

## Militant Geographers and Primitive Maps

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### Maps and imperialism

In the year before his death in August 1924, Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) wrote an autobiographical piece for the *National Geographic* entitled 'Geography and some explorers'.<sup>1</sup> He recalled his encounters with maps and mapping, from singularly unsuccessful lessons at school, taught by bored professors 'who were not only middle-aged, but looked to me as if they had never been young', to his work with maps as a junior officer aboard ship and then as captain. The memoir culminates with the experience of navigation along the Congo River to the interior of Africa which gave him the setting for *Heart of Darkness*.<sup>2</sup> Conrad's geography teachers (presumably in Russian-occupied Poland in the early 1870s) had been people 'of no romantic sense for the real, ignorant of the great possibilities of active life; with no desire for struggle, no notion of the wide spaces of the world.' He found that adventure for himself in the lives of explorers, geographers and missionaries. Conrad traces the genealogy of his fascination with geography and exploration back to the conquistadores. He recalls how reading Sir Leopold Mc'Clintock's biography of the arctic explorer Franklin sent him off 'on the romantic explorations of my inner self'. He reminds the reader that in the 1860s the interior of the map of Africa was still largely blank. The heroic geographer of the time was the missionary David Livingstone, whose books were best sellers, and whose 'discovery' and naming of the Victoria Falls and exploration of the lakes of east Africa captured the imagination of people in imperial Britain and beyond.<sup>3</sup> Conrad recalls as a boy in the late 1860s drawing in on a map published in 1852 showing the outlines of the great African lakes from Livingstone's accounts. Later, having left Poland for Marseilles in 1874, he travelled the world as a second officer and was tasked with updating admiralty charts. But the old excitement did not come back.

Livingstone's work was an inspiration for the British imperial project in all its aspects. Livingstone himself saw commerce, civilization and Christianity as necessary complements in the transformation of Africa and Africans. 'We ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate

for our markets', he wrote in 1865, 'as the most effectual means, next to the Gospel, of their elevation.'<sup>4</sup> His successors in mission fields were largely in agreement, for all that the interests of the missionaries in converting Africans to Christianity and those of traders in acquiring palm oil and ivory, or of industrialists in using indigenous labour for construction, mining and transport, were not precisely aligned. Livingstone's geographical writing inspired British churches to support missionary endeavour in Africa beyond the established political boundaries and the zone of imperial control. The missionary societies, which included those of the established Church and many nonconformist churches, mobilized their members to raise funds for missions to Africa and the rest of the non-Christian world. In so doing, they provided their members – who were endlessly invited to contribute money raised by subscription, public collections, special services, bazaars and rallies - with vicarious participation in the nation's imperial endeavour. Missionary reports featured prominently in church newspapers and magazines. Missionaries on furlough who returned on leave to recover their health toured the country with stories of their exploits, and missionary memoirs and biographies were produced in great numbers, often for distribution as Sunday school prizes.

Livingstone's books included maps which demonstrate the epic nature of his journeys of exploration. The 1861 edition of his *Travels and researches in South Africa*, published by John Murray, includes a map of South Africa by the London cartographer John Arrowsmith in 1857 who, like Livingstone, was also a member of the Royal Geographical Society. The map aggregates the journeys of 1849 and 1856 [figure 1].<sup>5</sup> The effect of the map is to contrast the thin red line of Livingstone's journeys with the vastness of the African continent, made all the more sublime by its complex river systems and other natural obstacles such as deserts, mountains and marshes. Tribal names and chieftaincies are assigned to different areas of the interior, but without distinct borders, while to the north and the east, the map is almost wholly blank. Livingstone was a hero for the missionary societies. The mention of his name in a public meeting was sufficient to raise a cheer, and in later missionary accounts of journeys in central Africa, a visit to the Victoria Falls was an opportunity not only to observe a wonder of nature, but also to visit the island on which Livingstone had carved his name on a tree. The image of the advancing frontier, and the task of following on behind Livingstone's pioneering work, served to inspire further missionary endeavour.

Writing in 1997, Edward Saïd identified the fundamental relationship between imperialism and Western culture, as exemplified in but not confined to, the novel. With reference to Britain and France, he wrote that

*There were scholars, administrators, travellers, traders, parliamentarians, merchants, novelists, theorists, speculators, adventurers, visionaries, poets, and every of outcast and misfit in the outlying possessions of these two imperial powers, each of whom contributed to the formation of a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life.*<sup>6</sup>

Missionaries need to be added to the list. If, as Saïd contends, Kipling and Conrad 'brought to a basically insular and provincial British audience the colour, glamour, and romance of the British overseas enterprise', so did the missionary work and the surrounding publicity of the churches.<sup>7</sup> In a society in which the majority of the population professed Christianity and a large proportion, particularly but not exclusively of the upper and middle classes were regular churchgoers, organised religion provided significant channels for the formation of ideas about the world. Missionary societies relied on popular support for their funding and for political mobilisation and used a wide range of means to communicate with the public at home. Stories of exploration and missionary work among people widely described as 'the heathen' appealed to and sacralised popular interest in colonial adventure. It played to the geographical and cartographical imagination recalled by Conrad.

In this article, I look at how maps were used by members of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society to advance their work in Africa. In the course of research into the Society's work for a broader work on Primitive Methodism, I came across a reference in the minutes of its General Missionary Committee to the need to use maps for communicating with the wider membership of the church. I found that there was a copy of the map and a later missionary atlas in the collection of the Primitive Methodist Museum at Englesea Brook, Cheshire.<sup>8</sup> I have attempted here to set these artefacts in the context of the society's missionary work, itself a small part of the much broader context of missions, mapping and imperialism to which we are directed by Conrad and Livingstone. The Primitive Methodist contribution to this bigger story is a very limited one. I have also included material about the missionaries' own use of maps to develop an understanding of the area in which they planned to work, and their reflections on the appreciation of maps of the Africans they encountered there. I make no claim for an innovative role on the part of this small missionary society in mapping (although one of their number, Edwin Smith, has a distinct place in the history of ethnography and was the only missionary from any society to become the president of the Royal Anthropological Institute), but the case study points to an approach which is capable of wider application to missionary maps.<sup>9</sup>

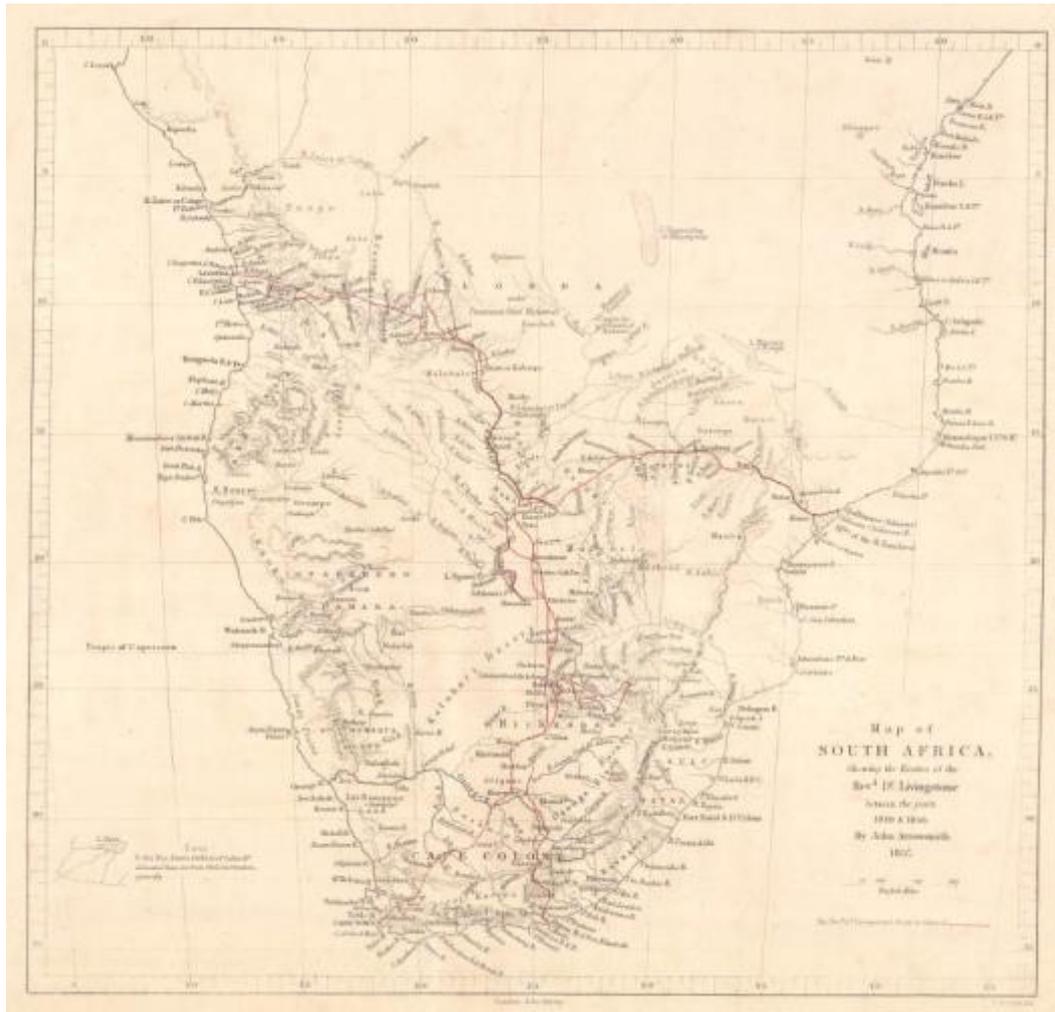


Figure 1 'Map of South Africa Showing the Routes of the Revd Dr Livingstone between the years 1849 & 1857' from Livingstone *A Popular Account of Missionary Travels*.

