

MISSIONS TO THE  
NIGER VOLUME II.  
THE BORNU MISSION  
1922-25, PART I

E. W. Bovill



THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

ASHGATE EBOOK

# Missions to the Niger

Volume II. The Bornu Mission 1822–25, Part I

Edited by  
E.W. BOVILL

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Plate I. Major Dixon Denham

From the painting by Thomas Phillips, dated 1826, in the National Portrait Gallery

# MISSIONS TO THE NIGER

VOLUME II

THE BORNU MISSION  
1822-25

PART I

Edited by  
E. W. BOVILL

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

The need for a new edition of the *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa* of Denham, Clapperton and Oudney first became apparent early in this century when Britain, France and Germany assumed control of the countries these travellers explored.

It was a vast area in which internecine war had long been rife, where few were at peace with their neighbours, and where security was almost unknown.

In the Sahara the predatory nomads, driven desperate by the diversion of the ancient caravan traffic to the seaboard, north and south, were pillaging the sedentary tillers of the oases on a scale which even that ever turbulent desert had not known before. Through neglect by man, oases were disappearing and wells drying up, and trade routes were being abandoned.

Down in the Western Sudan, villages, and sometimes even towns, were disappearing for political and economic reasons, but more often than not through the enslavement or massacre of entire populations. There also the old roads, too perilous to travel, were being abandoned.

To these geographical changes was added the fast disappearance of a generation of men to whom the names of the great chiefs who sped or hindered the Bornu Mission were still familiar through the talk of their fathers. The reconstruction of the map of Africa as the explorers had known it was becoming increasingly difficult.

Since then the processes of change and decay have been slowed down, and in part sometimes removed. But none can replot the town or village, oasis or well, of which all trace and memory have been lost and for which there is no longer any need.

These were the circumstances in which, several years ago, the Council of the Hakluyt Society began to turn their thoughts towards publishing a new edition of the *Narrative*. Unfortunately no suitable editor, with the time to spare, was available to undertake the work. As time passed the need to put the work in hand became more urgent but the difficulty of finding an editor did not diminish.

Eventually, bowing to a pressing need and in spite of a sorry lack of the qualities for which we were looking, I undertook the work. In doing so I believed I was committing myself to little more than editing a published text. I soon found that in the interests of scholarship I had

almost to rewrite, in more sombre tones, the story of the Bornu Mission.

It proved a task I could not perform, however inadequately, without the help of scholars far exceeding me in learning, and often with specialized knowledge of subjects of which I knew nothing. My indebtedness to others is therefore spread over a very wide field.

I am very grateful to the following, and their staffs, for their help over the many points on which I have sought their guidance: The Directors of the British Museum, the British Museum (Natural History), the National Maritime Museum and the Royal Botanic Gardens; also to the Librarians of the Admiralty, the Colonial Office, the War Office, the Royal Society and the International African Institute where Miss Ruth Jones has been particularly helpful.

More than a formal expression of thanks is due to Mr G. R. Crone and his staff at the Royal Geographical Society who have never spared any effort to satisfy my many demands on them. I am no less grateful to Mr R. A. Skelton and his staff in the Map Room of the British Museum where their kindly welcome has often led me to waste much of their time but never my own.

Then there are my scholarly friends who collectively have gone far to protect the Society against the consequences of my own shortcomings. Notable among them is my valued friend Professor C. F. Beckingham of London University to whom I am indebted for help which often went far beyond my importunate demands. Others to whom it is a pleasure to record my thanks are Lady Brogan, the Rev. Dr A. J. Arkell, Dr L. Cabot Briggs, Mr Seton Dearden, the late Mr F. de F. Daniel, Mr Robin Hallett, Mr A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, Professor Théodore Monod, Dr T. A. M. Nash, C.M.G., O.B.E., and Sir John Patterson, K.B.E., C.M.G. Another friend, Lady Tyrwhitt, kindly made available to me some of the Tyrwhitt family records for which I am very grateful.

I must also record the unfailing courtesy and helpfulness I have invariably received in the Public Record Office and in the library of the Royal Geographical Society for which I am very grateful. Unpublished Crown-copyright material in the Public Record Office has been reproduced by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Manuscript material in the library of the Royal Geographical Society is published by the permission of the Society, in whose possession the copyright of the original remains. My thanks are also due to the Society for permission to reproduce the engraved portrait of John Barrow. I

am also indebted to the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery for permission to reproduce the portrait of Dixon Denham by Thomas Phillips; and to the Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland for permission to reproduce G. Manton's portrait of Hugh Clapperton.

Finally there are the Society's two Honorary Secretaries, Mr R. A. Skelton and Miss Eila M. J. Campbell, to whom my debt for advice and guidance is profound. Like other editors of the Society, I have found both their patience and their readiness to help inexhaustible.

