitan merchants and the colonial planters. MacQueen stated that at this point "I observed that such a plan could never be countenanced by Government, that would deservedly and *in limine* be resisted by the Colonists both at home and abroad, being not a banking concern but a mercantile concern. The general plan for a general bank was then stated by me to the meeting, the influential hands in which it then was, and the negociations going with the Government under most favourable prospects."[41]

MacQueen alluded to some important concerns held by both the government and the colonists regarding the establishment of any banking system. Neither wanted "mercantile" business to be part of the system. The government feared that such business would conflict with proper banking activities, and in practice specifically restricted banks with royal charters—such as the Colonial Bank—to "banking business" (what this meant is explained below). The colonists, on the other hand, wanted to liberate themselves from the traditionally unfair arrangement between themselves and metropolitan merchants, which kept planters in perpetual debt to their creditors in Britain. The establishment of a proper bank in the colonies themselves, would, in the words of one letter to the editor, "release him [the planter] from the thraldom of the merchant,

under whose tyranny he now writhes."[42]

Transatlantic Bridge Building: MacQueen as the Principal Agent for the Colonial Bank

MacQueen's above quotation also alludes to his own role in the formation of the Bank, though it is not absolutely clear. The scholarship has been even less clear on this point. While the official history makes virtually no mention of him, the *Dictionary of National Biography* credits him with "the organization and projection of the Colonial Bank."[43] The truth is certainly somewhere in between. It is fairly clear that MacQueen was not the author of the original plan forwarded in 1833, though he was an avid promoter of it once it was with the government. Moreover, the Colonial Bank's Court of Directors never acknowledged him as the prime mover in the operation, as the Directors for the Royal Steam Packet Company did. The distinction is important since several of the Directors for the Colonial Bank would also be directors for the RMSP Company, including John Irving, who became the first chairman of both companies.

Four of the original eight directors were from the West India Committee: J.A. Hankey, Charles McGarel, James Cavan, and the chairman, Irving, of Messrs. Reid, Irving & Company, MacQueen's own creditor. The other half were from the banking business, which included David Barclay, M.P., John Gurney Hoare, Abraham George Robarts and Samuel Gurney.[44] Many of these Directors were, and would be, involved in numerous post-emancipation reconstruction schemes, emphasizing the heavy involvement of metropolitan interests in the colonies at this time. For example, Irving, Cavan, and Barclay took part in the formation of the Trinidad Railway Company in the latter 1840s,[45] and, as will be seen in the next chapter, both the Irvings (Sr. and Jr.), Cavan, and Robarts were Directors in the original Royal Mail Steam Packet Company.

Meanwhile, Irving Sr. (along with Andrew Colvile and George and Samuel Hibbert) was also in the midst of trying to form the Bank of Jamaica![46]

MacQueen certainly knew the chairman, and most likely knew at least the other West Indians on the Board, if not all of the founders. It is highly probable that he discussed with them the formation of such a company in the early thirties, as all West Indians were attempting to reconcile themselves to emancipation and the subsequent compensation payment. The speed with which MacQueen's arrangements were made supports this contention. He was appointed the Company's principal agent at the very first meeting of the Directors on March 31, 1836. Two weeks later, the Board established MacQueen's salary at £1200 a year, plus expenses, and ordered him to make arrangements to leave for the West Indies.[47]

By the time of their first meeting, the provisional Court of Directors had raised £500,000 capital out of a total subscription of £2,000,000. The Company's head office was located briefly at 62, Broad Street before moving to 13, Bishopgate Street Within. On June 1, the charter had been secured from the government, though negotiations continued throughout the rest of the year with MacQueen's old adversary, James Stephen the younger, the powerful permanent undersecretary of the Colonial Office.[48] The charter incorporated the principles of the new generation of multinational banks. Though colonials had a stake in the company, ownership remained firmly in the metropolis as the charter stipulated that three-fourths of the two-million pound subscription had to be raised in the United Kingdom, and the remaining quarter from the colonies. The charter also limited the company to the "business of bankers," that is, "dealing generally in bullion, money, and bills of exchange, and lending money on commercial paper and Government securities." It could make and issue notes, which would be payable on demand in

dollars. It was liable for the full amount of the stock, regardless of how much of it was paid up, and was required to publish yearly accounts in London and the colonies. The Colonial Bank was forbidden, however, to "lend or advance money on the security of lands, houses, or tenements, or upon ships ... [or] to deal in goods, wares, or merchandize of any kind whatsoever." In sum, the charter ensured a firm metropolitan foothold in the colonies, ensured that it did not cross into mercantile interests, and forbade long-term loans to planters. In other words, the Colonial Bank helped facilitate metropolitan domination of the local West Indian economy.

MacQueen's task was to lay the groundwork for this assimilative process. Though his contribution to the original idea of the Colonial Bank is not certain, we do know that he was responsible for establishing the company's initial infrastructure in the West Indies. As the Company's principal agent, MacQueen's instructions were "to visit the different West Indian Islands for the purpose of furthering the arrangements of the Corporation."[49] This vague mission statement misleadingly underrates the extremely complicated nature of his task and, by extension, his contribution to the Company's formation. In practice, the instructions meant touring the West Indies to evaluate how the Company was to be administered in the colonies (namely, choosing the locations of the principal and subordinate branches), selecting the initial senior staff, and working through any miscellaneous problems, either generally or within individual colonies, such as communication schedules, incompatible colonial laws, or difficult locals.

The nature of the task severely limited the number of people qualified to accomplish it because of the delicate balancing act it required one to perform. The mission required someone able to balance the interests of both the metropolis and the colonies--interests which, throughout the history of the Empire, have differed considerably. The ideal agent for the Colonial Bank, and

numerous other metropolitan companies like it, was one loyal to, knowledgable of, and respected by both the Corporation and the colonials. No one fit this profile better than MacQueen. His dedication to the colonies was undoubted after the bitter trials of the emancipation debate, and his popularity was soon confirmed after his arrival.

On the other hand, he sincerely believed in the Colonial Bank's purpose to partially assimilate and bind the colonies to the mother country. In addition to a sound understanding of economic principles, MacQueen was familiar with colonial laws and other relevant information, had good connections with influential colonials (usually Assembly members), and knew the Caribbean well enough to decide on the most strategic locations for the bank's branches, both generally and within the islands themselves. MacQueen's reputation as an expert on the West Indies was also part of the Directors' decision to make him their agent. One had to have a general knowledge of the Caribbean to organize an administrative framework from which the company could operate. But one also had to have enough local knowledge and respect to be able to get work accomplished in the individual islands. MacQueen had both of these important qualifications. At the first general meeting of proprietors nearly two years later, the Directors explained to the stockholders that they had chosen MacQueen because of "his known experience and popularity in the West Indies."[50] MacQueen's appointment is significant, therefore, because it underlined his reputation as an expert on the West Indies in both the metropolis and the colonies, and hence, his ability to bridge these two worlds effectively.

Excepting his brief trip in 1832-33, MacQueen's work for the Colonial Bank was also the first work he had done in the West Indies since managing Westerhall Estate in Grenada. As the company's agent, MacQueen's primary task was to select eligible locations for branches of the

Corporation's banks, and, with the help of another agent, Michael McChlery, to select the

Company's first managers and senior staff.[51] McChlery had lived in Barbados for several years

and, more importantly, was the nephew of one of the Directors, James Cavan, who, with his

brother Michael, had founded Cavan Brothers & Company in 1797, one of the largest London

merchant houses with connections to Barbados.[52] By August, after McChlery and MacQueen had

been in the West Indies for over two months, the Directors appointed him (McChlery) manager

of the principal bank in Barbados, and superintendent of the branches in the Windward Islands.[53]

Their first concern, however, was the Company's main branch in Kingston, Jamaica, where

MacQueen was authorized to draw up to £5000 sterling for the purchase of premises.[54] On June

1st, 1836, the two men embarked from London to Falmouth, and, after touching at Barbados,

landed at Kingston on July 23rd.

As soon as they arrived in the West Indies, it became clear that MacQueen was as

polarizing a figure in the West Indies as he was in Britain (although the majority of colonials

strongly supported MacQueen), and the only immediate difficulties arose from MacQueen

himself.

MacQueen's tour in the West Indies underlines how much he was still appreciated by the

majority of the plantocracy as a loyal ally for the colonies during the emancipation debate, and

beyond. In many ways the mission looked more like a royal tour than a business expedition, just

as his trip in 1832 had, with MacQueen treated to public dinners and numerous gifts wherever he

and McChlery stopped. In the parish of St. George, Jamaica, he was given a dinner where the

chairman, Roger Swire, described MacQueen as "a gentleman who took our part, and came

forward in a manly and independent manner, when our hacks were at the wall."[55] And when the

two agents were about to leave Jamaica for the last time in March of 1837, the *Kingston*

Chronicle proclaimed that "we have no doubt that had Mr. MacQueen remained in the island

another month, he would have been publicly entertained in every parish in the island."[56] Indeed,

MacQueen was seen as kind of a saviour by uncertain and expectant colonials. When it became

clear that the Colonial Bank would be successfully established, the *Royal Gazette* introduced the

news as a promise fulfilled by MacQueen: "this Establishment will soon be 'under way,' as Jack

says, the Cashier, Books, etc. etc., have arrived on the last packet, and Jamaica's friends will have

an opportunity of shewing that his [MacQueen's] assistance was not made up of idle words. Mr.

M'Queen is again himself."[57]

Outside of Jamaica, MacQueen and McChlery were able to accomplish their immediate

goals without much incident; a remarkable achievement in light of MacQueen's demonstrated

propensity to burn bridges, and simply because of the amount of ground the two men covered.

They travelled virtually the entire British Caribbean (including British Guiana), most of it more

than once, in their year-long tour. They also visited Cuba, Puerto Rico, St. Domingue (Haiti) and

St. Croix (Denmark). By the beginning of 1838 the Directors happily announced at the general

meeting that "they have been extremely fortunate in their selection of Managers and Officers, and

that all the Establishments are under the management of Gentlemen of great local knowledge and

commercial experience."[58]

The two agents also formulated and enacted an administrative scheme for organizing the

Colonial Bank in the West Indies. The plan--which was apparently sketched out sometime before

their departure and revised on their journey before being detailed in mid-1837--was to divide the

British West Indies into three districts, with principal branches in Jamaica, St. Thomas and Barbados, subordinate banks in Demerara and Trinidad (under the Barbados branch), and to form other banks where and when necessary.[59] By the end of 1837, a total of thirteen branches had been formed, making the Colonial Bank the largest and most influential institution of its kind in the West Indies, and marking a significant metropolitan influence in the colonies.

The Corporation's instructions to its managers and staff were consistent with the finalized version of the charter, presented to Parliament in December 1837. The numerous branches were to provide the standard banking services—dealing with bullion and exchanges, and transmitting money between colonies—as well as the limitations on lending money on "mortgages of fixed property."[60] These instructions, and the charter underpinning them, are illuminating. They demonstrate that the Bank's primary role in this early period was more to meet the day-to-day business of the colonies than to provide capital for long-term loans to planters—an initial, but only initial, step in post-emancipation reconstruction. The limitations on lending money to planters, especially long-term loans, were standard practice among the other banks in the region such as the Planters Bank and the Bank of British Guiana, which followed the Colonial Bank's lead. The caution arose out of the economic difficulties resulting from declining sugar prices, increasing planter indebtedness, and estate abandonment. Richard A. Lobdell has noted that evidence collected by two Select Committees in the 1840s confirmed the suspicions that all consignees had concerning the future of sugar.[61] Consequently, planters were not able to secure long-term loans until later in the century, and these came largely from planter building societies, formed in the 1860s and 70s.[62]

Local vs. 'Colonial' Banking: Controversy over MacQueen and the Colonial Bank

In the middle of this friendly atmosphere, MacQueen still managed to create difficulties. Many of the problems arose simply because of his personality. For example, a former custos of St. Anne's parish in Jamaica got into a row with MacQueen over subscription money given to him for his paper war with the emancipationists in 1828. MacQueen claimed he never received such money. The retired custos, Henry Cox, was astonished and confronted MacQueen in the streets of Kingston on the matter, where it was again denied. Cox then got the letter acknowledging the receipt of the money and published it. The *Royal Gazette*, consistently a strong ally of MacQueen's, expressed the hope that the incident would "make Mr. M'Queen less pertinacious in insisting on the accuracy and the retentiveness of his own recollection, and less hasty in giving publicity to statements seriously affecting the conduct and character of an honorable man."[63]

The *Gazette* was not only commenting on MacQueen's behaviour toward Cox, but was also referring to a much larger and more significant row between MacQueen, William Burge, the Jamaican agent in London, and Hector Mitchel, a Jamaican Assemblyman, Custos, and Mayor for the Corporation of Kingston. In a letter addressed to Mitchel dated January 11, 1837, MacQueen charged Burge with "double dealing," and implicated Mitchel as well.[64] Specifically, MacQueen accused the two of secretly plotting to undermine the establishment of the Colonial Bank in favour of their own plans to found a local Jamaican bank. According to MacQueen, there had been nothing but cooperation regarding the two banks initially. He related how Burge sought to improve the plan for a specifically Jamaican bank after Lindo's plan was effectively abandoned at the August 1835 meeting. Burge asked MacQueen for help, and in December 1835 MacQueen

provided him with papers related to the Colonial Bank that were with the government, "that he might learn from them." Cooperation continued between the men through the summer of 1836, as they corresponded with details on the developments of their respective banks.[65]

The problems began when MacQueen started asking questions in Jamaica regarding its currency. MacQueen explained that the rationale for the Colonial Bank was to act as a Bank of England for the colonies, which would entail, above all, stabilizing the island's debt and its currency. He made serious inquiries into the island's silver. In July 1836 he inquired about the £200,000 loan made by the British government to Jamaica, and at the time, he was assured that it was delivered in sterling. MacQueen was satisfied on this point, but made further inquiries into Jamaica's silver currency. The British government had introduced a silver coin into the British West Indies in 1825-26 in an attempt to create a uniform currency; but, knowing how difficult it was to keep specie in the colonies, the Mint depreciated the silver relative to the Spanish silver dollar by ten percent.[66] MacQueen needed details on how much the currency was now depreciated, how much was in circulation, etc. for the Bank's information. Perhaps mistaking these inquiries, Burge wrote MacQueen in October and politely criticized him for suggesting that the coins making up the £200,000 loan were not of the standard value. Burge also sent a letter to the Committee of Correspondence, with accompanying letters from the Mint confirming the coins' value.[67] MacQueen angrily wrote back that it was his duty to inquire into all of the island's coinage, especially considering the depreciated silver that had been introduced previously.[68] But what infuriated MacQueen and precipitated his caustic public response to Mitchel, was when Mitchel read Burge's letter to the Assembly's Currency Committee on December 13, 1836, adding that MacQueen's response to Burge was prompted by a "wicked spirit ... with the intention

to injure the credit of the island" and accusing the Directors of the Colonial Bank of "selfish attempts to depreciate our currency."[69] It was at this point that MacQueen pulled out his standard method of intimidation: to go public. He also offered his usual justification for instigating the bitter public debate: "you [i.e. Mitchel] forced me to take up the pen ... and it will not be laid down until truth in all these matters is placed before the public."[70]

The editors of the *Royal Gazette* admitted that "Mr. M'Queen's observations have staggered us," because Burge was known as a reliable and respectable gentleman, and a loyal defender of the island's interests. In fact, he had been one of the principals (along with Irving) in negotiating the details of the Emancipation Act with the Colonial Office in the spring of 1833. The dispute with MacQueen exploded in the spring and summer of 1837 into a very bitter and public exchange. At one point, MacQueen even accused Mitchel and another Assemblyman, W. Hyslop, of accosting his (MacQueen's) clerk in the streets of Kingston in order to get information, offering him champagne and a higher-paying position with their bank. Mitchel read MacQueen's letter of accusation, as well as the clerk's declaration, to the Assembly, which caused a sensation, not least because Mitchel was forced to periodically sit down because of "excited feelings" and an asthmatic condition. Hyslop was convinced of a conspiracy, "and was about insinuating [*sic*] a charge against Mr. M'Queen, when Mr. Leslie [the chairman] called the hon. member to order [and stated that] If he persisted in dealing out in such insinuations, he begged to remind the honorable member that Mr. M'Queen had his friends also in that house, and that they would not be afraid to speak out and defend that individual."[71]

By June, the *Royal Gazette* was despairing at this increasingly absurd melodrama, noting the "degree of rancour" amongst everyone involved in the "currency question," including all of

the Jamaican press. But the dispute reflected the deeper-rooted division amongst Jamaican whites between those who supported the Colonial Bank and those that supported a local bank. In other words, the dispute boiled down to the perennial problem of the British West Indies about the level of metropolitan intervention. Indeed, in June 1838, the Jamaica Assembly officially protested against imperial interference.[72]

In the case of the Colonial Bank, the chief source of opposition came from local colonial merchants who had traditionally advanced money to planters.[73] MacQueen did not create this opposition and the ensuing division, though his blitzkrieg style of public argumentation did exacerbate the problem. The more moderate contributors to the debate all voiced an interest in the establishment of both banks, some precisely because the local bank would provide, in the words of one letter to the press, "a healthy counterpoise to the otherwise *all absorbing, all controlling influence of the Colonial Bank.*"[74] [my emphasis] And in fact, by 1839, Jamaica had the Colonial Bank as well as two local banks: the Bank of Jamaica and the Planters' Bank.

The issues brought out in the "currency question" involving the soundness of Jamaica's monetary system and an acceptable level of metropolitan intervention continued to plague the Colonial Bank long after MacQueen had left the island. At the first general meeting of proprietors in January 1838, where the news of the Bank's progress was generally positive, the Directors admitted that they had to contend with two main difficulties: "the prejudices invariably felt by all Communities against Institutions," and problems "arising from the very defective and unsound state of the Currency in the West Indies generally and the imperfect state of the Law relating to Legal tender under debt."[75]

MacQueen published his 1838 pamphlet in part to address these difficulties. The "prejudices" in the colonies held against "Institutions" underlined colonial sensitivity to metropolitan encroachment. MacQueen agreed that the colonies needed a local bank to deal with the new problems (and opportunities) associated with emancipation, especially currency related problems. But, on the other hand, he steadfastly insisted that no individual colony could defend its economic needs or facilitate the structural changes without the backing of the British government. Therefore, the new financial institutions would have to have strong connections with Britain:

> Such a banking establishment as the Colonial Bank, with the head quarters in London, and agencies in the principal foreign countries connected with the Colonies, can alone render the British colonies any essential service, or save them from most serious mischief, perhaps ruin, under the total change of society which has so hastily taken place. No banking establishment, merely local, in any of these colonies, whether the establishments be the work of the Public, or of individuals, can prevent, in moments of pressure or alarm, the precious metals from leaving any colony; while both will be found comparatively feeble and powerless to bring these back when pressure requires it, and necessity demands a supply.[76]

MacQueen's analysis stemmed from his belief that no part of the imperial periphery, whether the old colonies in the West Indies, or a new empire in West Africa, could manage well without a strong connection to the mother country.

The chronic problem of currency was more serious and required more immediate action. The government freed the Colonial Bank's hands somewhat when it agreed to lift the restriction on paying only in dollars; a supplementary charter signed in 1838 allowed for payment in any currency legal within the colony where the Bank issued the note.[77] This same year, the government recognized the "unsatisfactory state of the monetary system" in the West Indies, noting, as MacQueen had, "the almost total disappearance of the Spanish dollar from the ordinary channels of circulation, the substitution of mutilated coins, or of parts of coins, and the difficulty in preserving even these, defective as they are, for the purposes of domestic interchange."[78]

After an inquiry, the government determined that the root of the problem "consists in the over-valuation of the gold coins in circulation relatively to those of silver."[79] In the world market of 1838, the rate of exchange between silver and gold was 15.8 to 1; whereas in the West Indies, one doubloon equalled sixteen dollars--that is, the exchange rate was 16.48 to 1. The government's remedy was to fix the exchange rate of the Spanish dollar and doubloon for the British West Indies. An Order in Council in September of 1838 fixed the rate at 64 shillings for one doubloon, and four shillings, two pence for one dollar. The measure gave the needed stability in the short term, and the problem was addressed for the long term when the government again began introducing sterling coin into the colonies in 1838, a measure which eventually supplanted the Spanish coin, and remained standard throughout the British Caribbean until 1951.[80]

MacQueen did not stay on with the Colonial Bank as he became very busy at this time, being engaged in negotiations with the three departments of government regarding the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and in consultations with Buxton and the Colonial Office on Buxton's Africa scheme. MacQueen was also writing his new book on African geography. As for the Colonial Bank, it was ultimately successful, though not without its trials. In its first year, the Corporation made a profit of £17,804 with a maiden dividend of four percent.[81] Profits and dividend percentages continued to rise until the economic crisis of 1841, when dividends shrank from a high of eight percent to five percent within the year, and were passed altogether from 1844 until 1848. By 1849, dividends returned at two percent, and thereafter continued another ascent, reaching twelve percent by 1863, and a profit of £121,000.[82] After the collapse of the Jamaica Planter's Bank in the wake of the economic crisis in the 1860s, the Colonial Bank maintained a

virtual monopoly in the region until the Bank of Nova Scotia established a branch in Kingston in 1889.[83] In the spirit of Imperial federation , the Colonial Bank Act of 1916 lifted the geographical restrictions on most British banks, and allowed them to establish branches anywhere within the empire. The Colonial Bank went to West Africa, thus completing the traditional trading triangle between Britain, the West Indies and Africa.[84] In 1925 the Colonial Bank amalgamated with Anglo-Egyptian Ltd. and the National Bank of South Africa to form Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial, Overseas; or, DCO), which is Barclays International today.

The Colonial Bank was the product of emancipation. With the end of slavery came a revolution in both the local West Indian and British transatlantic economies. The Bank was formed to deal with this revolution. Wages now had to be paid, a large of influx of capital from the compensation payment had to be channelled to various elements in the West Indian economy, and numerous other services were needed to deal with a free, wage-earning society. The necessity of a bank was increased by other difficulties which were exacerbated with the end of slavery, such as the unsound state of colonial currency. And while the establishment of the Colonial Bank did provide local banking services in the colonies themselves for the first time, it also bound the colonies closer to the mother country in two important ways: the government now began creating a uniform set of standards, and control of the bank remained in the metropolis. MacQueen was instrumental in facilitating this change in the colonies as one of the few people credible enough and knowledgeable enough to work effectively in both worlds. Binding the colonies closer to Britain was exactly what he had always argued was the best imperial policy for both the colonies and the mother country, and it is no surprise to find him as one of the Colonial Bank's principal agents. He would go on to do largely the same, though in a much larger capacity, with the Royal

Mail Steam Packet Company in the following years.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Registers of Claims, T71/883, no. 257.

2. *Ibid.*, no. 263.

3. The commission for compensation grouped the estates into four separate claims: no. 257, which included the estates of Mount Healthy, Northside, Turnbull's Mountain, Cane Garden Bay, and Lower Estate; no. 261, Cox Heath and Flamingo Pond; no. 263, Brewer's Bay; and no. 266, Rosses and Shannon's Estates.

4. Return made to the House of Lords ...containing Lists of all Awards made on Uncontested and Litigated Claims up to the 31st Dec. 1837, T71/1409, List C. The compensation award was calculated by taking a percentage of the average price of a slave in each colony between 1822 and 1830. The percentages varied slightly, from 42.48 to 47.58, while the prices varied greatly, from a high of £120.23 in Honduras to a low of £12.72 in the Bahamas. MacQueen's award was calculated at £14.14 per slave, the second lowest price of all the compensated colonies. See PP 1837-38, XLVIII (64).

5. The average is taken from the list of claims compiled by the commissioners as of May 1, 1835, and found in the Assistant Commissioners Proceedings of the Slave Compensation Commission, T71/1503. At this point there were 205 claims, the highest being £12,385. When the top five claims are taken out, the average plummets to £282½.

6. Dookhan, 123.

7. *Ibid.*, 126-27.

8. *Ibid.*, 127, 133-36.

9. London: B. Fellowes, 1836.

10. In fact, this pamphlet may well have been a response to similar quantitative studies of the British Empire, which de-emphasized the importance of the West Indies directly. For example, in his 1833 tract, Pablo Pebrer simply multiplied statistics he had gleaned from 1811 estimates by one-third for all parts of the Empire, except for the West Indies, which he kept the same. See *Taxation, Revenue, Expenditure, Power, Statistics, and Debt of the whole British Empire* (London, 1833). His estimates were based upon P. Colquhoun, *Treatise on the Wealth, Power and Resources of the British Empire* ... (1814).

11. *Statistics of the British Empire*, 220. He revised and expanded this work years later. See *Statistics of Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1850), as well as the expanded edition in 1851.

12. *Ibid.*, 207.

13. *Ibid.*, 191. MacQueen did not elaborate, but Eric Williams cited at least one example in Joseph Marryat, the M.P. and agent for Trinidad, was awarded a staggering £15,000 for 391 slaves, a sum which nearly doubled the average price of £21 paid for each slave in Trinidad. See *Capitalism and Slavery*, 104-5.

14. *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 7 Jan. 1837.

15. Stanley Chapman, *The Rise of Merchant Banking* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

16. Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge U.P., 1960), 3, 38-39, 44-50; K.G. Davies, "The Origins of the Commission System in the West India Trade," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth series, 1-2 (1952), 89-107.

17. Michael Collins, *Money and Banking in the UK: A History* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 12.

18. A.S.J. Baster, *The Imperial Banks* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1929), 1-6.

19. 7 Geo. IV c. 46.

20. Geoffrey Jones, *British Multinational Banking 1830-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 19.

21. *Ibid.*, 2.

22. *Ibid.*, 5 and 41.

23. E.g. Roeliff Morton Breckenridge, *The Canadian Banking System, 1817-1890* (London: Swann, Sonneschein, 1895; New York: Macmillan, 1982); Leslie Cyril Jauncey, *Australia's Government Bank* (New York: Business Council, 1934).

24. Jones, 14. See also p. 32.

25. Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 2, 531.

26. *The Sugar Question: Being a Digest of the Evidence Taken Before the Committee on Sugar and Coffee Plantations* (London: H.M.S.O., 1848), vol. 2, 62; quoted in Richard A. Lobdell, "Patterns of Investment and Sources of Credit in the British West Indian Sugar Industry, 1838-97," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 4 (1972), Table 1.

27. PP, 1856, lv (209), 2-3; quoted in Curtin, "The British Sugar Duties," Table 2.

28. Kathleen Mary Butler, *The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados, 1823-1843* (Chapel Hill and London: U. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 132-33.

29. J.H. Parry and P.M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1971), 197-98.

30. *A Letter to the Right Honourable Lord Glenelg, on the West Indian Currency, Commerce, African Slave Trade, &c. &c.* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838), 9.

31. *West Indian Currency*, 4.

32. Cyril Hamshere, *The British in the Caribbean* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 156.

33. 4 Geo. III, c.34.

34. *West Indian Currency*, 3.

35. Henry Iles Woodcock, *The Laws and Constitution of the British Colonies in the West Indies, Having Legislative Assemblies*, 2nd ed. (London: R. & W. Swale, 1838), 186.

36. Quoted in the *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 15 Aug. 1835.

37. This is simply following a pattern, since, as Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman concluded, the apprenticeship system in general was a way of forcing freedmen "to bear the lion's share of the direct financial cost of their freedom." See "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation," *Journal of Legal Studies*, 3,2 (1974), 377-401; quotation on 379.

38. *The Barbadian*, 29 Aug. 1835.

39. For those better-off labourers of the early 1840s (the golden years for high wages before the collapse in 1846) who did have the means to save, William Green notes that these ex-slaves did not conform to the "respectable" ideals of "industry and frugality" (among other middle-class ideals which British missionaries in the Caribbean promoted) largely because they had been so long denied any material comforts. Instead, Green observes, "they used their high wages and independent earnings to purchase riding horses and finery which they displayed with marvellous ostentation." *British Slave Emancipation*, 306.

40. 15 Aug. 1835.

41. *Royal Gazette, Supplement*, 21 Jan. 1837.

42. *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 15 Aug. 1835.

43. *Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial & Overseas) 1836-1936* (for private circulation, 1938), 26. My thanks to the Barclays Group Archives in Manchester, England, for allowing me to examine their copy.

44. *Ibid.*, 31.

45. Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, 215.

46. This seeming conflict of interest remains a bit of a mystery. Butler explains it as a strategy to secure both the home and colonial banking service markets: the Jamaica Bank would serve the local needs of colonials, while the Colonial Bank, with its headquarters in London, would serve as "the investment channel for the compensation that remained in ... Britain." *Economics of Emancipation*, 137.

47. *Minutes of the Court of Directors of the Colonial Bank, 1836-1844*, 14 April 1836, Barclays Group Archives, Manchester, England.

48. It was signed and presented to Parliament December 16, 1837. See PP 1837-38 (457) XL.95.

49. *Director's Minutes*, 31 March 1836.

50. *General Minutes of the Colonial Bank*, 25 Jan. 1838, Barclays Group Archives, Manchester, England.