The literature about missionaries and their role in imperialism and colonialism frequently refers to maps and mapping, but less often discusses the maps themselves. In his review of Catherine Hall's study of Baptist missionaries' work in Jamaica, Edward Saïd deplores overuse of the verb *to map*, finding it 'a word which should have concrete, geographical precision', but which is 'misapplied by scholars trying to describe ways of linking together different echelons of experience'. Hall certainly does not describe any work by the Baptists which led to the production of maps of their mission field. Comaroff and Comaroff describe overseas missions as 'nodes in a global order', from which displaced Europeans 'tried to resituate "native" peoples on maps centred elsewhere, maps that marginalised the local', but they don't look at cartographic practice in their study of the missionary encounter with the southern Tswana in South Africa. Among the writers who do write about cartography proper, Amy De Rogartis, writing about the work of the Connecticut Missionary society on the Ohio

Frontier in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is concerned with mapping as a means of imposing both moral and physical order on the wilderness as part of an enterprise involving both missionaries and surveyors. The maps are all drawn by the surveyors though and the missionaries' mappings are imaginary ones. Braun discusses the contribution of missionaries to the creation of maps in South Africa which were the basis for subsequent imperial purposes of mineral exploitation, infrastructure building and administrative control. This follows the approach taken in Felix Driver's work on geography and exploration and by Annie Coombes in her work on ethnography and exhibitions about Africa in the period 1890-1913. Driver observes the use of the map of Africa as a backdrop for public meetings from the time of the Royal Geographical Society's grand meeting to celebrate the return of Speke and Grant in 1863, at the British Association's annual meetings and in Africa exhibitions.<sup>10</sup> Coombes observes that almost no consideration has been given to either the home missions' role in the representation of the mission fields abroad, and remedies this in a study of missionary exhibitions. She draws attention to the prominent place of maps at the Stanley and African exhibition in London in 1890, which was a celebration of exploration, but not to their place in missionary exhibitions, where the overwhelming weight of the material on display consisted of artefacts produced by natives of the mission fields.<sup>11</sup> The Primitive Methodist maps nevertheless lead us to consider how maps were used to portray the missionary enterprise to members of the church in Britain.

### **Primitive Methodists**

The Primitive Methodist Connexion was established as a breakaway from the Wesleyan Methodists in 1811 and maintained an independent existence until reuniting with other branches of Methodism in 1932. The origins of the split were in issues relating to local control of church business and the Primitives' wish to continue to hold mass outdoor prayer meetings (*camp meetings*) at a time when the Wesleyan authorities, mindful of the Government's measures against political radicalism, had banned them. They called themselves *primitive* as an assertion of their return to the original values of Wesley and indeed to the early church. Their critics called them Ranters because of their style of preaching. The strongholds of Primitive Methodism were in north Staffordshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire, although by the 1860s it was a national movement, albeit one whose centre of gravity was in the north and midlands and in rural areas in the West Country and East Anglia, reaching 200,000 members and with three times that number attending its chapels. Primitive Methodists were evangelistic nonconformists, with a missionary impulse inspired by a belief, derived from Wesley, that all could be saved. The Primitives had a

reputation and a self-image of being a church for the poor, especially in rural areas and mining villages. They always had a number of wealthier members, some of whom were able to fund missionary activity, but the church was less wealthy than other nonconformist groups and perennially lacked funds to match its expansionist ambition.<sup>12</sup>

The Primitive Methodist Missionary Society was established in 1843. Largely for financial reasons, it restricted its support for missions to Britain and Ireland and colonial Australia, New Zealand and Canada until 1870. It then founded missions in Africa, on the island of Fernando Po in the Bight of Biafra and to Aliwal North in Cape Colony. Conference resolutions in 1868 had proposed that the time was right for such foreign missions, but the choice of locations was opportunistic. A Primitive Methodist ship's captain had put in at Santa Isabel on Fernando Po for repairs and discovered that there was a Protestant community in and around the port, largely consisting of migrants from parts of the coast with a long experience of contact with Europeans, who had had no minister since the Baptists had been expelled by the Spanish authorities in 1858. Now, with the establishment of republican government in Spain, there was greater religious toleration and an opportunity for Primitive Methodist missionaries to fill the vacuum. There would also be the chance to convert the indigenous Bubi people who inhabited most of the island and who were not Christians. At Aliwal North, a Primitive Methodist emigrant farmer offered to provide lodging for missionaries whilst they established a church in what was then a town at the furthest extension north of the railway system. In each case, the Primitive Methodists sent pairs of missionaries and established missions, building churches and schools. From Fernando Po, they established missions in south eastern Nigeria while at Aliwal North, it had become apparent that the scope for extension was limited by the adjacent missions of much bigger societies and in any case, the popular impulse, inspired by Livingstone's writings, was to work not amongst the increasingly Europeanised society of the Cape but among the heathen (as non-Christian Africans were invariably called) to the north. In 1888, it was resolved to finance a mission north of the Zambesi in what became north western Rhodesia (and is now Zambia). Again, the choice of mission field was opportunistic. In Aliwal North, the missionaries had made close contacts with the French protestants of the Paris Evangelical Mission, led by François Coillard (1834-1904), who had a strong presence in Basutoland (now Lesotho) and who established a mission to the court of Lewanika, king of the Barotse on the Zambesi in 1884. Coillard recommended that the Primitives should join the effort in the north and seek the permission of Lewanika to establish a mission among the Baila, one of his tributary peoples.<sup>13</sup> The story of the establishment of the missions to the Baila is one of high Victorian persistence in the face of adversity, involving dispute with Lewanika over

admission to the country, disease and hardship, the indifference of the Baila and the deaths from disease of missionaries and members of their families.

The impact of the work of the missionaries on subsequent waves of European intervention in central Africa is acknowledged by the hunter, Captain A St H Gibbon, whose journey in pursuit of game took him to Coillard's mission and the court of Lewanika and who travelled in the Barotse and Baila lands in 1895. Gibbon believed that, quite apart from their religious work, the missionaries had 'inspired confidence in the native mind'. As a result, 'Missionary enterprise has played a most important part in the extension of the empire of which we English are so proud and so envious.' He gives most credit to Livingstone and acknowledges the contribution of Coillard, but makes no mention of the Primitive Methodists, even though he subsequently went into the territory of the Ila and marked their mission stations on the map of his journey.<sup>14</sup> In time, and as north western Rhodesia was incorporated into the imperial system by the development of administration, railways and mines, the mission became soundly established and was to contribute significantly to the development of the education system of Northern Rhodesia in the 1920s.<sup>15</sup>

The Primitive Methodists were late into the business of foreign missions. The non-denominational London Missionary Society, which was Livingstone's employer, was formed in 1795 and the Church Mission Society, which was Anglican, in 1799. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was formed in 1813. By the 1860s, these societies had mobilised resources for missions not only to Africa but also to the Caribbean, India, China and the Pacific. The Primitive Methodist effort was relatively insignificant (other than locally) in the mission fields, but it was significant for the members of the church. Supporting overseas missions was *de rigueur* for any church which wanted to demonstrate its full membership of the evangelical project, and for members of the congregation who wanted to show respectability and Christian citizenship. For all the radical origins of the Connexion, by the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, Primitive Methodist communities were unquestionably respectable, largely made up of men and women who had achieved decent prosperity, strong supporters of temperance and opponents of disorderly popular culture.<sup>16</sup> The Connexion prided itself on those members who had become school board members, local councillors, mayors and MPs, largely in the Gladstonian Liberal tradition, as well as on the work of Joseph Arch and miners' leaders in Northumberland and Durham who promoted trade unionism as a means of bringing stability to the lives of rural communities. Support for African missions fulfilled both the evangelistic desire to change the world and the socially competitive urge to belong to the world of progressive nonconformity.