E. W. BOVILL

## ABBREVIATIONS

- C.O. Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office  
F.O. Foreign Office Records, Public Record Office  
*H.L.* *Missions to the Niger: Vol. I. Friedrich Hornemann (1797-8) and Gordon Laing (1824-6)*. Hakluyt Society, 1964  
I.F.A.N. L'Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire  
O.D. Denham's original draft  
P.R.O. Public Record Office  
*Q.R.* *The Quarterly Review*  
R.G.S. Royal Geographical Society  
R.P. Rejected pages from Denham's original draft

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## GLOSSARY

*Note:* The literary forms of certain Arabic (Ar.) and Turkish (T.) words are given in brackets.

<i>barracan</i> (Ar. <i>barrakān</i> )	a loose mantle
<i>baʕeen</i> (Ar. <i>baʕīn</i> )	a coarse <i>cuscus</i> ( <i>q.v.</i> ), usually made of millet
<i>benise, benish</i> (Ar. <i>banīsh</i> )	a riding cloak with long split sleeves
<i>bornouse, burnus</i>	a hooded cloak, usually of wool
<i>caftan</i> (T. <i>kafīān</i> )	a long-sleeved outer garment, open in front
<i>cassoub</i>	dates pressed into a hard cake
<i>chaoush, chaoux, choush</i> (T. <i>çauş</i> )	a constable, guard or messenger
<i>chiroma</i>	a ruler's son, the heir to a throne
<i>coosie</i> (Kanuri: <i>kasi</i> )	a circular grass-roofed hut
<i>cuscus</i> (Ar. <i>kuskus</i> )	a stew of wheat or barley with vegetables and sometimes meat
<i>fatah</i> (Ar. <i>fātiḥa</i> )	the opening chapter of the Koran, much used as a prayer
<i>fighi</i> (Ar. <i>faqīh</i> )	a jurisconsult, a scribe
<i>fsug</i>	(see <i>suk</i> )
<i>gaffle</i>	(see <i>kafila</i> )
<i>gafooly, gufally</i>	parched barley or beans
<i>galadima</i>	a senior official, civil or military
<i>gedeed</i> (Ar. <i>qadīd</i> )	dried meat
<i>gomah, gummah</i>	the edible heart of a sapling palm tree
<i>grazzie, ghrassie</i> (Ar. <i>ghazw</i> )	an armed raid
<i>gubbuk, gubka</i>	narrow strips of cloth woven in Bornu and often used as a currency
<i>guerba</i> (Ar. <i>qirba</i> )	a water skin
<i>gussub, ghussub</i>	a porridge made from grain (usually millet), or millet itself
<i>hajamad</i>	charms, amulets
<i>haleb, halab</i> (Ar. <i>ḥalab</i> )	fresh milk
<i>hatera, hatura</i>	a camping place
<i>hemma, humma</i> (Ar. <i>hummā</i> )	ague
<i>kachella</i>	the chief slave of a sultan
<i>kadi</i> (Ar. <i>qādī</i> )	a judge
<i>kafila</i> (Ar. <i>qāfila</i> )	a caravan
<i>kafian</i>	(see <i>caftan</i> )

*kaid* (Ar. *qā'id*)

*kail*

*kashella*

*kerdi, kirdi* (Ar. *kurdi*)

*kouscasou*

*lackbi*

*liban, leben* (Ar. *laban*)

*mahery, maherhy*

*malam* (Ar. *mu'allim*)

*marabut* (Ar. *marbūṭ*)

*maten*

*mehri, mheri* (Ar. *mahrī*)

*rhaṣṣia*

*sidria* (Ar. *ṣadrīya*)

*skiffa* (Ar. *saqīfa*)

*suk* (Ar. *sūq*)

*teschera, tescar* (Ar. *tadhkira*,

T. *teḡkere*)

*tobe* (Ar. *thaub*)

*turkudi, turkadee*

*ḡumeeta, ḡumetta*

literally a leader, but usually the civil governor of a district

a general term for a measure of grain; the *kaila* of Stambul was about  $7\frac{3}{4}$  gallons

(see *kachella*)

a pagan, a kaffir\*

(see *cuscus*)

sour milk

whey, with curds removed

(see *mehri*)

a scholar, a religious teacher

a man of reputed sanctity, or the tomb in which he was buried

a watering place

a fast riding camel

(see *graṣṣie*)

a kind of waistcoat buttoning on one shoulder or down the back

an entrance hall, a portico

a market

a permit, an authority

a shirt (in Bornu used as a currency)

narrow strips of cloth woven in Hausa and widely used as a currency

parched corn

\* In Tripolitania Italian settlers are still commonly called *kirdi* by the people of the country.

# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

### *i. The Materials*

The '*Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823, and 1824*<sup>1</sup> by Major Denham, Captain Clapperton and the late Doctor Oudney' was first published by John Murray in 1826, in a single quarto volume. A second edition, with fewer plates, in two octavo volumes, was published later the same year. The present work is a reprint of the second edition, with extra plates taken from the first edition. It has been chosen in preference to the earlier one because it includes much additional material, and omits eight of the original twenty-four Appendixes, none of which is of sufficient interest to be reprinted today.<sup>2</sup> For the same reason Appendixes XII to XVI of the second edition have also been omitted.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Mission's travels extended into 1825.

<sup>2</sup> The following are the Appendixes omitted from the second edition:

XVII Bornou Vocabulary

XVIII Begharmie Vocabulary

XIX Mandara Vocabulary

XX Timbuctoo Vocabulary

XXI Zoology

XXII Botany

XXIII Letter to Major Denham on the Rock Specimens

XXIV Thermometrical Journals

The second edition included only fourteen of the forty-one plates in the first, but it had the same three maps.

A French translation of the first edition, entitled *Voyages et découvertes dans le Nord et les parties centrales de l'Afrique*, trad. Eyriès et de la Renaudière, was published in Paris, in three volumes, in 1826.

In America, in 1826, Cummings, Hilliard & Co. of Boston, published a reprint of the first edition but without the plates. In 1828 Murray published a third edition, 2 vols. 8°, which was a reprint of the second edition except that the two introductory chapters, previously unnumbered, were numbered I and II, thus increasing the total number of chapters from VII to IX. In 1831 Murray published a 4 volume 16° edition with portraits of Denham, by T. Phillips, and of Clapperton, by Gildon Manton, both engraved by Edward Finden.

By a curious and uncharacteristic mistake that very accurate explorer and writer Henry Barth, when referring to the *Narrative*, twice mentions Clapperton when he meant Denham, thus giving the impression that Clapperton had published a separate account of the Mission's work. This was not so. (Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, 5 vols. (London, 1857-8), v, 422, 432.)

<sup>3</sup> The omissions are:

XII Translation of an Arabic MS.    XIII A Narrative of the first Battle of Kadawee

Owing to his having died in Africa, Oudney's contribution to the *Narrative* was limited to what Denham chose to extract from his journals.<sup>1</sup> Clapperton contributed only an account of his journey from Kuka to Sokoto and back. So most of the book was written by Denham. As he wrote well, and far more lucidly than the ailing Oudney, this would have been an advantage had not rancour led him to do less than justice to his companions.

In the background, however, and exercising an influence over the writing up of the records which we cannot assess, was the formidable figure of John Barrow. He was the Second Secretary of the Admiralty, a distinguished man of science, and the leading figure of the day in everything to do with African exploration. From start to finish, from the launching of the Bornu Mission to the publication of the *Narrative*, his influence was unceasingly, but unobtrusively, at work.

Barrow's only direct contribution to the work was his *Prefatory Notice* to Clapperton's account of his expedition to Sokoto, Clapperton having asked him to see his part of the book through the press. But in his *Prefatory Notice* Barrow mentions having 'caused to be printed at the end of the Introductory Chapter' Oudney's account of the expedition which he and Clapperton had made to Edri and Ghat. Evidently, therefore, Barrow's contribution to the work was not limited to his modest three page *Prefatory Notice*. But of this there is plenty of other evidence. It looks very much as though but for Barrow the account of Oudney and Clapperton's expedition, like the other they were to make alone to the Shari, would have been omitted altogether. Clearly the work owed much to Barrow. This indeed was almost inevitable because, quite apart from the important part which he played in everything to do with the Mission, he and John Murray, the publisher of the *Narrative*,

(These two Appendixes, XII and XIII, comprise brief extracts from the important *Infaku'l Maisuri* of Mohammed Bello, the whole of which is included in E. J. Arnett, *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, published by the government of Nigeria in 1929.)

XIV The Song of Mohammed-Alameen ben Mohammed El Kanemy

XV Translation of an extempore Arab Song

XVI Translation of the Song of the Fezzanneers, on Boo Khaloom's Death

<sup>1</sup> In his Preface Denham tells us that Oudney's account of 'An Excursion to the West ward of Mourzuk' had not 'been deemed fit for publication *in extenso*, from [its] imperfect state, and containing very little beyond what will be found in my own journals' (p. 131 below). This was untrue. Denham never saw any of the country west of Murzuk described by Oudney. But he very much wanted to deny him and Clapperton credit for an expedition in which he had no part, and for which he never forgave his companions. Later he was to try to take credit for discovering the Shari river by omitting from the *Narrative* any mention of its having been previously discovered by Oudney and Clapperton.

were already closely associated through their joint interest in *The Quarterly Review*.

In the literature of African discovery there are few more readable books than Denham and Clapperton's *Narrative*. This is partly because it tells an interesting, though not a particularly thrilling, story, and partly because it is not overloaded with detail. Nevertheless, in the interests of learning, it should unquestionably have told more than it did, and when it was first published it did not escape criticism on this score.