51. *Director's Minutes*, 31March, 14 April, and 5 May 1836.

52. Cecilia A. Karch, "The Role of the Barbados Mutual Life Assurance Society during the International Sugar Crisis of the Late Nineteenth Century," in *A Selection of Papers presented at the Twelfth Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians*, ed. by K.O. Laurence (printed by the Barbados Government printing department, 1980), 102.

53. *Director's Minutes*, 11 Aug. 1836; *General Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1838.

54. *Director's Minutes*, 14 April and 27 May 1836.

55. *Royal Gazette, Supplement*, 25 Feb. 1837.

56. Quoted in the *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 25 March 1837.

57. *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 28 Jan. 1837.

58. *General Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1838.

59. *Instructions and Information for the use of the Managers and other Officers of the Colonial Bank in the West Indies* (1 July 1837), signed M. McChlery [Manager of the Barbados Branch], Barclays Group Archives, Manchester, England. I am assuming that the details in this volume reflect the general outline of the plan from the year before.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Lobdell, esp. 36, n.23. See also *Report of the Select Committee on the West India Colonies* (London: H.M.S.O., 1842) and *The Sugar Question*.

62. Karch, 105 and 124.

63. *Royal Gazette*, 8 April 1837.

64. *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 14 Jan. 1837.

65. Some of this information is also in "Letter II" to Mitchel, published in the *Royal Gazette, Supplement*, 21 Jan. 1837.

66. *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 11 March 1837. See also Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, 181-82.

67. Reprinted in "Letter I," *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 14 Jan. 1837.

68. Reprinted in the *Royal Gazette, Postscript*, 11 March 1837.

69. *Despatch* (Jamaica), 22 Dec. 1836.

70. "Letter I."

71. Recorded in the *Kingston Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1837.

72. K.N. Bell and W.P. Morrell, *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1928), 402-6.

73. Dereyk Brown, "The Response of the Banking Sector to the General Crisis: Trinidad, 1836-56," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 24, 1 (1990), 35.

74. Signed "Nemo," in the *Royal Gazette, Supplement*, 21 Jan. 1837.

75. *General Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1838.

76. *West Indian Currency*, 6.

77. *Barclays Bank*, 34-35.

78. Circular, Downing Street, dated Sept. 1838; quoted in *Royal Orders and Proclamations relating to Coins and Currency*, PP 1845 (520) VIII.715.

79. *Ibid.*

80. Hamshere, 157.

81. *Barclay's Bank*, 32.

82. *Ibid.*, 42-43.

83. Jones, 95.

84. See Richard Fry, *Bankers in West Africa: the Story of West Africa Ltd.* (London: Hutchison Benham, 1976).

Chapter 4

Post Office Imperialism:
MacQueen and the Formation of the
Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1837-44

During his work with the Colonial Bank MacQueen began working on another scheme

to bind the colonies closer to the mother country: this time through communications. Unlike his

somewhat nebulous role in the formation of the former, MacQueen was undoubtedly the central

figure in the formation and projection of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, which began

service January 4, 1842. He developed the original plan, and contributed all of the major

modifications for this complex undertaking during the first few years of the company; he single-

handedly promoted the plan to the British government and subsequently became the RMSP

Company's primary negotiator from 1838 to 1841; and finally, he laid the administrative

groundwork in both Britain and the West India colonies.

Now in his 60s, MacQueen's work in these years was the most significant of his career,

and marks the apex of his influence on British policy in both West Indian and African affairs.

As will be seen in the next chapter, while he was working with the RMSP Company, MacQueen

was also solicited by the Colonial Office and his old nemesis, T.F. Buxton, for advice on Africa,

on subjects which ranged from negotiating with Africans (although MacQueen had never been

to Africa) to statistics on the slave trade. Not surprisingly, MacQueen was asked to be the head

negotiator for the upcoming Niger Expedition (co-sponsored by the government and Buxton's

African Institution), an offer he refused because of his work with the RMSP Company. Clearly

during the latter 1830s and early 1840s, MacQueen had become one of Britain's most influential

agents for the British Empire.

These years represent the peak of his influence, however. MacQueen took no significant part in the actual Niger Expedition, which was just as well for him since the mission ended in disaster by 1841.[1] His reputation as an African expert remained intact, but he no longer enjoyed any direct influence on the government as he had previously. He also resigned his position as Superintendent of the RMSP Company in 1842 mainly because of internal company politics. Characteristically, MacQueen intervened in the Company's business from the outside, which eventually led to a complete, embittered and public falling out by 1843.

Despite his difficulties with the Company, and despite the fact that his plan was altered significantly after his departure, MacQueen deserves credit for organizing, promoting, and building the original RMSP Company. The venomous accusations and counter-accusations after he resigned did not encourage company officials to memorialize MacQueen's contributions.[2] This chapter will examine MacQueen's part in the formation of the RMSP Company more fairly, and do so in the context of the government's increasing imperial control over the West India colonies.

Developments in Steam Technology and the British Postal System to 1837

MacQueen's plan for steam communication and the formation of the RMSP Company was a marriage between the larger revolutions which occurred in the latter 1830s in steam navigation technology and in the British postal system. Steam ships had been experimented with ever since Thomas Newcomen first developed his atmospheric steam engine in the early eighteenth century, although it was not until the nineteenth century when a workable vessel had been invented.[3]

MacQueen's interest in steam navigation can be traced back to his residence in Glasgow, which remained the center for advancements in steam navigation for at least the next half century. In 1812, the first passenger paddle steamer, the *Comet*, was launched, and by 1819, twenty six steam vessels ran along the Clyde (as opposed to less than ten on the Thames), by which time the Clyde area began exporting steamers.[4] But these early steamers were small, inefficient, ugly to contemporaries, and had no supporting infrastructure such as coaling facilities in the ports--and thus their acceptance was slow. The Admiralty, always a conservative body, remained apathetic or even hostile to the use of steam ships well into the century. In fact, it was not until 1837 that the Steam Department was formed within the Admiralty,[5] when steam became a more accepted mode of transportation.

More pointed changes occurred in the British mail system, which changed significantly within the span of a very short time in the latter 1830s. Largely as a result of pressure from Robert Wallace, M.P. for Greenock since 1832, the House of Commons established a Post Office Commission in 1835, which published a series of ten reports over the next three years.[6] Among other recommendations for such things as competitive tenders for mail-coach contracts and the introduction of registered mail, the Commission recommended in 1836 that all packet services be transferred to private contractors or to the Admiralty, which had been in charge of the overseas packets since 1823.[7] In 1837 Parliament passed the Post Office (Management) Act, which consolidated all of the previous Post Office regulations from the past 300 years into five statutes.[8] In the summer of this year, the first regular rail mail line opened between London and Liverpool, inaugurating the revolution in overland mail delivery, and which was immediately followed the next year by an Act of Parliament allowing for a separate rail car for mail sorting.[9] The first

regular service to India began in 1837 as well. Based on a plan by Thomas Waghorn, the Post

Office and the East India Company each agreed to contribute £50,000 a year to support a mail line

to India, via Egypt overland to Suez.[10] Finally, Rowland Hill published *Post Office Reform: Its*

Importance and Practicability in 1837, which advocated a universal penny post and the use of

pre-paid postage stamps. This small pamphlet sparked public agitation for the next two years

(largely financed by the banking house of Baring Brothers), and led to the introduction of the

Penny Post throughout Britain, probably the single most important development in postal history.

Beginning in January 1840, any pre-paid letter up to one-half ounce would cost only one penny

to be delivered anywhere in the United Kingdom (two pence if paid on delivery).[11]

The Penny Post did not extend to the colonies, where the risks and the cost of transport

were considerably higher than for inland mail, and more importantly, where there was no general

system for conveying the mails at all. Much like what was done since the Crown monopolized

the mail in 1635, the government simply contracted out the delivery of mails to private

individuals or companies. But whereas the government had slowly taken over the various

services for the inland mails since the days of Charles I, it continued to pay for overseas delivery

for the majority of this service throughout the nineteenth century. Before 1837 and the advent

of the large steam packet companies such as Royal Mail, the Peninsular and Oriental (P & O) or

Cunard, private ships and British coffee-houses were the mainstay of the colonial mails. Anyone

wishing to send mail to the West Indies usually went to his local coffee-house, where bags were

hung on the walls with the names of outgoing ships, their ports of call, and times of departure.[12]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the government attempted to clamp down on this technical

infringement of the monopoly; but, realizing that it could not replace the system, tried to

regularize and control it. Beginning with the creation of the Ship Letter Office in 1799, the Post Office allowed the system of "ship letters" to continue--giving official endorsement to a practice as old as overseas mail itself--but stipulated that it, the Post Office, would pick up the bags, stamp and charge the letters, and send them by government mail coach to the port, where the private ship would convey them. Although the service cost the sender only half that of the normal packet, and although the master of the carrying vessel received two pence per letter from the Post Office, contraband mail to the colonies remained high.[13]

There were some government packet services. Beginning in the 1820s, the Admiralty pioneered the use of steamships for mail service to Ireland, and by 1836, the Post Office had twenty six packets under its charge.[14] But the system was limited to very small routes, and these were losing money. Between 1832 and 1836, these packets lost £154,957, which is what prompted the Post Office Commission to recommend using private contractors as much as possible. After the reorganization of 1837, the packets became the responsibility of three departments: the Post Office and the Treasury would consider what mail services were needed, and the Admiralty would enter into the contracts, as well as superintend their execution and enforcement.[15]

MacQueen's Plan for Steam Mail Communication: Origins, Design, and Promotion

Like many others, MacQueen was quick to see the possibilities offered by the developments in steam navigation and the British mail services. The haphazard system of ship letters and the government's invitation to contract out the various overseas services, coupled with the increasing number of steam ships, undoubtedly interested MacQueen. But as he recalled, he

had been "specially requested" by interested West Indians to design a steam communication system for the colonies in early 1837 when he was touring the islands for the Colonial Bank.[16] His defence of the colonies over the past fifteen years through the use of forceful and highly detailed articles and pamphlets earned him the reputation of one who knew the problems of the British West Indies, and could credibly offer a plan for the future of the colonies in a post-slavery world. Numerous packet companies already existed, and new plans for steam packets were put forth regularly, and thus, initially, MacQueen's plan was just another among many. But by the latter 1830s, British West Indians were still dissatisfied, because the packets only came once a month, there was no time for colonials to reply by the same packet, and the service was always irregular. New companies such as the Jamaica Steam Navigation Company (1835) failed to provide the desired services, even within their limited routes.[17] For example, in January 1838, the Annual General Meeting of the Glasgow West India Association was dominated by complaints against the British-West Indian packet service.[18] In the summer of 1839, the *Colonial Gazette* summarized the problem and the general feeling among the colonials, after it took the *Pandora* packet almost two months to deliver West Indian mail to Britain:

> This vessel is several days behind her time, the Barbados papers being 54 days old; but this is an improvement on the Jamaica mails, when they were of 60 days' date. As we have formerly observed, the present Post Office arrangements for the West-Indian mails are ill-digested, and the people of the several islands have just cause of complaint. The remedy for this is to be found in the establishment of a well-considered line of steamers, which we would fain hope will speedily be effected.[19]

MacQueen also had more philosophical reasons for designing a steam communication system. Basically, such a plan made sense for a dedicated imperialist such as MacQueen. Imperialism by definition requires effective communication. The expansion and maintenance of an empire demands that the center be able to control its periphery, which can only come through

reliable communication. Thus all territorial expansion--indeed, any attempt by a centralized power to exert its influence--has some concomitant system of communication underpinning it. The first regular and efficient imperial communication system was probably introduced by the Persians in the fifth century BC when Darius I built 1500 miles of roads with a series of posts along them to better administer his extensive satrapies (provinces).[20] In England, the "King's mail" is first mentioned in relation to Edward IV (r. 1461-70),[21] when the threat to his throne during the Wars of the Roses probably necessitated a fast, reliable, and above all, secure, means to convey messages. The Tudors, however, established the first Royal Mail system, when Henry VIII appointed the first "Master of the King's Post" to oversee royal communications. By the time of Elizabeth, British merchants had their own organized means of transmitting messages overseas, beginning with the Merchant Adventurers of the late sixteenth century, an organization which officially held a monopoly on business mail until the ubiquitous system of ships letters became common in the seventeenth century.[22] Between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, transatlantic communications improved steadily, which resulted in both the centralization of power in the metropolis, and after 1714, in "centralizing resistance to that central authority."[23] However, these developments did not come as the result of technological developments or government initiatives, but instead from "the growth of oceanic merchant shipping and by the development of the news business of the post and the newspapers."[24]

By contrast, MacQueen hoped to take advantage of technological developments and the central government in order to start a packet service, whose ultimate goal was to engage the rest of the world more closely. Why? Because he understood the connection between mail communication and informal imperialism. In an early pamphlet published in 1838, MacQueen

argued that "the rapidity and regularity with which such communications can be made, gives to every nation an influence, a command, and advantages such as scarcely anything else can give, and frequently extends even beyond the sphere of that influence and that command which the direct application of mere physical power can obtain to any government or people."[25]

Designing a steam mail communication system was an incredibly complicated task. First, the routes had to be devised. Which ports should be included on the routes? Of these, which should be hubs, which should be other major stops? How long should these ports have to reply to incoming mail? How often should the mail be delivered and picked up? The answers to these questions provided the basis upon which to sketch a network of mail lines, including the transatlantic lines, the intercolonial lines, and relatedly, the main lines and their feeder lines. Delivering mail to the numerous islands of the West Indies, for example, complicated the routes because of the sheer number of ports, which increased the chance for mishaps. Excluding these chance mishaps for the moment, however, MacQueen still had to calculate all of the distances between stops, the time it would take for a steamer or a sailing ship to reach these ports, and, from the infinite number of permutations of routes, what the best possible combination would be. Of course these calculations would depend on numerous variables. For example, times would depend upon the size of the sailing ship or steamer, the size of the latter's engine, the efficiency of its engine, the quality of the coal used, the abilities of the commander and/or engineer, and the time of year which affected winds and currents. Times and frequency would depend upon the number of vessels in operation on the routes, and this would depend partially on the company's ability to pay for vessels in operation. Revenue was to come from postage, passengers and

freight--other variables.

Next, these mail steamers needed logistical and administrative support. Coal could come a number of places in Britain, and then had to be shipped to various depôts scattered around the routes. Workers also had to be hired at these depôts to coal the company's ships when they came in. Other logistical concerns included lighthouses, supplies for vessels, offices and depôts, food, uniforms and other items for commanders and crews, and the necessary port facilities for docking, landing mail, etc. The administration was headed, in this case, by the government, but controlled and operated by the Company's management in London. A secondary office would also have to be opened in the Company's home port, which eventually became Southampton. The shareholders and insurance companies could also affect the Company's operation. The Company kept agents in all of the ports of call, while the Admiralty kept agents aboard all of the vessels. Variables for these elements in the plan included the company agent's relationship to the individual colonial authorities, and the Admiralty agent's relationship to the commander of the individual vessels. MacQueen also had to account for colonial and foreign laws--especially those regarding mail, passengers, and freight--in addition to Britain's relationship with these colonies or foreign countries. This period was one of the most tumultuous for all of the Central and South American countries, including the Caribbean, as British colonies adjusted to emancipation, and most of the old Iberian colonies adjusted to independence. The British government did not always have a smooth relationship during these times, demonstrated most dramatically by its blockade of the Mexican ports in early 1842, and its protectorate established over the Mosquito Coast (Nicaragua) from 1841 to 1850.

Finally, MacQueen had to promote his plan to those who could put it into operation,

which meant first, the government, specifically, the Admiralty, Treasury and Post Office; second, private influential individuals who could raise a substantial amount of capital and who would direct the company; and third, the public, who would buy shares in the company, as well as use the service for mail, passage and freight. Part of promotion also included defending one's plan against critics and competing plans. Because steam mail communication involved so many different elements, MacQueen had to contend with political struggles as varying interests jockeyed for favour or a superior position both within and without of the Company.

MacQueen had to consider and manage virtually all of these basic elements and the numerous variables for his plan—a complicated task for the smallest of steam mail routes. Thus one can only imagine what was first said in response to MacQueen's initial plan for a world-wide steam mail communication system in the summer of 1837. Immediately upon his return from his business trip for the Colonial Bank, MacQueen submitted such a plan to the Admiralty. The scheme entailed steam communication between Britain and "the western world," which included no less than all of the major trading ports in the world. The next month he published a more detailed plan, entitled "A General Plan for a mail communication between Great Britain and the Eastern and Western parts of the World; also to Canton and Sydney westward by the Pacific." As their titles suggest, these early schemes outlined extraordinarily large ventures, on the scale of his grand plans for establishing an empire in West Africa. In fact, his arguments and even syntax were very similar to those found in *Northern and Central Africa*. In his introduction to Francis Baring, M.P. and Secretary to the Treasury, MacQueen put forth why mail communication was so important to the British Empire, and why no expense should be spared to

implement it:

> No narrow or parsimonious views on the part of this great country ought to throw aside the plan ... or leave it to be taken and split into divisions by parties, perhaps foreigners, who will then not only command the channels of British intelligence, but be enabled to demand what price they please for carrying a large and important portion of the commercial correspondence of this country. The Public, moreover, can only repose implicit confidence in a mail conveyance under the direction and responsibility of Government. Further, it is scarcely necessary to point out, or to avert to, the immense advantages which the Government of Great Britain would possess, in the event of hostilities, by having the command and the direction of such a mighty and extensive steam power and communication, which would enable them to forward, to any point within its vast range, despatches, troops, and warlike stores.[26]

By MacQueen's estimates, this global mail service would require roughly forty-one steamers, fourteen sailing vessels, a little over a million pounds for start-up costs (construction of the vessels, depôts, etc.), and over a half-million pounds annually to maintain the system.[27] Using geographical information provided by the Royal Geographical Society, MacQueen also strongly advocated British involvement in either the construction of a canal across Panama, or the establishment of a permanent route across Nicaragua, via Lake Nicaragua.[28] To emphasize the importance and necessity of a regular and global communication network, MacQueen used parliamentary papers to list the value of Britain's world-wide imports and exports, which he broke down by region. He also compared the total value of British trade, about £17,500,000, with that of the United States, almost £8,000,000, to show the increasing competition from foreign trading nations.[29]

As with his Africa plans, his global steam communication scheme was both logistically and politically impossible to implement. No vessel had even traversed the Atlantic entirely by steam, and would not until the pioneer crossings of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western* in April 1838 (MacQueen had written the pamphlet in January and February of this year). Nevertheless, the Admiralty did show some interest in a limited version of the plan, and one of its secretaries, Charles Wood, began working with MacQueen on several combinations for mail routes to the

Americas.

Meanwhile, MacQueen had to contend with competing interests for steam communication

to the West Indies. The rival plan that concerned him the most at this time was one put forth by

"a West India committee" in August of 1838. MacQueen learned that William Burge, the agent

for Jamaica with whom he (MacQueen) had disputed on his previous West India trip, was in

charge of the meeting. In response, MacQueen immediately composed a pamphlet to promote

his plan to any West Indian doubters.[30] He dismissed this committee's criticism of his plan on

the charge of ignorance and parochialism. For example, they objected to the packets calling at

foreign ports such as San Juan, Puerto Rico, or St. Jago de Cuba. MacQueen again tried drive

home the point that engagement, not exclusion, would be the path to success for British Empire,

and most especially for the British West Indies, which could no longer support themselves in

isolation. MacQueen spelled out with statistics why a regular intercourse with the other major

centers in the Americas would be of great benefit to British West Indian colonists, particularly

Jamaicans. 400,000 people (190,000 whites, MacQueen noted parenthetically) lived in San Juan,

while St. Jago constituted Jamaica's best re-export trader:

> That town contains 55,000 inhabitants; ships 180,000,000 lbs. of coffee (double the coffee crop in
> Jamaica) 244,000 cwt. of sugar, 15,000 casks of molasses, 40,000 bales tobacco, and 4,000 bales cotton,
> &c. &c. It has in the copper-ore trade 30 vessels of 230 tons each, which, together with the very rich
> mines themselves, are chiefly the property of British subjects, and of individuals in this country ...
> Between Jamaica and St. Jago there is a very considerable trade; in fact, it is now the best re-export trade
> that Jamaica has, and its importance is best proven by the numerous applications which the merchants
> in Kingston make to the naval commander on the station, to send ships of war with the mails to St. Jago,
> as anyone who reads the Jamaica papers, but which it would appear her agent here does not read, may
> see.[31]

The Glasgow West India Association also considered MacQueen's plan in February 1838,

offered its comments and suggestions, mainly amounting to minor adjustments in the number of

stops per month for various vessels in the plan.[32] By November, the Association had turned to

an alternative plan for a packet service between Liverpool and the West Indies[33], and presented

a memorial to the Admiralty in March of 1839.[34] A great deal of political lobbying ensued, as

the GWIA pushed hard for its plan, or at least for a modification of MacQueen's plan. Because

of its traditional business connections, the GWIA wanted St. Thomas instead of Grenada as the

main coal depôt. MacQueen countered and eventually won, after which the Grenada Legislature

promptly voted him one hundred guineas to buy a piece of plate.[35]

Meanwhile MacQueen, Baring from the Treasury and Wood from the Admiralty

continued to hammer out the details of MacQueen's plan, which, for the time being, was

restricted to mail service to the West Indies, and selected ports along the eastern coasts of North

and South America. The Admiralty also informed MacQueen that it refused to perform the

service itself as MacQueen had requested,[36] and wished to contract out the service. In February

1839, MacQueen wrote to Baring with the news that he had found some "influential gentlemen"

interested in forming the company.[37]

Foundation of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1838-41: Continuing Negotiations and Establishing an Administration

Most of the original directors of the RMSP Company were familiar faces to anyone

interested in the West Indies, and certainly to MacQueen. John Irving, James Cavan and the

banker A.G. Robarts were directors from the Colonial Bank, and the former two had also been

involved with the Trinidad Railway Company. The RMSP Company's solicitors, Crowder and

Maynard, had been MacQueen's legal representatives in charge of his compensation claims, while

the deputy chairman, Andrew Colvile, and George Hibbert, had been two of the founders of the

failed West India Company (1824), and, with Irving, part of the founders of the Jamaica Bank. The other directors included Thomas Baring, George Brown, Robert Cotesworth, Henry Davidson, Russell Ellice, John Irving, Jr., W.I. Marshall, and P.M. Stewart. Thomas Masterman and A.G. Robarts were the company's auditors, and Messrs. Robarts, Curtis and Co. its bankers.[38] Once again, in an arrangement similar to the formation of the Colonial Bank, these influential men with West Indian connections would provide the capital for a venture in which MacQueen would do much of the initial groundwork.

The Directors first met on July 24, 1839 at the offices of Reid, Irving, and Co. in Token House Yard, London, where the proposed charter and prospectus were read. A month later the Court engaged MacQueen as the "General Superintendent of the Affairs of the Company," and resolved "that, in consideration of the Services already rendered by Mr. M'Queen in framing the Plan of Operation of the Company and carrying through the Contract with H.M. Government, he be paid the sum of £5000, and that he be further paid the annual sum of £1000 for his future services."[39] After acknowledging MacQueen as the author of the original plan, the Directors assigned him the same sort of vague title that he had been given while working for the Colonial Bank, and one which, again, reflected the broad range of his duties in these early years of the Company. Essentially, he was the point man for all of the Company's business, except for the construction of the new steam vessels which the company planned to build (the ships were partially the responsibility of the "Assistant Superintendent" who was based in Greenock, and the Ship Building Committee of the Court itself; in December 1840, a "Marine Superintendent" would take complete charge of this aspect of the Company's business). Thus MacQueen was involved in constant modifications to the plan, on-going negotiations with the government, the

selection of a dock site in Britain, and the erection of the Company's entire infrastructure in the colonies, which included the selection of ports (plus dock sites, wharves, storehouses, etc. for incoming company vessels), negotiations with all of the colonial governments regarding laws, customs dues, port charges, postal facilities, lighthouses, etc., the locations of coal depôts, and the selection of the Company's first managers and staff.

The Company's charter was signed the next month, on September 26, 1839.[40] MacQueen's first order of official business was to accompany the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to their meetings with the Admiralty and Treasury regarding the contract, which was signed on March 20, 1840.[41] The terms of the contract regarding the obligations of both the government and the Company were similar to the one just previously negotiated with Samuel Cunard in July 1839, but the size of the contract was wholly unprecedented. Whereas Cunard was to be paid £55,000 annually to run four vessels of at least 300 horsepower between Liverpool, Halifax, and Boston, the RMSP Company negotiated a staggering subsidy of £240,000 a year to run fourteen steamships of at least 400 horsepower, plus four sailing vessels, between Southampton and virtually every significant port on the Atlantic side of the New World. Both the subsidy and the number of new ships to be constructed remain the largest in the history of the British government. Even the mail line serving India and China received a smaller subsidy--the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company's contract of 1851 stipulated £199,600 per year for the Suez-Calcutta-Hong Kong line. By this time, Royal Mail was receiving £270,000 a year because of an added line to Brazil which had been signed into its 1850 contract.

At the stage when the original contract was signed, the plan entailed service from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Paramaribo in Dutch Guiana, with only one stop on the eastern coast of the United

States, New York, though the possibility of adding additional stops was written in. The bulk of the service would be to serve the West Indies, both foreign and British, and included ports around the Gulf of Mexico—Chagrés (Panama), Belize, Vera Cruz and Tampico in Mexico, Mobile, Alabama, and the Spanish Main—Cartagena, Santa Marta, Porto Cabello, and La Guayra (the port for Caraças).

The Company would hire its own commanders and crew, but the ultimate authority on board the vessels would be an Admiralty mail agent (an officer of the Royal Navy) who was not only in charge of the mails, but empowered to " require a due and strict execution of this contract on the part of the said Company, their officers, servants, and agents, and to determine every question arising relative to proceeding to sea, or putting into harbour, or to the necessity of stopping to assist any vessel in distress, or to save human life..." His decision was "final and binding" though it could be appealed to the Admiralty Commissioners. It is not difficult to see how these sweeping, but somewhat vague, powers led to conflicts with the commanders of the ships, when even questions of steering the vessel into harbour was not solely their own. Tensions would be exacerbated also by the provision that the agent be provided with his own first-rate cabin, a "proper and secure" place for mails, and was not to be charged for passage and victualling.[42]

The Company and the government showed interest in the Pacific links, especially after the Company received a letter from parties in Sydney expressing their desire for service from the RMSP Company.[43] In July 1840 the Directors asked MacQueen to estimate the costs of a Panama-Sydney-Canton line, while Irving and Colvile would request an additional £70,000 annual subsidy to conduct the services.[44] The next month the Admiralty specifically asked about

sending mail to Brazil and Buenos Aires, which of course, had been in MacQueen's original all-encompassing plan, but which had been shelved. The Company agreed to negotiate these stops as well. None of these additions came to fruition, however. Meetings between the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Baring, now Chancellor of the Exchequer (since August 1839), had led to the conclusion that these additional lines were all desirable, but currently unfeasible in light of poor relations, as with Panama, or because of domestic "financial and political matters" as with Sydney or South America, which forced deferment of the issue to another time.[45]

Before MacQueen left on his West Indian mission in December 1840, he had to head off an attempt to change the British terminus for the line. This seemingly simple question became complicated when numerous interested parties lobbied for alternatives to Southampton, which was MacQueen's choice. The community at Falmouth made an especially strong plea, having been the only station for the overseas mails for nearly 200 years. The Southampton Dock Company made the earliest, and most persistent attempts, perhaps explaining somewhat MacQueen's partiality to this port. In July both Plymouth and Devonport sent deputations to the Company hoping the get the terminus based in their respective ports.[46] Indeed, when the Admiralty conducted an inquiry into the best port for the West India mails, which included the above four ports plus Dartmouth, the officers in charge of the investigation, led by Rear Admiral Sir James Gordon, noted that every port had been very anxious to attract the business: "throughout the whole course of our proceedings a deep interest was invariably manifested by the parties to whom the task of the representing the alleged advantages of each particular port had been assigned."[47] In August, the officers concluded that Dartmouth would make the best port because it was quiet, had good lights, and was relatively secure. A meeting with the Admiralty

was quickly organized, and MacQueen (again) entered a statement regarding the distances, etc. to show the advantages of Southampton. The government agreed to try the port temporarily, but the issue did not arise again and the RMSP Company remained based at Southampton for its entire existence, including its administrative offices which moved from London in 1842.

Another West India Mission and Another Infrastructure to Establish, Dec. 1839-Aug. 1840

The next major piece of business for MacQueen was to set up the RMSP Company in the West Indies. In early November 1840 he was given a letter of credit for £2000 drawn on, naturally, the Colonial Bank.[48] Later this month, a special session of the Court of Directors was organized to give MacQueen his instructions for the mission.[49] He was given power of attorney, which allowed him to enter and conclude contracts for the Company according to colonial laws. He was also to find suitable ports, including all of the concomitant facilities for the Company's vessels and the government's mail. The Company also gave MacQueen letters of introduction from the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, to ensure access to the highest levels of colonial authority.