Membership of this imperial evangelistic movement came at a high price. Foreign missions were very expensive to set up and run. They required the home society to pay for the travel of missionaries, usually with their wives and sometimes children, to remote locations and to maintain them there. The south and central African missions were remote, those on the Zambesi especially so, requiring transport of supplies thousands of miles and in the years before 1910 much of it beyond the reach of the railways. The cost of goods in Africa was high. The Methodist model of establishing new societies of members who would relatively quickly become self-sustaining financially did not apply in Africa, where recruitment of members was very slow, where in any case incomes were low and where the local people did not see the benefit of giving money or goods to the missionaries. In time, local income was generated, from school fees, members' donations and the product of industrial activity – in Fernando Po from cocoa plantations – but the missions were always a drain on Primitive Methodist resources. There was plenty of competition for these in England, for inner city missions, support for circuits in declining rural areas and for building the Connexion's infrastructure. The secretary of the General Missionary Committee (GMC) and his executive committee were preoccupied with the need both to raise funds and to justify their expenditure to the wider membership in England.

The need to promote the missions and instil missionary fervour throughout the Connexion led the GMC to a series of institutional and practical innovations. From 1868 the GMC organised an annual national rally in London devoted to missionary work at home and abroad. They took place in May, hence known as the May meetings, and were held in the first year in Exeter Hall, the de facto home of the anti-slavery lobby. Then from 1869, the May meeting was held in Charles Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle at the Elephant and Castle. Every district of the church was encouraged to hold missionary services and meetings at which returned missionaries and their wives or serving missionaries on leave could talk about their work. On occasions, tours of Primitive Methodist circuits were organized for one of the small number of Africans who became Primitive Methodist ministers.<sup>17</sup> Missionaries were encouraged to publish memoirs and to write serial articles for the connexional magazines. The Primitive Methodist press paid attention to a wide range of the protestant missionary societies (and kept an eye on what the Catholic missions were doing). The connexion also published *The Herald*, a monthly devoted entirely to news about the missions. It was a useful source of information for Sunday schools and the auxiliary bodies which were set up to mobilise support across the Connexion such as the Primitive Methodist Women's Missionary Federation (founded 1909 by Mary Leuty, the daughter of the agricultural labourer's union leader Joseph Arch) and the Layman's League, founded in

1910 with an inspiring call to arms proclaimed that ‘This is a decisive hour for Missions. The call is loud and urgent. No missionary era has ever been so important.’<sup>18</sup>

### **Journeys with inadequate maps**

Building on the popularity of the literature of exploration, and later sustained by popular exhibitions, the geographical imaginary was at the core of the appeal to the membership. News about missions offered to take members beyond the local concerns of industrial or rural England and show them the world, a place which was alien, but, through evangelization, capable of being saved. The stories of missionary endeavour were about the challenge and the conquest of the Other. Their tools were special services and sermons, missionary memoirs and lectures by and about the missions. Illustration with line drawings, maps and from the 1890s photographs were essential elements, frequently incorporated into lantern slide shows.

In common with other denominations, the Primitive Methodist printing house in London produced missionary memoirs with a standard format and a number of set pieces.<sup>19</sup> These were essentially travelogues and adventure stories, tracing the arduous journeys of the missionaries into the unknown, reaching a destination which promised both physical and spiritual transformation. They included an account of the voyage, describing the conditions on board ship, places seen along the way, such as Madeira, the initial sight of Africa, in the case of South Africa of Table Bay, and the first encounter with Africans, in their role as port workers, as the travellers disembarked. For missionaries going to south central Africa, the earliest accounts described arduous journeys by ox wagon to the Zambesi but later ones covered this stage with a number of train journeys (between 1870 and 1900 the railway was extended as far as the Zambesi). *En route*, there were stops at places thought to be of interest to readers. Some of these were other mission stations such as the Primitive Methodists’ own at Aliwal North in Cape Colony or the London Missionary Society’s station at Kuruman in Bechuanaland (Botswana) on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. Others were natural wonders (the Victoria Falls was obligatory) or places of political interest, such Cecil Rhodes’ grave near Bulawayo which was made in 1902. Before the railway was extended north of the Zambesi in 1905 the remainder of the journey was completed by ox cart and on foot and the baggage carried by a team of Africans recruited by the mission, sometimes numbering over a hundred. Like Livingstone’s own accounts, these memoirs are full of descriptions of life travelling through the bush, which is exotic but whose dangers are manageable. In so far as there is much about the porters, it is usually to describe their exotic appearance and rough manners, their propensity to argue about their pay and a

recalcitrance about observing the Sabbath. Ultimately the missionaries would reach their destinations and the work of bringing civilisation and Christianity began.

As well as narrative, missionary memoirs looked to engage their readers with illustrations. In the 1860s and 70s, hence in Livingstone's books and early Primitive Methodist missionary memoirs, these were engraved line drawings. By the 1890s, cameras were sufficiently portable to allow copious photographic illustrations. The Primitive Methodist missionaries were keen to take photographs. Baldwin records in his journal that one of the first things that Beckenham did on arriving among the Baila was to take photographs. Some of the photographs were incorporated in slide shows which were available for missionary meetings in the UK. In 1904, the GMC created the role of Missionary Editor to select standard Missionary libraries for preachers, teachers and as Sunday school prizes and to supply auxiliary help such as lantern lectures, services of song, picture post cards of missions and missionary banners and mottoes. The GMC subsequently set up a Lanterns Department.<sup>20</sup>

At a local level, all these media could be brought together by enthusiastic ministers. Hull was one of the cities with the greatest concentration of Primitive Methodists and the Hull Circuit Missionary Committee coordinated efforts in support of home and overseas missionary work on behalf of all its seven circuits. In 1917, the committee placed on record its appreciation of the services of Rev J S W Stanwell, its secretary, who had shown exceptional interest in communicating about the African missions. 'The maps he has compiled', then minutes record, 'give valuable knowledge of our mission fields, the enlarged photographs of African scenes that he has produced and the missionary district library he has collected are similarly our instruction and inspiration. His services in selecting and preparing the Connexional lantern slides are of value throughout the whole denomination.'<sup>21</sup> The appreciation of missionary maps should be set within this broader context of visual culture and geographical literature. The styles of the maps which the Connexion produced reflect changing perceptions of the task. Isolation and distance were the geographical expression of the spiritual wilderness of missionary imagination.

Missionaries' memoirs, some published others not, give some indication of the value of maps to the missionaries. The young minister Arthur Baldwin, a native of Nelson in Lancashire, travelled to Africa in 1889 following the Primitive Methodists' decision to establish a mission north of the Zambesi. He was 25 years old and was sent to work alongside Henry Buckenham, who had been the first Primitive Methodist missionary to Aliwal North in 1870. In Cape Town, Baldwin attended a lecture by the French scout and hunter Selous on 'My experiences north of the Zambesi'. Selous had 15 years' experience of the

country and knew the area which the Primitive Methodists were going to. Baldwin wrote to his mother that Selous had

*prepared a large map of the country. After the lecture we had an introduction to him and a long chat with him. He was very kind and free. He lent us his map to get a copy of. So Thursday and Friday I spent in tracing the map. It was a heavy job but it will be of service to us.*<sup>22</sup>

Baldwin didn't tell his mother that Selous told the Primitive Methodist party that he had been attacked by the Baila, the intended targets of the PM mission. In his memoir about the mission, Baldwin recalls that 'he finished its recital by warning us against attempting to go to these people, for he was confident we should meet a similar experience, and probably should lose our lives.'<sup>23</sup>

