

ILLUSTRATION ▶
from Charles John
Andersson's account of
his travels, *Sjön Ngami*
(1856).



Travelled territories

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Charles John Andersson's personal archive includes a description of his travels and two maps of southern Africa from the early 1850s. One map (60 × 120 cm), which he drew himself, is based on his travels in the area that is now Namibia, to which the travel description belongs. The other map (77 × 71 cm) covers a larger area, and was copied in Cape Town from a map compiled by David Livingstone (see picture to the right). These two hand-drawn maps consist of sheets of paper stuck onto fabric, so they can be folded without the paper tearing along the creases. In other words, these are maps made to be used in the field, from preliminary information, not the result of a thorough scientific survey. Such maps are an important element of the process of gathering knowledge, working material that also captures the scientific expedition's aims and circumstances. Additionally, they are examples of a central component in colonial practices – conquering territory through science.

These journeys of exploration were not particularly quick – they travelled in ox carts at about four kilometres per hour – but nonetheless this was a much faster method than the geodetic triangulations necessary to produce professional maps. Instructions for travellers from this time therefore stated that one should not be excessively thorough; instead, using robust techniques, and a watch and compass, one should make general sketches of the route, which were gradually added to the map.

Travel descriptions and their associated maps were an established method for scientists and others who had similar ambitions to concretise the Western scientific gaze across the world. The 19th century saw the establishment of a literary genre centred on thrilling journeys of exploration in foreign lands, aimed at an interested Western audience. Additionally, explorers could legitimise colonial claims on the areas in which they travelled, making



PART OF A MAP that Charles John Andersson copied from one of David Livingstone's maps and which he sent to the Academy of Sciences in 1852. It shows part of the course of the Zambezi River. At the bottom, the "Mosioatunga or resounding smoke" waterfall, is visible. This was discovered by Livingstone a few years later and named the Victoria Falls.

competition the obvious result. Andersson's maps did not contribute to any Swedish colonial claims on southwest Africa, though his first travels in the area were with Francis Galton and so served the British colonial powers.

Presumably, it is well-known that Linnaeus' apostles were sent out across the world on missions from the Swedish Academy of Sciences in the 18th century, as well as how numerous expeditions in the second half of the 19th century went to the polar regions, especially Spitsbergen. However, some

reports, like Andersson's, also served to focus the Academy of Sciences' gaze on other points of the compass. At its Annual Meeting on 31 March 1854, the permanent secretary, Peter Fredrik Wahlberg, presented the various scientific reports that had been sent to the Academy. Among medical trials of galvanism and a description of ore deposits in Gällivare, was Andersson's travel description "of the scientific journey to the interior of Southwest Africa" that he had undertaken with Galton, "and two maps of the travelled territories". The copied maps were not published, in accordance with Andersson's wishes, but they were reported upon on this solemn occasion.

The travel description – in English – was sent from Cape Town in November 1852 and reached the Academy of Sciences in the summer of 1853. Andersson explained in the introduction: "I do not have the honour of being a member of your Society, yet I think that a short and general account of our travels, and a statement of my future plans and proceedings may be of some interest to it." He wrote that the maps would help the recipients "better to follow me in my narrative", but he also asked the Academy of Sciences not to publish them, rather use them as references. They had been partly compiled from other explorers' maps and could thus not be entirely expropriated. It was otherwise a given that explorers would share observations and surveys when they met in Cape Town between expeditions, or that they left maps at the city's observatory. Andersson called his contribution a general account, while in Stockholm the text was read as a scientific travel description. Not only the text, but particularly the maps, may have contributed to the scientific format.

Collecting knowledges via a representative – as with Linnaeus and his apostles – was an established practice, and Andersson took on some such assignments. Earlier that same autumn, in a letter to entomologist and county governor in the county of Göteborg and Bohus, Olof Fåhraeus, he comments on an order for beetles that the county governor had sent him the year before, but which had only just reached him. Andersson also says that he is writing his travel description and planning his next journey to southwest Africa, and he hopes to be able to capture and send the desired beetles to the county governor. He was thus keen to maintain good contacts with both the Academy of Sciences and with private, influential researchers, by providing specimens, travel descriptions and maps. In this way, knowledge was transferred between places and people – to be exchanged for scientific recognition or other resources in the future.