On December 3rd, MacQueen departed for the West Indies. In less than nine months, he was to travel over 18,000 miles and visit thirty-eight ports. As on his previous trip for the Colonial Bank, MacQueen received a warm welcome in most of the colonies, even missing one of his connections out of Demerara because of a public dinner given for him the previous night.[50]

MacQueen was familiar enough with the West Indian colonies to know which ports would best serve the Company. With speed being such an important factor in the success of the service, MacQueen spent the majority of his time negotiating with Governors and Collectors of Customs

for privileged access for Company vessels into the ports, which meant securing agreements for exemption from customs fees, entry fees, harbour dues, tonnage dues, and the usual red tape required for incoming passengers. Freight was to be severely limited on the Company's vessels, so that any items could be carried off and reported to customs in the time in took to exchange the mail. MacQueen had written to most of the island governments informing them of his—and the Company's—intentions, so none of his requests were unexpected. Though he did encounter some hesitance in places, usually due to internal politics more than any problem with the Company,[51] in the end MacQueen was able to secure all of the needed provisions for quick and easy access for the Company's vessels.

Supporting facilities to accommodate the vessels proved more troublesome. MacQueen wrote from Barbados about the astonishing lack of lighthouses in the colonies: "It is a disgrace to England that such a thing [constructing lighthouses] has not been done many years ago," and suggested that "it would be worth the while of the Directors to press upon the Home Government the propriety of following out this subject."[52] Over the next few years the Directors did press the issue, and found both the home government and the colonial governments reluctant to construct the lighthouses. In fact, in the fall of 1842, the Jamaica Legislature passed an act which, in effect, cut off the maintenance for the current lighthouses.[53]

More serious concerns arose over the coal depôts. Firstly, it was more of a challenge for MacQueen to decide which colonies would make the best places for the stores. Aside from the strategic considerations, he had to take into account the available port facilities for storing thousands of tons of coal, the price of labour in the colony for coaling, and the contractors for the depôt. MacQueen specifically complained about one of the main factors influencing his decision,

and one of the biggest variables in post-slavery West Indies: Negro labour. Early in his trip MacQueen wrote to the Directors, "under the existing state of things [the Negroes are] uncertain in their attendance while in several places their demands for wages is too frequently exorbitant, especially when they perceive that they can with impunity take advantage of the party which stands in need of their labour."[54] He was referring to the colonies of low population density, Grenada specifically in this case, where the availability of land left labourers with more options, and thus more bargaining power.[55] For this reason MacQueen initially favoured Barbados, a high density colony where labour was much cheaper and more reliable. But perhaps because of old friends and a sense of nostalgia, or perhaps because of some business connection with the Company, MacQueen did settle on Grenada, for which, as noted above, he received a prompt reward from the island's legislature. MacQueen also wanted European labourers to be sent out to the coal depôts to be in charge of them, for the purpose, he argued, of teaching the Negroes proper labour discipline, and to prevent fraud.[56]

The colonies had their own concerns as well. MacQueen had to change his plan significantly when, apparently for domestic problems over its control over Santo Domingo, Haiti proved less willing than other countries to allow Royal Mail Vessels into ports without the usual port examination procedures.[57] All of the places at which MacQueen stopped voiced concerns about smuggling, a practice which had a long tradition with the crews of government mail packets.[58] Because RMSP Company vessels were allowed limited amounts of freight, plus passengers, these concerns were even more pronounced at this time.

Foreign ports also had the additional, and far more serious, concerns regarding slaves. In late February, MacQueen wrote

there is a misconception I find prevailing in the Foreign Islands regarding the Steamers which I hope to get done away ... it is believed that they are commanded by Captains in the Navy and that therefore being in some measure Government Steamers and at all events being completely under Government control the Slaves in the Foreign Colonies may find a refuge on board the Steamers without the possibility of their owners recovering them or compensation for them. This must be guarded against in every way.[59]

For many Britons, slave emancipation and the continuing policies of suppressing the foreign slave presented a clear case of British humanitarianism in action. On the other hand, foreign countries, particularly the other major slave-owning countries of Europe, viewed British antislavery policies with a great deal of mistrust and cynicism (just as British slave owners and their polemicists, like MacQueen, had denounced the motives of the philanthropists during Britain's own emancipation debate). Foreign countries did not see the RMSP Company as a private mail service with only the backing of the British government. Instead, they saw it as an extension of the British government.

On the last leg of MacQueen's journey he travelled north to visit Washington, D.C. and Halifax. MacQueen had a friendly meeting with President Tyler, who, according to MacQueen, was encouraging about the scheme, although it is apparent that he offered nothing substantive to the RMSP Company. Cunard served Boston and New York already, and numerous U.S. packet services were in operation, and expanding--and would soon be competing fiercely with Cunard for the transatlantic mails between the U.S. and the U.K.[60] MacQueen had heard rumours, too, that Cunard, with support from the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and the Governor of Bermuda, was secretly planning another line to Bermuda and onward to St. Thomas and the Windwards through the front of another company called the Rell Steam Packet Company. In Antigua MacQueen had run into a member of the Bermuda Assembly, who apparently told MacQueen about the plan, and even gave him a copy of the memorial that was sent to the

government.[61]

Evolution of the Company With and Without MacQueen, 1840-42

MacQueen arrived back in London at the end of August 1840. On the surface, little seemed to have changed with the Company since he had departed, but MacQueen soon found that some small adjustments in the Company's administration would profoundly affect his association with Royal Mail.

Virtually all of the Company's business while MacQueen was gone had been concentrated on the construction of a fleet of fourteen full-rigged paddle steamers, using the latest steam technology available. This was yet another enormous task in setting up the RMSP Company, and by itself put the Company on the cutting edge of transportation technology. In September of 1839, the Directors formed a Committee of the Vessels and Supply of the Machinery, with one Lieutenant Kendall as a Company agent in Greenock, who was essentially in charge of ship building. Because the scale of the undertaking went well beyond the means of any one company, the Directors had secured, by October, contracts with seven different shipbuilders, which were located in four different cities, and seven different "engineering" companies (engine builders) in three different cities.[62] According to the plan, all of the vessels were to be exactly the same so any steamer could run any part of the mail route requiring a steam vessel (at this point, four of the smaller feeder lines required only small sailing vessels). Because the Company planned to carry passengers and some freight, the vessels were also to be larger than any mail packets hitherto in British history—roughly 2000 tons—even approaching the largest steamship of the day, which was the *President* of 2360 tons (launched August 1840).[63] The 400 collective horsepower

engines were also large for their day. By comparison, Cunard's ships at this time were 1154 tons running on 300 horsepower engines.[64] In March 1840, Lt. Kendall prepared all of the drawings, specifications and other preparations for the contracts, and building soon commenced.

Construction would take nearly a year a half, in which time the Company had to attend to fitting and manning the fleet. As building became more involved, the Company hired a captain of the Royal Navy, Edward Chappell, formally to oversee all of the Company's ship building operations in December 1840, just days before MacQueen departed for his West Indian mission.[65] While MacQueen was gone, Chappell's reports dominated Company business, with weekly updates on everything from chronometers to cookery. Overall, everything went well, although with such a large undertaking using new technology, there were bound to be glitches. The basic design of the vessels contained some inherent flaws. For example, the decks had to be raised in mid-construction because not enough room had been made for ventilation, while the long boats could not be carried at all on this first fleet because the engines took up too much space.[66] Other problems also made caused headaches, but no serious setbacks, as when clerical errors in the specifications led one of the shipbuilders (and engineers), Caird & Company, to build vessels that were not standard with the rest of the fleet. The Directors complained, but since time was extremely tight, they had no recourse but to accept the fact that their fleet would not be uniform.[67]

The construction of so many new and innovative vessels in such a short time caused a sensation. The *Greenock Advertiser* enthusiastically reported on the progress of the "splendid new steamers" in the summer of 1841:

> For durability, elegance of model, and the promise of the finest sailing qualities, these vessels are pronounced, by the most competent judges, to be unrivalled, and certainly present a most imposing spectacle. The hurry to have them out to sea is so great, that almost every kind of work connected with them is going on at once, and consequently a vast number of hands may be seen busily engaged in the

work on any lawful day of the week.[68]

When the *Forth* was finally launched in May 1842, over 60,000 spectators came out for the occasion.[69] A contemporary history written in the 1870s also noted that "the fleet of the RMSP Company consisted of the finest class of vessels of that description built of wood which, previous to 1841, had been sent to sea either for naval or mercantile purposes."[70]

In November 1841, the Admiralty tested, inspected and gave its approval for the first four vessels. Again, there were some problems, such as the strong vibrations from the paddles, a "wet cloud" from the boiler, and the fact the engines had been built one foot further aft than the specifications had called for. Still, the inspector added that "there certainly cannot be a finer piece of workmanship than these engines."[71]

MacQueen had only been back in England for a couple of months when the vessels were ready, and had spent this time facing a new Company. While MacQueen had been gone, Captain Chappell, the Marine Superintendent, had gradually acquired more responsibility and authority within the Company through his oversight of ship construction. He and MacQueen soon clashed over the plan. Only a month after MacQueen had returned, Chappell called for the formation of a "Committee of Captains" to check MacQueen's plan: specifically, to check his calculations, the safety of the routes, and the selected locations of the coal depôts.[72] Taken completely by surprise, MacQueen was furious. Never one able to take questions to his conclusions lightly, MacQueen also objected to this check on the plan because this process had been done months ago with the Admiralty.[73]

Still, the Committee, which included MacQueen, Chappell, and three naval officers, met over the next three weeks. MacQueen filed a separate report in which he reiterated his objections.

But he need not have complained too much since the Committee found little wrong with the plan. Lighthouses were needed, a couple of ports needed changed, speed and coal consumption were thought slightly too optimistic, and the passage through the Turk's Island Passage and New Providence Channels (the Bahamas) was deemed too dangerous for fast steamers--"it would seem a almost a miracle," the Captains noted, "to make 112 voyages each year, through these countless rocks and shoals without the occurrence of disaster."[74] MacQueen accepted most of these changes, explaining that he had pushed for some of these changes himself (e.g. the lighthouses), and that discrepancies should be blamed on the new ships' performance, and not his calculations, which he based on other steamers, notably the *Great Western*). The most serious oversight seems to have been down time for the steamers. The Committee noted that "there has as yet been no instance of a steam vessel working for six months, without cessation," whereas MacQueen's plan was based upon year-round service.

The report basically vindicated MacQueen, and he received further backing a week later regarding the navigation of the Bahamas when Chappell reported that the Admiralty saw "nothing to prevent the Company's ships with proper care from using the Hawk's Nest and Cockburn's Anchorages, and from carrying out the course of operation contemplated by Mr. M'Queen."[75] But other developments coupled with MacQueen's naturally suspicious mind led him to believe that a conspiracy had been hatched to squeeze him out of the Company's operations. At the same time that the Committee presented its report in mid-November, a new plan was considered, authored by MacQueen's old partner in the Colonial Bank, Michael McChlery.[76] McChlery's plan was a pared down version of MacQueen's, and for the moment, received little attention. But these small incidents and disagreements were disconcerting. MacQueen later recalled that

''everything around me indicated some secret work in operation. Scarcely a question was asked for many weeks regarding anything that I had seen, heard, or done during my mission.''[77]

Initial Service: Problems and Modifications

Partial service began in early 1842, with the departure of the *Tay* from Southampton on January 4. Delays plagued the vessel from the very beginning, as the *Tay* did not even make it out of British waters without finding itself behind schedule. In this case the Admiralty had insisted, against strong Company protests, that the steamer pick up the outward mails at Falmouth.[78] Further delays and other problems, even disasters, beset the Company for the first few months of operation--so much so that it seems particularly remarkable that the Company survived, let alone prospered.

The full extent of the mail system's weaknesses did not reveal themselves until a couple of months of service. Some irregularities were to be expected from the initial run of such a complicated undertaking, but prolonged delays would be the death of the endeavour, since the Company's *raison d'etre* was to provide faster, more regular, service. In mid-March 1842, three months after service began, the Directors sat to examine the main reasons for the delays. Crew trouble and a labour shortage seemed the most common causes initially. According to MacQueen's later account, the Company sought its first crews from the dredges of the seafaring world, and paid for their parsimony with insubordination to officers and rudeness to passengers. For example, the *Tweed* lost precious time coaling at Grenada because the crews of the *Dee* and the *Clyde* refused to help. The *Dee* herself spent over two days coaling because of the same labour problems; consequently, the passengers became so disgusted that they all hired another

vessel. The next month the commander of the *Clyde* reported on the "mutinous state" of his crew.[79] The *City of Glasgow* had trouble coaling in Demerara partially because the chief engineer and trimmer were being punished for misbehaviour, and partially because the local Negroes struck work. A month later the Directors found out that the ship's third engineer had been thrown into prison for striking a saloon cook, with Captain Boxer describing the rest of his crew as "absolutely little short of savages."[80] It is little wonder, then, why the Company's agent in Grenada, Captain Maclean, recommended implementing naval discipline.[81]

There were other causes for delay as well: no tugboat at the Mississippi port, no trade wind, an engineering error miscalculating the amount of coal needed, a British naval blockade of Mexican ports (June 1842), etc. Regardless of the reasons, these delays inevitably led to complaints, with which the Company was flooded in the spring and summer of 1842. Complaints ranged from poor treatment and the quality of the wine, to schedule irregularities--either the failure to arrive on time, or even the unexpected landing, as when the *Actæon* landed and left a group of passengers on Turk's Island.[82] Even problems which had been foreseen and discussed previously disrupted the operation. In August, Customs officers in Southampton found contraband tobacco on both the *Trent* and the *Thames*; subsequently, both vessels had temporary stops put on them.[83] And no mail was exchanged at Mayaguez (Puerto Rico) because the port authorities required the Company's agent there, R.D. Jacob, "to become security for any negro slaves the steamers might take from the island," which he refused to do. Shortly thereafter, MacQueen had to rearrange the routes so that San Juan became the only port of call for the island.[84]

Also not surprisingly, disputes arose between the Company's commanders and the

Admiralty mail agents, as the former obviously resented taking orders from someone else on a ship that was technically under his command. For example, in the summer of 1842, the Admiralty agent aboard the *Medway*, Lieutenant Achmutry, wrote the commander, Captain Smith, a note during the vessel's approach to port, with suggestions on where to land. According to the evidence that the Directors received later, Smith shot back to the messenger "for God's sake, tell Mr. Achmutry I cannot be humbugging replying to letters now!"[85]

These initial difficulties occurred during the first major administrative reorganization of the Company's management. On February 10, 1842, barely one month after service began, the Secretary, Henry Longland, retired. A week later, Chappell became the new secretary at £1000 per year, and was paid an additional lump sum of the difference of all of his previous pay calculated at this rate. MacQueen's position was refined to "Superintendent of Foreign Agencies," which included the oversight of the "operation of the Company abroad; of the proper instructions to the Captains; of the regular performance of the service abroad, and of the correspondence relating therein." He was also requested to attend Court meetings.[86]

As his new duties suggest, MacQueen still retained enormous responsibility within the Company. For the next six months, he took care of virtually all business arising from outside of Britain, which included problems on board the vessels, complaints from foreign or colonial governments, or anything to do with the coal depôts or company agents. He then provided a bi-monthly report of his work to the Court. Still, relative to his earlier position, MacQueen's influence had declined in the Company while Chappell's had grown significantly. As Secretary, all business, now including MacQueen's, passed through Chappell before it came before the Directors. Obviously the Directors were impressed with Chappell, and MacQueen found that he

no longer had the ear of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, as he had previously.

Nothing reflected the new order of Company management better than when the Directors ordered some modifications to the plan in May. As usual, MacQueen was to work out the details, but he was to do so with Chappell. On Chappell's suggestion, MacQueen was also given explicit instructions about the scope of the plan. He was told up front to eliminate service to Halifax and Surinam, and reduce service to Tampico, Vera Cruz, Cartagena and Chagres to once a month.[87]

MacQueen opposed these limitations on the Company's service, having seen his plan reduced from a world-wide mail service to one that did not even serve all of the Caribbean. Even worse for MacQueen, McChlery submitted another plan the next month, paralleling the one suggested by Chappell, and which received a more enthusiastic response from the Directors this time.[88] MacQueen struggled to maintain the present scheme, but did so during the low point of the Company's history. In May, the *Medina* struck the shoals off Turk's Island and was lost. And as the complaints continued to mount, a sympathizer wrote the Company saying one newspaper was predicting "the probable dissolution of the Company."[89] By the beginning of August the Directors had decided to adopt the reduced plan, and Chappell had already come up with a new set of by-laws for the Company and instructions for the commanders. On the same day that he presented these to the Directors, MacQueen submitted his resignation.[90]

Engagement or Exclusion? Differing Views on the Mail System and MacQueen's Resignation

It seems clear at this point that the falling out between MacQueen and the company which he founded came about because of differences in the scope of the operation. MacQueen hoped

to establish a global mail system, while the Company would settle for a mail service localized to the West Indies, mainly the British West Indies. When it became clear to MacQueen that the Company was going to substantially scale down his scheme, with his influence rapidly declining within the management, he left. Personal conflicts with the management, particularly with Chappell, also led to the break. Differing opinions easily turned into bitter political rivalries as MacQueen was always prone to take criticism personally, and Chappell was increasingly less tolerant of MacQueen as his (Chappell's) own influence grew.

With MacQueen out, the adoption of the new plan came quickly. Chappell drew up new instructions for a new plan six days after MacQueen's resignation. By the end of the month the Directors had approved the new plan, and by mid-September the Admiralty had granted its permission to try it experimentally. On October 1, the RMSP Company put the plan into effect.

The new scheme had reduced the routes far more than the Directors had asked in May. The RMSP Company eliminated service to Surinam, St. Croix, Curaçao, Turk's Island, and all of North America, including Halifax. Service to the Spanish mainland was reduced to once a month.[91] The total mileage of the routes went from 684,816 to 392,926.[92] The RMSP Company was now almost solely a British West Indian mail service.

The new scheme seemed to work well. Expenditures had been cut from £360,000 a year to £235,000. Incredibly, the government did not cut its subsidy in proportion to the reduced service. Furthermore, the Admiralty approved the new routes by March 1843. With several of the original problems taken care of such as crews and workers at the coal depôts, the Company was doing quite well, and posted a profit for the first time in 1843 of £94,219. 1845 is when the Company really got on its feet, when it maintained a reliable regular service, the debt was paid

off, and dividends began to be paid on shares (£1.10/share). The 1850s saw profits reach over £200,000, largely helped by the additional government subsidy of £30,000 for another line to Rio de Janeiro.[93] Meanwhile, the Company maintained its monopoly over mail service to the British West Indies. These successes were nearly offset by bad luck, however. In the first ten years of its operation, Royal Mail lost seven vessels.[94]

MacQueen may very well have been just as happy as anyone involved with the Royal Mail to see it prosper. After he resigned he still had a substantial number of shares in the Company-- £4000 worth, that he had purchased with his £5000 "gift" that the Company had given him. As the founder of the Company and a substantial shareholder, he felt justified in commenting on the Company's business from the outside, even though he had resigned his position. In May 1843 he wrote the Directors that he had heard from a friend that because of "improper construction," one of the boilers had caught fire aboard the *Severn*, one of the new vessels about to commence service, on its way from Bristol (where it was constructed) to Southampton. Likewise, according to MacQueen, the *Avon*, also built by William Patterson in Bristol, also suffered structural problems that led to high coal consumption and the risk of fire. Chappell was more than irritated with MacQueen not only because of his unsolicited, and seemingly unfounded, information, but also because MacQueen had not even informed the Company first, and instead had written the same letter the day before to the Admiralty. Chappell responded with a short note requesting MacQueen to furnish authorities for his charges. Incensed that his word was not deemed good enough, MacQueen wrote back refusing the request, and offered more rumours about the poor performance of other Company vessels.[95]

The matter dropped for the rest of the summer, with both sides disgusted with the other. But the increasingly strained relationship between MacQueen and the Company snapped altogether in one night the next autumn. At the third General Meeting of the RMSP Company in mid-October 1843, Irving, Company Chairman and MacQueen's long-time associate, singled out MacQueen as one of the main causes of the Company's problems:

> A misfortune to which I trace much of the evil which has arisen to us, from the confidence which we gave to Mr. Macqueen, in the belief that he had talents for the investigation--that we could depend upon his statements to us as to the concern. The calculations of revenue proceeded from Mr. Macqueen; the calculation of the cost proceeded from Mr. Macqueen. In fact, I am sorry to say, that a great deal more confidence was given to Mr. Macqueen that from subsequent investigation than he deserved. There (pointing to Mr. Macqueen in the body of the meeting, the Shareholders turning round at the same time), there he sits, and he cannot deny a word that I state.[96]

This was only the final humiliation which led to MacQueen writing the series of scathing letters in *Herapath's Railway Journal* between October and December 1843, and put together in one volume in January 1844. The same charges against MacQueen had been implied at the second General Meeting the preceding March, where Chappell blamed virtually all of the Company's problems on the original calculations:

> It is now universally admitted that the original project of the Company embraced too extensive a sphere of operation; that its calculation, whether as related to the number of ships required; to the work they could perform; to the practicability of their visiting all of the specified places; to the adequate security of the Ports with assemblage; to the cost of building, outfit, and maintenance of the Ships; and to the amount of Revenue likely to be realized, were all too sanguine a character.

Even the loss of the *Medina* and the *Isis* were blamed on the "old plan" for no other reason, it seems, than they were lost during the operation of the plan.[97]

The bulk of MacQueen's *Reply* was spent demonstrating that the initial problems were not due to the calculations but to the ships themselves and the management, especially Chappell. MacQueen also argued that regardless of where one placed the blame, his actions were approved by the Directors and the Admiralty every step of the way. To blame him now was simply

scapegoating. What angered MacQueen even more was the fact that he had done virtually all of

the groundwork for the formation of the Company, then others had come along and changed the

plan, not only taking credit for themselves, but leaving nothing for MacQueen but the blame for

any difficulties:

> Nothing is so easy as to find fault, especially when doing so proceeds from ignorance of the subject on
> hand. It is also easy for men to travel when the way by which they can travel has been pointed out to
> them. But with all the spirit which has been displayed to cavil, no one went to the Government with a
> scheme for conveying the vast correspondence to and from the western world that Government could
> afford or would entertain, or that it would have been safe for private interests to have taken up, until it
> was done by me without assistance from any quarter."[*]

MacQueen's defence here was entirely justified. To dismiss MacQueen's contribution

because his calculations were "too sanguine a character" is to ignore the numerous other factors

involved in establishing a steam mail system. Moreover, we have seen that the initial problems

were not due to the calculations, though they were not really the fault of the ships or of Chappell

either, as MacQueen charged. The initial delays had been caused by other unknowns such as

labour shortages, difficult crews, disputes between commanders and mail agents, and engineering

errors. The recriminations that resulted from these problems were simply the result of the

Directors looking for a scapegoat, and MacQueen looking to vindicate himself, as well as vent

his anger at those who took over the management and direction of the Company.

Undoubtedly, Chappell was right that the initial scope of the operation was too large. Here

was another example of MacQueen's reach exceeding his grasp. Considering the complexity of

the scheme, the new and untested technology used, and the inexperience of all involved, it is

surprising the RMSP Company did as well as it did. Indeed, a contemporary concluded that

inexperience on the part of all concerned explained most of the Company's initial problems:

> Though Mr. McQueen ... was a gentleman who had considerable experience in the promotion of large
> undertakings, his knowledge of maritime affairs was limited, while he was not sufficiently conversant

with those details, the practical knowledge of which is so essential to the success of all shipping operations. The directors, as a body, were not competent, from previous experience, to manage such an undertaking; while the choice also of commanders, selected from the Royal Navy, with little or no experience of steam, and none whatever of the requirements of a merchant ship, was unfortunate ..."[99]

But MacQueen never backed down from his position on the scope of the mail system, and here lies the crux of the dispute. The most interesting parts of his *Reply* are those which explain the role of the mail system in connecting the British West Indies to Britain, and both to the wider world. As he had argued all along, the steam communication system was vital for, first, the British West Indies after emancipation:

> The late great change in society has placed the British colonies in a totally different position from that in which they formerly stood—a position wherein it becomes absolutely necessary for their prosperity, nay, for their existence, that they should have ready and frequent communication and full acquaintance with every quarter of the world, but more especially with that quarter of the world to which they geographically belong, wherein great and rising nations, such as Mexico and the United States of America, to say nothing of the British North American colonies, regulate, and will continue more and more to regulate, by their energies and their productions, all their markets, all their prices, and all their exchanges.[100]

Therefore, the limitations imposed by the new plan would only hurt the West Indies and the Company in the long run, and MacQueen found himself once again showing the absurdity of such limitations. For example, New Orleans was eliminated as a port altogether under the new scheme. Yet, MacQueen noted, "that port exports yearly to Great Britain on British account, and principally in British ships, about 9,000,000£, being greater than the exports of all the British West Indies put together."[101] MacQueen even found parochialism among the colonials, who, insisted MacQueen, should have known better:

> It is with regret and surprise that I have heard it stated, on the part of some British West Indian colonists, that such restriction of the service is proper; because, the undertaking being British, the operations thereof ought to be chiefly confined to British possessions, and that, in the benefits which it confers, foreign places ought to be considered of minor importance. No such language ought to be held by any British colonist, especially under the present circumstances and position, when they recollect, as they ought to do. that British merchants trade, and trade largely too, with every country in the world.[102]

MacQueen's comments here are symptomatic of the differences between his idea of a mail

communication system and the ideas of those who could implement such a system. MacQueen wanted a world-wide and highly centralized system. What his efforts led to was a localized and partially private packet company. Once again, MacQueen's vision went beyond the Empire's grasp, for such a system was simply not possible, and no one supported such a system, from the government which wanted to contract out the service, to colonials, who wanted an exclusively British service. But if his schemes were unrealistic, his analysis regarding the role of mail in an imperial system was highly sophisticated, and ultimately prophetic. It was not until 1860 when the Post Office itself realized that mail communication involved more than just carrying messages. At this time, a select committee concluded that mail

> frequently involves considerations of an imperial character affecting our political relations, our colonial empire, the efficiency of our army and our navy, and the spread of commerce.[103]

This is precisely what MacQueen had argued in 1838.[104]

MacQueen's achievements regarding the development of the colonial mail system are, however, significant in themselves. Designing, modifying, promoting and managing so large a project demonstrate MacQueen's abilities as a practical agent for imperial change, even if the project ultimately left him behind. The formation of the RMSP Company is also representative of a crucial period in British imperial history, when technology and governmental reorganization radically changed the way the Empire operated. Steam power brought speed and regularity to overseas travel. For the British Empire this translated into regular schedules and thus more efficient colonial administration, as well as tighter centralized control. Although this period is traditionally known as the classic age of laissez-faire government in Britain, especially regarding colonial policy, the government's dramatic reorganization and centralization of colonial mail

counters this view. The subsidy is the most dramatic example of how much the British government was willing to pay for its control. While the big steam packet companies posted large profits every year for themselves, the government was losing enormous sums because the postage revenues were not nearly enough to cover the subsidy. A parliamentary inquiry headed by Viscount Canning (then Postmaster-General) in the early 1850s[105] found that Royal Mail was by far the largest drain, running a deficit of nearly 70 percent:

Line (Company)	Postage	Contract Payment	Deficit
North America (Cunard)	£120,863	£188,040	£ 67,177
East Indies (P & O)	127,896	199,600	71,704
West Indies & Brazil (RMSP)	85,410	270,000	184,590

The government maintained the subsidies, even in the face of huge losses and vociferous critics such as Robert McCalmont, who argued throughout the 1850s that the contract system was a "new Navigation Law" and attacking the packet companies as "pampered monopolists."[106] It was not until 1860 when the subsidies were even reduced, and until 1876 before they were eliminated altogether.

The government's support to the mail system is a prime example of how it was increasing its intervention in colonial affairs. A uniform system of mail delivery, enforced by Admiralty agents and standardized regulations, greatly expanded the government's presence in the British West Indies along the same lines that it had grown since the end of slavery, when commissioners sought to carry out its policies. MacQueen contributed to this direction in British imperial policy by always advocating strong central control; he did not get the absolute government control that he had pushed for in the beginning, but his efforts in forming the RMSP Company helped establish the direction. In a very real sense, the RMSP Company was the government's agent,

and the system of mail delivery under which they operated was only one step away from direct government control.

Some of these inter-related transitions in British history that the formation of the RMSP Company represents were captured most beautifully by MacQueen's famous contemporary, the painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). Turner spent eight months in 1838 painting *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up*. The picture depicts the noble-looking but now ghostly man-of-war, which had fought in the Napoleonic Wars, being pulled by a small paddle steamer up the Thames to Rotherhith to be dismantled for scrap.[107] The symbolic transition from sail to steam is made clear by the smoke from the tug's steam funnel which pours forth partially to cover the *Temeraire*. The old warship is still beautiful but it is set against a sunset where other tiny phantom-like sailing ships fade into the distance. For MacQueen, the painting may very well have symbolized more than just the transition from sail to steam, but also the transition in the development of the British Empire, which no longer developed in leaps by dramatic wars, but by the steady, if mundane. advances in technology and administration--represented by a steam tug boat.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa*, chs. 6-8.