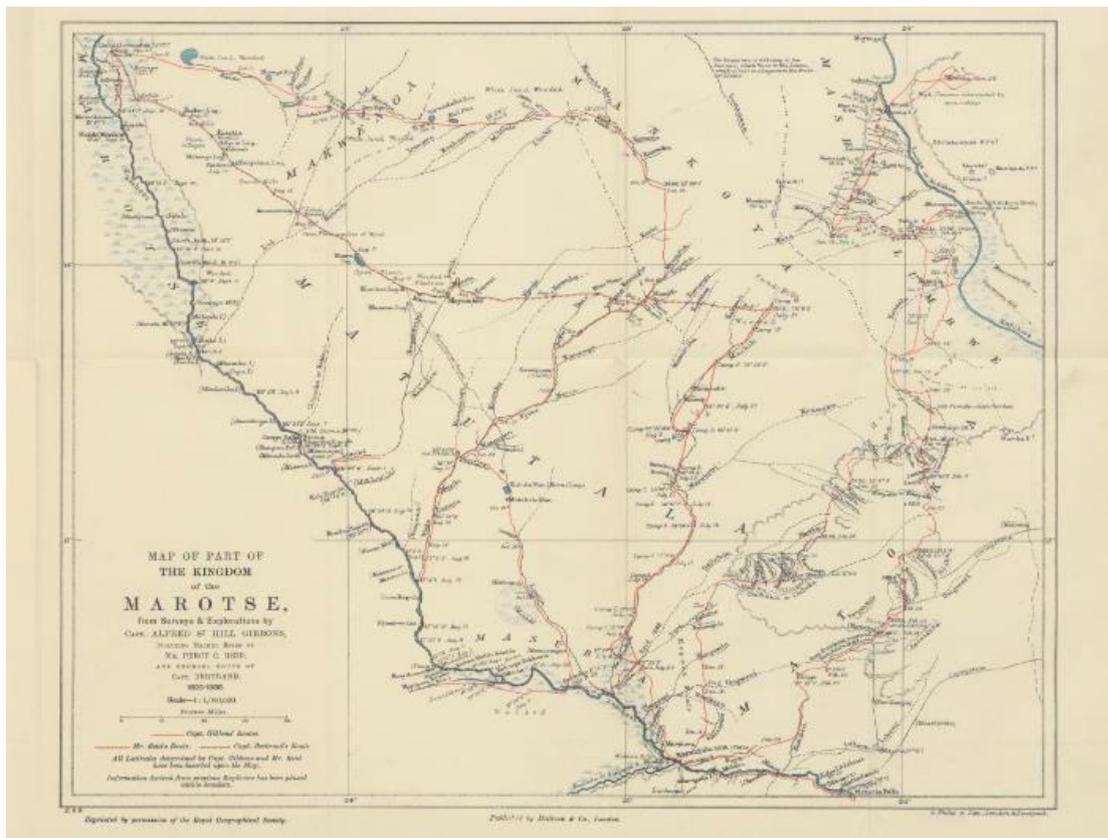


Figure 2 Map from Gibbon *Exploration and Hunting in Central Africa*. The Primitive Methodist stations at Nzela and Nambala are in the north-eastern area of the map.

When in 1893 the Primitive Methodist mission finally received permission from Lewanika to set out for the Baila, maps seemed to be of little help. At a meeting with the King, Baldwin recorded in his journal, 'Buckenham had some maps with him which we looked at, but our efforts to trace our road and locate our proposed place only ended in failure.' The King

promised them a guide.<sup>24</sup> There is no indication of what these maps could be, although Baldwin's tracing is an obvious candidate. Gibbon, on his visit to Lewanika in 1895, told him that his main aim was to make a map of the country, which Lewanika welcomed. This was to Gibbon's surprise since he feared the king would think he was spying. Gibbon subsequently produced a map which is reproduced in his book, incorporating the locations of the Primitive Methodist mission stations, but this was of course not available to Buckenham [fig 2].

Coillard's mission would have had its own maps for missionary fundraising purposes [fig 3] and possibly for the missions' own use in planning journeys.<sup>25</sup> The map would have been of limited use to the expedition, although knowledge of the rivers was essential. On the journey in 1893, the party crossed no fewer than seventeen.

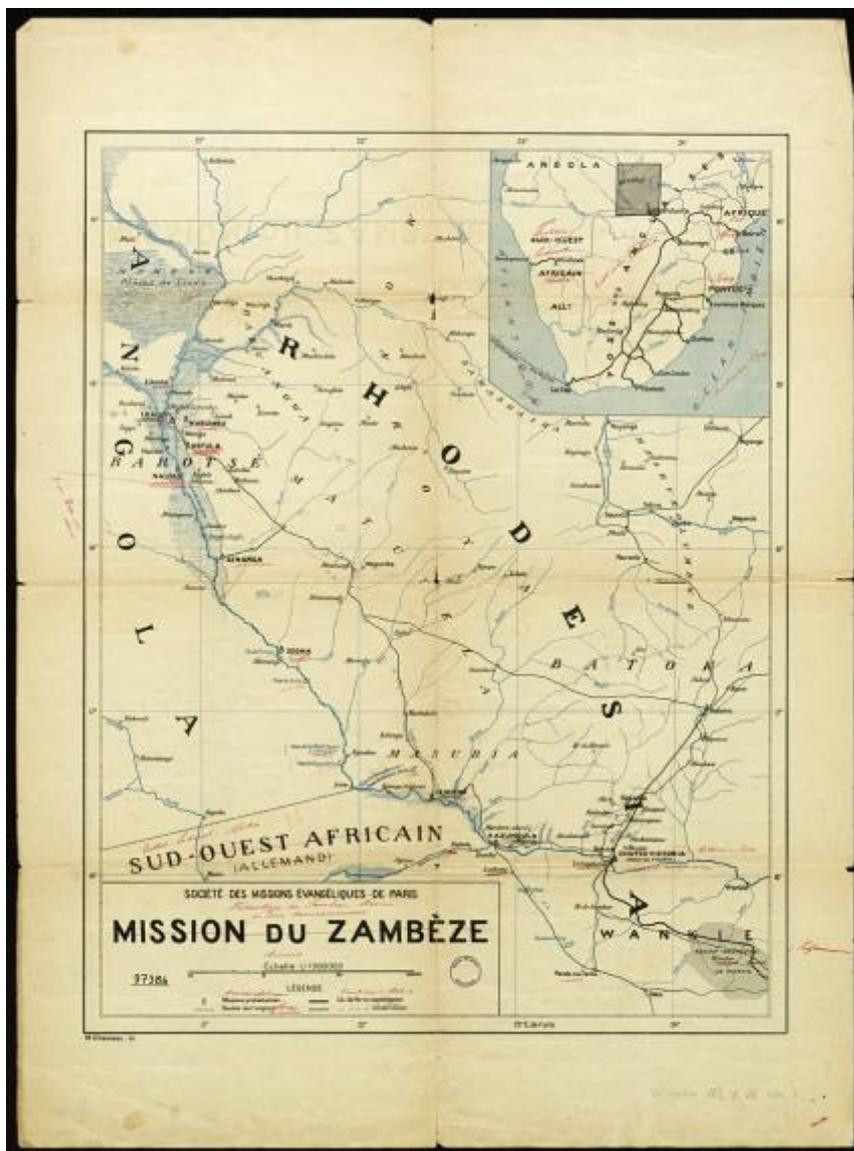


Figure 3 Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Zambesi Mission. [nd]

The maps which the GMC sponsored in the following decade, however, were for fundraising not navigation or trekking. The GMC first discussed producing a map of the African missions in 1903, giving the responsibility to Arthur Baldwin, who had returned from Africa in 1902 and was now a minister in Yorkshire. There is no reference in the GMC minutes of this initiative producing a map, but Baldwin, who had been made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1898 for reports submitted about his observations in Africa, continued to produce educational and campaigning materials for the PMMS.<sup>26</sup> In January 1906, the GMC secretaries were asked to prepare maps of the three main areas of overseas missionary activity, with a view to publishing them in the *Missionary Herald* from time to time, although this initiative too was slow to get off the ground.<sup>27</sup> The question of producing the maps was held over whilst the general secretary (at this time Arthur Guttery) made enquiries. This resulted at the end of the year in accepting a tender for 1,000 maps at 1/6d (7½ p) each from Stanford and Co, the sole agents for Ordnance Survey Maps in England and Wales, with a royal warrant as cartographers and, as now, premises in Long Acre, Covent Garden.<sup>28</sup> A further order of 1,000 maps was underway the following April whilst the GMC secretariat assessed the demand for maps across the Connexion.

A copy of the map survives in the collection of the Primitive Methodist Museum at Englesea Brook. [Fig 4 and 5] It is designed to be hung on a wall and would be suitable for the travelling lecture and the Sunday School alike. The map locates the missions in a global context by showing where they are in relation to the whole African continent, while insets enable the viewer to see where the various stations and outstations, names familiar from the missionary literature, were located in relation to one another. The Primitive Methodist centres are spread out, isolated voices crying in the wilderness. Only the most south westerly tip of the United Kingdom appears on the map, further emphasizing distance and isolation from home. The appeal is to anxiety about the massive nature of the task, and of the need to fill the spaces in between (even if, in reality, other societies had long been doing that). For all that it was produced in 1907, there is no attempt to demonstrate the industrialization and modernization of Africa. The post-1887 delineations of colonial spheres of interest are absent, as are railways or in indication of mining or other economic activity. The interior is no longer blank and reflects decades of exploration, but it is still a map which represents geographical challenge. But while the enormous expanse of the map led the viewer back to imagining the heroic Livingstone and militant Christian exploration, the use of British cartographic pink to mark the Primitive Methodist missions reminded them that this was part of a greater, imperial project. As Elaine Freedgood remarks in her discussion of Victorian literature about Africa (including Livingstone), British civilization is elevated in comparison with African Otherness precisely by distancing it from modern time.<sup>29</sup> Through its

missions, the Primitive Methodist church could take its place, albeit as a junior member, alongside bigger, better funded denominations that had been at work overseas far longer. In not showing them on the same map, the insignificance at a global scale of the PM effort is concealed.