There is, however, a mass of unpublished material relating to the Bornu Mission. Being a government enterprise, the Mission was naturally the subject of a lot of official correspondence, involving the Colonial Office, Foreign Office, and the British consulate-general in Tripoli, most of which now lies in the Public Record Office in London. These unpublished documents include, besides dispatches from the explorers, scores of letters written by Hanmer Warrington, the consul-general in Tripoli who was charged with supervisory, rather than executive, duties over the Mission, and who was in the confidence of nearly everyone concerned. Unfortunately few of the outward dispatches of the responsible Minister, Lord Bathurst (the Colonial Secretary) to Warrington have survived.

The Royal Geographical Society has a small but important collection of documents relating to the Mission. Most of these were the property of either Dixon Denham or his brother Charles from whom they passed into the hands of the firm of John Murray who presented them to the Society in 1889.

This unpublished material, in the Public Record Office and the Royal Geographical Society's archives, totals over 500 documents of which a number are of considerable importance and few of no value at all. They contain information which should not have been omitted from the *Narrative* (some of which was excluded to serve petty private ends). In these documents there is also a great deal of information which could not have been published at the time but which, while not materially affecting the story as a record of geographical discovery, presents a totally new picture of the circumstances in which the several members of the Mission achieved what they did. It is an unpleasant picture which reflects shame on the principal author of the *Narrative*, and credit on none. But it so alters our conception of how the Mission was launched, and organised, and of how it worked that it cannot be ignored. Indeed, as it clouded every aspect of the Mission's

activities, from before the explorers arrived in Africa up to the return of the survivors to England, it cannot be lightly dismissed in a few words. Although it may seem to dominate unduly some of the following chapters the sordid tale is in fact here told only in outline. It could indeed be made with ease to fill a whole volume.

The most valuable of the Royal Geographical Society's documents are an account, recorded by Denham, of a joint attack on Bargarmi by the armies of the Bashaw of Tripoli and the Sheikh of Bornu, and reports or long memoranda by the same hand on Murzuk and Bornu, and on the commercial side of the Mission's work. There is also Denham's final report to the Colonial Office on the later work of the Mission, and the draft of an earlier and no less valuable dispatch of the same nature which has not survived. The more important of these, and other similar documents which together add very considerably to our knowledge of the Western Sudan at that time and of the work of the Mission, are printed in these volumes.

With these latter documents there are three manuscript books containing Denham's original draft for much of the *Narrative*. One, marked 'DENHAM, The Folio Book (Tripoli, Mourzuk & return)', and much mutilated, carries the story up to his return to Tripoli from Marseilles. Attached to it is a note, initialled 'R.R.H.' (R. R. Hunt), which points out that '*very little*' of this draft was included in the *Narrative*. As most of the original draft in this book was devoted to an account of the manners and customs of the people of Tripoli, which only a very few years before had been adequately described by Miss Tully,<sup>1</sup> and to the hardships of desert travel, of which earlier travellers had written most of what there was to say, the omissions were no great loss. There are far fewer excisions from the remaining two books of Denham's draft, but together the three books have considerable editorial value in elucidating obscure passages in the *Narrative*.

Although there is little to regret in the omissions from the original draft, it is little short of astonishing that Denham failed to use the mass of valuable material which he had recorded in the unpublished dispatches, memoranda and drafts already referred to.

In justice to Denham, however, we must bear in mind that at his elbow was the dominating John Barrow who played so great a part in preparing the *Narrative* for publication that he must take part of the

<sup>1</sup> Tully, Miss, *Letters Written During a Ten Years Residence at the Court of Tripoli* (London, 1816).



blame for its shortcomings. A note attached to Denham's draft reads: 'This Introduction or Preface was entirely cancelled by Mr. Barrow.' Another note tells us that at certain pages of the draft 'Mr. Barrow's wishes as to omissions & curtailings may be seen, & the reasons given.'<sup>1</sup>

While some omissions from the text were due to Denham's jealousy others may well have derived from Barrow's interest in the Mission's work being largely confined to the problem of the course of the Niger, a subject on which he was very sensitive. He had, as we know, and as he was soon to learn, backed the wrong horse. He was committed to the hilt to the Niger-Nile theory.<sup>2</sup> How deeply he felt being proved wrong is shown by there being not the slightest reference in his autobiography to the Niger controversy although it was one in which he played a leading part, and which constantly occupied his mind for a number of years.

A minor but not unimportant secondary source of information is *The Quarterly Review* which published five notices of the Mission between October 1821 and March 1826.<sup>3</sup> The first merely reported the appointment of the Mission, and the last was a review of the *Narrative*. The articles are valuable as a guide to informed contemporary opinion about the Mission, and made doubly so by their having been written, in the present writer's opinion, by John Barrow himself.