2. Incredibly, MacQueen is not mentioned in the official history, T.A. Bushell's *Royal Mail: a Centenary History of the Royal Mail Line* (Southampton, 1939). A more recent work corrects this obvious omission by noting that MacQueen was "the inspiration and driving force behind the establishment of the RMSP Company." See Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great Steamers White and Gold: A History of Royal Mail Ships and Services* (Southampton: Ensign, 1993), 9. However, as a celebratory book with no notes or bibliography, it is of limited scholarly use.

3. Philip H. Spratt, *The Birth of the Steamboat* (London: Griffin, 1958); K.T. Rowland, *Steam at Sea: a History of Steam Navigation* (Devon: David & Charles, 1970).

4. Geoffrey Body, *British Paddle Steamers* (Plymouth: David & Charles, 1971), 20-28.

5. Rowland, 64.

6. Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press 1970; orig. pub. 1948), 244-57.

7. *Sixth Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Management of the Post Office Department, 30 April 1836*, PP 1836 XXVIII, 147-48.

8. Robinson, *The British Post Office*, 256-57.

9. F. George Kay, *Royal Mail: the Story of the Posts in England from the Time of Edward IVth to the Present Day* (London: Rockliff, 1951), 61 and 112.

10. *Ibid.*, 105-6.

11. "Anywhere" in theory but in reality this meant only to the centers which had a post office line at the time, which did not include many rural areas. In 1850, the Post Office established the principle that a Penny Post would be introduced anywhere it could pay for itself. See Kay, 80.

12. Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York and Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1986), 113.

13. Kay, 98.

14. M.J. Daunton, *Royal Mail: the Post Office since 1840* (London: Althone Press, 1985), 154.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Mr. McQueen's Reply to the Chairman and the Directors of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (London: R. Clay [printer], 1844).

17. The JSN Company's two steamers only stopped at Barbados, Jamaica and St. Thomas before returning to Falmouth.

18. *Minutes of the Glasgow West India Association, 1807- [1867]*, vol. 1, 633-34, held in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

19. Quoted in the *Morning Journal* (Kingston), 15 July 1839.

20. Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, rev. by Mary Q. Innis (U. of Toronto Press, 1972; orig. pub. 1950 by Oxford U.P.), 48.

21. Kay, 1.

22. Howard Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), 17-18.

23. Steele, 250.

24. *Ibid.*, 213 (quotation) and 168. For example, the government twice tried to establish a packet service to the New World during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14), most notably through Edmund Dummer's West Indian packet service (1702-9), but without success. See ch. 9.

25. *A General Plan for Mail Communication by Steam between Great Britain and the Eastern and Western Parts of the World; also, to Canton and Sydney Westward by the Pacific: to which are added, Geographical notices of the Isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, etc.* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838), 1.

26. *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

27. *Ibid.*, 47, 78.

28. *Ibid.*, 83-92.

29. *Ibid.*, 101-3

30. *West Indian Mail Communication: in a Letter to Francis Baring* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838).

31. *Ibid.*, 18.

32. *[Directors'] Minute Book of the West India Association of Glasgow*, no. 4, pp. 91-96, held in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

33. The plan was authored by one Mr. Macgregor, and presented to the Directors 21 Nov. 1838. *GWIA Minutes*, vol. 1, 642-43.

34. *Directors' Minute Book*, no. 4, 114.

35. *The St. Vincent Chronicle, and Public Gazette*, 6 Mar. 1841.

36. *Reply*, 94.

37. MacQueen to T.F. Baring, 18 Feb. 1839, *Royal Mail Steam Packet Company--Public Department Letter Book*, RMS 7/1.

38. *Royal Mail Steam Packet Company--Court of Directors Minute Book*, RMS 1/1, in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

39. RMS 1/1, 28 Aug. 1839.

40. PP 1840 (287) XLIV, 241.

41. PP 1840 (369) XLIV, 259.

42. *Ibid.*, 263.

43. RMS 1/1, 20 Jan. 1840.

44. RMS 1/1, 2 July 1840.

45. RMS 1/1, 22 Oct. 1840.

46. RMS 1/1, 27 July 1840.

47. Dated 6 Aug. 1840 in PP 1840 (319) XLIV, 253.

48. RMS 1/1, 4 Nov. 1840.

49. RMS 1/1, 30 Nov. 1840.

50. RMS 7/1, Despatch #5, 26 Jan. 1841.

51. For example, at the very beginning of his journey, MacQueen wrote the Directors from Demerara noting that "On my arrival here I found things as to the local Government in a strange state and in consequence of the suspension of all public proceedings and measures on account of the quarrel between Governor Light and the combined courts that no steps had been taken on our matters ..." RMS 7/1, Despatch #2, 11 Jan. 1841.

52. RMS 7/1, Despatch #9, 3 Feb. 1841.

53. RMS 1/1, 26 Sept. 1842. At this special session, the Directors also resolved not to take responsibility for the lighthouses either.

54. RMS 7/1, Despatch #11, 5 Feb. 1841.

55. For the relationship between wages and population density, see Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, 170-71, 192-95.

56. RMS 7/1, Despatch #11 and #14, 5 Feb. and 18 Feb. 1841.

57. RMS 7/1, Despatch #1, 4 Jan. 1841. Haiti and Santo Domingo were united 1804-44.

58. Robinson, *British Mail Overseas*, 64, 79-80.

59. RMS 7/1, Despatch #17, 25 Feb. 1841.

60. For the Anglo-American competition for steam lines across the Atlantic, which led to the Blue Riband competition, see Robinson, *British Mail Overseas*, 139-41.

61. RMS 7/1, Despatch #21, 13 Mar. 1841.

62.

	Shipbuilders (2 vessels each)	Engineers (2 pairs of engines each)
London:	Wigrams & Green	Miller, Ravenhill, & Co.
	Curlings & Young	Seawards & Chapel
	Pitcher	Mandslays & Field
Liverpool:	Messrs. Wilson	Messrs. Fawcett & Preston
Greenock:	Messrs. Caird & Co.	Messrs. Caird & Co.
	Messrs. Scott Sinclair & Co.	Messrs. Scott Sinclair & Co.
		R. Napier
Glasgow:	Charles Wood	

Source: RMS 1/1, 11 Oct. 1839.

63. Body, 39.

64. Hyde, 326.

65. RMS 1/1, 17 Dec. 1840. At the same time, the Company also replaced Lt. Kendall with a Mr. George Mills.

66. RMS 1/1, 26 Oct. 1840 and 14 Jan. 1841.

67. RMS 1/1, 20 and 27 Aug. 1840.

68. Quoted in *The Times*, 16 July 1841.

69. Baker and Leonard, 16.

70. W.S. Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce*, vol. IV (London: Samson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1876), 302.

71. RMS 1/1, 18 Nov. 1841.

72. RMS 1/1, 14 Oct. 1841.

73. Captain Richard Owen, a naval officer familiar with West Indian hydrography, did most of the checks for the Admiralty. MacQueen received a copy of Owen's favourable report just before he (MacQueen) left for his mission in December 1840. For Owen's work see *A Nautical Memoir descriptive of the surveys made in H.M. ships Blossom and Thunder from 1829 to 1837* (Dublin, n.d.).

74. Special Committee Report, RMS 1/1, 4 Nov. 1841.

75. Marine Superintendent's Report, RMS 1/1, 11 Nov. 1841.

76. RMS 1/1, 4 Nov. 1841.

77. *Reply*, 124.

78. RMS 7/1, 22 Dec. 1841.

79. RMS 1/1, 7 Apr. 1842.

80. RMS 1/1, 28 Apr. 1842.

81. RMS 1/1, 17 Mar. 1842.

82. RMS 1/1, 28 Apr. 1842.

83. RMS 7/1, 15 Aug. 1842.

84. RMS 1/1, 28 Apr. 1842.

85. RMS 7/1, July 1842.

86. RMS 1/1, 17 Feb. 1842.

87. RMS 1/1, 25 May 1842.

88. RMS 1/1, 16 June 1842.

89. RMS 1/1, 21 July 1842.

90. RMS 1/1, 4 Aug. 1842.

91. Chappell outlined the plan to the Directors on 13 Aug. 1842, which was immediately accepted. RMS 1/1.

92. RMS 2/1, 21 Sept. 1842.

93. RMS 2/1, 30 Mar. and 12 Oct. 1843, 21 Apr. and 10 Oct. 1844, and 10 Apr. 1845.

94. RMSP Company ship losses, 1842-52:

Ship	Date of loss	Reason
Medina	12 May 1842	Struck coral reef off of Turk's Island
Isis	8 Oct. 1842	Struck reef off of Bermuda
Solway	15 Apr. 1843	Incompetent navigation west of Corunna (Sp.)
Actæon	Dec. 1844	Struck shoal off of Cartagena
Tweed	12 Feb. 1847	Struck Alicrane reefs off of Yucatan
Forth	1 Feb. 1849	"
Amazon	7 Jan. 1852	Boiler fire

Sources: RMS 1/1, 13 June 1842; RMS 1/2, 11 Nov. 1842, 11 May 1843, 19 Dec. 1844; Lindsay, 303-4.

95. The letters were reprinted by MacQueen in his *Reply*, 4-7.

96. *Reply*, 23. Interestingly, this incident is not recorded at all in the Company's minutes.

97. RMS 2/1, 30 March 1843.

98. *Reply*, 151.

99. Lindsay, 294.

100. *Reply*, 154.

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*, 140-41.

103. *First Report from the Select Committee on Packet and Telegraphic Contracts*, PP 1860 XIV, 16.

104. See notes 25 and 26.

105. PP 1852-53, XCV, 235. The reference and the table are from Daunton, 158. See also Freda Harcourt, "British Oceanic Mail Contracts in the Age of Steam 1838-1914," *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser., 9 (1988), 1-18.

106. *Some Remarks on the Contract Packet Service and on Ocean Penny Postage* (London, 1851). See also Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas*, 143; Daunton, 158; Kay, 101-2.

107. The scene depicted is not historically accurate: the masts and sails on the *Temeraire* had already been removed; two steam tugs, the *Samson* and the *London*, pulled the large ship, and their steam funnels would have most likely been amidships, not fore; and they most certainly did not carry out their operation at dusk, as Turner shows. Nevertheless the symbolism of the painting perfectly captures several transitions occurring at the time. The connection with Turner was inspired by an exhibit at the National Gallery, London, in the summer of 1995, which featured *The Fighting Temeraire*.

Chapter 5

Armchair Geographer and Imperialist, 1820-70

It is appropriate to examine MacQueen's geographical work last because his interest in this field lasted nearly half a century, and informed almost all of his other endeavours, especially his most cherished goal of establishing a British empire in Africa. His geographical work also spanned an important period in both British geography and British imperialism, from the travels of Mungo Park at the turn of the century, to the foundation of the Royal Geographical Society in 1830, to the journeys of David Livingstone in the 1850s and 60s. Essentially, the first half of the nineteenth century was the "opening" of Africa to British traders, missionaries and ultimately, soldiers and administrators. Thus, examined within the context of this more general evolution of geography and imperialism, MacQueen's geographical career between 1820 and 1870 provides valuable insight into the nature of both at this time, and the nature of their relationship with each other. I have divided MacQueen's career into roughly three periods: 1820-32, the years of the debate over "the Niger question" which were influenced, significantly, by "the slavery question"; 1839-59, when MacQueen was recognized as an authority on Africa; and 1860-70, the period of the Nile debate, MacQueen's somewhat reactionary turn, and the ambivalent acknowledgement of MacQueen's contribution to geography by the geographical establishment at his death.

MacQueen's legacy in geography is not as tangible as in his other work with the Colonial Bank or the RMSP Company or even the emacipation debate, but in some ways it had the same general effect of aiding the centralization of power in the metropolis, and especially with the government. His influence came partially as a counsellor on African affairs. By the late 1830s

he became recognized as an "expert" on Africa. He was especially influential in the planning of the Niger expedition of 1839-41, co-sponsored by the government and Buxton's Africa Civilization Society. But the majority of his legacy resulted from the sterile and often thankless work of armchair geography--that is, compiling and synthesizing geographical information in order to fill in the "blank spots" on the map, which in MacQueen's case was the map of Africa. This kind of work not only provided valuable information for British expansion, but also helped promote and legitimize expansion.

I have employed, or rather appropriated, the phrase "armchair geography" to describe the kind of work done by MacQueen. The label was inspired by reading the brief analyses of MacQueen's geographical work by other scholars, who either directly use the phrase in its common connotation to dismiss him, or at least imply that because he had never been to Africa we are to suspect his work.[1] Ian Cameron, for example, describes MacQueen's contribution to the Nile debate between the rival explorers Richard Burton and John Speke in one sentence: "the armchair geographer James M'Queen (who had never been out of England in his life) stirred up trouble by publishing a series of bigoted and scurrilous attacks on Speke's character."[2] While the nature of MacQueen's attacks in this case is accurate enough, such a view of MacQueen and "armchair geography" generally has led historians to ignore what MacQueen's work can tell us. On the other hand, other scholars have used the phrase more specifically, even narrowly, to describe an influential group of amateur geographers who "corrected the information obtained by the great nineteenth century explorers." Included in this elite group were those such as John Pinkerton, W.D. Cooley, C.T. Beke and MacQueen.[3] For MacQueen specifically, then, "armchair geography" serves as a good general phrase to characterize his geography, whose salient points

would be compilation, synthesis, amateurism, and promotion.

The Development of Geography in Britain in the Nineteenth Century

At the turn of the nineteenth century "geography" in Britain could mean anything from agriculture to topography to travel literature to navigation. With the exception of some surveyors, cartographers and hydrographers, geography was mainly a hobby pursued by amateurs. For example, in a revealing review of one of the most popular geographical works in Britain, John Pinkerton's *Modern Geography* (1802), the *Edinburgh Review* began by stating generally that

> There is no science so attractive as geography. It requires scarcely any preparation of previous study, and deals in a sort of information so popular and various, as to recommend itself even to those who have but little relish for literary occupations. It is indeed a kind of condensation of books of travels, and exhibits the most captivating collection of marvellous truths that ever yet were assembled, to excite or gratify curiosity. Of its substantial utility, it is unnecessary to speak.[4]

As the quotation suggests, there had existed no training in geography at the university level[5] and a limited exposure to geography at the elementary and secondary levels. Edmund Gilbert has shown that teaching geography to British schoolchildren in the early nineteenth century "consisted largely of learning by rote the names of places and products."[6] The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment had influenced geography to the limited extent that the value of collecting and cataloguing information was recognized. The emphasis on statistics, borne mainly of the Scottish Enlightenment in the latter eighteenth century, also influenced how geography was viewed, and hence, taught. Through something similar to the "Scientific Tables" of *The Students' Classical Guide to the Sciences* (1818), MacQueen as a schoolboy would have memorized the world's countries, their capitals (including name, population, latitude and longitude, and miles from London), square miles, population, type of government, sovereign, religion and any principal

towns, lakes, rivers, capes, islands, animals, produce and trade. Geography has worked with statistics in a universalist scope and determination ever since Claudius Ptolemy's (c. AD 90-168) attempt to record the location of all the known places of the world using latitude and longitude. But at the turn of the nineteenth century geography emerged reinvigorated as a kind of "inventory science"--like geology, meteorology, botany, etc.[7]--whose purpose was to explore, collect, catalogue, plot and map everything in the world. Nevertheless, even amongst the most "scientific" scholars such as James Rennell,[8] the Bible and the ancients, especially the *Geography* of Ptolemy, continued to be extremely important sources for geographical information.

Geography remained "attractive" to the wider public, however, mainly because of "voyages and travels," a genre revived in Britain with the great explorations of the eighteenth century, especially those of William Dampier (1652-1715) and Captain Cook (1728-1779), as well as the "imaginary travellers" in the literature of Defoe, Swift, Montesquieu and Voltaire.[9] By the turn of the nineteenth century travel literature continued to be immensely popular, despite the mediocrity of the vast majority of it--a slough of aristocratic "tours" through Britain or Europe, or obscure expeditions detailed by minor officers of the Royal Navy.

By the 1880s geography had become a more clearly defined, professional discipline, integrated with other physical sciences, and underpinned with a scientific methodology. The most significant changes came from the pioneering work of two Germans: Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Carl Ritter (1779-1859). Humboldt revolutionized geography in much the same way that Captain Cook revolutionized marine surveying: through strict adherence to the scientific method and the integration of many disciplines to provide the most accurate regional description.[10] Humboldt began his career advocating the study of the "geography of plants," and

ended it with an attempt to incorporate all the physical sciences to describe the entire universe,[11] a work which transformed the theoretical basis of geography for the first time since Ptolemy.[12] Geographer Robert H. Fuson has stated simply that Humboldt "laid the foundations for our discipline."[13] Ritter, "the co-founder of modern geography," infused the human element into geography by emphasizing our influence on the physical environment, and vice-versa.[14] By mid-century the German influence could already been seen on British geography. In 1848 Mary Somerville published *Physical Geography*, a work which outlined a specific methodology based upon Humboldt's holistic approach to geography, and for which Somerville eventually won the RGS gold medal.[15] Charles Darwin, on whom Humboldt's work had an enormous influence, also contributed to the transition of a method based upon direct observation and integration with other sciences.[16] But it is Sir Halford Mackinder, the first man to reach the top of Mount Kenya and holder of the first Chair of Geography at Oxford (1887), who defined the discipline directly in purpose and method, by bringing together the elements of physical and human geography: "Physiography asks of a given feature, 'Why is it?' Topography 'Where is it? Physical geography "Why is it there?' Political geography, 'How does it act on man in society,--how does he react on it?' ... The[se] four subjects are the realm of the geographer."[17] Mackinder's explanation formed the basis of his "new geography," and marks the beginning of geography as the discipline that we know today.[18]

The development of a standard methodology was paralleled by the intitutionalization of geography. The first professional geographical organization in Europe was the Paris Geographical Society, formed in 1821, followed by the Berlin Geographical Society (co-founded by Humboldt and Ritter) in 1828.[19] In Britain, the Royal Geographical Society was formed in

1830 from the Raleigh Travellers Club, a dining club formed in 1827, and a year later also incorporated the African Association (1788-1831).[20] While all of these organizations were mainly social clubs for curious aristocrats,[21] they provided the first institutional structure for geography. More importantly for our purposes, by the 1860s the RGS had become dominated by what Roy Bridges has called the "service class": surveyors, hydrographers, imperial administrators, engineers, and medical doctors[22]--in other words, those with an interest in expanding the British Empire.

From Elephants to Blank Spaces: European Maps of Africa to the Early Nineteenth Century

Africa held a somewhat anomalous position in the European study of geography overall, mainly because of the continent's location relative to Europe, which had led to varying levels of knowledge for different sections--as R.V. Tooley observed, "Egypt and its northern coasts being known in remote antiquity, its southernmost tip not reached till 1487 by Bartholomew Diaz, and its centre practically unknown till the late 19th century."[23] Despite over three centuries of contact and trade, Europeans held detailed information, at best, for three to four-hundred miles up the principal rivers on which they had trading factories (namely, the Senegal and Gambia Rivers in West Africa). Otherwise, little was known beyond one or two-hundred miles of the coast, if this much. Even the coastlines did not get surveyed competently and comprehensively until Captain W.F.W. Owen's great African Survey of 1822-26.[24] As numerous scholars have pointed out, the climate, coupled with powerful African states and merchant middlemen, strongly discouraged any European penetration of the interior.[25]

European ignorance of African geography did not mean that Europeans did not produce geographical works on this part of the world. But this ignorance did mean that European geographers had to rely far more on ancient sources and their own imaginations than they did for other parts of the globe. Ptolemy remained the paramount source, with a considerable reliance on the Old Testament and the medieval Arabic sources. Moreover most people are familiar with the beautiful but highly fictitious maps of Africa by European geographers—maps which portrayed fantastic creatures such as the cyclops, or fabled kingdoms such as the Christian empire of Prestor John in Abyssinia, or simply a nice picture of elephants.[26] Contemporaries certainly were aware of these shortcomings, as seen in Jonathan Swift's oft-quoted lines:

> Geographers in Afric's maps
> With savage creatures filled the gaps
> And o'er unhabitable downs
> Placed elephants for want of towns.

It is a commonplace now to observe that many of the best European maps of Africa in the early modern era were more works of art than science. It is no coincidence that during the golden age of Dutch cartography (roughly from 1570 to 1670), Dutch map-makers not only produced the most accurate maps of Africa of their time, but also the most beautiful.[27] Less fanciful maps began appearing at the turn of the eighteenth century, led by French cartographers, especially Guillaume de L'Isle (1675-1726) and Jean Baptiste d'Anville (1697-1782), the latter whose work Rennell described as "the most perfect of all, previous to the inquiries of the African Association [1788-1831]."[28] De L'Isle and D'Anville greatly advanced the geography of Africa by simply admitting the extent of European ignorance of the continent, and their maps are the first in the modern period to leave major blank spaces.[29] Still great geographical fictions existed and were created even in MacQueen's day. Rennell, for example, England's best geographer, "invented"

the Kong Mountain range (through a loose interpretation of Park's *Travels*) stretching across Africa at 10° North latitude in 1788, which remained on European maps for the next century.[30]

Africa also held a special place in European geography because of the slave trade and slavery. Although the first Europeans to make contact with the African coastline south of the Sahara in the fifteenth century were looking primarily for gold, the trade in slaves remained the mainstay of African-European trade until the nineteenth century, and thus the main source of geographical information for cartographers. British information regarding Africa, too, came really only after its own transatlantic slave trade had been well established by the latter seventeenth century.[31] Moreover popular interest increased in the latter eighteenth century as the abolitionist assault on the slave trade intensified. By the turn of the nineteenth century the popular antislavery campaign kept Africa publicized at a national level. In particular, the Abolition Society's founding of Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1787 kept Africa in the limelight as more first-hand information became available, and even more importantly, as the colony increasingly became the focus of pro-slavery counter-attacks.

European geographical knowledge of Africa, then, involved far more than just the physical topography of the continent. The "geography" of Africa inevitably involved issues of trade, morality, cultural dominance, and perhaps most importantly, a lack of information. This was true in MacQueen's day as well, and *Northern and Central Africa* is one of the best works representing geography's implication in these other issues. MacQueen's information came as much from business associates, hearsay, and cultural assumptions and myths as much as from past geographers, who themselves had been influenced by these same factors.

Armchair Geography, 1820-33: Africa Schemes, the Niger Question, and the Politics of Slavery

Strictly as a work of regional description, *Northern and Central Africa* is a dissertation on the geography of what is today West Africa, and particularly the course of the Niger River. The work is basically a massive synthesis and interpretation of ancient and modern sources of African information, put together in a comprehensive geography for the first time since Pinkerton's *Modern Geography*. The number of explorer's accounts of Africa had risen considerably since James Bruce's journeys in the 1770s; but while these accounts excited great interest, their inherently limited focus on the path of the explorer himself rendered them useless as general geography texts of Africa. The only geographical works about Africa—in other words, those that put together the explorers' information—came from the giants in the field of geography such as Rennell or Pinkerton, who were willing and able to take on so obscure a topic as Africa. Rennell was the African Association's geographer who had been solicited to write a geographical commentary on Park's *Travels*. Significantly, all of Rennell's geographical expertise hitherto lay with India, where he had done very accurate survey work on the Bhutan frontier and produced the first "approximately correct map" of the sub-continent in 1783.[32] However great his abilities were, though, his selection by the African Association highlighted the absence of any "expert" on Africa at this time. The end result of his commentary was a good work piece of scholarly work, but one inevitably limited by a heavy reliance on ancient sources and British attitudes to other cultures. For example, Rennell spent much time discussing the boundaries of "moral geography," which, in his opinion, were to be drawn according to "the opposite qualities of mind, as well as of body, of the Moors and Negroes."[33] Out of the 1500 pages of his *Modern*

Geography, Pinkerton devoted a paltry eighty two to the whole continent of Africa, and of this he focussed mostly on Egypt and Abyssinia. West Africa is dismissed almost in a single sentence: "On this side of Africa, so far as hitherto explored, are innumerable tribes, as little meriting particular description as those of America."[34]

MacQueen's work combines Rennell's scholarly standards and interest in Africa to the broad scope and patently armchair methods of Pinkerton. In fact, MacQueen may be considered the first armchair geographer of West Africa. As he acknowledged, he relied heavily on the standard older sources of Ptolemy, Leo Africanus, and the medieval Arabic works of Ebn Hankel, Shabeeney, Bakui. He supplemented this information with that gleaned from the major explorations during his own lifetime, especially those of James Bruce, James Tuckey, T.E. Bowditch, and of course, Mungo Park.[35]

The resulting work is a good example of the fill-in-the-blank geography common in the early nineteenth century. Based on a process going back to Ptolemy, the armchair geographer begins with a blank sheet, pencils in the latitude and longitude lines for the area he is to deal with, pores over any source relating to his topic, and attempts to translate such information into degrees to plot on the map. This "map-plot" method of geography, as I have called it, is a cross between primitive physical geography and political geography: points such as towns are calculated and fixed, and then used as reference points to delineate the locations of larger features such as rivers, mountain ranges and political boundaries. As a result of this method, the actual geographical sections of MacQueen's work make for painfully dry reading since he was simply plotting in text form, or justifying his plots. For example, MacQueen's description of the Cameroons coastal region begins thus:

About 3° 20' north latitude we have the great estuary of Old Cameroons, or Jamoor, and Malemba rivers. The extreme breadth is 12 miles. It communicates with Old Cameroons by Bimbia and other creeks. At a short distance from he sea, is an island between the Jamoor and Malemba rivers, on which the town of Cameroons is situated. The natives say, that all these three rivers come from one parent stream in the interior; but of whose source they are ignorant, as it was far distant. Southward, the coast rises into a table land, extremely beautiful, and very healthy. Passing Cape Ciaro [sic], in 1° 10' north latitude, we have Moohnda, or Danger river, a deep and powerful stream, navigable for vessels of any burden.

Or south of the Niger

we will find ... Coomassie to Yahndi is 24 days' journey. This will place Yahndi in north latitude 8° 38', and 0° 55' east longitude. From Yahndi to Yaoora is 42 days' journey, and the same distance to the point where the Niger is crossed in the route to the city of Houssa. From Inta to Timbuctoo is 41 days' journey; from Coomassie to Kong is 24 days' journey, and then to Ninne is 24 days' journey, according to the accounts from which Bowditch obtained from different authorities.[36]

Clearly the emphasis is on the map, and much of the text is devoted to simply walking the reader around it.

MacQueen devoted most of his efforts to guiding the reader down the course of the Niger River, a task which required him to forward and justify a controversial theory on the topic since no European had gathered first-hand information past the city of Boussa (5° E 10° N), where Park had perished in 1805. The course of the Niger had been a great geographical conundrum since the beginning of the discipline, and the question had recently gained popularity in the latter eighteenth century as European explorers were able to penetrate further into the interior.[37] By the turn of the nineteenth century the most popular theories regarding the Niger's mouth put it either in a lake in the interior, in a swamp in the interior, in the Nile, or in the Congo. The first theory was probably the most widely accepted, with influential supporters such as Rennell; while MacQueen's theory was nearly original, having only been proposed previously by a German geographer named Christian Reichard in 1803.[38] MacQueen later claimed never to have heard of Reichard or his theory until "several years" after the publication of *Northern and Central Africa*, though this seems unlikely since he definitely consulted Tuckey's *Narrative of an*

Expedition to Explore the River Zaire ... (London, 1818), where the theory is mentioned (though only in passing) in the introduction.[39]

The geographical sections of *Northern and Central Africa* were meant to evaluate a region's value and compatibility to the British imperial economy, and induce the government to support his scheme for a British empire in West Africa. As discussed in chapter one, MacQueen turned to various departments of government, and finally the Admiralty, to solicit support for the plan. His memorial to the First Lord, Viscount Melville, however, had to go through the second secretary, John Barrow.[40] Barrow, world traveller, future founding member and President of the Royal Geographical Society, and a regular contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, had become Britain's most powerful patron of geography with the death of Joseph Banks in 1820, and wielded enormous influence over British policy. Regarding the Niger, he initially supported the Congo River thesis, having organized Tuckey's mission there in 1816-17, and written the introduction to the explorer's posthumous journal. Throughout the 1820s, though, Barrow argued anonymously in the *Quarterly Review* that the Niger emptied into the Nile. Thus, when the Admiralty, too, eventually rejected MacQueen's plan, Barrow's personal beliefs were not lost on MacQueen, who knew of his contributions to the *Quarterly Review*.