Figure 4 Map of Africa prepared for the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society. Stanford and Co 1908. Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum.



Figure 5 Map of Africa prepared for the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society. Stanford and Co 1908 (detail). Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum.

The second map [fig 6] is taken from *An Atlas of Primitive Methodist Missions in Africa*, published by the PMMS in December 1920. The new atlas was a slim volume, with 7 pages of maps and three containing very brief accounts of the three mission fields. The maps were drawn by Harry H Rodmell, Marine Artist to *The Illustrated London News* at no cost to the Society. In a foreword, the secretary of the Lantern department, J S Waltham Stanwell, says that the PMMS had hitherto had 'nothing in the way of cartographical guidance for general publication, except one map of the whole Continent issued many years ago and long since obsolete.' This is harsh on the Stanford and Co map, which was after all only 12 years old at this time, although Stanwell was perhaps misled by its archaic style.

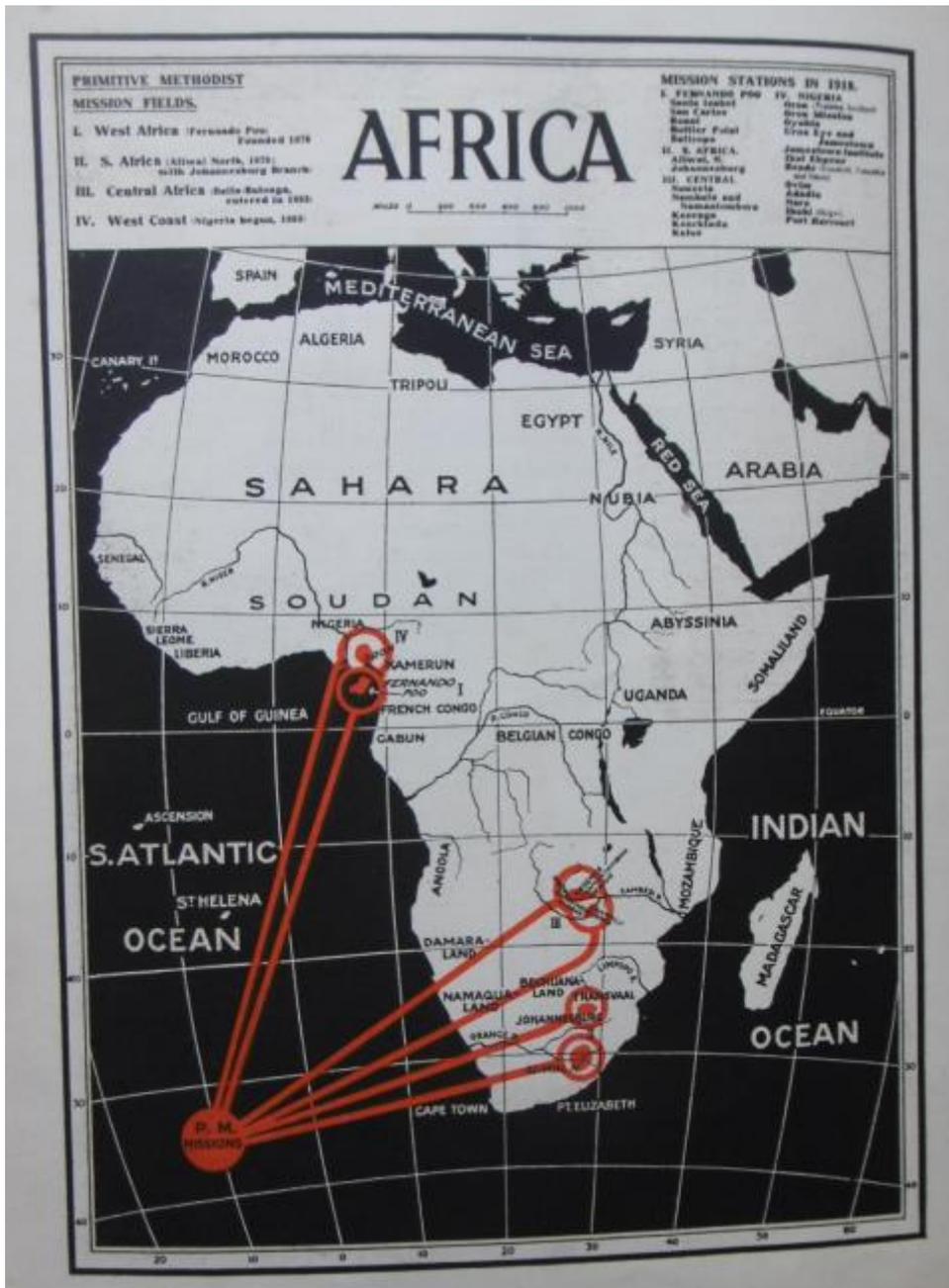


Figure 5 Atlas of Primitive Methodist Missions in Africa PMMS 1920. Engelsea Brook Chapel and Museum

If the 1908 map represents the Primitive Methodists as finding themselves in the midst of a vast continent which awaits divine illumination from the mission stations, the second envisages evangelistic invasion from without. The missions are portrayed as agents of transformation, bringing science, medicine, education, industry, modernized agriculture as harbingers of modernization. The arrows all go one way – any dialogical development of the imperial imagination, in which the metropole is shaped by its encounter with the other, is wilfully denied. This time, means of communication, the arteries of modernization, are prominently displayed. The strong red of the shading [fig 7] and lettering [fig 8] maximises

the impact of the Primitive Methodist activities while the amount of topographical information is reduced. Rivers are now resources or means of communication, not obstacles. In the map of south east Nigeria, there is sufficient confidence in the extent and stability of the Primitive Methodist missions to give some indication of who was working the neighbouring mission fields.

