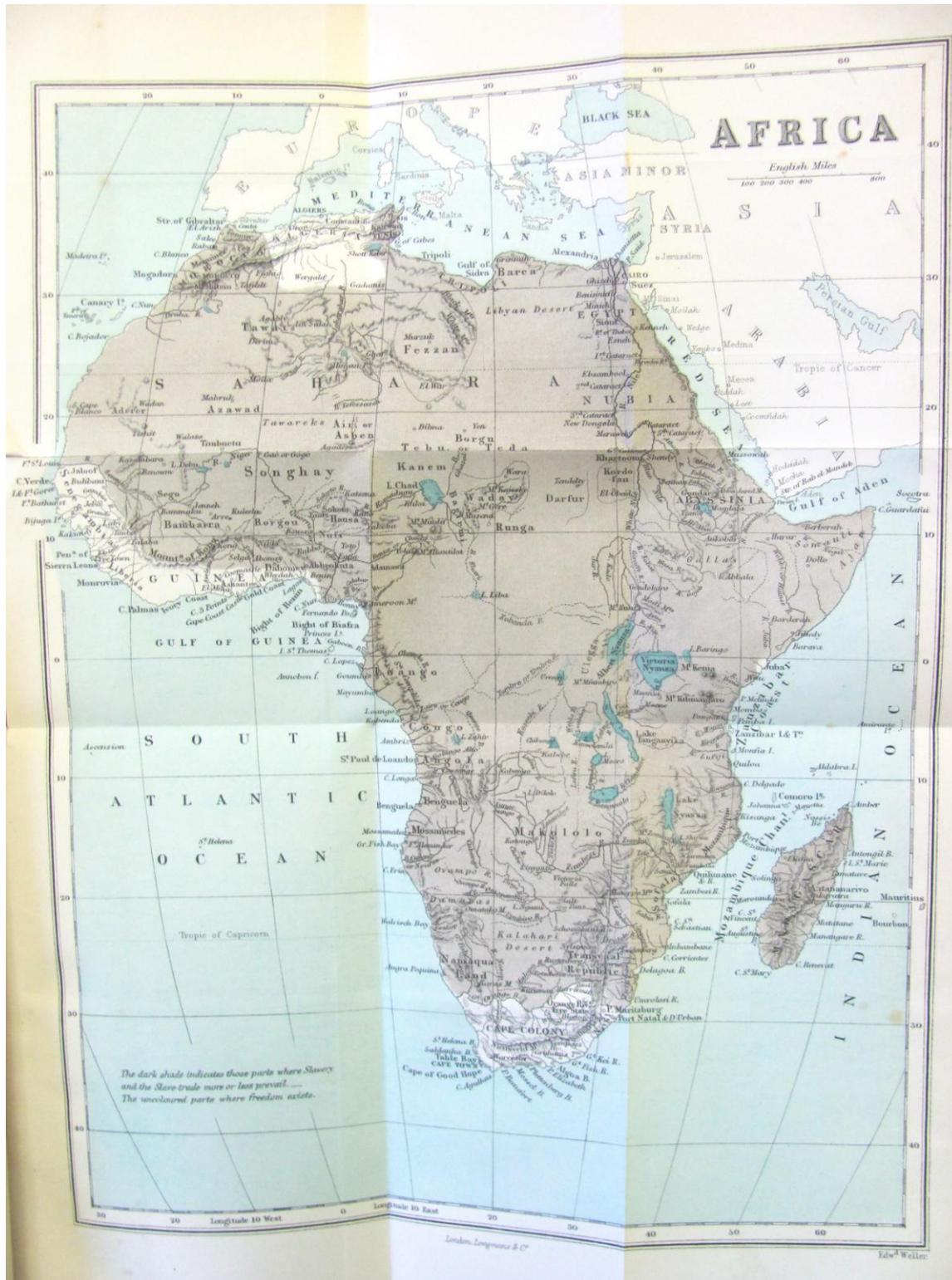


# The Lost Continent, or, Slavery and the Slave-trade in Africa

Joseph Cooper (1875)



This map of Africa was published as the frontispiece to the abolitionist Joseph Cooper's 1875 book, *The Lost Continent*. The shaded area represents the proportion of Africa where slavery and slave trading were said to prevail, and the white areas (Algeria, South Africa and the coast of West Africa from Senegal to the Bight of Benin) the colonies or "uncoloured parts where freedom exists".<sup>1</sup> The clichés of light and dark with regard to Africa to suggest colonial 'civilisation' versus obscurity are here used in a graphic representation of African slavery. The connection between Europe's colonial ambitions in the so-called "Lost Continent" and anti-slavery campaign strategies in Africa emerges through this geographical format. Two similar maps appeared as part of Cardinal Lavigerie's 1888 *Letter [...] on African Slavery*. One, like Cooper's map above, shows the entirety of Africa while the second focuses in on the centre of the continent. The key to Lavigerie's maps, like Cooper's work, is based on an opposition between light abolitionist and dark slave-trading areas. Lavigerie gives a more nuanced view, distinguishing three different shaded areas of darkness: "Areas currently threatened and devastated by the slave traders", "Countries where the cruel state of slavery exists", and "Areas which have been ruined and completely de-populated by the slave traders".<sup>2</sup> Slave trading routes are also marked out on Lavigerie's maps. By identifying and targeting with increased precision areas of central Africa, Lavigerie intended for his maps to be used by "a body of generous Christians [...] to go and fight wherever is necessary in our Africa".<sup>3</sup> The map above is much less precise, and was rather intended to give an impression of slave trading and slavery on an almost impossibly vast scale in Africa.

Joseph Cooper's book, *The Lost Continent* gives an overview of slavery and slave trading in Africa and in the rest of the world in the second half of the nineteenth century, from the point of view of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society of which he was a key member. General public interest in Europe, as well as the work of the Society had been influenced by the travels of David Livingstone and Sir Bartle Frere in East Africa, and their revelations on the subject of the continuing slave trade there. The foreword to *The Lost Continent* expresses the hope that renewed public interest in exploration could be directed towards this subject: "If so, under the Divine blessing, Slavery and the Slave-trade in Africa may be speedily abolished".<sup>4</sup> Cooper attempts to give a short overview of the global systems of slavery and forced labour which had been recorded by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, including chapters on slavery in North Africa, Turkey, the Middle East, Madagascar, the Portuguese colonies in Africa, Brazil, and Cuba. He also looks at indentured labour systems in the European colonies of Australia, Asia and the Americas. The main focus of the book, however, is on the slave trades out of Africa which, Cooper points out, the powers of Europe had promised in 1815 to abolish. Sixty years later he proclaims that: "the time is come for the abolition of this, the greatest evil that ever afflicted mankind".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Cooper, *The Lost Continent; or, Slavery and the Slave-trade in Africa, 1875. With observations on the Asiatic Slave-trade, carried on under the name of the labour traffic, and some other subjects* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1875).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lavigerie, *Lettre de S. Em. le Cardinal Lavigerie sur l'esclavage africain à Messieurs les Directeurs de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (Lyon: Mougin-Rusand, 1888), 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Cooper, *The Lost Continent*, vii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.