MacQueen's lobbying and subsequent publication demonstrate that he was not a dilettante pursuing geography as an amusing hobby, as practised by most of those in the African Association. Nor was he a relatively disinterested scholar searching for geographical truths like Rennell or Pinkerton. MacQueen was an entrepreneur using geography openly and consciously to promote and facilitate British expansion into Africa. Philip D. Curtin has rightly noted that most of MacQueen's ideas were "the common coin of the time." After the Napoleonic Wars,

several people forwarded plans for expansion into West Africa, from Joseph Banks, to ex-colonial governors such as William Dawes, to merchants like G.A. Robertson.[41] Robertson's was the closest to MacQueen's, focussing on the Oil Rivers delta (i.e. the outlet of the Niger River) and a base at Fernando Po, although he did not advocate penetration into the interior.[42]

In a more general way, however, MacQueen's work has more in common with the geographer-imperialists of the British past such as Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616) or Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808), who used geography specifically for imperial enterprise, and advanced both in the process. In fact, until the revival of travel literature at the turn of the eighteenth century, it is fair to say that all British descriptive geographies (as opposed to mathematical or British regional geographies) were promotional literature for imperial expansion; and the formula remained the same in MacQueen's day: describe the region's topography, resources, manufactures and people in order to demonstrate the great economic potential to Britain and secure a charter from the government. Most of the justifications remained the same as well: economic independence and strategic security against European rivals (though France had long since replaced Spain as Britain's great nemesis). Only some of the moral justifications for imperial expansion and control had changed since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with "development" becoming even more important than religion in aiding the "civilizing mission."[43]

However primitive his methods and self-serving his purpose, MacQueen nevertheless was instrumental in applying British geography to the interior of West Africa, and introducing Africa generally to the British public. His ideas may have been "common coin," but Curtin also points out that "MacQueen's [geographical] synthesis dominated British geographical thought for a generation."[44]

As his activities over the next decade show, MacQueen believed that publicizing Africa was the way to both ends, and that geography was the main way to publicize Africa. In addition to publishing *Northern and Central Africa*, MacQueen wrote several articles in *Blackwood's* and his own *Glasgow Courier*. MacQueen now had a permanent soapbox from which he could deliver a steady stream of news and commentary regarding Africa, as well as constant promotion and pressure to adopt his plan.

Geography remained the pretext to write about African affairs, and as the 1820s wore on there was increasingly more to write about as the British government began to take a more serious interest in the Niger region. While there may have been a genuine interest in "the Niger question," there were numerous other factors encouraging the British government to look to the Bight of Biafra, such as the increasing value of the palm oil trade, the desire to suppress a flourishing slave trade in the region, the reorganization and government takeover of the Gold Coast forts, and the problems of Sierra Leone as the central British base in West Africa.[45] Consequently, the government sponsored all of the important expeditions in West Africa in this decade: Dixon Denham, Hugh Clapperton and Walter Oudney to Lake Chad (1822-25), Gordon Laing to Timbuctoo (1824-26), Clapperton and Richard Lander to Sokoto (1825-28), and Richard and John Lander down the last 500 miles of the Niger (1830). As with (ex-) slave legislation, colonial finance and overseas mail, geography, too, was in the process of coming under the purview of the British government.

MacQueen took the opportunity to comment upon all of the above expeditions, refining his own geographical details in the process, but never wavering from his original conclusions. These reviews began with a heavy emphasis on the "geographical view," and less so on

extraneous matters. In 1823 he responded to (what he believed to be) Barrow's anonymous review of *Northern and Central Africa*[46] mainly by criticizing Barrow's own theory that the Niger emptied into the Nile. MacQueen sifted through minute geographical and meteorological details point by point, demonstrating an increasingly sophisticated method: from comparing the rainy seasons of the two rivers to tracing the terrain the Niger would have to travel through. In light of his later writings, MacQueen showed remarkable restraint in the face of criticism, even sarcasm, about his work. He concluded magnanimously that despite these criticisms of his work (which were of course wrong, he urged), at least Africa was getting publicity: "Notwithstanding these [geographical] errors and inconsistencies, the Quarterly Review deserves great praise for what it has done--what it wishes to do--what it gets done in AFRICA."[47]

In June 1831 Richard and John Lander returned as heroes to England after successfully navigating the last 500 miles of the Niger River to the Oil Rivers delta, thus proving MacQueen's theory correct. The newly formed Royal Geographical Society awarded Richard Lander their first gold medal for his efforts. With the quick publication of the Landers' journal, MacQueen put together and published his own geography of the Niger with this new information. It was the most accurate delineation of all 2600 miles of the river to date, plotting every known point between Mount Loma at its source to the Delta in the Gulf of Guinea. No other geographer offered as detailed a description as MacQueen's. Even the RGS took little advantage of Lander's discovery; aside from Richard Lander's own address to the Society, the only paper that the RGS sponsored focussed on the question "Is the Quorra, which has lately been traced to its Discharge into the Sea, the same River as the Nigir of the Ancients?"[48]

Yet what should have been MacQueen's moment of geographical glory turned into one

of bitter disappointment. Except for a couple of publishing friends,[49] no one credited MacQueen for his theory or even for his abilities as a geographer of this region. He complained to Blackwood that "Even at this moment with the exception of my friend Mr. Hunter [publisher?] the whole ... press in this quarter and as far as I have seen in other places exclude my name from any connection with the discovery and as being the first to point out clearly the important fact."[50] Why?

Three reasons suggest themselves, all of which shed important light on geography and British attitudes toward Africa in this period. First, most people did not know--and did not care-- that much about anything to do with Africa, especially a river. As the above-mentioned RGS paper suggested, even geographers considered the Lander's discovery as more of an answer to a geographical puzzle than additional information to a regional geography. Now that the puzzle had been solved, this chapter in geography seemed to have been closed.

The second reason comes from the inherent advantages of the explorer over the armchair geographer. Though both are equally necessary components of the geographical process, the explorer's work is certainly more exciting, even romantic and adventurous, than that of the geographer who stays at his desk compiling and writing. MacQueen first faced the issue in 1822, when the *Quarterly Review*, with Barrow as author, sarcastically noted that MacQueen's map for *Northern and Central Africa* had been "constructed from materials collected in his closet."[51] After Lander's discovery, the point was brought up again, this time, far more bluntly:

> Since Park's first discovery of the Joliba, every point of the compass has been assumed for the ulterior course and termination of that river. M. Reichard the German hit upon the happy conjecture, for it was nothing more; he arrived at the conclusion which happened to be right, though every stage of his reasoning was grounded on false data; he had not a single fact to guide him ... Mr. M'Queen, almost as ingenious as M. Reichard, but a humble copyist, with an equal poverty of facts, claims the merit of the discovery; which however is due, and solely due, to Richard Lander.[52]

Although Barrow's statement betrays an incredible lack of understanding of the geographical process (by Barrow's logic, Ptolemy, the 'gigantic copyist,'[53] should never have been an authority), this natural prejudice in favour of the explorer-geographer was nothing new before Barrow, and certainly continued after him. The RGS itself has held this bias. According to D.R. Stoddart, out of the 280 gold medals awarded between 1832 and 1972, only 68 were for "non-exploratory geography."[54] Moreover, the gap between the two only widened when theorists such as MacQueen would question the conclusions, or even the observations of the explorer. Regarding Clapperton and Lander's journals, MacQueen commented

> The errors which have been committed in, and the blunders which have crept into, the narratives of Clapperton's and Lander's earliest travels, are ... as conspicuous as they are remarkable. In the narrative of Clapperton's second journey, we are informed that Boussa is situated on an island; that the Quorra [the Arabic name for the Niger] there runs in three streams ... The narrative states this in the most pointed manner as being what Clapperton saw and wrote. Lander now [in 1831] tells us ... that the Quorra at Boussa runs in one channel, which is only about a stonethrow across ... not situated on an island, but on the northern bank of the river ... Which of the narratives, both given by eye-witnesses, are we to believe?[55]

Though this criticism is completely valid, and raises a point not adequately considered until very recently, such statements look, at the very least, petty and churlish when applied to an obviously courageous person who has risked his life and endured innumerable hardships for the sake of king and the very information in question. MacQueen's haggling did not endear him to other geographers, let alone the public at large. W.D. Cooley would run into the same problem in the 1850s and 60s when criticizing the observations of the very popular explorer, David Livingstone. In fact, Bridges argues that this armchair criticism was determinative to the eclipse of armchair geographers as legitimate geographers by the 1870s.[56] This contention is supported by Stoddart when he points out that Halford Mackinder "deliberately set out to be the first man to climb Mount Kenya in order that his ideas on the nature of geography might command respect. 'At that

time,' Mackinder wrote, 'most people would have no use for a geographer who was not an adventurer and explorer.'"[57]

Thirdly, and most significantly, MacQueen did not get recognized for his geographical work because Africa had become increasingly politicized throughout the 1820s as a result of the heightening intensity of the emancipation debate. As noted in chapter two, MacQueen hoped to expose Sierra Leone as a weak link in the abolitionist defence, citing the colony's high mortality rate, poor productive output, etc.. Not surprisingly, he utilized geography as another weapon against the colony. For example, he used the testimony of Alexander Gordon Laing, a fellow Scotsmen from the 2nd West India Regiment who had explored the region around Sierra Leone in the early 1820s, for both its geographical information and its negative information regarding the colony itself.[58] The connection between geography and the anti-Sierra Leone campaign was made even clearer when a letter from Clapperton was published in early 1825 suggesting that the Niger might terminate in the sea. The *Glasgow Courier's* first response to this exciting piece of geographical news had nothing to do with geography; instead it announced in bold letters: "Sierra Leone may now indeed tremble."[59]

MacQueen also attacked the abolitionists' ignorance of African geography. After Buxton referred to the Bonny and Calabar rivers as "inconsiderable streams" at an African Institution meeting, MacQueen asserted that such ignorance proved that the humanitarian interest in Africa was all talk:

> If ever we wish to do good to Africa--if ever we wish to stop either a foreign or an internal slave trade in that country--dry up the tears, heal the wounds, and open the eyes of the African population to their ignorance, their vices, their crimes, and their debasement, we must take the business out of the hands of men who do nothing else but make pompous speeches at public meetings, and spend the funds bestowed by a charitable public to enlighten Africa, in trumpeting, through Tracts and Reviews, their own praises.

MacQueen ended with his familiar alternative, but what now sounded more like a battle cry: "plant British banners ... on Fernando Po, under the guidance of British merchants, not British enthusiasts."[60]

Politics, especially the politics of slavery, inevitably began to affect MacQueen's geographical work. In his 1826 review of Clapperton's journal, he rather tamely remarked "we cannot but deprecate the injudicious zeal with which Clapperton pressed the total abolition of the slave trade [to Sultan Bello of Sokoto]."[61] By the turn of the 1830s, when MacQueen had become a political firebrand, he had managed to alienate almost everyone associated with African affairs, from the humanitarians who considered him a "mercenary for the West India cause," to the government, and even other geographers who eschewed "enthusiasts" from either side of the slavery debate. Thus when no one credited MacQueen for his contribution to the Niger question, and particularly when Barrow dismissed him out of hand as a "humble copyist," he privately lamented:

> By any thinking mind, it [MacQueen's Niger thesis] could only be doubted by a nation, which like this nation, ... is ready to listen to everything but the truth on the subject. Every effort will be made to rob me of the praise of the discovery by an invidious and mercenary Press and by Lander and his friends. They merely descended the River, the course of which I pointed out unto them and I also know that it was from my book and map that Clapperton formed his opinion about the outlet of the River being in the Delta of Benin.[62]

Publicly, MacQueen lashed out violently at all of his perceived enemies, targeting those factions which really did oppose him: "the Saints and Theorists and Free Traders"—in other words, the abolitionists, John Barrow, and the East India interest. The first two thwarted his geographical work the most, and for these two MacQueen planned a response in another article on African geography. He specifically wanted to "give Barrow a drubbing" (though, still in the midst of the Pringle lawsuit, MacQueen assured Blackwood that "there shall be no names and no

libels"[63]). In February 1832 MacQueen published his article in *Blackwood's* and demonstrated

his own command of African geography even better than in 1831. But any geographical

information is overshadowed by his thinly-disguised attack on the Saints and Barrow. He blamed

them not only for the failure of his own scheme but for the failure of all British policy towards

Africa:

> The system which has been pursued by this country, during the last thirty or forty years, in everything
> that was connected with a knowledge of Africa, its people, or its geographical features, has been alike
> contemptible and reprehensible, and such as is a disgrace to it. A contemptible and interested faction
> [the abolitionists] laid claim to the government of that quarter of the world, dictated to the British
> Government what it should and what it should not do, shut up all communication concerning Africa,
> except such as its lying vehicles pleased to give, and led the people of this country to believe that the
> barbarism, brutality, superstition, and degradation of four thousand years' standing, had wholly vanished
> from Africa, under their superintendence. That delusion is past, and an astonished and indignant country
> finds, that after mis-spending about FIFTEEN MILLIONS of money, Africa is left more wretched than
> ever. So much for the would-be instructors of Africa. Another party [Barrow], residing with the
> Government, and with the fear of the Government, took African geography under its supreme direction,
> and the consequence was, that her vast mountains, and cultivated plains, were turned into morasses,
> lakes, or sandy deserts, at pleasure; and her mighty rivers, compared to which Europeans steams are
> rivulets, were made to stand still, to sink in sands, or disappear in fictitious lakes, to run dwindling
> through sandy deserts, or to leap over mighty mountains,--to run every way but the way they really ran,
> according as these geographical dictators thought proper.[64]

Such was the parting shot of a man who had been beaten by his political opponents and rejected

or ignored by his geographical peers.

MacQueen left for the West Indies on his business trip in July 1832 and arrived back just

in time to witness the unpleasant, but not unexpected, passage of the Emancipation Bill in the

summer of 1833. With slavery abolished and a major plank in his Africa scheme eliminated, with

a libel suit still pending, with his plantations and slaves to deal with in the wake of emancipation,

and as an outcast in the geographical field, MacQueen temporarily retreated from geography, and

public life altogether, until the latter 1830s when he began to re-emerge through his work with

the Colonial Bank and the RMSP Company.

Africa Expert, 1838-60

Ironically, MacQueen's recognition as a legitimate geographer and African expert only came at the price of his gradual alienation from the West India interest. As noted, he briefly criticized some of the larger planters over the division of the compensation money, while his work with the Colonial Bank and RMSP Company had conflicted with competing West Indian interests in these fields. By the late 1830s and early 40s, he became very vocal about his opposition to British suppression of the slave trade and African immigration to the West Indies, two major components of the West Indian cause. Even more disturbing to West Indians, he also began consorting with his former enemies, the abolitionists.

In fact, the abolitionists provided the initial opportunity for MacQueen's re-entry into African affairs, and the first major recognition of his abilities. With British slave emancipation accomplished, British abolitionists had turned their attention to the foreign slave trade and discovered a disconcerting fact--one already known by many, including MacQueen--that suppression had utterly failed to stem the transatlantic slave trade. Buxton, by now one of the most influential men in the country (despite his defeat in the 1837 general election), and after 1839, leader of the main abolitionist faction, the Africa Civilization Society, became convinced that the only way to stop the slave trade permanently was to end slavery in Africa.[65] Buxton claimed to have arrived at this conclusion from a revelation one night,[66] but this revelation was in all probability influenced by years of MacQueen's unceasing polemic. How else can we explain the fact that Buxton solicited his former tormentor, MacQueen, for information and advice regarding Africa?

As MacQueen never failed to point out during the 1820s, Buxton knew little of Africa

(which he now admitted[67]) and the old abolitionist invited MacQueen to Leamington in May 1838 to advise him on Africa, specifically the extent of the slave trade and MacQueen's plan to eliminate it.[68] MacQueen became a member of the ACS the next year, many of whose members he had personally attacked less than a decade previously.[69] Furthermore, the ACS strongly supported the naval campaign to suppress the foreign slave trade, a policy that MacQueen emphatically opposed. Thus, in light of their earlier acrimony over the emancipation debate and their present differences regarding suppression (among other things), I find this meeting at Leamington, as well as MacQueen's membership with the ACS, nothing short of incredible.[70] One can only conclude that at this point Buxton and MacQueen needed each other: Buxton needed an expert's assistance, and MacQueen needed a sponsor for his plan, and a man with powerful African connections.

According to the scheme as outlined in *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, Buxton adopted most of the components of MacQueen's plan, but none of the principles of it.[71] He agreed to establish a base on Fernando Po and base at the Niger-Tchadda (Benue) confluence and to introduce legitimate commerce to replace the slave trade. However, he made it clear that he did not intend "to erect a new empire in Africa," and therefore, as G.M. Metcalfe has pointed out, rejected those parts of MacQueen's plan which directly supported imperial expansion, such as monopoly trading rights, or a custom house on Fernando Po.[72] The different ends that Buxton and MacQueen had in mind can be traced back to different assumptions about Britain's relationship with Africa. Buxton believed Britain had a debt to pay, and urged his readers "to recollect that for centuries we were mainly instrumental in checking cultivation in Africa: we ransacked the whole continent in order to procure labourers for the West Indies."[73] MacQueen, on the other

hand, always insisted that African slavery was the result of the "ignorance and barbarity" of Africans themselves. Perhaps partially due to these fundamental differences which remained between the two men, Buxton did not acknowledge MacQueen much in his book except for estimates regarding the slave trade, some comments about the value of Sierra Leone, and a vague reference to MacQueen's authority as an expert on Africa.[74]

Once the Colonial Office became convinced of the value of Buxton's plan, it too, solicited MacQueen's advice on some of the more specific details about the plan, and especially how to conduct the negotiations with the African leaders. He not only provided the Colonial Office with detailed advice on how to conduct the negotiations, but he also insisted that the government needed a more specific plan to go into Africa.[75] Not surprisingly, Colonial Secretary Glenelg, having just received MacQueen's proposals regarding West Indian currency, proposed that MacQueen be the agent for this expedition.[76]

MacQueen's negotiating experience as the agent for the Colonial Bank and RMSP Company may have been a factor in the government's decision to ask him for advice and to consider him as an agent for the expedition. If so, such reasons tell us a great deal about the number of African experts in Britain at this time, and how this number had changed since the late eighteenth century when the African Association asked Rennell to be their advisor. MacQueen's geography was not progressive, and one could even call it tainted because of his interested motives. Yet this is what Buxton and the government chose. There simply were no other good alternatives at this time. Along the same lines, MacQueen was at the height of his influence, and at this point resembles his preceding geographer-imperialists like Hakluyt or Dalrymple the most- -all compiled, synthesized, promoted and advised.

It is unclear why MacQueen did not become the agent for the ill-fated Niger expedition of 1839-41,[77] but part of the reason lies with fundamental differences in dealing with the slave trade--concerns which MacQueen expressed publicly in his new book, *A Geographical Survey of Africa*, published in 1840. As the subtitle of his new work explained, he prefaced his geography with a letter to Glenelg's successor, Lord John Russell, in which he hoped the book would "prove a guide to Government in following out their present extended views and plans, formed for the purpose of extirpating at its roots the African slave trade."[78] In other words, the only "new" part of this geography would be new geographical details overlaid on MacQueen's old ideas about establishing inland commerce and ending the slave trade. The only real difference from *Northern and Central Africa* as far as the plan went was in emphasis: instead of attacking the cost and uselessness of Sierra Leone, he took aim at the government's policy of naval suppression of the foreign slave trade. With the government in the midst of shifting its locus of operations in West Africa from Sierra Leone and the Windward coast to the Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po, initiated by way of the Niger expedition, there was little point in beating a dead horse. But another component to the government's change of policy, also heavily influenced by Buxton and the ACS, was a massive expansion of the antislavery naval blockade. The number of ships deployed on the West African station rose from 7 in 1831, to 19 in 1841, to a peak of 36 between 1845-47.[79] MacQueen had always opposed suppression as useless and costly, and was now joined by several others, including the merchant-explorer Macgregor Laird, the parsimonious M.P. Joseph Hume, conservative and liberal writers such as Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens, and pacifist abolitionists such as Joseph Sturge and his British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. MacQueen estimated that Britain's suppression campaign cost the country £600,000 annually (see

his calculations pp. xxxiii-xxxix). The figure is as exaggerated as the annual export of slaves

from Africa, which Buxton--using MacQueen's calculations--estimated at 150,000 (and which

MacQueen in turn, used Buxton as his authority).[80]   In *A Geographical Survey* MacQueen

encouraged the use of missionaries more because they provided far cheaper and more effective

imperial expansion: "a few thousand pounds--10,000£ annually, my Lord, spent in this way,

would prove more effectual in spreading knowledge, and industry, and civilization in African,

than half a million annually spent in external efforts to extinguish the foreign slave trade."[81]

Likewise, MacQueen approached the actual geographical sections in *A Geographical*

Survey in much the same way as he had in *Northern and Central Africa*: numerous map-plots

combined with general regional descriptions--in other words, another "geographical and

commercial view." His narrative begins:

> Africa ... extends north to south from Cape Bianco in 9° 48' E. long. and in 37° 20' N. lat., to the Cape
> of Good Hope in 34° 22' S. lat. and 28° 24' 24" E. long.; and east to west ... being in extreme length from
> north to south 4302, and in its extreme breadth from east to west 4127 geographical miles. This
> important and vast portion of the world, hitherto but little known, and less attended to for any good or
> beneficial purpose, stretches through the whole of the torrid zone, and includes within its borders 11°
> lat. of the southern, and 14° lat. of the northern temperate zone; thus enjoying the finest and most
> productive climates on the face of the globe.
> The countries extending throughout by far the greater portion of the vast surface just mentioned
> are, as regards soil and capabilities, amongst the finest in the world ...[82]

The changes were simply in scope and sophistication. MacQueen now attempted to cover

all of Africa (though everything south of the equator is described in less than twenty pages at the

end of the book, while the Niger itself is given over eighty pages); greatly expanded his range of

sources; and utilized more developed techniques for both the map-plot and descriptive sections

of the work. The nature and changes of MacQueen's methodology is explained in a very

illuminating concluding chapter in *A Geographical Survey* entitled "Construction of the Map."

Indeed, the section is an explicit explanation of armchair geography generally:

The labours and speculations of geographers, or writers on African matters previous to this day, were brought into aid. The accounts of travellers, ancient or modern, that were known, or that came in my way were carefully and separately examined; their statements retained or rejected, according as these agreed with themselves as a whole; or, as they stood the test of rigid examination when contrasted with others. The bearings and distances give in each were all carefully considered, as these were found to be given when travelling from different points in Africa to other points in Africa. Every one of these journeys were [sic] then protracted upon a large scale, and afterwards reduced, combined, connected, by which means, with the aid of one or two fixed points, and a few more stated positions in which there could be no great error, one traveller and writer was made to check the other, and sometimes themselves.[83]

MacQueen then discussed the difficulties of ascertaining information from explorers for use in converting it to a spatial format. Distances, place names, directions, indeed, all observations were susceptible to misinterpretation and hence, distortion. He spent two pages explaining his method for calculating distances. Where in *Northern and Central Africa* he simply calculated an explorer's travel as ten miles per day, he now took account of mode of travel, terrain, and activities of the explorers themselves, and more carefully determined the method of calculation if he was using a previous geography. MacQueen repeatedly notes that determining place names was a similar nightmare for the geographer.[84]

MacQueen's range of sources had also expanded. The expeditions from the previous fifty years, particularly those of the 1820s and 30s--René De Caillié (to Timbuctoo 1827-29), Clapperton, Lander, Macgregor Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield (up the Niger 1832-34)--provided most of the information for *A Geographical Survey*, supplanting all other sources available, even Ptolemy. MacQueen also acquired more older Arab and European works, making especially good use of Guillaume D'Lisle's maps and some more obscure eighteenth-century surveys.[85] He also apparently acquired a copy of Pinkerton's next massive compilation, his *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1811). More importantly, however, MacQueen admitted that much of his information came "from written and oral communications of various individuals." He had always used these "informants" (as he often called them) ever since his initial interest in geography was

sparked by discussions with the slaves in Grenada. During the 1820s he mainly relied on his friend Blackwood for his powerful connections in getting him information. Since then, MacQueen's own network of business contacts (including Glasgow and Liverpool merchants, West Indian friends, and other newspaper editors and correspondents) and purely geographical correspondents had expanded considerably. Far more foreign information was made available with the formation of the Paris and Berlin Geographical Societies in the 1820s, and the publication of the most famous foreign travels in West Africa, such as Caillié's journey to Timbuctoo in 1828.[86] It is clear in MacQueen's 1832 article on the geography of West Africa that he made more use of older Dutch and French maps than the Landers' journals.[87] By the 1840s MacQueen began consistently referring to the French *Geographical Bulletins* in his work, and established a correspondence with the Paris Geographical Society (which published the *Bulletins*). His British connections were even more fruitful. For example, he corresponded directly with Oldfield and Robert Jamieson, and through friends was able to acquire unpublished letters and surveys of John Beecroft (explorer, surveyor and British consul on Fernando Po) and Captain Owen, the Admiralty's pre-eminent hydrographer. The Admiralty even agreed to give MacQueen a copy of Captain Allen's recent survey of the Niger.[88] Finally, MacQueen also became friends with John Arrowsmith, Britain's leading cartographer and engraver, who not only provided MacQueen with geographical information, but also engraved MacQueen's maps for *A Geographical Survey*, as well as all of his future maps.[89]

MacQueen even attempted to provide more than just the "great physical features" of Africa. He tried to broaden his descriptive sections primarily by including more of what we could loosely call anthropological information. MacQueen had always distinguished the "barbarian"

North Africans--Arab or Moor--from the "perfect [i.e. pure?] savages" of the south--the Negroes.

This was a commonplace distinction, even amongst liberal quarters in Britain.[90] Now, however,

MacQueen fairly accurately divided all of Africa into roughly six main ethnic groups: the Berbers

in the north, the Foulahs in the northwest and west, the various "Arab tribes" throughout

northern-central and eastern Africa, the Negroes south of 10° N. latitude, the Hottentots in the

southwest, and the Caffres in the southeast. He also provided more information on the various

peoples within each region, though still in the superficial manner of something like the "Scientific

Tables." And as always, emphasis was on the strange and the sensational. MacQueen's

description of Ashantee is typical:

> Ashantee is a monarchy of the most despotic description; the sovereign there rules over all his subjects
> by the terrors of superstition and the sword. Their religion is Paganism, in its lowest and most degraded
> forms; and in many of the districts and the countries adjoining, the people are so ignorant and degraded
> as to worship the shark and the snake. Amongst other customs which were known and practised amidst
> the most barbarous nations of Europe and Asia in the most ancient times--that of sacrificing their enemies
> taken captive in war, to gratify their deities, to appease the manes of their chiefs who fell in battle, or to
> attend them as slaves in the invisible world, is retained in Ashantee ..."[91]

MacQueen continued to describe the practice of human sacrifice for the next thirteen pages (more

than half of his whole description of Ashantee). The passage shows that MacQueen had not

adopted some of the more innovative investigative methods of analyzing African regions and

people, such as Hannah Kilham's watershed studies of African languages near Sierra Leone and

the Gambia in the 1820s or S.W. Koelle's linguistic work in the 1850s.[92] Instead, he was

incorporating the descriptive techniques of traditional travel literature--listing the manners,

customs, religion, etc. of a region--and applying it to Africa in a comprehensive way.

MacQueen's descriptions were superficial and biased, but they were a great improvement over

previous compilers such as Pinkerton.

Contemporaries realized as much, even before the publication of *A Geographical Survey*,

as seen by MacQueen's work with Buxton and the government. *A Geographical Survey* only confirmed and reinforced his reputation as an established authority on Africa, as his later career suggests.[93] In 1843 he wrote a "Geographical Memoir" and constructed two maps for the Church Missionary Society to preface the journals of their two missionary-explorers, C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf, to Abyssinia, a region with which MacQueen had dealt little.[94] That MacQueen was still chosen again reflects on both his reputation and the number of British African experts generally. And from MacQueen's point of view, the CMS's work confirmed his new-found belief in imperialism on the cheap, even if he did not have any direct strategic designs in this part of Africa.

In addition to Krapf and Isenberg's accounts, MacQueen relied very heavily on Bruce's journals, to provide his usual textual synthesis plus two maps.[95] The actual geography itself is really only remarkable, however, by *how* it was prepared and presented. First, MacQueen again worked through the RGS, sending his two maps and a response to a recent explorer's account of the region.[96] More significantly, however, MacQueen's "Geographical Memoir" was his first apolitical geography—no criticisms, no promotion, no plan—only no-nonsense map-plots around eastern Africa. Along the same lines, the geography is even more detailed, at least in its cartographic form, as MacQueen began using a larger scale (i.e. focussing on a smaller region), which he would employ for all of his future maps.[97] Instead of attempting to plot all of Africa, or even all of "Northern and Central Africa," as he had up until 1841,[98] MacQueen was now isolating regions within Africa. The change reflects an advance in geographical knowledge, but an advance made along the same primitive track of map-plot style geography.