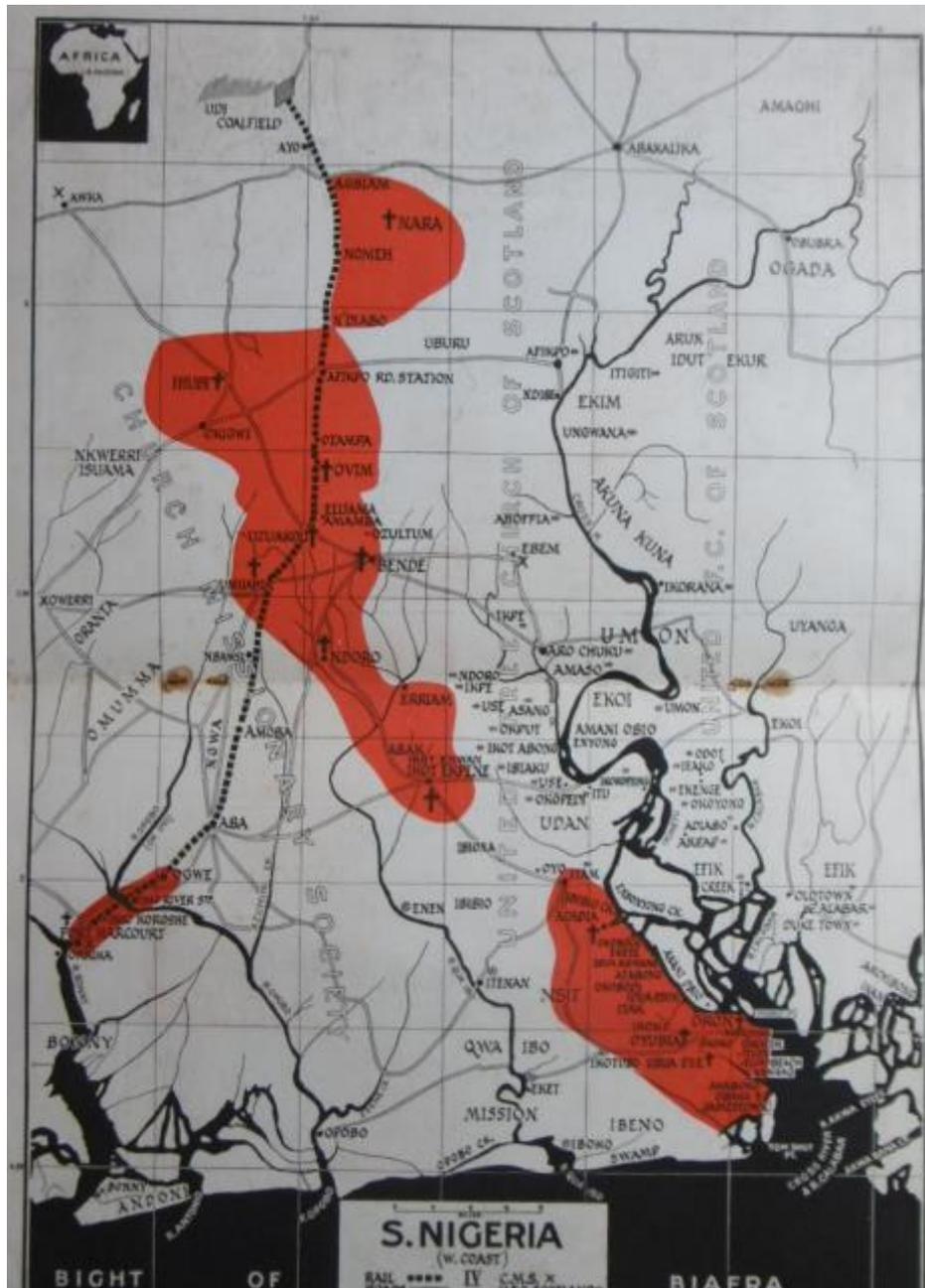


Figure 6 from Atlas of Primitive Methodist Missions in Africa PMMS 1920. Engelsea Brook Chapel and Museum.

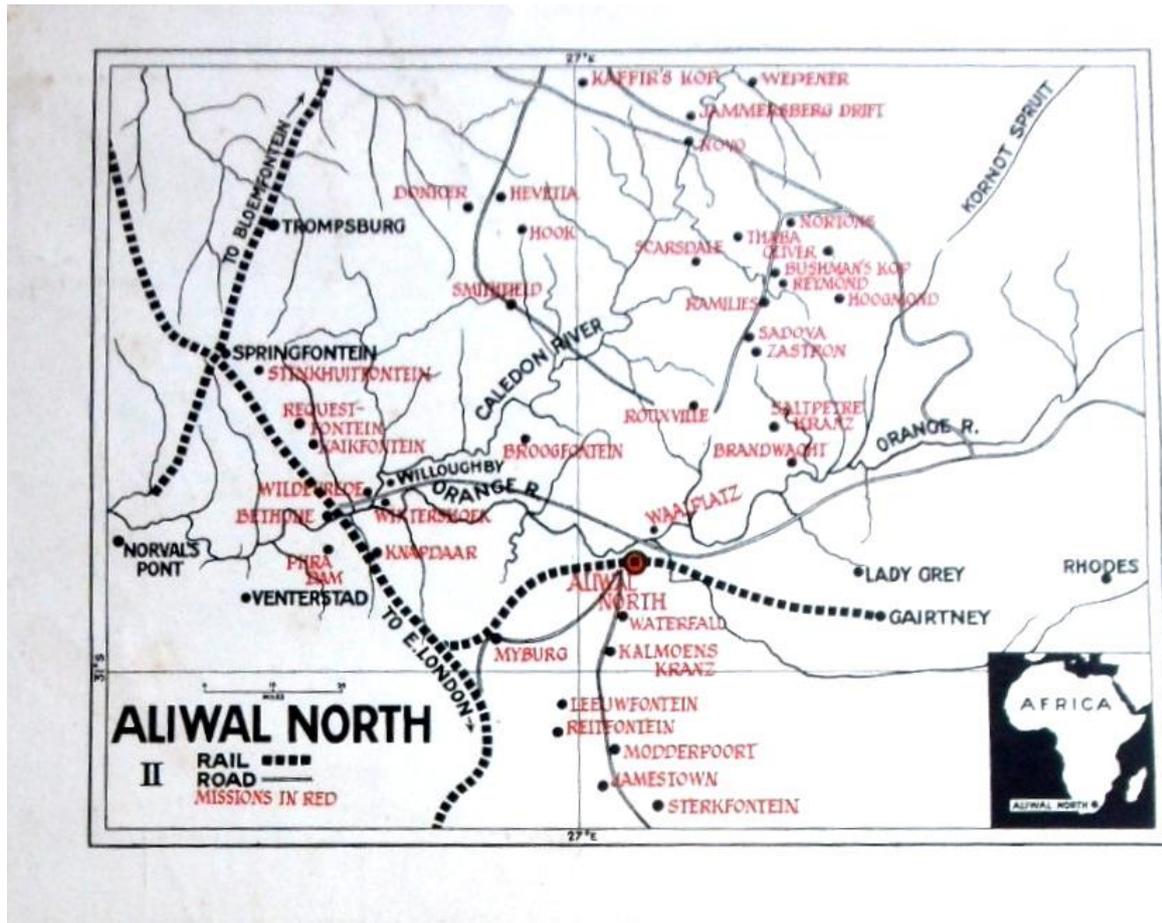


Figure 7 from Atlas of Primitive Methodist Missions in Africa PMMS 1920. Engelsea brook Chapel and Museum

The military metaphor used in the 1920 atlas was not a product of the 1914-18 War. A similar invasion motif is used, this time to frighten into action rather than to reassure, in a map reproduced in the programme of the Orient United Missionary Exhibition. The invader in this map, the product of a joint effort between the major missionary societies, is Islam [fig 9].

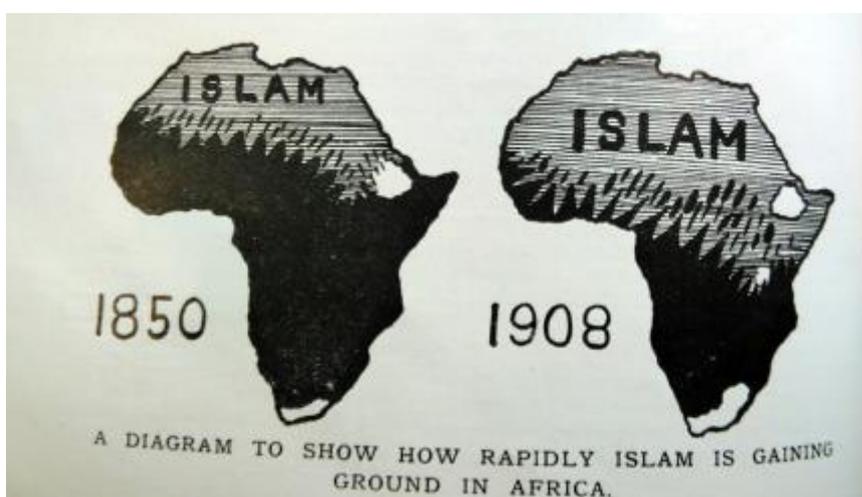


Figure 9 From the programme to the Orient United Missionary exhibition, Hull 1910.

The conventional map's view from above, the one used in both the 1908 map and the Atlas, implies hierarchy and superiority. The God view is a perspective for the Missionary Society planning its campaign, or assessing its position in the world. It is a view which was not available to, and in some cases, at least initially, not meaningful to, the subjects of missionary activity. In the pioneering ethnographical study, *The Ila-speaking People of Northern Rhodesia*, co-written with the administrator Andrew Murray Dale, E W Smith discusses the Baila conception of the physical world.<sup>30</sup> From his conversations with the Baila, he came to the view that they had a limited view of the world beyond their own lands and that even those who had been to Katanga or Kimberley to the mines, or those who had returned from slavery in distant lands, one of whom recalled travelling with Livingstone, had a very clear idea in geographical terms of the relationship between those places and their homeland. Bulawayo (in modern Zimbabwe), he writes, is the Ultima Thule of most Baila and they thought all white people came from there. Since, according to Smith and Baldwin, the Baila made no written records or pictures, there is unsurprisingly no reference to any Ila map, nor does he attempt to construct one with them. He doesn't refer to any attempt to make maps in less permanent media (e.g. on the ground). It is evident from his discussion of, for example land use and ownership, or in the association of particular trees and groves with dead members of the community, that the Baila made very precise delineation of their environment. But it was a *local* geography with no ambition to describe – or lay claim to - that which lay outside the concern of the people. Arthur Baldwin found that King Lewanika of the Barotse had 'a splendid acquaintance with the geography of the country.'<sup>31</sup> In discussing maps with the hunter-explorer Gibbon in 1895, Lewanika gives a clue to the origins of his knowledge and his wish to know more. Gibbon recalled that as a boy he recalled 'a white man coming here and making a map of the river'. The white man was Livingstone. For Lewanika, the prospect of a new map evidently appealed to his sense of power, and perhaps also to the need to use the white man's tools for survival in a political world delineated by maps. It was also a period in which, as well as seeking to come to terms with the advance of the British South Africa Company, Lewanika was looking to extend his influence by creating new settlements of Barotse among tributary peoples. He told Gibbon 'It is a good thing to make a map of my country, for though I am king, my country is a large one; and there are many rivers I know nothing about.'<sup>32</sup>

The geography of the missionaries had a very different purpose. However insignificant in the great scheme of European territorial rule, the identification of the disparate communities of Fernando Po and south eastern Nigeria with those of the eastern Cape and north western Rhodesia imposed a metropolitan view which was alien to the indigenous Ila and Bubi. For the Fernandino community of Fernando Po and the Basuto and Xhosa of Aliwal North, it

confirmed their place as intermediaries between the metropolis and the interior. It is not apparent whether these maps found their way to the mission stations – they may well have done. E W Smith at least argued that the PMMS annual reports should be written in such a way that they could be made available to the African stations. By putting their African members on the map, the Society incorporated them as subaltern members of the imperial project. They were blessed to be in the land shaded pink.