The articles were of course anonymous but, as we know from Barrow's autobiography, between 1809, when he became closely associated with the *Quarterly*, and 1846 when he was presumably writing his autobiography (it was published in 1847) his contributions totalled over 190, an average of over 5 articles a year to a journal which, despite its title, appeared only every six months.<sup>4</sup> It would have been truly astonishing had so assiduous and influential a contributor allowed another to write for the *Quarterly* on a subject on which he was the unchallenged leading authority.

<sup>1</sup> Few of Barrow's comments, scrawled in very soft pencil, are legible today. An exception is the following terse comment on Denham's foolish claim that they were the first British to reach Sockna: 'This is not so, look up Lyon who fills 30 or 40 pages with Sockna.'

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that Barrow connived at Denham's omission from the *Narrative* of Oudney's account of his discovery of the Shari because it led to conclusions which conflicted with his dearly cherished Niger-Nile theory.

<sup>3</sup> The references are xxvi (1821-2), 56-8 (October 1821); xxviii (1822-3), 93 (October 1822); xxix (1823), 509-24 (July 1823); xxxi (1824-5), 455-73 (March 1825); xxxiii (1825-6), 518-49 (March 1826). The months given in brackets are the months of issue but probably not of publication for, as we shall see, the *Quarterly* was apt to be months in arrears in reaching its printers.

<sup>4</sup> *An Auto-Biographical Memoir of Sir John Barrow, Bart.* (London, 1847), v and 502.

At the beginning of the 1823 article a reference to each member of the Mission is followed by these words: 'From the private correspondence of these gentlemen with their friends, we shall be able to glean some little account of their proceedings.' Later in the same article we are given an account of the discovery of the Shari river taken not from 'the private correspondence of these gentlemen', but from Oudney's official dispatch to the Colonial Office of the previous 15 May.<sup>1</sup> The only man, outside the Colonial Office, likely to have seen the dispatch was Barrow to whom we know some of the dispatches from the Mission were shown because of pencilled directions on them to this effect. The probability is that he saw all the dispatches from the Mission because some of the more important outward ones appear to have been inspired, and probably also drafted, by him. The important 1825 article appears also to have been written by someone with 'inside' knowledge of official correspondence. In all these circumstances it cannot be doubted that John Barrow was the author of the *Quarterly* articles to which, later in this volume, reference will be made.<sup>2</sup>

## ii. Oudney, Clapperton and Denham

The Ritchie-Lyon expedition, sent out from Tripoli in 1818 to penetrate to the heart of Africa and discover the lower Niger, had been a sad failure. Ritchie had died in Murzuk, and Lyon had had to turn back before he had got so much as half way across the Sahara. Failure though it had been, it had not discouraged the British government from sending out a second expedition by the same route and with the same main objective. This may have been largely because Lyon's enquiries had led him to conclude that the Niger joined the Nile 'to the southward of Dongola'.<sup>3</sup> This was in conflict with the theories of distinguished geographers, some of whom thought the Niger was the same river as the Congo, and some (like the eminent James Rennell) that it just disappeared in the heart of the continent, while one or two suspected that it flowed into the Bight of Benin. But Lyon's was a conclusion that accorded with the views of John Barrow who had

<sup>1</sup> This dispatch did not reach the Colonial Office till 10 November but the remarks based on it were published in the 'July' issue of the *Quarterly*. This is one of several examples showing how late the journal must have been in reaching its printers.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately John Barrow's writing lacked a distinctive style, but the clarity and conciseness of the *Quarterly* articles were characteristic of him.

<sup>3</sup> Captain G. F. Lyon, R.N., *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa* (London, 1821), 148.

succeeded Joseph Banks as the dominant figure in the field of African exploration. To him and his friends there was clearly a need to send out another expedition to prove that, as Lyon had concluded, the Niger and the Nile were one.

Directly the results of the Ritchie-Lyon mission were known in London, and before Lyon had had time to get home, the government decided to send out a second expedition. On 5 August 1820 Hanmer Warrington, the British Consul General in Tripoli, reported to Lord Bathurst that he had informed the Bashaw<sup>1</sup> that

'it was the Intention of Your Lordship to persevere in the Research.

'I told His Highness I was fully aware that He could pass the Travellers to Bornou, and might even Guarantee their return.<sup>2</sup> The Bashaw acknowledged He certainly could, but that it would be attended with considerable expense but if the English Government would give him five thousand Pounds, He would send an Army or Escort of One Thousand Men to conduct the Travellers to Bornow, & return with them and which could be accomplished between October & May next.<sup>3</sup>

'Your Lordship may be assured it is the best and most certain way of succeeding, if the sum is not thought too great, & I should not hesitate to go knowing as I do there is neither Danger nor difficulty attending it.

'Of course that Force would be employed as a Safe conduct, & not any Hostility would be resorted to in the Capture of Slaves.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yusuf Karamanli, see p. 137 n. 2 below. He was commonly called Bashaw in England but Pasha would have been more correct.