In the mid-1840s MacQueen again became a one-man pressure group to achieve his plan,

and nearly succeeded. In 1844 and 1845, he sent numerous letters and memorials to the Prime

Minister, Sir Robert Peel, outlining his scheme, though now emphasizing the problems with

importing "free labourers" into the West Indies, and warning of the dangers of Britain's

dependence on the United States for almost all of its cotton.[99] Initially the government responded

with polite apathy, as it had to most of MacQueen's schemes in their original form. But, again

following the same pattern as before with the Colonial Bank and RMSP Company, MacQueen

had convinced a group of private investors, this time under the directorship of Alexander Baring

(of the banking family, and by now Lord Ashburton), to form the company by 1847. As usual,

the government granted a charter, a prospectus was drawn up, and the Directors held their first

meeting. However, Ashburton postponed developments because, according to MacQueen, he

"saw the Commercial Storm coming" in the wake of the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the plan

was never resumed.[100]

    While his attempts to effect his scheme failed, MacQueen's memorials to Peel are

interesting nevertheless because here is where he explained most explicitly how he tried to bring

a rapprochment between the West Indians and the abolitionists, and after failing, why he sided

more with his former enemies:

> I have taken a great deal of trouble to bring round a cordial union between the former opposers of
> Colonial Slavery and everyone connected with the now enfranchised British Tropical Colonies ... But
> my efforts have been completely thwarted, though I know this to be the wish of many West Indians both
> at home and abroad. On the part of the former opposers of Colonial Slavery the propositions suggested
> [i.e. MacQueen's plan] were met with the readiest acquiescence and the most cordial good will ...[101]

Although MacQueen still could not call the abolitionists anything more than the "former opposers

of Colonial Slavery," he nevertheless realized that Britain's future in Africa lay with them, even

in the geographical field.

The abolitionists may also deserve some of the credit for MacQueen's entry into the Royal Geographical Society. Technically MacQueen became a fellow of the RGS in 1845, aged sixty-seven years, upon the nomination of John Arrowsmith, which was certainly a significant endorsement. But as noted, MacQueen's connections with the Society began at least since the late 1830s when he began working on his plan for global mail communication and also when he sent material for Buxton or the CMS via the RGS. Furthermore, he addressed his correspondence to Captain Washington, the RGS Secretary between 1836 and 1840, who also belonged to Buxton's ACS.[102]

MacQueen's contribution to the RGS was modest but important. He presented a half-dozen of his own papers and communicated four others to the Society, presenting his last in 1860. Continuing in the direction he took with his 1843 "Geographical Memoir," MacQueen's work now dealt exclusively with Eastern Africa and was purged almost entirely of any non-geographical information. He mainly synthesized the latest explorer's accounts, and converted their information into highly detailed map-plots.[103] His work was undoubtedly useful for explorers but makes for painful reading as an endless narrative of latitudes, longitudes, miles, and obscure place names. As we have seen, he had always written his geographical sections in this manner, in the Scientific-Tables manner that he had learned, but until the 1840s there had always been a political or commercial element to them. Without this edge to MacQueen's geography, one can especially sympathize with British school children who were still learning geography as MacQueen had. In 1880 John Richard Green, the pioneer social historian, lamented:

> No drearier task can be set for the worst of criminals than that of studying a set of geographical text-books such as children in our schools are doomed to use. Pages of 'tables', 'tables' of heights and 'tables' of areas, 'tables' of mountains and 'tables' of table-lands, 'tables' of numerals which look like arithmetical problems, but are really statements of population; these ... form the only breaks in a chaotic

mass of what are amusingly styled 'geographical facts', which turn out simply to be names, names of rivers and names of hills, names of counties and names of towns, a mass barely brought into grammatical shape by the needful verbs and substantives, and dotted over with isolated phrases about mining here and cotton-spinning there.[104]

As much as we sympathize with Green, however, what is important to note in this context is that even in 1880, the "capes and bays" style of geography that MacQueen learned and practised was still the norm. In fact, this style of geography would continue to be taught in such a way well into this century.

Rejection and Reaction: MacQueen's Last Africa Plan and the Nile Question, 1860-70

While beginnings of a reaction to MacQueen's method of writing geography were only being heard at the end of MacQueen's career and after, a rejection of his purpose for geography was fully complete by 1860. MacQueen's last attempt to get his plan adopted best illustrates how geography had changed, and specifically, how its relationship to imperialism had changed.

As Robert Stafford relates, Palmerston's return to office in 1859 and the imminent outbreak of the American Civil War "revived flagging interest" in the development of cotton in the Niger Valley, a cause which MacQueen had promoted generally since 1820, and specifically since 1839.[105] In 1860 he asked if the Society would sponsor his scheme. Francis Galton reviewed the plan and gave it a favourable endorsement. But the RGS never acted on it because, Stafford argues, Sir Roderick Murchison, the RGS's longest-running president and perhaps Britain's most influential patron of the sciences, opposed the scheme--not because he objected to imperial expansion into Africa; on the contrary, in his 1845 Presidential Address Murchison had rebuked MacQueen (in his first year as a Fellow) for communicating information regarding Krapf's journey to the Juba River (Somaliland)--a potential British market--to the Paris

Geographical Society.[106] And not because the members of the RGS as a whole objected to expansion; as mentioned, the RGS was dominated at this time by military men and the "service class" described by Bridges[107]—all of whom supported exploration, world geography, regional geographies outside of Britain, and ultimately, expansion. Murchison opposed MacQueen's plan simply because he, Murchison, "knew that openly projecting the RGS as a colonising agency would be disastrous."[108] For the first time in 300 years, British geography could no longer justify itself as a visible concomitant of imperial expansion.

In fact geography was no longer simply a "useful" means to any other end, whether imperialism or simply "to excite and gratify curiosity" as at the beginning of the century when MacQueen began his career. British geography in the 1860s was in the initial throws of the identity crisis that would not be resolved until Mackinder formulated his "new geography" in the 1880s. The discipline was in the process of becoming a professional, specialized and legitimate "science," whose purpose could no longer be openly implicated with interested ends such as imperial expansion. This is not to say that geography was no longer implicated in imperialism; only that it was forced to go underground, thus creating perhaps a more insidious form of veiled imperialism.[109]

This last failure to adopt his plan marks a distinct change, or return, in tone in MacQueen's geographical work, which would last for the remaining ten years of his life. As with his first decade of writing geography, MacQueen again brought politics into his geography in a vicious way. Perhaps a lifetime of failed attempts to promote his African plans, plus never receiving the credit he believed he deserved for his geographical work, coupled with the immediate concerns of economic hardship, "family afflictions," and an exhausting debate over

the sources of the Nile, pressed down heavily on MacQueen in this period.[110] Consequently he may have despaired of British geography and Britain in Africa, and retreated somewhat to the comfort and stability of the Bible and the classics. In a long reminiscing letter to Lord Ashburton (second baron), then President of the RGS, MacQueen recounted his plan's history, but then tailed off into a long and strange discussion on the sources of the Nile. In seemingly conscious reaction to all contemporary exploration, MacQueen made no mention of the recent discoveries of Burton, Speke, Livingstone or any other contemporary explorer; instead, he provided a summary of ancient Egyptian knowledge and the Old Testament, plus a lamentation on the destruction of the library in Alexandria--once the Mecca of all armchair geographers--in the seventh century. He concluded that "had the library ... not been destroyed by the fanatical Arabs, we should have had no lack of information regarding the Nile, and all the sources, and courses of its early tributaries."[111]

The "Nile question" was indeed the greatest single geographical issue by the late 1850s, and MacQueen's handling of it epitomizes the change in his work. Early in his career MacQueen had simply accepted Ptolemy's conclusion that the river sprang from two sources coming from the "Mountains of the Moon." More careful analysis of the journals of Bruce, Krapf, Isenberg, and most especially, information obtained from the recent Egyptian expeditions up the White Nile (1839, 1840, and 1841) ordered by Mohamet Ali, had led MacQueen to remain thoughtfully ambiguous on the question in the 1840s. For example, on his 1843 map of Abyssinia, MacQueen included both Ptolemy's and Bruce's versions of the source of the Nile, plus several specific details (e.g. river width and depth) provided by the Egyptian expeditions.[112] His papers presented to the RGS in the 1850s made him an authority on Eastern and even Southern Africa. Indeed, in

his 1858 Presidential Address to the Society, Sir Roderick Murchison referred to MacQueen as

"our sagacious critic on all South African subjects."[113] But MacQueen did not really get involved

with the problem of the Nile's source until the dispute between Richard Burton and John Speke

became a national debate after Speke presented his findings to the RGS in 1859 and then

published *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* in 1863. The public was divided

on Speke's claim to have discovered the source as Lake Victoria, which he had made

independently on the expedition led by Burton (1857-59).[114] Just as the public had become

bitterly divided, geographers split into camps on each side of the question, with those such as

Livingstone, Murchison and Cooley supporting Speke, and Krapf, Beke and MacQueen

supporting Burton.[115]

As a correspondent for the *Morning Advertiser* since the early 1860s, MacQueen, now in

his eighties, jumped into the middle of the fray on Burton's side in a manner reminiscent of the

1820s and the Niger question, or the 1830s and the currency question. While MacQueen raised

legitimate questions about Speke's geography, focussing on the elevation of Lake Victoria, such

criticisms were overshadowed by MacQueen's personal attacks. He lambasted Speke with all of

the bitterness and vehemence with which he had the abolitionists, using *ad hominem* arguments,

haggling over irrelevant details, and pandering to the prudery of his time, in an effort to discredit

the man instead of the message. For example, MacQueen spent two pages recounting the story

of how Speke measured one of the fatted wives of King Rumanika of Karagwe (Rwanda?): "We

must give this precious piece of information in Speke's words, as he seems to delight and excel

in such exhibitions. An agreement was quickly made with the lady. Speke was to obtain a good

view of her naked, and then to measure her, upon a like reciprocity on his part ..."[116] MacQueen's

articles were published as a single volume together with Burton's own views of the Nile's source, which he had previously presented to the RGS.[117] Burton offered an interestingly qualified endorsement of MacQueen in the preface to the book:

> To the veteran African geographer, Mr. James Macqueen, my thanks are especially due for permission to reprint his valuable and original letters ... His literary labours in the cause of the Dark Peninsula have extended through half a century, and hardly ever before has he shown greater acumen or higher spirit--to say nothing of his inimitable dryness of style--than in those compositions, put forth at a time when the English world was bowing down before their latest idol.[118]

Presumably the "latest idol" was Speke's latest theory on the source of the Nile, and thus Burton is praising MacQueen's reviews. Nevertheless, Burton must have been embarrassed by parts of MacQueen's reviews since the book was published just after Speke's shocking "gun accident" which occurred the day before he was to debate Burton at the RGS. Upon hearing the news, Burton is said to have cried, 'By God, he's killed himself.'[119]

After MacQueen himself died in 1870, Murchison gave his "old and respected friend" a generous obituary in his annual Presidential Address, noting, among other things, that MacQueen "published, through Mr. Arrowsmith, the first map, approaching to correctness, of the interior of Africa."[120] But, as with Burton's endorsement, one also senses a little reserve and qualification about Murchison's description of MacQueen as a geographer. Murchison ended with "In him [MacQueen] the Society has lost one of its most attached members." What does this mean, and is it a compliment? I suspect this ambiguity arose from difficulties in reconciling MacQueen's geographical work with British geography generally in the 1860s and 70s.

Both Burton and Murchison acknowledged that MacQueen had contributed much important knowledge about the geography of Africa over a lifetime of study, synthesis and

promotion. Indeed, no one had a more comprehensive range about the subject, filled in more "blank spaces" on the map, or spoke more passionately about Africa than MacQueen. And while it is true that he became a geographer in the first place only to achieve self-interested ends quite outside the realm of geography—indeed, he became expert in the field, at least initially, only to justify himself to his dismissive critics and unconvinced government officials, and ultimately to legitimize his plan for Africa—he nevertheless deserves credit for advancing British geographical knowledge of the interior of Africa. We must remember, however, that MacQueen had the benefit to belong to the first generation of European geographers who were able to take advantage of contemporary explorations into the interior (from Bruce's journey onwards) since the travels of Leo Africanus in the sixteenth century. There were simply very few rival map-plotters of Africa when MacQueen began his career. This certainly was not the case when he ended it.

But what kind of geography did MacQueen contribute, and how did it change? At the core of all of MacQueen's geographical work was what I have called the map-plot—the delineation of a region's main features, mostly physical, in text form. I have given a liberal sampling of MacQueen's style of listing latitudes, longitudes, miles, directions, etc. about which Green was to complain regarding British geography generally. In the early part of MacQueen's career, i.e. from the publication of *Northern and Central Africa* (1821) to 1832, his map-plots were heavily overlaid with more general "descriptions": a listing of the region's soil, vegetation, "beauties," along with an equally simplistic overview of the humans in this area—mainly their productions, manufactures, trade practices and willingness to trade, plus some of their more notable (if sometimes exaggerated) customs, "manners," etc. MacQueen also included very specific details about his plan for expansion into Africa and commentary on British policy

towards Africa generally in these early geographies. In fact, the geographical sections of them were only meant to support and strengthen his plan and commentary; in other words, they were to show where the most valuable regions in West Africa were, how the British were to get to these regions, and how the British government should tailor its African policy to accommodate this expansion.

This was the method, style and purpose that MacQueen had learned as a schoolboy studying geography, travel literature, and the history of the British Empire. Ever since the Elizabethan era when British geography came into its own, it had always been inextricably attached to imperial expansion--to promote it and to facilitate it--from Hakluyt's geographical compilations of America to Dalrymple's of the South Seas. MacQueen also took after these great predecessors in their advising capacities, which enabled them to shape government overseas policies based upon their geographical expertise.

MacQueen's later work did change, but not fundamentally. It only became more focussed, by which I mean two things. First, his map-plots became more localized and detailed as he perfected his own skills and his network of sources expanded. On the other hand, the material within the geographies themselves narrowed as he gradually began removing any non-geographical information. In *A Geographical Survey*, his plan and usual commentary were attached separately as a preface to the actual geography. By 1843, his plan was out of his geographies altogether. The descriptive sections were also pared down after 1840. Thus, by the 1850s when he was presenting most of his work to the RGS, his geographies had been stripped down to their map-plot skeletons, making them little more than cartographies in prose.

I believe that MacQueen made these changes because he sensed, though he did not

consciously recognize or understand, the larger changes in the discipline. The age of the gentleman geographer was certainly coming quickly to an end. Moreover Murchison's rejection of MacQueen's plan in 1860 because the RGS could not openly act as a "colonizing agency" also suggested that the days of the geographer-promoter were also numbered.

Burton and Murchison sensed the anachronistic qualities to MacQueen's work themselves. Where MacQueen's work became increasingly reduced to latitudes, longitudes, and simplistic descriptions, the theory behind geography was becoming broader, emphasizing the unity of all sciences. Not surprisingly, then, MacQueen never once made mention of Humboldt, Ritter, Somerville or any pioneer in the field. And Burton's reference to MacQueen's "dryness of style" points to a larger question about MacQueen's whole approach to geography, which had changed greatly since the days when geography required "scarcely any preparation of previous study," and "recommend[ed] itself even to those who have but little relish for literary occupations."[121] In his biography of James Rennell written near the end of the century, Clements Markham asserted that the ideal geographer

> should have been trained by years of land or sea surveying, or both, and by experience in the field in delineating the surface of a country. He should have a profound knowledge of all the world of exploration and discovery previous to his own time. He should have the critical faculty highly developed, and the power of comparing and combining the work of others, of judging the respective value of their labours, and of eliminating errors. He must possess the topographical instinct; for, like a poet, a geographer is born--he is not made.[122]

MacQueen had many of the qualities that Markham outlines; but his greatest weakness was that his approach was less like a poet's and more like Thomas Gradgrind's. By the time of his death it was clear that he had not been born a geographer, but an imperialist.

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natural history draughtsmen, professional astronomers, surgeons and naturalists. His method of exploration set a new standard for scientific travel in terms of ships, their crews and equipment, and a concern for proper survey. See J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford U. Press, 1974), 141-45; and David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration, Science and Empire, 1780-1801* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 116.

11. *Flora Fribergensis* ... (Berlin: Rottmann, 1793) and *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, 5 vols. (Suttgart: Cotta, 1845-62).

12. Margarita Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought: From Francis Bacon to Alexander von Humboldt* (Cambridge U. Press, 1981), 29. For her analysis of Humboldt's influence on geography, see chapter 7.

13. *A Geography of Geography: Origins and Development of the Discipline* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1969), 95.

14. Ritter's masterwork was *Die Erdkunde im Verhaltnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen* [Geography in Relationship to Nature and Human History] (Gottingen, 1817-18), the first in a series of nineteen volumes (one on Africa, eighteen on Asia). In 1845 he won the Patron's Medal from the RGS. Quotation from Fuson, 96.

15. E.C. Patterson, "Mary Somerville," *British Journal for the History of Science*, 4 (1969), 311-39; M. Sanderson, "Mary Somerville: her work in physical geography," *Geographical Review*, 64 (1974), 410-20.

16. On the *Beagle* voyage (1831-36), Darwin read Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of a New Continent, 1799-1804* (1818) numerous times, and later recalled it to be one of his most formative influences. See Patrick Armstrong, "Charles Darwin and the Development of Geography in the Nineteenth Century," *History of Geography Newsletter*, 4 (1984), 1-10.

17. "On the Scope and Methods of Geography," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 9, 3 (March 1887), 147.

18. J.F. Unstead, "H.J. Mackinder and the new geography," *Geographical Journal*, 113 (1949), 45-57.

19. [Anonymous], "Cent-cinquantenaire de la Societe de geographie, 1821-1971," *Acta Geographica*, no. 20 (March 1975), 1-52; Otto Baschin, "Die Gesellschaft fur Erdkunde zu Berlin 1828 bis 1928: Vorgescheichte, Begrundung und Entwicklung," *Die Naturwissenschaften* 16, 21 (25 May 1928), 369-74.

20. The best overview of the early years of the Society is still Clements Markham's *The Fifty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society* (London: John Murray, 1881), esp. ch. 5. See also Cameron, *To the Farthest Ends of the Earth*.

21. D.R. Stoddart, "The R.G.S. and the 'New Geography,'" in *On Geography and its History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 60-61.

22. "Nineteenth Century Exploration and Mapping: The Role of the Royal Geographical Society," in *Maps and Mapping of Africa*, ed. by Patricia Larby (London, 1987), 11.

23. *Maps and Map-Makers* (New York: Dorset, 1990; orig. pub. 1949), 96.

24. E.H. Burrows, *Captain Owen of the African Survey* (Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1979).

25. K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885* (Oxford, 1956), 5-18; Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 58-87, 177-97.

26. G.R. Crone, "Elephants for Want of Towns," *Progress* (Autumn 1952), 26-34.

27. Tooley, *Maps and Map-Makers*, 29.

28. "Geographical Illustrations of Africa," in Park's *Travels*, ix.

29. See Oscar I. Norwich, *Maps of Africa: An Illustrated and Annotated Carto-Bibliography* (Johannesburg: A.D. Donker, 1983); Tooley, *Maps and Map-Makers*, 42-44.

30. Thomas J. Bassett and Philip W. Porter, "'From the Best Authorities': The Mountains of Kong in the Cartography of West Africa," *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), 367-413.

31. While serious English interest in Africa began with the establishment of its own slave trade, all seventeenth-century English maps of Africa were copied nevertheless from Dutch maps, and merely "corrected." The first English-printed map of Africa was John Speed's "Africae; described, the manners of their habits and buildinge ..." in *The Prospect of the World* (London, 1627), based on Jodocus Hondius' "Africae Nova Tabula" (1606). The real boom in English maps of Africa did not occur until the latter part of the century with the publication of Robert Walton's in 1659, a second edition of Speed's map in 1662, and John Overton's in 1668. See R.V. Tooley, *A Sequence of Maps of Africa* (London: Map Collector's Circle, 1972), 8, 10.

32. Markham, *Rennell*, 85; *Records of the African Association 1788-1831*, ed. with an intro. by Robin Hallet for the Royal Geographical Society (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 19.

33. "Geographical Illustrations," iv.

34. II, 737.

35. James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1790); Tuckey died on his expedition up the Congo in 1816-17, and his account was put together posthumously, with an introduction by Sir John Barrow, as *Narrative of an Expedition to explore the River Zaire ... in 1816* (London, 1818); T. Edward Bowditch, *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: Murray, 1819); Park, *op cit*. The African Institution published Park's last journals and letters in 1815 "with a glowing account of the riches to be won in the interior by British commerce" (Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 164). Ironically MacQueen's lifelong plan to penetrate Africa commercially may have been heavily influenced by his bitterest enemies early in his career.

36. Pp. 159 and 172, respectively.

37. Ever since Richard and John Lander found the answer, the history of "the search for the Niger" has been well documented in the scholarship: from the founding of the African Association in 1788 to the Lander brothers'confirmation that the river terminated into the Gulf of Guinea in 1830. Though any history of the exploration of Africa will relate this story, see the more specific works of Christopher Lloyd, *The Search for the Niger* (Newton Abbot, Devon: Reader's Union, 1973); and Sanche de Gramont, *The Strong Brown God: The Story of the Niger River* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

38. *Atlas Ganzen Erdkreises*.

39. P. xx. MacQueen's denial is in *Blackwood's*, 31 (Feb. 1832), 201.

40. Letter to Barrow and Memorial to Melville, dated 18 Aug. 1820, G051/2/619, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.

41. *Image of Africa*, 284 (quotation), 157-64.

42. *Notes on Africa ... with Hints for the Melioration of the Whole African Population* (London, 1819).

43. See Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Cornell U. Press, 1989).

44. *Image of Africa*, 206.

45. Martin Lynn, "Britain's West African Policy and the Island of Fernando Po, 1821-43," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18 (1990), 191-207.

46. *Quarterly Review*, 36 (1822), 51-82.

47. *Blackwood's*, 13 (1823), 432. In *Blackwood's*, 19 (1826), 687-709 he provided even more evidence to disprove the Nile thesis and even constructed a new map to show it spatially. See Map 5.1.

48. Presented by Martin Leake, Esq., *JRGS*, 2 (1832), 1. Meanwhile modern historians such as Dike have marked the Landers' discovery as nothing less than the "opening of West Africa" to European expansion since a water highway was found into the West African hinterland. See

Trade and Politics, 18.

49. The editor of Blackwood's (C.N.) asserted "one of the numerous mouths of the Niger should certainly be called the 'MacQueen.'" Vol. 30 (1831), 136.

50. MacQueen to Blackwood, 29 May 1831, BP.

51. Vol. 19 (1822), 55.

52. *Quarterly Review*, 46 (1832), 78-79.

53. With access the world's largest library in his day, Ptolemy borrowed from other scholars liberally, especially Hipparchus. Simon Berthon and Andrew Robinson have recently described him as a "copyist on a gigantic scale." *The Shape of the World* (London: George Philip, 1991), 29.

54. *On Geography and its History*, 23.

55. *Blackwood's*, 31 (1832), 215.

56. "Cooley," 44-45.

57. *On Geography and its History*, 73-74. Stoddart takes his reference from E.W. Gilbert, *Sir Halford Mackinder 1861-1947* (London: London School of Economics, 1947), 14.

58. Kenneth Macaulay, who defended the colony against MacQueen's attacks (see chapter 2), believed that MacQueen and Laing had met. He then concluded that Laing's contact with MacQueen helps explain why he, Laing, criticized Sierra Leone in his book (*Travels in the Timanee, Kooranko, and Soolima Countries in West Africa* (London, 1825)) when he had held a "favourable" opinion while residing in the colony. See *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated*, 18.

59. 21 April 1825.

60. *Glasgow Courier*, 17 May 1825.

61. *Blackwood's*, 19 (1826), 707.

62. MacQueen to Blackwood, 16 June 1831, BP.

63. 13 Dec. 1831, BP.

64. *Blackwood's*, 31 (1832), 213-14.

65. J. Gallagher, "Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 10 (1950), 36-58; Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery 1833-70* (London: Longman, 1972),

ch. 3.

66. One of Buxton's sons recalled: "in the beginning of the summer of 1837, he walked into my room one morning, at an early hour, and, sitting down on my bedside, told me that he had been lying awake the whole night reflecting on the subject of the slave trade, and he believed he had hit upon the true remedy for that portentous evil." *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, Bart.*, ed. by Charles Buxton (London & Toronto: J.M. Dent, n.d), 193.

67. "I possessed neither the practical experience which belongs to a traveller, a trader, or the governor of a colony, nor the intimate acquaintance with the native mind acquired by the missionary; nor that deep knowledge of all that has been written concerning Africa, in which Mr. [Thomas] Clarkson and Mr. M'Queen excel." *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840), 436.

68. *Memoirs*, 194.

69. For example, in addition to Buxton, Stephen Lushington, Sir Robert Inglis, Lord Nugent, and Sir George Stephen.

70. Even moreso in light of MacQueen's schedule; in this year (1838) MacQueen was still an agent for both the Colonial Bank and the RMSP Company.

71. Buxton's assessment and plan were published separately at first in 1839 and 1840, and together as *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*.

72. Buxton, 453 and 443. See Metcalf's introduction to the 1968 edition (pub. Frank Cass) of *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* for one of the only assessments of MacQueen's influence in the formation of Buxton's strategy.

73. Buxton, 456.

74. pp. 53, 365 and 415. Regarding African information, Buxton also acknowledged Thomas Clarkson, the venerable abolitionist and another former enemy of MacQueen. See pp. 424 and 436.

75. Memo., 12 Jan. 1839, CO 2/22. Advice was also sought from John Rendell, a colonial official from the Gambia, and Robert Jamieson, a merchant-explorer in West Africa (he had accompanied John Beecroft in the *Ethiope* in the expedition led by Macgregor Laird in his 1832 expedition up the Niger), and friend of MacQueen. However, both offered only vague suggestions. See their memos in CO 2/22, 3 Jan. 1839 and 21 Sept. 1839.

76. Memo., 18 Feb. 1839, CO 2/22. Lord Glenelg had resigned and this memo was for the benefit of his successor, the Maquis of Normanby.

77. For the course of the expedition, see Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa*.

78. *A Geographical Survey of Africa: Its Rivers, Lakes, Mountains, Productions, States, Population, etc. with a map on an entirely new construction to which is prefixed A Letter to Lord John Russell Regarding the Slave Trade and the Improvement of Africa* (London: B. Fellowes, 1840; rpt. Frank Cass, 1969), i.

79. Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 92.

80. P. xxiii. Eltis estimates that suppression cost about £240,000 a year and that between 1836 and 1845--a peak period--about 83,000 slaves were exported from Africa. See *Economic Growth*, 92-93, 251.

81. "Letter," *Geographical Survey*, xiv.

82. *Geographical Survey*, 1.

83. P. 268.

84. In the text, MacQueen gives the name "Wangara" as a typical example: "No word or term in modern days ever occasioned so many errors in African geography as this word. It was, and is confounded with the province now known under the name Oonghor, or Oongooroo, or Ungura, the Guangara of Leo [Africanus] and Owencara of some Arabian writers ..." He continued for the next two pages discussing the word's history. See pp. 17-19.

85. MacQueen lists Bosman (1702), Matthews (1776), Clammisson, Norris, Woodville, T. Clarke (1780), Fairweather and Latham (1790), p. 274.

86. *Journal d'un Voyage a Temboctou et à Jenne dans l'Afrique Centrale* (Paris, 1830).

87. He made particular use of the work of the great eighteenth-century French cartographer, D'Anville, as well as some Napoleonic naval maps. See *Blackwood's*, 31 (1832), 205-6.

88. MacQueen was in close and frequent contact with the Admiralty between 1838 and 1841, especially Barrow, due to negotiations between the government and the RMSP Co.

89. There is shockingly little work on the Arrowsmith family and its dominance of British cartography throughout the nineteenth century. See Coolie Verner, "The Arrowsmith Firm and the Cartography of Canada," *Canadian Cartographer*, 8, 1 (1971), 1-7.

90. For example, in a review of George Waddington's *Journal of a Visit to some parts of Ethiopia* (London, 1822), the *Edinburgh Review* sought to praise one of the indigenous groups that Waddington encountered, the Shagaeia, by arguing that this race was not like a Negro race at all: "Though their colour be jet black, their form suggests nothing of the negro. The regularity of their features, the softness of their skin, the lustre of their eye, remind us of the finest specimens of the Arab race, and might even rank them as European." See vol. 41, 81 (Oct. 1824), 183.

91. *Geographical Survey*, 31.

92. Hannah, Kilham, *African Lessons. Wolof and English* (London, 1823) and *Specimens of African Language Spoken in the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London, 1828); S.W. Keolle, *Polyglotta Africana, or a Comparative Vocabulary of Nearly 300 Words and Phrases in more than 100 Distinct African Languages* (London, 1854).

93. The government again called on MacQueen's African expertise in 1849 for an inquiry into the state of the slave trade. See his evidence given July 4-5, 1849 in *PP* 1849 (Lords) XXVIII (32). The invitation aptly symbolizes how much had changed since MacQueen had been called in 1832 as an expert to comment upon the commercial state of the West Indies.

94. "A Geographical Memoir on Eastern and Central Africa," preface to *The Journals of C.W. Isenberg and J.L. Krapf Detailing Their Proceedings in the Kingdom of Shoa and Journeys in other parts of Abyssinia in the years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1843; rpt. Frank Cass, 1968), 1-95.

95. Maps 5.5 and 5.6.

96. Dr. C.T. Beke. MacQueen to Col. Jackson [Sec.], 5 June 1843, RGS/GC. Beke presented his conclusions regarding the Nile, and his commentary regarding MacQueen's work, to the RGS in 1847. See *JRGS*, 17 (1847), 12, 23, 44.