The third item I want to consider is the cover of the popular report of the PMMS for 1931, incorporating the outline of the map of Africa [fig 9].

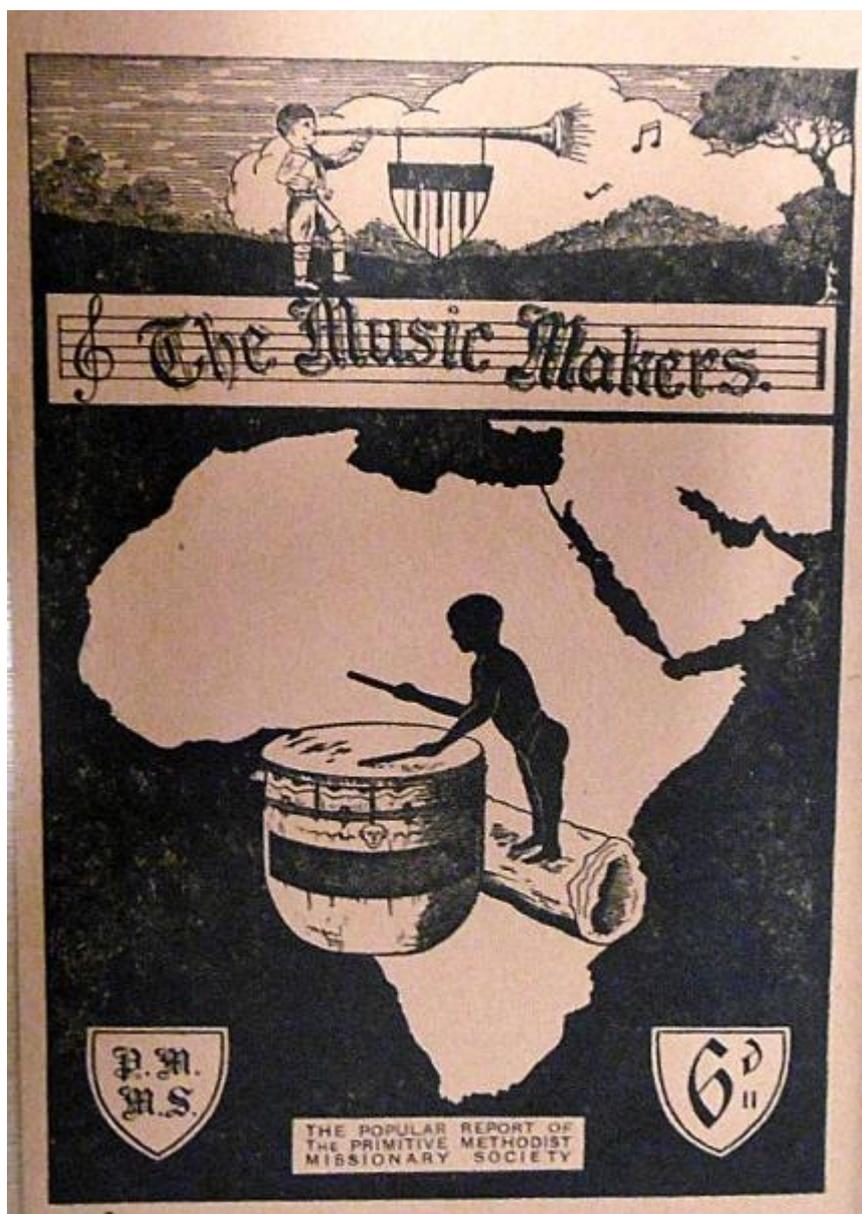


Figure 9 Cover, The Popular Report of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, 1931. Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum.

From 1928, the PMMS looked for new ways to engage the UK readership by making the annual report something more than the usual accounts of officers elected, members recruited and funds raised. Each report has a theme – The Lamps, The Weavers, The Peacemakers – which serves to frame and bind together a set of articles about the missions. The 1931 theme was the Music Makers and the report contains a number of articles about African music which are largely sympathetic to it. There had been a realization in the decade before the First World War that the Africans among whom the missionaries worked had powerful musical traditions. Even hardened ethnocentrists among the missionaries had conceded as much. The 1931 report goes further. There is a discography for EMI and Zonophone recordings and even that, while there is much that is objectionable in African dancing from a Christian point of view, the dances are a revelation of the latent energy of the people. The authority for this last statement is E W Smith's *The Ila speaking peoples*. The whole report imagines a future convergence of African and European musical styles and is inspired by concepts in the theory of mission work (missiology) advocated by Smith about the validity of non-European perceptions of the divine.<sup>33</sup>

What then are we to make of the cover? It is crudely drawn, far from the professionalism of the 1908 map and the 1920 Atlas, and far too from the formal style of the Primitive Methodists of the 1870s. The figures are children and they are safe. The drummer on the cover looks like a child. This is certainly not one of Conrad's ecstatic natives. He is the African equivalent of the bugle-blowing English boy at the top of the illustration. The map is undifferentiated but its inhabitants are benign, they have a culture which in its traditional form is capable of co-option. The map of Africa has no features at all, but it is shown in white, not black. It is no longer the dark continent and is left entirely open. Modernity, which by this time was reflected in widespread labour unrest (prevalent in the mines of Northern Rhodesia and South Africa), the problems of forced and indentured labour (which was a particular issue on the plantations in Fernando Po) and by growing discontent about the expropriation of land and incipient apartheid. None of this is apparent in the imagery of bugles and rural idyll, heraldic shields and Gothic script in the English part of the design, or the traditional drummer, a timeless image of the Other time, in the African part. By this time, the most influential work of the Primitive Methodist missions was in education and training, particularly in southern Nigeria and Northern Rhodesia, and in providing medical services – humanitarian support rather than cultural onslaught. African music, and by extension African culture, is made childlike even childish, hence capable of change through education. Like the reduction of the map of Africa to an outline which is knowable, music and culture are no longer a challenge to the missionary project. The contrast with the reality of the musical culture which the more perceptive missionaries encountered is reflected in the photograph

taken by Edwin Smith of a chief, Sejungo, and his band and included in an album for personal use [fig 10]. The demeanour of the chief and the musicians reflects pride and status. There is nothing childlike in this picture. Elsewhere, Smith acknowledged that understanding the music of such musicians was beyond him.

Through ignorance of technique, we find ourselves at a loss when we come to describe the music and dancing of the Ba-ila. We can give...the words of many of the songs, but to illustrate the music and to detail the steps of the dances are beyond us.<sup>34</sup>

Arthur Baldwin responded to Sejungo's with less openness about his own limitations in appreciating the music. He noted in the occasion of a visit by Sejungo to the French Mission in 1894 that 'After lunch he sent his band and clown to play and dance for our entertainment. The drums made such a noise that instead of giving us pleasure they gave us head aches.'<sup>35</sup>



Figure 10 Detail from a photograph taken by Edwin Smith of Chief Sejungo and his band, nd [c 1905]. Sejungo is second from the left. Methodist Missionary Society Archive, SOAS.

## Conclusion

Missionary maps were one of the means by which a wider public was informed about and engaged on the imperial project. The PMs produced very few maps, and there is no suggestion that their role was a particularly innovative one. What the two maps and the

cover of their missionary report demonstrate is a changing perception of the nature of the task, from discovery in the spirit of Conrad's militant geographers, via the metaphor of military invasion and conquest to the outline of Africa as a symbol of progress through education of the youth. Darkest Africa is transformed into a realm of easy harmony, much as the complexities and impenetrability (for the missionaries) of bands like Sejungo's gives place to the folksiness of the boy drummer in the cover of the 1930 missionary society report.