<sup>2</sup> As far back as 1817 Warrington had reported the Bashaw's readiness to give such a guarantee (Warrington to Bathurst, 9 November 1817. F.O. 76/11).

<sup>3</sup> Both the Bornu Mission and, later on, the Timbuktu Mission of Gordon Laing were to suffer from Warrington's unfortunate belief that the Bashaw's influence extended as far as he liked to boast it did. Unwilling to admit that his writ did not run south of Fezzan, the Bashaw could not refuse to guarantee the safe passage of the British travellers. But the only way to ensure their safety was to send them with a powerful escort. As they were to discover, they could travel just as safely without an escort, but the guarantee having been given the Bashaw, to their later embarrassment, was not prepared to let them leave his territory without it.

It is difficult to read all the relevant correspondence without concluding that the Bashaw was not a little influenced by the attractive prospect of sending to the Sudan, at the British Government's expense, an armed force which, once it had crossed the desert, could be more profitably employed in raiding for slaves than in protecting the lives of infidel explorers. This, too, was what the Colonial Office feared would happen.

<sup>4</sup> The Barbary States had only recently been persuaded by the Christian Powers to give up the enslavement of Europeans, and at this time the first steps were being taken to persuade them to abandon the slave trade altogether. As the economy of the Regency was largely dependent on the slave trade there at least the Powers had a formidable task before them.

'His Highness says that if England would advance Him Twenty five thousand Pounds, He would repay it in a few years, & which would enable Him to take Bornou & Sudan<sup>1</sup> & fix a Bey at each Place, & that the Produce of the Country would enable Him to relinquish the Slave Trade, particularly as there is much Gold Dust at Sudan. Muckne the *late Bey* of Fezzan<sup>2</sup> is returned here with 600 Slaves. He tells me with 6000 Men He could take & keep both Places [Bornu and Hausa].'<sup>3</sup>

It was six years since Warrington had taken up his appointment in Tripoli but, rather surprisingly, his masters in London had yet to learn that bombast was not the least of the weaknesses of the genial but not very intelligent consul. So when he suggested turning explorer they believed him, and John Barrow began to look round for a man of science to accompany him to Bornu. It did not take long to find a suitable candidate.

*John Barrow to H. Goulburn*<sup>4</sup>

Admiralty, 15 Nov '20

Dear Goulburn,

The writer of the enclosed bears the highest Character and would I think answer the purpose of accompanying Col. Warrington to Bornou provided it is still meant to send him. I can easily find out his qualifications in Natural History provided you can tell me what the encouragement is likely to be — That is to say what salary you will give him.

Yours very faithfully

John Barrow<sup>5</sup>

Henry Goulburn Esq.

<sup>1</sup> Sudan or Bled es Sudan (Bilād as Sūdān), the Land of the Blacks, meant the whole of that great strip of Africa lying between the deserts and the tropical forests of the south, extending from the Red Sea to the Atlantic. But in Tripoli and Fezzan Sudan meant only Hausa. It is used in that sense here.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed el Mukni had been appointed Bey el Noba, or Collector of the Fezzan Tribute, shortly after the Bashaw's usurpation of the throne. That was the post he held when, in 1799, Hornemann accompanied him to Fezzan (*H.L.*, 109). When, in 1819, Ritchie and Lyon reached Murzuk Mukni had become Bey of Fezzan, and we hear much of him from Lyon. He described him as 'a man of about fifty years of age, of a fine martial appearance, and of great personal strength; but withal of an insatiable ambition and excessive avarice'. (*Travels*, 3). By the time the Bornu Mission had arrived he had been succeeded as Bey by Mustafa el Ahmar (Mustafa the Red).

<sup>3</sup> F.O. 76/14.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Goulburn had succeeded Peel as Under-Secretary for War and the Colonies in 1812, a post which he was to give up at the end of 1821.

<sup>5</sup> F.O. 76/14.

The following was the letter which he enclosed:

*Dr. Walter Oudney to John Bynon*<sup>1</sup>

54 Bristo Street  
Edinburgh

November 11, 1820

Sir,

In answer to your letter of the 7th Inst., I beg leave to state my willingness to accept of the situation, & the pleasure I would feel in having such a favourable opportunity of exploring the Natural History of a country so imperfectly known.

Should I be fortunate enough to be appointed I would be glad to be informed of the particulars as soon as possible that I may profit by the valuable instructions of my scientific friends; & I hope the terms will be such that I may be able to provide in a very moderate manner for my Mother & Sisters who are almost entirely dependent upon me; for that circumstance has been the only source of uneasiness to me on the present occasion.

I am, Sir,

Your Most Obt. Humble Servt.

Walter Oudney M.D. Surgeon R.N.

John Bynon Esq.