97. Instead of reduction ratio of 1 to 8,000,000, as for his map in *A Geographical Survey*, MacQueen now used a ratio of 1 to 2,100,000. (Reduction ratios from the RGS Map Library.) See Maps 5.7 and 5.8 for other examples.

98. Excepting his large-scale map of the Niger Delta, which was his most detailed at 1:1,100,000, or 1" for 15 miles. See Map 5.2.

99. MacQueen to Peel, 23 Apr. 1844, *Peel Papers*, MS 40543, ff. 67-81; 15 July 1844, MS 40548, ff 234-38; 9 Jan. 1845, MS 40557, ff 303-8; 31 Jan. 1845, ff. 309-11; and 15 May 1845, MS 40567, f. 28.

100. MacQueen to Ashburton, 5 June 1860, RGS/GC.

101. MacQueen to Peel, 31 Jan. 1845, *Peel Papers*, MS 49557, ff. 309.

102. E.g. MacQueen sent Buxton some material on Ptolemy through the RGS (31 Dec. 1838, RGS/GC).

103. For example, see "Notes on the Geography of Central Africa, from the Researches of Livingstone, Monteiro, Graça, and others," *JRGS*, 26 (1856), 109-30, with a map constructed by MacQueen (Map 5.8).

104. *A Short Geography of the British Islands* (1880), vi-viii; quoted in Gilbert, "Teaching Geography," 133.

105. *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, scientific exploration and Victorian imperialism* (Cambridge U. Press, 1989), 167.

106. *Ibid.*, 154.

107. See note 22. Stoddart notes that the military was always well-represented in the RGS (18-19% throughout the century). "The RGS and the 'New Geography'," 61.

108. *Scientist of Empire*, 167.

109. This new form of imperialism is the basis of Brian Hudson's article, "The New Geography and the New Imperialism: 1870-1914," *Antipode*, 9 (1977), 12-19. See also T.O. Ranger, "From Humanism to the Science of Man: Colonialism in Africa and the Understanding of Alien Societies," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26 (1976), 115-42. For more on the imperialism of science generally, see Stafford, 221-22.

110. Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, a friend of MacQueen's and former Honorary Secretary to the RGS (1862-65), asked the RGS to help him in soliciting the government to grant MacQueen a pension in light of "anxieties and privations ... in addition to other family afflictions he has had to endure." Hodgkin to RGS, 14 July 1860, RGS/GC.

111. MacQueen to Lord Ashburton, 5 June 1860, RGS/GC.

112. See Map 5.5.

113. *JRGS*, 28 (1858), cc.

114. For a summary of the expedition see Christopher Hibbert, *Africa Explored: Europeans in the Dark Continent 1769-1889* (London: Penguin, 1982), 191-225.

115. Baker, "Nile Sources," 193-208.

116. *The Nile Basin*, 98-99 (see next note).

117. *The Nile Basin. Part I: Showing Tanganyika to be Ptolemy's Western Lake Reservoir* by Richard F. Burton. *Part II: Captain Speke's Discovery of the Source of the Nile: A Review* by James M'Queen (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1864).

118. *Ibid.*, 30.

119. Quoted in Hibbert, 225. Hibbert suggests that suicide was very likely since Speke was found shot through the chest, even though it was known that the young lieutenant from the Native Bengal Infantry was always careful with guns.

120. *JRGS*, 40 (1870), cxlviii. Murchison is referring to MacQueen's map in *A Geographical Survey* (1840) (Map 5.3).

121. See note 4.

122. *Rennell*, 10-11.

Conclusion

MacQueen died on May 14, 1870, aged ninety-two years, in his London home of the past twenty-five years at Bury Street, St. James. In the occupation box on his death certificate, MacQueen is listed simply as a "gentleman." In almost every sense, this term seems inappropriate. MacQueen was never really wealthy enough to claim much status. In fact, he died penniless, leaving behind his fifty-nine year old spinster daughter, Jean, destitute, and who was subsequently provided for only from money collected among RGS fellows.[1] But even in more prosperous days, MacQueen never sought to escape the grind of work or the activity of the City in order to retire to an easier life. And he was hardly "gentlemanly" in most of his public writings. On the other hand, the term does characterize some of the ambiguity of MacQueen's position in British society, with no professional training or function, but an amateur, enthusiast, or hobbiest in several endeavours, such as technology, geography, or grand schemes of government policy.

One can sympathize, then, with those who had to specify MacQueen's occupation. Probably a more accurate term would have been an anachronistic one: "imperialist." The label captures the essence of MacQueen's career and also suggests that he himself was somewhat anachronistic to his age. I believe MacQueen would have been much more comfortable in the mercantilist empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or in the chauvinistic empire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Throughout his life he seemed to have had one foot in each of these worlds, and for the most part seems to have fallen in between them in his own time.

Even MacQueen himself remained a frustrated man because of his seeming inability to connect with government officials or with the British public on his ideas about the British Empire. But it is a mistake to judge his legacy this way, to judge it based on his backward-looking defence of slavery or on his premature plans for an African empire. While he did not directly contribute to the acquisition of additional territory—"imperialism" in its classic sense—he did help shape the development of the Empire as a foot soldier fighting on the "turbulent frontiers" within the Empire. His work defending slavery, in forming the Colonial Bank and Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and in geography are significant examples of this work (even if MacQueen himself considered them side lights to his larger goals) and they collectively they formed part of the larger developments of British imperialism in this period.

MacQueen was, and perhaps remains, most notorious for his defence of slavery. Over the course of the last decade before the Emancipation Act, he emerged as a powerful spokesman for the West Indians, and was paid on many occasions for his exertions by the official committee of merchants and planters in London, or by individual colonies. He was also well known among emancipationists, and became a target for many of their offensives, even well after 1833. And finally, the plantocracy in the colonies considered MacQueen an invaluable ally and influential authority on matters of their interest. His steadfast defence and his brief tenure as a planter himself gained him enormous credibility among the colonists as one of the rare men from the metropolis who knew their actual situation. He was also instrumental in unifying the colonists, if only when it was too late.

While certainly a staunch defender of the colonies, MacQueen was also a maverick in

some areas. He belonged to no organized West Indian association, and opposed some key issues that most West Indians supported, particularly the suppression of the foreign slave trade. MacQueen's interest in Africa also led him to take an unconventional approach to attacking the antislavery cause, such as his broadside against the colony of Sierra Leone, an attack which at least spurred, if not inspired, the inquiries into the colony, and the eventual decision to withdraw. These numerous differences with the bulk of the West India interest would develop to form a major split later in his career, and serve as a reminder that there were several competing "interests" among the West Indians.

More significantly, MacQueen's defence of slavery and the colonies provides us with valuable insight into the emancipation debate, and helps refine our understanding of the issues involved, as well as the real gap between the opposing sides. For MacQueen, as for Gladstone and the majority of pro-slavery polemicists in this period, the debate had largely come down to a legal dispute. Moral justifications--from the Bible or from arguments regarding the level of African "civilization"--for continuing the slave system were ushered out as well, but they were almost always undercut by statements claiming to be opposed to "slavery in the abstract." Moreover, these philosophical arguments were only used to argue about when emancipation should come, not if it should come. Of course, the plantocracy wanted to continue the system as long as possible, and much of the debate over slavery in the 1820s was simply over timing: should the slaves be emancipated gradually, or immediately? But the fundamental issue throughout dealt with rights; firstly the right to property without interference, or, in the last resort, the right to justice--that is, to be justly compensated for property legally purchased under British law. And claims for compensation did not come in a panic immediately before emancipation.

As soon as the debate had begun in the early 1820s, pro-slavery advocates were already pressing the issue of compensation, revealing how little, in principle, they differed from the emancipationists. In turn, most emancipationists favoured compensation.

And finally, of the two sides in the emacipation debate, slavery advocates such as MacQueen turned out to be more accurate about the future of the West Indies. They predicted economic and social decline because, without a coercive system, they argued, Africans would not work. What they really meant, and what even antislavery advocates later came to agree, was that the black population would not necessarily work or behave in the way envisioned by whites. MacQueen and other slavery apologists argued that such intransigence came from a lack of civilization, and by the 1850s, the humanitarians began to agree with them when commenting on the "moral decline" of the ex-slaves. Perhaps those who defended the slave system unconsciously understood better that freed slaves would resist conforming to white standards of any kind--whether as labourers or as so-called responsible and moral free people--and would instead pursue their own interests. What is important, however, is not that MacQueen's predictions were right, but that his former adversaries came to agree with him. In this sense, MacQueen's racism was not some relic from a dying plantocracy, but the way of the future for Victorian attitudes toward race.

While lamenting the coming of emancipation, MacQueen nevertheless accepted the reality of it, and adjusted accordingly. His most tangible legacies to the Empire, in fact, were projects meant to help the West India colonies adjust to what MacQueen always called "that great change in society." In the case of the Colonial Bank, MacQueen was intimately involved with the formation of the Company, even if it was not his idea originally. He attended meetings of the

various West Indian interests which were attempting to deal with the financial realities of emancipation, and offered his own advice. He soon became allied with a specific group of the West Indian mercantile elite, many of whom were involved in several post-emancipation reconstruction schemes, and become their principal agent at the very first meeting of the directors. As the Company's point man, MacQueen, along with Micheal McChlery, established the Bank's infrastructure in the West Indies. The task should not be underestimated in light of the complicated nature of the work, which was exacerbated by tensions between the colonies and the metropolis. MacQueen had both the knowledge of the colonies and the credibility among colonials to be able to effectively establish as instrusive an institution as a metropolitan-owned and controlled bank. And despite some initial problems, due to MacQueen's personality, to tensions about the Bank itself, or to currency problems, the Bank became the most influential financial institution in the West Indies for the rest of the nineteenth century. By introducing, standardizing, and stabilizing the currency, as well as offering other typical banking services (excepting long-term loans), the Colonial Bank brought some financial stability to the tumult raised in the wake of emancipation.

MacQueen's most significant achievement was the RMSP Company, which he founded and projected in its early years. Taking advantage of conflating trends in steam technology and the British postal system, MacQueen formulated the original complicated plan, and all of the early modifications; did all of the early negotations with the Admiralty, Post Office and Treasury; countered rival plans and criticism; and most importantly, he established the Company at both ends of the imperial nexus, in both Britain and in the West Indies. It was an astounding accomplishment. He had convinced the government to offer the largest subsidy to a mail packet

company in Britain's history, and commit itself to a project which involved the construction of an unprecedented fourteen new steamships. After some initial difficulties, the Company provided a vastly improved, if not perfect, mail service to the British Caribbean, imposing for the first time a sustained and regular postal schedule for the entire region, and offering colonials a reasonable period in which to send their reply mail. The early difficulties, however, in addition to a different vision of what a steam mail company could and should do, were partially responsible for MacQueen's resignation and bitter falling out with the Company. But his resignation and the subsequent modifications to the route of the Company should not diminish his early work as its founder and its first general superintendent. Ultimately, this company, like the Colonial Bank, gained a virtual monopoly throughout the British West Indies, and marks a significant new metropolitan presence in the region.

Finally, MacQueen died a geographer. Geography was a subject in which he had been interested for a half-century, and the one to which he devoted almost exclusively to the last twenty-five years of his life. After failing to get support for his ideas on Africa from the government or from private speculators, MacQueen found that his best opportunities regarding the continent would come through geography, and the societies which were interested in such information, namely, the Royal Geographical Society, the African Civilization Society and the Church Missionary Society. His geographies were valuable at the time because they filled in the so-called "blank spots" on British maps of Africa, as British explorers, missionaries and traders were able to penetrate the interior of the continent consistently for the first time ever. MacQueen was also a valued expert on Africa generally, offering advice to the Colonial Office and to important sponsors of expeditions such as T.F. Buxton. But his geographical work is also

valuable today as a window into the nature and development of nineteenth-century British geography generally, a subject we find that began the century as a amateur hobby, and which had become a more modern, professional discipline by 1870. The implications for imperialists like MacQueen was that geography could no longer be used as an overt tool of imperial expansion, as it had for the previous three-hundred years of its development. Of course, it was still used as a tool of imperialism, but after 1870, it was cloaked largely in the garb of "science."

MacQueen's difficulties in coming to grips with the changes in geography are related to his understanding of--and contribution to--British imperialism. He did not fully recognize that the expansion and consolidation of the Empire would not be done as it had previously. British governments were no longer conciously promoting additions to the Empire through pre-authorized rights to annexation and monopoly, as they had since the time of John Cabot and did so right up until the time of MacQueen's birth. For example, in light of his genuinely impressive achievements in exploration, it is often forgotten that Captain Cook's secret orders for his first voyage (1768-71) were to find the mysterious "southern continent" and "with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain; or if you find the Country uninhabited take possession for His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first observers and possessors."[2]

No such orders were being given by the turn of the nineteenth century, and MacQueen understood this to a limited extent. Even in his earliest plans for an Africa company, he was not asking for the government to take possession of territory, only "control" of it. In fact, he even

made at least a tacit recognition of the rights to possession. In *Northern and Central Africa*, he noted,

> it will, and may very justly be asked, what right have we, or any other European nation, to go and fix ourselves in Africa, conquer and controul the native powers, levy taxes, and make them our subjects? The answer is plain; we have no such right, nor is any such right here claimed or advocated.[3]

Instead, MacQueen promoted a form of informal control over the region through the command of strategic points, collaboration with native elites, and monopolized trade. The line between the old-fashioned policies of outright possession and MacQueen's version of informal empire may be thin—indeed, it was only a step away—but the mere fact that he felt compelled to address the point at all suggests a change in imperial policy. He was less able to see much beyond this change, however. He still believed in the laws which underpinned this old form of imperialism, such as the various protective duties on colonial produce, and he staunchly defended these policies.

Ironically, it was in this attempt to preserve the old system that MacQueen made his greatest contributions to the empire, and helped pave the way for the new empire. He failed to convince the government to sponsor expansion into Africa, or to take complete control of overseas mail, but he was part of a process of imperial centralization. Again, the nature of this centralized power was not the traditional one of firm, direct and overt control by the government over the Empire in the form of something like the Navigation Acts. The process occurred indirectly, and manifested itself in the form of regulations on specific elements that affected the Empire, such as ex-slaves, banks, mail, and geographical knowledge. The policies of emancipation, compensation, and apprenticeship were applied to the colonies through stipendary magistrates and collaboration with the plantocracy, while the Colonial Banking and Post Office

regulations were applied through the medium of a government-chartered metropolitan company. The government also sponsored the RGS, as well as most of the important expeditions into Africa in this period.

MacQueen's most significant contributions to the Empire were made as a bridge, or more accurately, as an agent working across this bridge, facilitating this centralizing process between the center and two peripheries--between Britain and Africa, and Britain and the West Indies. The characteristics of such an agent, of an imperial go-between, were outlined very accurately in *The London Tradesman*, a book published in 1747:

> he must understand not only Goods and Merchandize in general, and be a Judge of every particular Commodity he deals in, but must know Mankind and be acquainted with the different Manners and Customs of all the Trading Nations; he must know their different Products, the Properties of their Staple Commodities, their Taste in the several Sorts of Goods they want, their principal Marts and Markets, the Seasons proper for buying and selling, the character and Humour of their Traders, their Coins, Weights, and Measures, their particular Manner of keeping Accompts, the Course of their Exchange, &c. the Duties chargeable at their several Ports, their Methods of Entry and Clearance; their peculiar Mercantile Customs and Usages, relating either to Payments, or Buying and Selling; the common Arts, Tricks and Frauds, put in practice by the Dealers: In a word, he must be as well acquainted with the Manners and Customs of all the Nations he trades with as his own; all which requires an extensive Genius and great Experience.
>
> As to his Education, he must understand his Mother Tongue perfectly, write it grammatically, and with Judgment; he must learn all the Trading languages, French, Dutch and Portugueze, and be able to write them ... He must understand Geography and some Navigation, must write a fair and legible Hand, and ought to be a compleat master of Figures and Merchants Accompts.[4]

The author, R. Campbell, was describing the ideal merchant, but is this not a summation of MacQueen and his career? MacQueen's abilities were not with the sword or the Bible, traditional symbols of imperial enterprise, but with the details of empire, like "Coins, Weights, and Measures." MacQueen's "genius" (if the term is appropriate) was to use his considerable knowledge of the center and its peripheries, both old and new, in order to mitigate between them, and bind them closer together.

As one who grew up in the colonies, MacQueen's knowledge of the British West Indies

was extensive, and respected, which made him one of the few people able to effectively negotiate between Britain and the colonies. During the slavery debate, he was a dual agent, attempting to represent the colonies in the mother country, and vice versa. He failed in his ultimate goal, but the experience gave him the kind of intimate knowledge needed for practical post-emancipation adjustment and development. The Colonial Bank required an understanding of the West Indian "Manner of keeping Accompts, [and] the Course of their Exchange currency," while a uniform mail communication system required a mastery of equally tedious details like "Duties chargeable at their several Ports, [and] their Methods of Entry and Clearance." MacQueen also had the confidence of the metropolitan merchants with West Indian connections who funded and directed these projects.

Regarding Britain's relationship with the world outside the Empire, MacQueen knew that one had to understand a region before it could be integrated with the British imperial economy. His career as a geographer was largely an attempt to understand the "Manners and Customs" of Africa--i.e. its staples, tastes, markets, economic, political and social structures, etc.--so that he could not only spark the interest of the British government and public in the continent, but also formulate the best method of its integration. His knowledge here was quite limited, but it far exceeded that of most his countrymen, which is why he became a credible bridge between Britain and Africa. His own plan for British expansion into Africa, based on his experience with the old empire, nevertheless anticipated many policies toward Africa in the future, including a toleration of indigenous slavery, "commerce and Christianity" as the means to combat slavery, the capture and control of strategic locations, and the monopolization of trade within controlled regions.

That MacQueen's suggestions were prophetic underlines that fact that the imperialism of

the latter part of the nineteenth century was more "neo" than "new." If the *Pax Americana* of the

latter twentieth century is any guide, informal imperialism was to be the imperialism of the future.

As during the *Pax Britannica*, or any imperial age for that matter, it is the control of financial

institutions, communications, and geographical reconnaisance that largely determine a state's

ability to reach beyond its borders. Although he spent much of his life trying to add to the formal

empire, it was to these essential elements of imperialism--its less glamorous nuts and bolts--to

which MacQueen contributed.

Notes to Conclusion

1. Katherine Petherick to Mr. Bates, 3 Jan. 1871, RGS/GC. "Miss Macqueen's Fund" was organized by Katherine Petherick, whose husband, John, was the former Consul of Khartoum, and most famous for his row with Speke during his (Speke's) second expedition to East Africa (1859-63). The donations enabled Jean MacQueen to spend her remaining years in a women's dormatory in Whittington College, Highburg.

2. Quoted in J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford U.P., 1974), 149.

3. P. 202.

4. R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747); quoted in Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 25.

Map 1.1   262

A MAP
OF
AFRICA

North of the parallel of 7° South Latitude;
Showing the courses & direction of the principal
Rivers & Mountains.
particularly of the
NIGER & of the GIR
WITH THEIR TRIBUTARY STREAMS,
from the best Authorities.

DRAWN BY JAMES M'QUEEN
Glasgow 6th June 1820.

Engraved by W.H. Lizars Edinburgh.

Map 4.1 RMSP Company Route Plan According to the Contract, signed 29 March 1840

Map 5.1

Map 5.2

THE

DELTA

OF THE

RIVER KOWARA

OR QUORRA, THE ANTIENT NIGER

1839

BIGHT

OF

BENIN

Map 5.3

MAP
OF
AFRICA.
from
LOANDO IN THE SOUTH.
to
TRIPOLI IN THE NORTH.
ON MERCATORS PROJECTION.
Constructed from the latest Authorities
by
JAMES M'QUEEN.
1840.

INDIAN

OCEAN

1 = 110 miles (Geog.)