British explorers sent their reports and hand-drawn maps back to the London Missionary Society and the Royal Geographical Society, where the information was compiled. All European journeys to central southern Africa built upon the hope of finding navigable rivers. They were not strictly survey expeditions, as the maps were compiled using many different sources com-

bined with some measurements, and often included numerous errors. Similarly, the maps were not unproblematic testimonies. They were both real and symbolic instruments for consolidating Western claims to areas that could be called uninhabited on the map and were thus easier to seize with no proper justification. They can therefore be regarded as emblematic of the business of colonialism.

There are a couple of different maps of these areas from this time; it is not always easy to reconstruct the transfer of information between the explorers and between the various maps. However, what is clear is that the information was primarily transferred by local informants. This is also supported by the maps published alongside Livingstone's popular accounts of his travels. Quite simply, bearing in mind the enormous areas the maps covered, no European would be able to survey them alone, however energetic and adventurous that person was. Information for the maps was therefore obtained by talking to the local population, who were asked to describe the surroundings if one continued upriver or beyond the mountains.

It is clear that Livingstone's missionary efforts and scientific surveys were one, or more correctly several elements, of a colonial practice, but then how should we characterise Andersson's work? Was it part of a general European colonial practice or something else? It was evidently part of a system for collecting scientific knowledge that had numerous functions and purposes. Like Linnaeus' apostles, on his return Andersson hoped to be able to exchange the reports and specimens he had sent for recognition in the form of employment and reputation. At the same time, he was an adventurer hoping to make a fortune from ivory and other items, for example exciting travel descriptions. Sweden was poor and did not have advanced colonial ambitions, but Andersson's work remains analogous to that of his British colleagues.

To be sure, the Academy of Sciences was no Royal Society or Royal Geographical Society at the centre of a global empire. Just the same, Andersson's reports to Stockholm are like the reports Livingstone sent to London. His submission to the Academy of Sciences exemplifies how knowledge circulated on multiple levels: one was an aggregated level, where information was gathered from different parts of the world in an enormous mapping project organised from the empires' centres. Another level was that at which knowledge circulated between the explorer and various institutions. Yet another level was where information and maps circulated among the explorers themselves and, finally, there was a circulation of knowledges between local informants and the European explorers.

Andersson's final assistant, Axel Eriksson, enticed more Swedes to the region and, for a while, Swedes were the largest European group in what is now Namibia. These historic Swedish-Namibian ties from the time before both apartheid and German colonial rule were therefore an asset in Swedish

involvement with the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) during the Namibian War of Independence. And history was possibly a contributing reason for the extensive Swedish aid to post-independence Namibia in the 1990s. A scientific interest in beetles and a young man's efforts to advance in the world laid at least a foundation for this. The archive in Stockholm is therefore not only of interest for northern Europeans, in this case it is a great asset for countries such as Namibia and Botswana.

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Charles John Andersson can be read about in Bo Bjelfvenstam's *Charles John Andersson: Upptäckare, jägare, krigare* (Stockholm, 1994) and in Lasse Berg's "Upptäcktsresanden som kom för sent", *Populär Historia*, no. 3, 1992. Andersson's father, Llewelyn Lloyd, had several of his son's books published, including Charles John Andersson, *Lake Ngami* (Stockholm, 1856). Andersson's assistant Axel Eriksson can be read about in Peter Johansson, *Handelsfursten av Damaraland: Axel Eriksson – en svensk pionjär i södra Afrika* (Stockholm, 2001). In addition to the maps and travel descriptions, there are letters from Andersson, e.g. Charles John Andersson to Olof Fåhraeus, 9 October 1852, Fåhraeus Archive, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Pär Eliasson has written about the preceding period in *Platsens blick: Vetenskapsakademien och den naturalhistoriska resan 1790–1840* (Umeå, 1999). Cartographic historian Elri Liebenberg has studied the different variants of Livingstone's map in "The cartography of exploration: Livingstone's 1851 manuscript sketch map of the Zambesi river", *Terrae Incognitae*, vol. 44:2, 2012. Adam Jones and Isabel Voigt discuss the origins of similar maps in "Just a first sketchy makeshift: German travellers and their cartographic encounters in Africa, 1850–1914", *History in Africa*, vol. 39, 2012. An anthropological discussion can be found in J. K. Noyes *Colonial Space: Spatiality in the Discourse of German South West Africa 1884–1915* (Chur, 1992).