Walter Oudney, the son of humble parents, was born in Edinburgh in 1790. There he managed to acquire sufficient knowledge to start life as a surgeon's mate in a man-of-war. In 1810 he became an assistant surgeon and was posted to the East Indies where he was promoted surgeon. In 1816, like many other serving officers, he was placed on half-pay. He joined his mother and sisters in Edinburgh where he studied at the University and, in 1817, he graduated as an M.D. He set up in private practice but devoted much of his leisure to the study of chemistry and natural history, and hoped to become a lecturer in botany. It was no doubt his keen interest in natural history that prompted him to respond so eagerly to the tentative offer that had been made to him.

James Robertson Scott, a naval surgeon and botanist, whom Barrow had asked for a report on Oudney, said he had studied mineralogy, was 'abstemious to a degree' and 'is a good active little walker; as to Horsemanship, I cannot say, but a few falls at the Edinburgh riding school may be of service to him.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Bynon was Chief Clerk in the Secretary's Department of the Victualling Board.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. Scott, 15 Nov. 1820; C.O. 2/14. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oudney, of whom no portrait survives, was 'of middle stature and slight build,

Scott's report was considered satisfactory, and as the terms were acceptable to Oudney he was accordingly engaged by the government to accompany Warrington to Bornu. There was, however, no question of his immediate departure because nearly a year would have to pass before he could set out from Tripoli for the interior at the beginning of the next cool season.

As it soon became apparent that there was no question of Warrington himself exploring Bornu, Oudney had to look for a companion. He quickly found a suitable candidate in a naval lieutenant who was living in the same street in Edinburgh and whom he had probably known some time before. This was Hugh Clapperton who leapt at the opportunity, and was approved by Barrow who, on 14 July, wrote to Goulburn:

'I have no doubt that Lieut. Clapperton would be happy to go for £150 a year in addition to his half pay, and I need not hint to you how desirable, in such a country, it would be, to have two strings to one's bow; besides a Naval Lieutenant generally possesses resources of a superior kind, more especially if the party should get afloat on the Niger.'<sup>1</sup>

The decision to send out Clapperton seems to have been taken very quickly for on 8 August Oudney wrote to Barrow telling him how pleased he was that Clapperton was to be his companion.<sup>1</sup>

Hugh Clapperton was the son of a Dumfriesshire physician and surgeon of some distinction. He had been born in Annan in 1788, so now was 33 years of age. At 13, after being educated by a tutor, he had entered the mercantile marine. After making several voyages to North America he had either entered or had been impressed into the Navy and sent to the Mediterranean. There, through the influence of an uncle, he was promoted from the lower deck to midshipman. After serving in the East Indies he was sent to Canada where he remained from 1814 to 1816. During those two years he saw much active service in the course of which he proved himself a man of great courage and hardihood. In 1817, having been promoted lieutenant, he was placed on half-pay and went to live in Scotland — first in Edinburgh, then at Lochmaben, in his native Dumfriesshire, and later in Edinburgh again. There he settled in Bristo Street, only a few doors from Oudney. A tall, strong and handsome man, with a fine service record and considerable with a pale, grave face, pleasing manners, and possessed of much enterprize and perseverance'.

<sup>1</sup> C.O. 2/14.

foreign experience, he must have seemed an admirable companion for the apparently hazardous enterprise to which Oudney was committed.<sup>1</sup>

Although it was agreed by all concerned that Clapperton should go out with Oudney this could not be officially sanctioned until Clapperton had made formal application. He accordingly wrote the following letter to the Colonial Office:

*Lieut. Hugh Clapperton to Henry Goulburn*

No. 47 Bristo Street, Edinburgh  
18th July, 1821

Sir,

I am very desirous of being appointed to accompany my friend Dr. Oudney on the intended mission to the interior of Africa — I am endowed with good health and vigorous constitution which has been sufficiently tried by active service in very different climes — Dr. Oudney has known me long and is of opinion that I would assist him greatly in his scientific research in that ill known country — My situation in the Navy has often brought me in contact with uncivilised tribes and in my intercourse I have always had the good fortune to insinuate myself into their good opinion — Should my service be accepted no exertion of mine will be wanting in the great cause of discovery — I would thank you to inform me as soon as possible of your determination.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir, your Most Obt. Servt.

The Right Honble  
H. Goulbourne Esq.  
Col. Secy.  
London.

Hugh Clapperton,  
Lieut. R.N.<sup>2</sup>

From this and the other letters quoted above it is clear that the purpose of Oudney's expedition was to be exploration, and nothing else. But soon after it was decided to send out Clapperton as well as Oudney a radical change was made in the character of the latter's mission. This appears to have been adopted as a convenient way out of an embarrassing situation created by the unexpected entry of a third aspirant into the field of African exploration. This was Lieut. Dixon Denham of the Military College, Sandhurst.