The shift in the geographical imagination is echoed in the Primitive Methodists' maps. Education was a lasting missionary contribution. The Primitive Methodist training school at Kasenga was the centre of the British educational effort in north western Rhodesia, limited as it was. But if for Conrad, the taming of the Other was a matter for loss and the end of geographical romance, for the missionaries it was in theory at least the opportunity for the spread of civilisation and hence for evangelisation. In reality, resources did not permit extensive work, and the opening up of the African interior to transport, trade and the exploitation of raw materials transformed the social context of mission work. African culture was in any case more complex and resilient than the missionaries had imagined in 1890. The vision of evangelistic fervour was as attenuated in Africa as it had become in England. The missionary romance of writing the Word on the blank map of the interior was replaced by the less heroic work of the training college.

In 'Geography and Some Explorers', a world-weary Conrad reflects on the disillusionment and banality that followed when there was no land left to discover. He achieved his boyhood dream of reaching the centre of Africa, but, alone on the deck of a boat on the Congo River, he contemplated only Stanley's much publicised meeting with Livingstone and King Leopold's exploitation of the Congo, 'the unholy recollection of a prosaic newspaper stunt and the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration.' He recalled also that his youthful romantic imagining of the first European encounter with what was then called the Central Sudan, in his mind's eye a picture of

*a self-confident and keen-eyed person, in a long cloak and wearing a turban on his head, riding slowly toward a gate in the mud walls of an African city, from which an excited population is streaming out to behold the wonder - Dr Barth, the protégé of Lord Palmerston and subsidized by the British Foreign Office, approaching Kano, which no European eye had seen till then...*

Forty years later, Conrad's friend Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Nigeria, travelled in state in a day to Kano to open a college. Education was a fine thing, but the era of militant geography was certainly past.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Conrad, Joseph. 'Geography and Some Explorers.' *National Geographic*, March 1924. The piece was subsequently published in *Last Essays*, ed. Richard Curle, London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1926 pp 10-17. The full text is available at [http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/geog\\_and\\_some.html](http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/temp/geog_and_some.html). [Downloaded 18 March 2017]. Conrad's essay is discussed in Driver, Felix. *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2000, pp 3-5.
- <sup>2</sup> Conrad, Joseph *Heart of Darkness* serialized in *Blackwoods Magazine* 1899 and published by Dent in 1902. Online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/526> [Downloaded 18 March 2017].
- <sup>3</sup> Livingstone, David. *A Popular Account of Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. London: John Murray, 1861.
- <sup>4</sup> Livingstone *Missionary Travels* pp 576-77
- <sup>5</sup> A copy of the map can be downloaded at <http://insight.stanford.edu/luna/servlet/detail/Stanford~6~1~10543~632:Map-of-South-Africa-Showing-the-Rou> [Downloaded 4 April 2017].
- <sup>6</sup> Saïd, Edward W *Culture and Imperialism* London: Vintage 1993, p 8.
- <sup>7</sup> Saïd *Culture and Imperialism*, p 160.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.engleseaabrook-museum.org.uk> [downloaded 26 April 2017]. I am grateful to the help given by the archivist, Dr Jill Barber, and her staff in finding this material.
- <sup>9</sup> Young, W. John. *The Quiet Wise Spirit: Edwin W. Smith 1876-1957 and Africa*. Epworth Press, 2002.
- <sup>10</sup> Saïd calls this 'a fuzzy tic inherited from Fredric Jameson.' Saïd, Edward 'Always on Top.' *London Review of Books* 25 (March 2003): 3-6, reviewing Hall, Catherine *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830 - 1867*. Polity Press, 2003. Comaroff, John L. and Comaroff, Jean *Of Revelation and Revolution* vol 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p 12; DeRogatis, Amy *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier (Religion and American Culture)*. Columbia University Press, 2003. Braun, Lindsay Frederick 'Missionary Cartography in Colonial Africa: Cases from South Africa' in Liebenberg, Elri and Demhardt, Imre Josef (eds) *History of Cartography: International Symposium of the ICA Commission, 2010* Springer, 2012. Driver, Felix. *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2000, pp 79ff. Coombes, Annie E. *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. Yale University Press, 1997, especially chapter 8.
- <sup>11</sup> Coombes, *Reinventing Africa* p 70. The catalogue to the Orient United Missionary Exhibition held in Hill in 1910, which was the 1908 London Exhibition discussed by Coombes on tour, says that maps were on display in the study court. This was a part of the exhibition which encouraged young people to set up missionary study groups to raise awareness of overseas missions. The catalogue is in the Hull History Centre, reference L266.064.
- <sup>12</sup> An outline of the origins of the Primitive Methodists' overseas missions is described in Kendall, Rev H. B. *History of the Primitive Methodist Church*. Revised and enlarged edition. Joseph Johnson, 1919.
- <sup>13</sup> Coillard, F. *On the Threshold of Central Africa. A record of twenty years' pioneering among the Barotsi of the Upper Zambesi*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897. There was some misunderstanding on the part of the Primitive Methodists as to the identity of the people they intended to mission. The Barotse called the Baila *Mushukulumbwe*, which the Baila regarded as demeaning. I have used the name *Baila* throughout in this piece.
- <sup>14</sup> Gibbon, A. St H. *Exploration and Hunting in Central Africa*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896, pp 161-2.
- <sup>15</sup> Ragsdale, John. *Protestant Mission Education in Zambia 1880-1954*. Susquehanna University Press, 1986; Rotberg, Robert I. *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia 1880-1924*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- <sup>16</sup> see for example Obelkevich, James *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-75*. Oxford University Press, 1976, ch 5.
- <sup>17</sup> William Barleycorn, minister on Fernando Po, visited England in 1887, GMC minutes 29 July 1887. John Msikinya, minister at Aliwal North, visited in 1899, *Primitive Methodist* 18 and 25 May 1899.

<sup>18</sup> Primitive Methodist Women's Missionary Federation Yearbook 1928, p 15. GMC minutes 26-27 July 1910

<sup>19</sup> The Primitive Methodist memoirs include Roe, Henry *Mission to Africa*. London: G Lamb, 1872; Smith, Julia A. *Sunshine and Shade in Central Africa*. London: W. A. Hammond, 1908; Butt, G. E. *My travels in North West Rhodesia, or A missionary journey of sixteen thousand miles*. London: E Dalton, 1909; Chapman, William. *A Pathfinder in South Central Africa*. London: W A Hammond, 1910; Baldwin, Arthur. *A Missionary Outpost in Central Africa*. London: W A Hammond, nd [1912]; Taylor, H. J. *Capetown to Kafue*. London: W A Hammond, nd [1915].

<sup>20</sup> GMC minutes 26 October 1904 and 26-27 April 1911. On the use of lantern slides by missionaries, see Simpson, Donald. "Missions and the Magic Lantern." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (January 1997): 13-15. An example of a missionary slide show, created for the Christian Brethren missionary society can be viewed at <https://rylandscollections.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/brethren-lantern-slides.pdf> [downloaded 18 April 2017].

<sup>21</sup> Hull District Missionary Committee minutes 7 December 1917, Hull History centre C DCT/2.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Baldwin to his mother, 3 June 1889. SOAS PMMS archive.

<sup>23</sup> Baldwin *Missionary outpost* p 11

<sup>24</sup> Baldwin Journal 29 May 1893. SOAS PMMS archive.

<sup>25</sup> The map is undated but has evidently been amended in crayon to reflect the consequences of the First World War by amending the names of the German territories. It can be viewed online at <http://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/100202551> [Downloaded 12 April 2017].

<sup>26</sup> Primitive Methodist General Missionary Committee (GMC) minutes, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, 25 June 1903; "Meetings of the Royal Geographical Society, Session 1898-1899." 13 (1899): 84-86.

<sup>27</sup> GMC minutes 24 January 1906

<sup>28</sup> GMC minutes 19 December 1907. 'Stanfords – A Brief history' <http://www.stanfords.co.uk/our-history> [downloaded 12 April 2017]

<sup>29</sup> 'To keep the other in a time that is not one's own is to make a temporal distance that keeps the observer-participant safe from cultural contamination and safe from the rigors of historical understanding.' Freedgood, E. (*Victorian Writing about Risk: Imagining a Safe England in a Dangerous World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p 135

<sup>30</sup> Smith, Edwin W. and Andrew M. Dale. *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia (2 vols)*. London: Macmillan, 1920, pp 218-223

<sup>31</sup> Baldwin Journal 6 April 1892

<sup>32</sup> Gibbon, pp 163-4

<sup>33</sup> *The Music Makers* Popular report of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society London: Holborn Hall 1931. On Smith's missiology, see Young, W. John. "A Hostile Tribe Made Him Their Chief: Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957) and Anthropology." *Social Sciences and Missions* 26 (2013): 226-252

<sup>34</sup> Smith and Dale, *Ila-speaking Peoples*, p 269. Smith's photograph album is in the SOAS archive.

<sup>35</sup> Baldwin Journal 26 February 1894