Map 5.4

A

NEW MAP

OF

AFRICA

FROM THE

LATEST AUTHORITIES,

Dedicated (by Permission) to
His Royal Highness Prince Albert.
By his most obedient humble servant
JAMES McQUEEN.
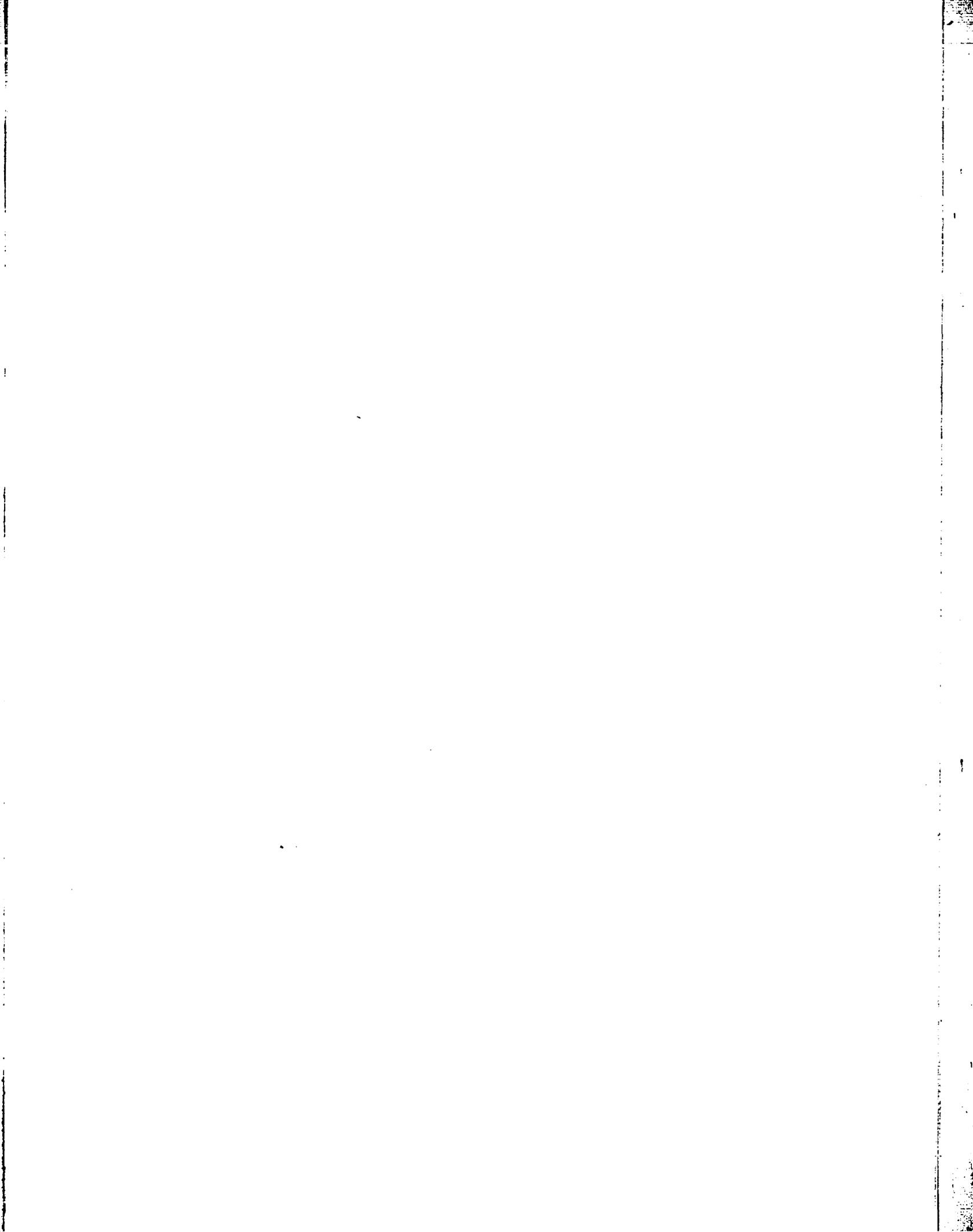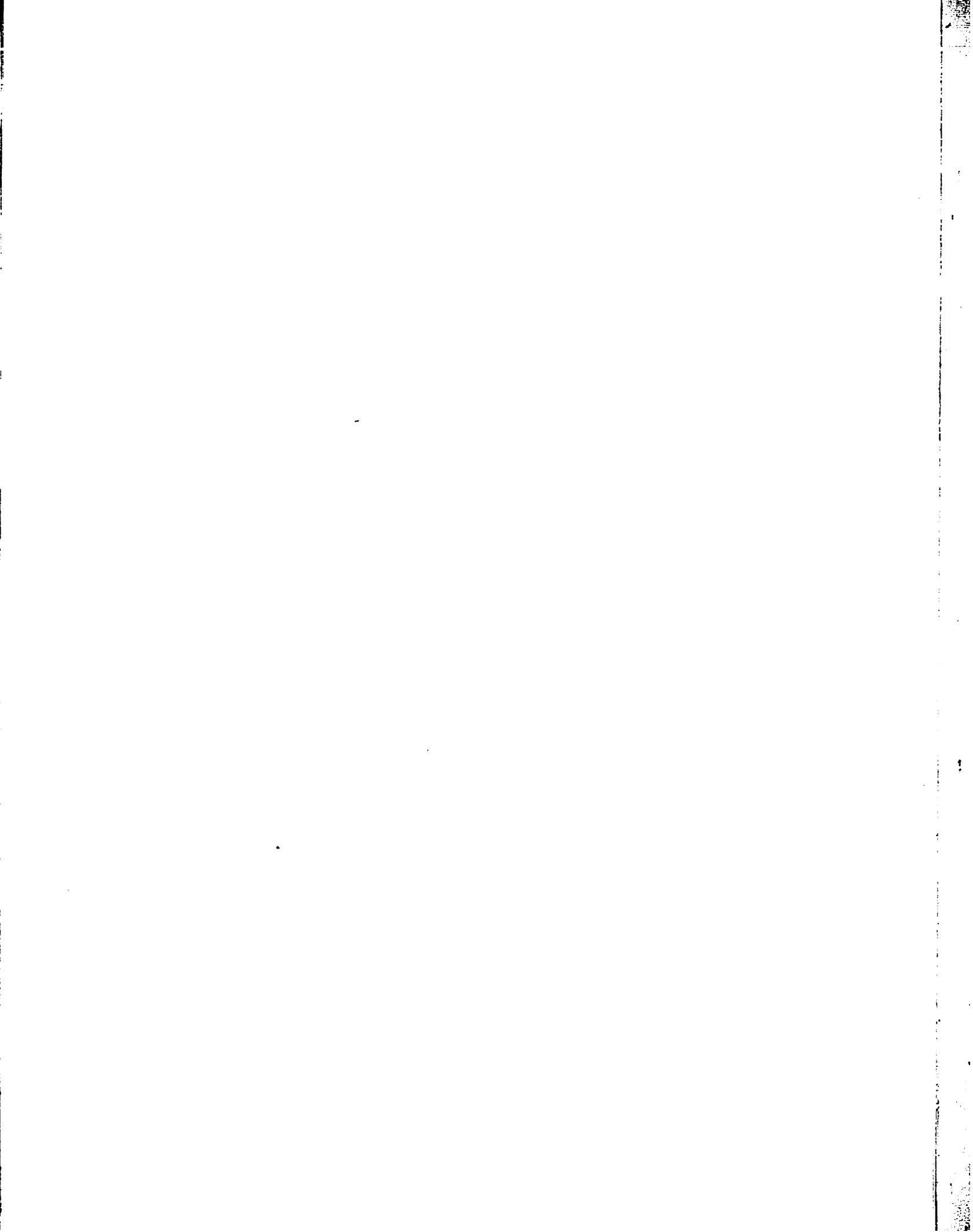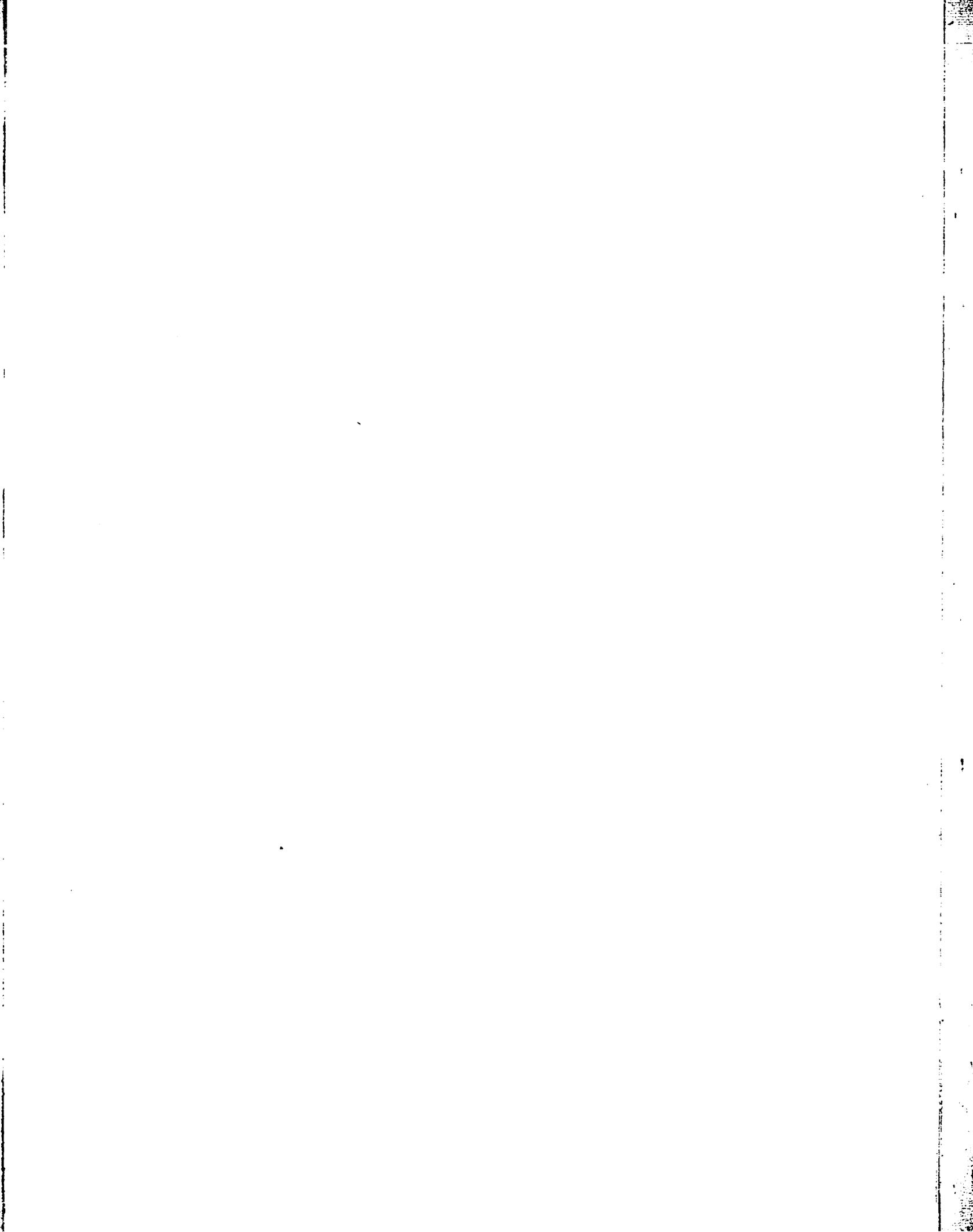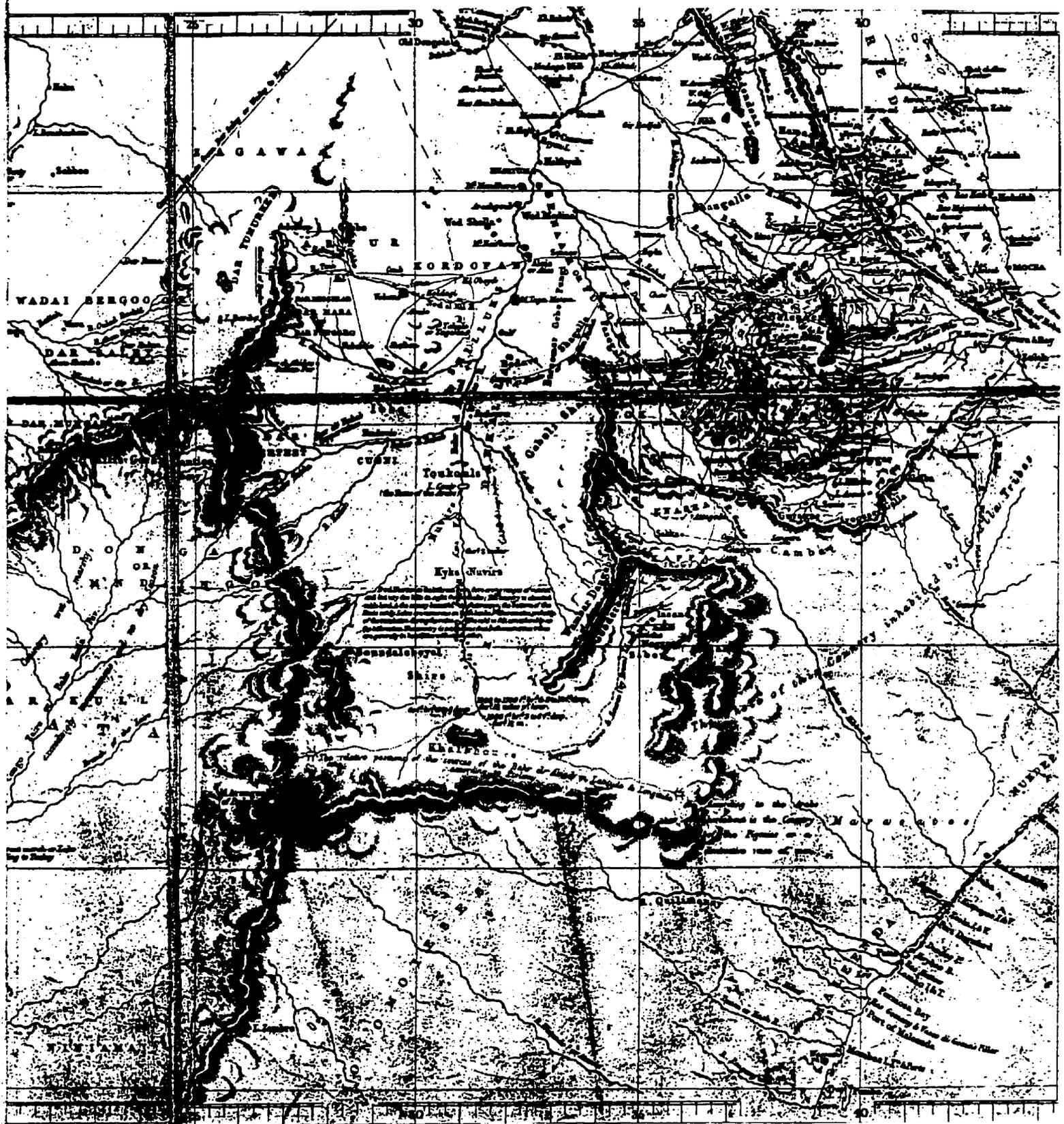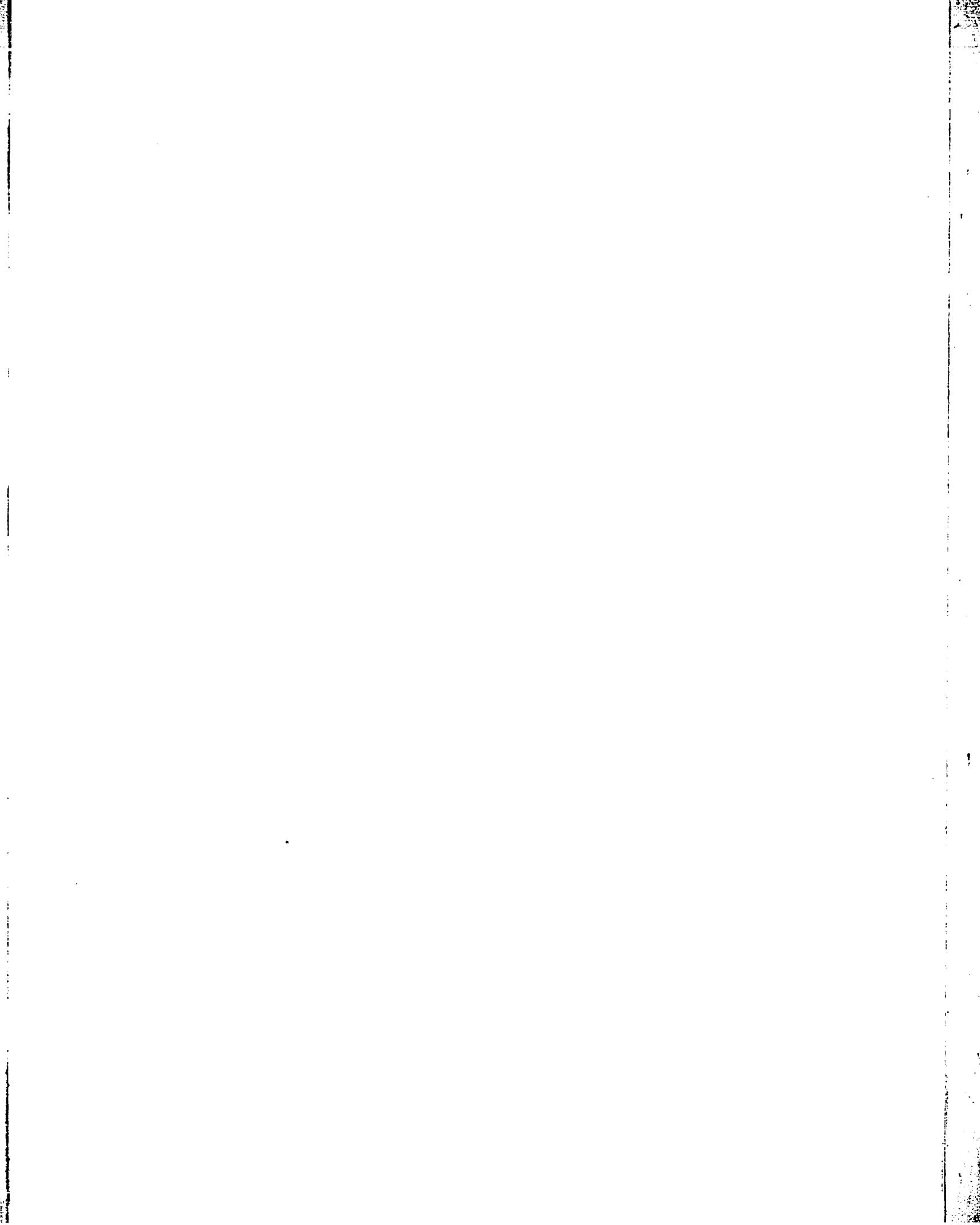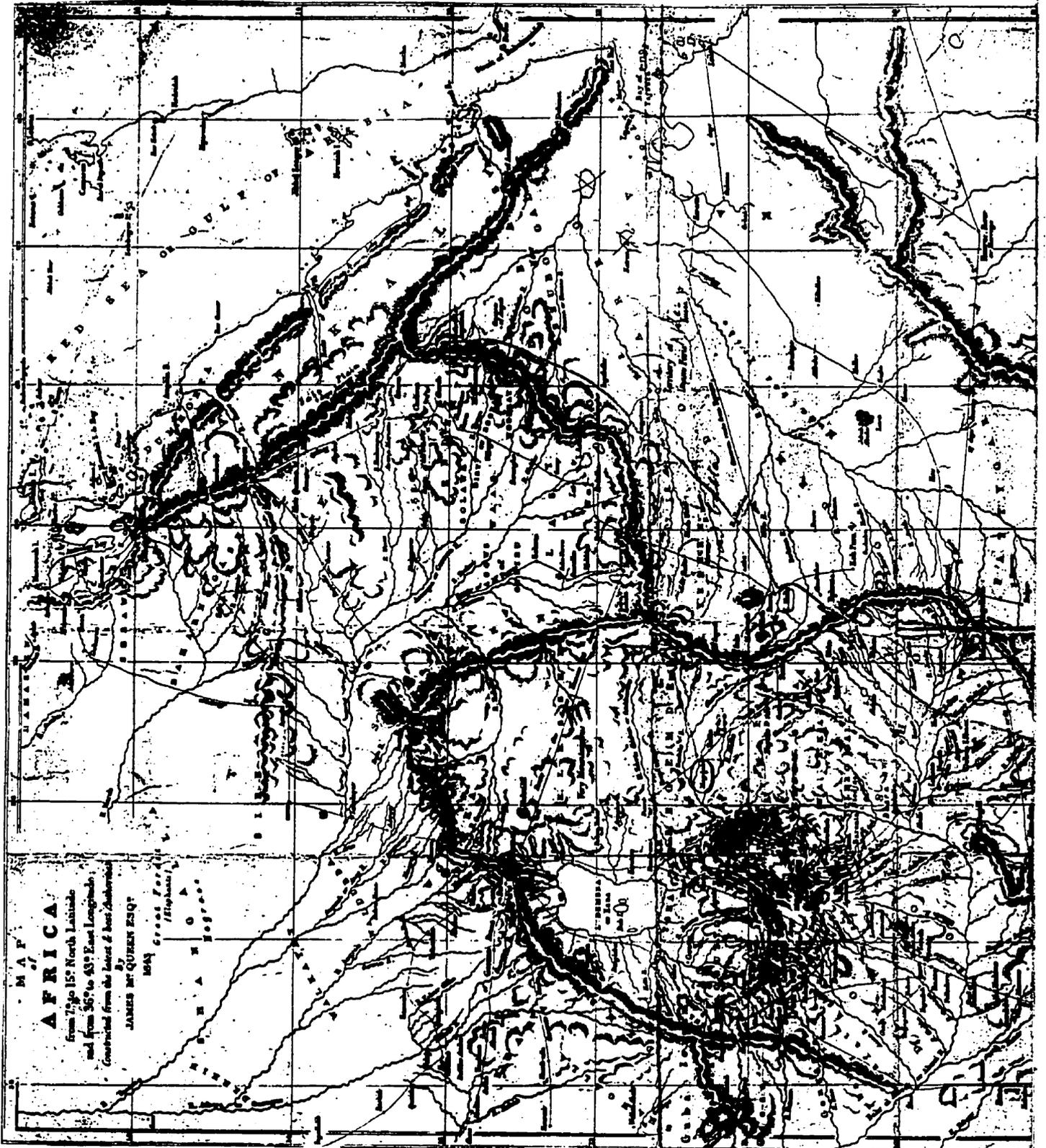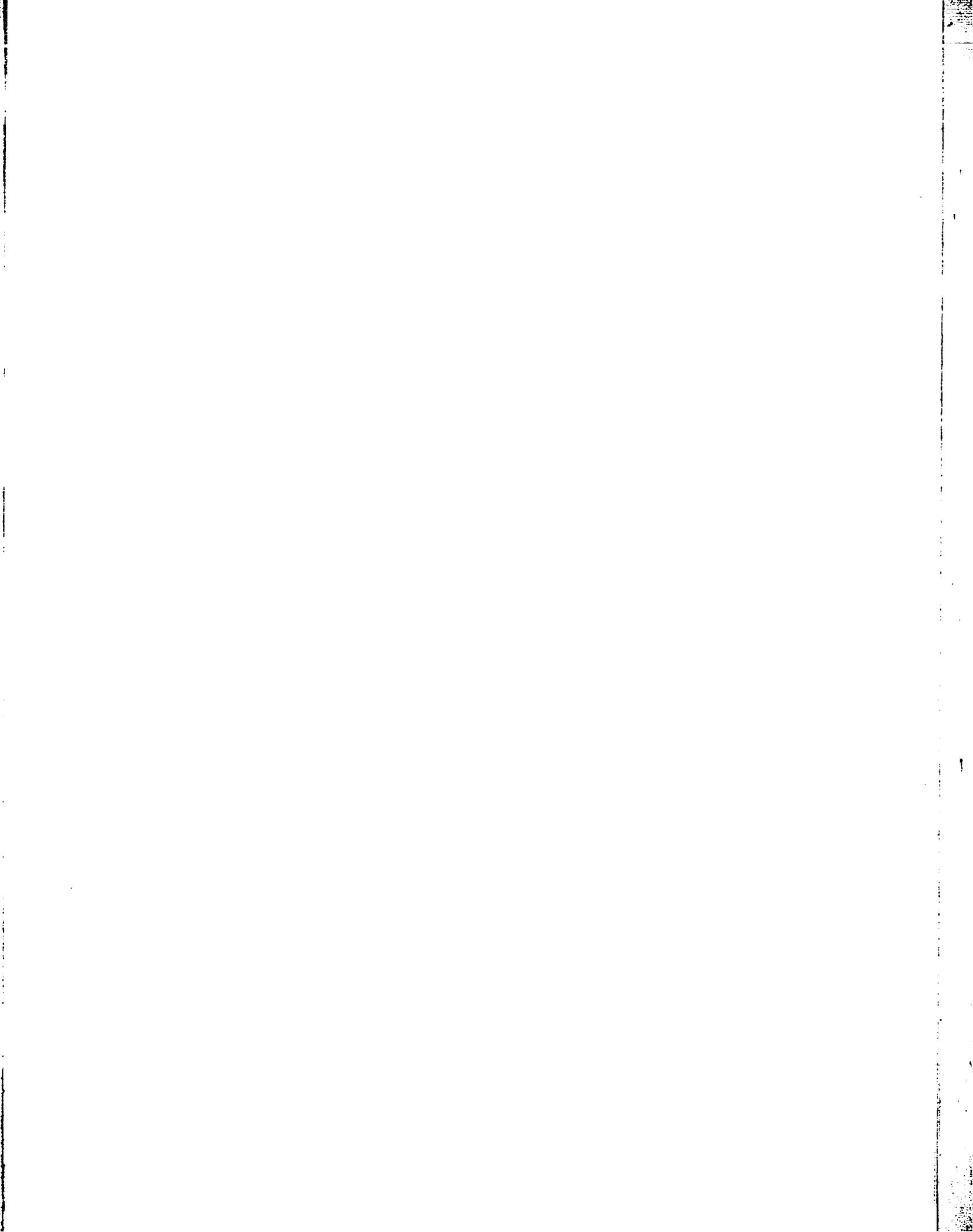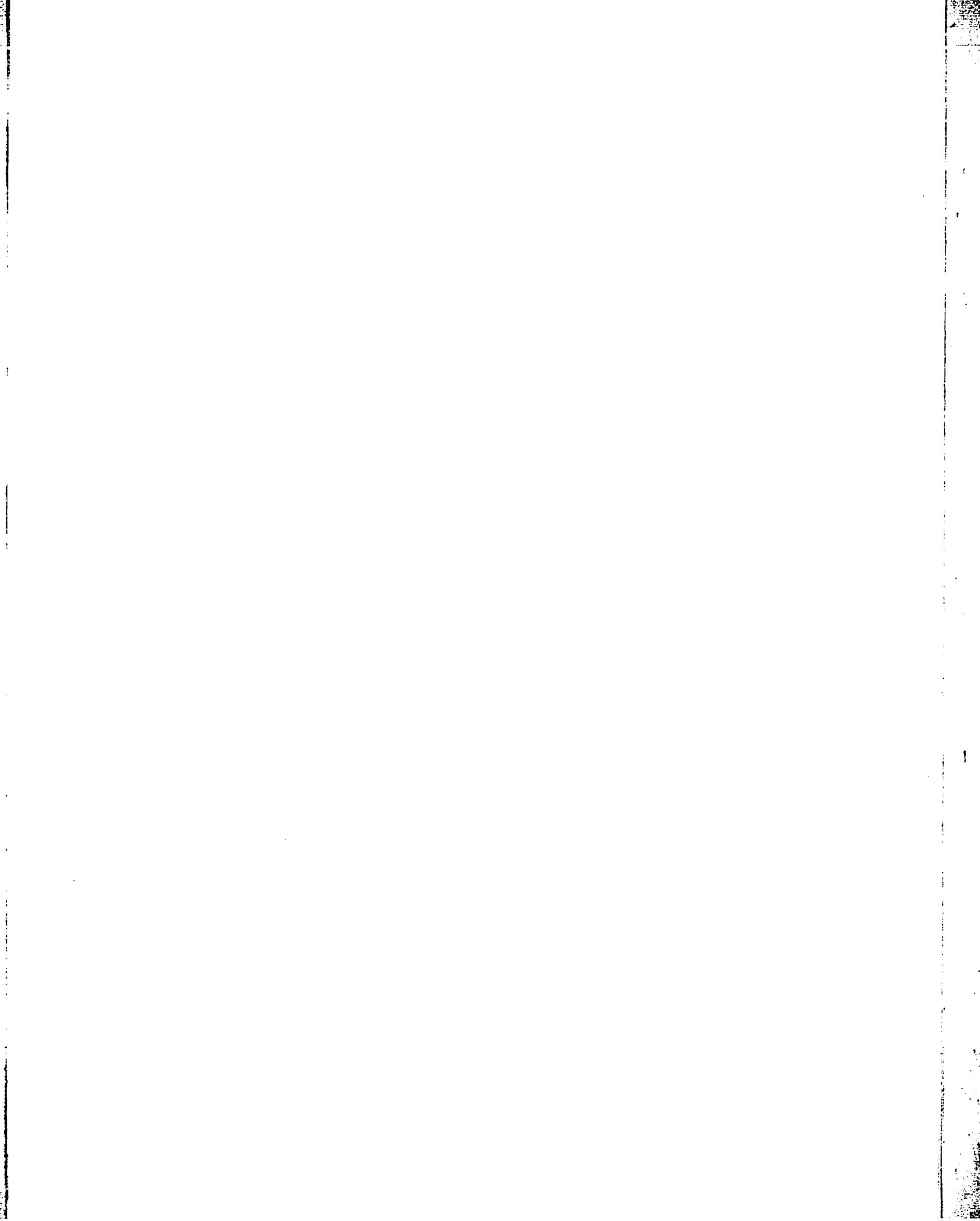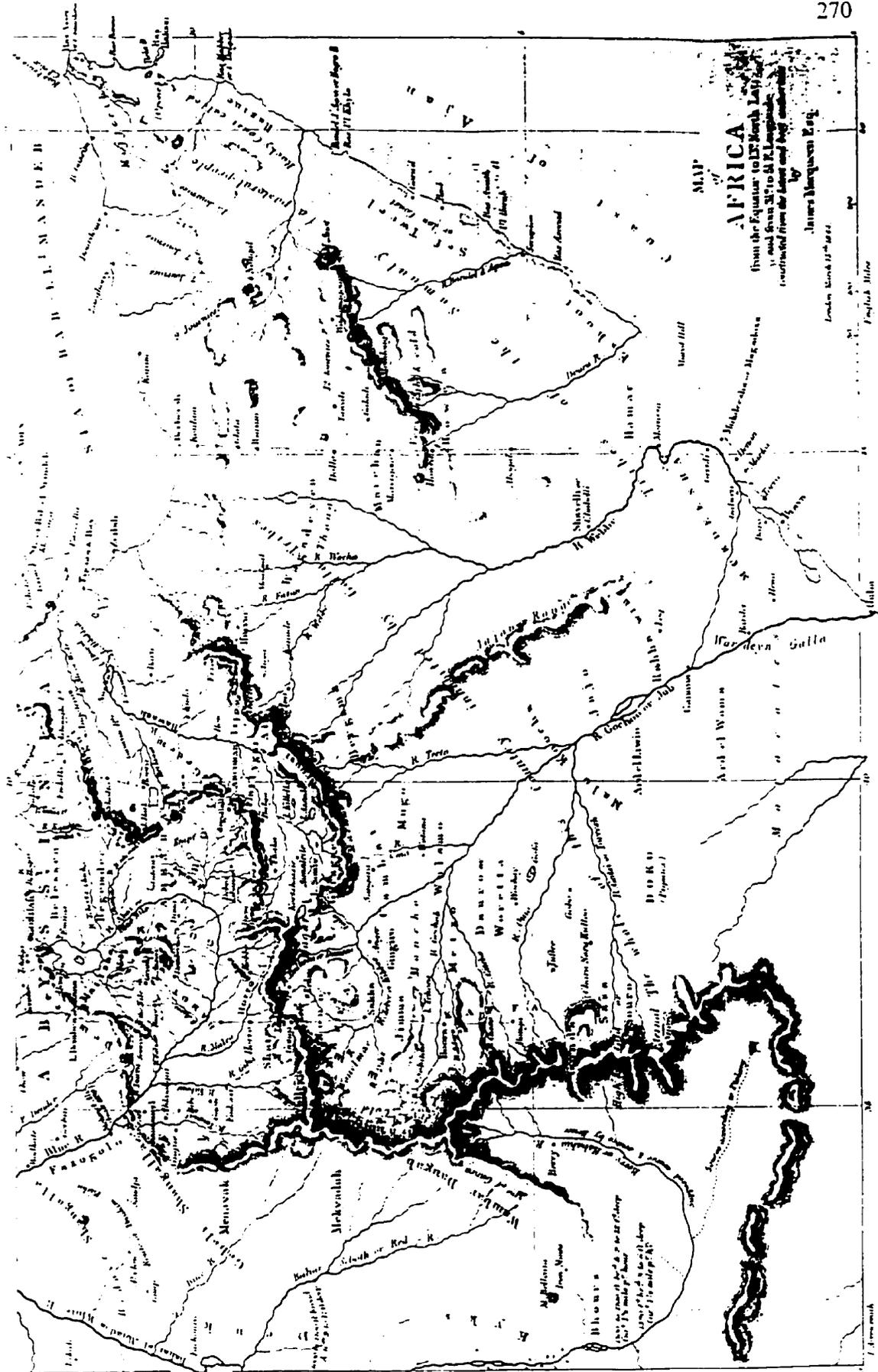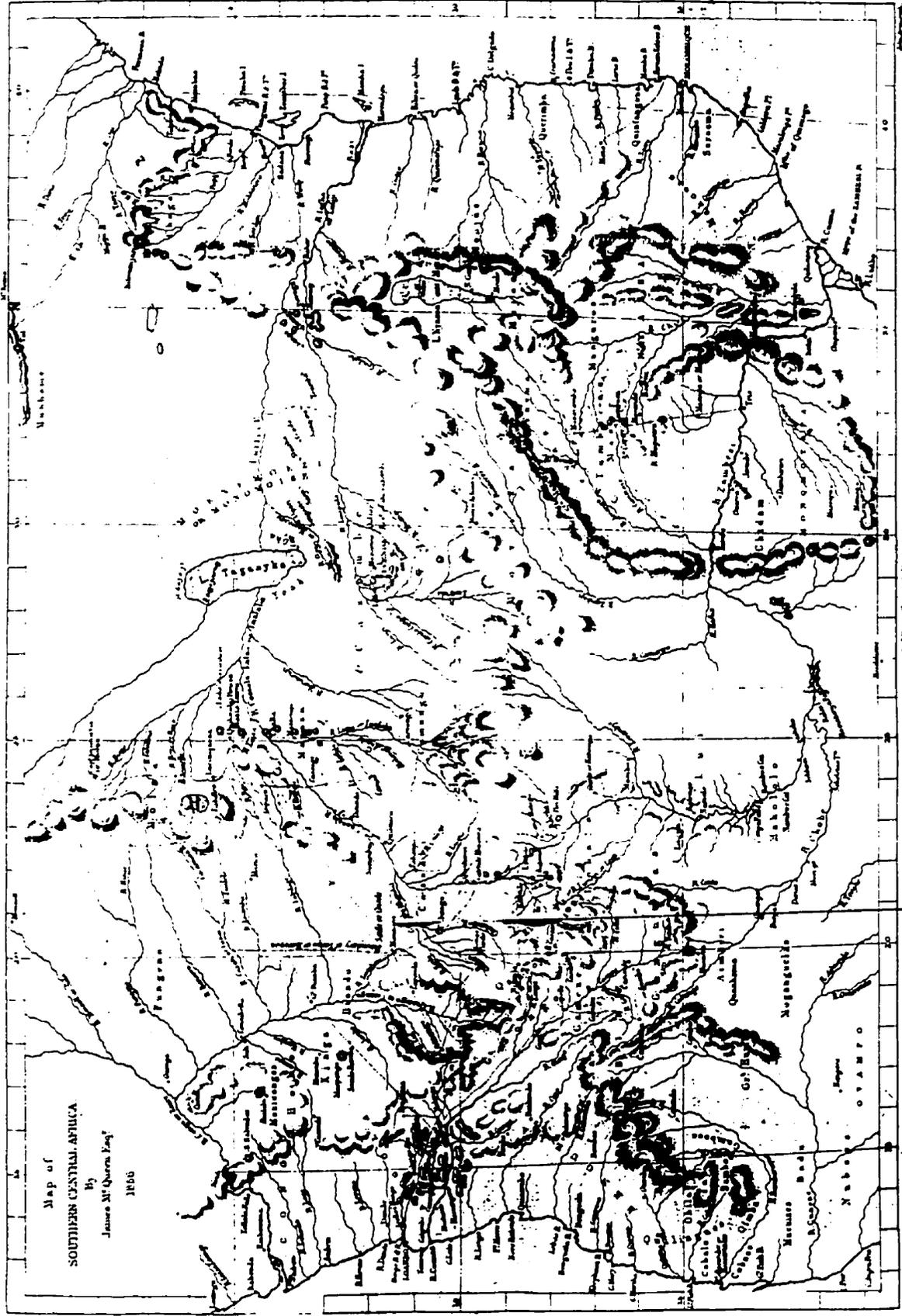
London, John Arrowsmith
10 Soho Square.
1841.

Map 5.5
268

MAP
of
AFRICA
from 5° South to 18° North Latitude
and from 5° to 44° East Longitude
Constructed from the latest Authorities
By
James McQueen Esq.
1843.

Map 5.6   269

Map 5.7

Map of
SOUTHERN CENTRAL AFRICA
By
James M'Queen Esq.
1856

Map 5.8

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