Denham, born in 1786, had been educated at the Merchant Taylors'

<sup>1</sup> Clapperton's *Journal of a Second Expedition* (London, 1829), contains a 'short sketch' of his life by his uncle Lieut. Colonel Samuel Clapperton.

<sup>2</sup> C.O. 2/13.

School and was afterwards articled to a solicitor. In 1811, however, he joined the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers in the Peninsula as a volunteer. There he served with sufficient distinction to win a commission in the following year. After serving in Portugal, Spain and France he was transferred to the 54th Foot in Belgium and was with them at the occupation of Paris.<sup>1</sup> In 1818 he was, like Oudney and Clapperton, placed on half-pay but soon secured an appointment at Sandhurst.<sup>2</sup> It was said that the death of Joseph Ritchie, with whom he does not seem to have had any connection, first turned his mind towards African exploration. In March he wrote the following letter:

No. 73 Pall Mall  
March 3rd 1821

Dear Sir,

You are not unacquainted with my anxious desire of attempting to penetrate into the Interior of Africa by way of Tripoli with a view to extending the information already obtained respecting that Country — I have had several conversations with Captain Lyon who is just returned from Mourzouk who recommends my seeing Lord Bathurst on the subject & this I am desirous of doing previous to my return to the College.

May I request you so far to oblige me as to make known to his Lordship my wishes?

I am, dear Sir,  
Yours very faithfully & obliged,

D. Denham  
Lt. 64 Rgt.<sup>3</sup>

There is no indication of whom this letter was addressed to, but it was probably either Henry Goulburn or John Barrow both of whom were closely associated with Lord Bathurst. The meeting Denham sought was quickly arranged.

<sup>1</sup> From 1812 to 1814 Denham was A.D.C. to Lieut. Col. (later Col.) Sir James Douglas, K.C.B., who was commanding the 8th Portuguese Regiment.

<sup>2</sup> From his surviving papers, now in the possession of the Royal Geographical Society, it is clear that Denham was of a studious nature and had a taste for literature. He was probably therefore well suited for the academic appointment which he now held. He was also a competent artist as may be seen from a number of his water colour sketches, illustrating his African travels, now in the possession of Mr A. A. Denham of Haywards Heath and Captain H. M. Denham, R.N., C.M.G.

<sup>3</sup> C.O. 2/13. Denham had been transferred to the 64th Foot in December 1819.



*Lieut. D. Denham to Lord Bathurst.*<sup>1</sup>

Military College,  
Sandhurst.

March 12 1821

My Lord,

Encouraged by Your Lordships reception on Wednesday, I have taken the liberty of stating very shortly, the route I should propose taking in the event of my being employed on the Mission into the Interior of Africa.

From the information I have been able to collect on the subject I am convinced that the probabilities of success are much in favor of a small party with the least possible parade — accompanied by one or at most two persons from this country every thing might be attempted, but as no native or person of respectability can possibly travel without one or more attendants and as white men will not serve, it will be requisite to have permission for the purchase of slaves, to be released from bondage on quitting the country; never to be sold and merely retained as servants.

I have the Honour to be,

My Lord

Your Lordship's most obedient  
very humble servant,

D. Denham<sup>2</sup>

The following was the statement that accompanied this letter:

March '21

I propose in the event of being encouraged to the undertaking, to proceed from Tripoli to Ghadames (Fezzan having been already explored)<sup>3</sup> and from thence to Ghraat, [Ghat], where I am promised a meeting with a chief of the Tuarick of Booghrasata<sup>4</sup> named Hateeta<sup>5</sup> — This man I have no doubt for a particular present would accompany one thro' all the tribes of Tuarick to Kashna [Katsina] from whence, after a few months residence I can send home my papers by a Trader, promising him a certain sum on his delivering them to the Consul at Tripoli.

From Kashna I should proceed to Bornou and fresh information can be also sent from thence by the same means as from Kashna — then proceeding through Baghermi [Bagarmi], Waday [Wadai], (Borgoo of

<sup>1</sup> By inference only.

<sup>2</sup> C.O. 2/13.

<sup>3</sup> By Hornemann, Ritchie and Lyon.

<sup>4</sup> Lyon's Benghrasata, and probably the Imaghassetan Tuareg, a noble Ajjer tribe who at the time occupied the neighbourhood of Ghat.

<sup>5</sup> Hatita ag Khuden belonged to the Ajjer tribe of Tuareg, but he was in no sense a chief. He was, however, a remarkable man with an unaccountable liking for infidel British explorers. For no less than 30 years, from the Ritchie-Lyon expedition of 1818 to Richardson and Barth's of 1849, his name constantly recurs in the annals of African exploration. (See *H.L.*, pp. 164-8.)

Browne)<sup>1</sup> and the countries as far as the Nile, I should take care to follow as nearly as in my power, that river which from circumstances I may judge to be the Niger or Nile of the Negroes —

I do not stipulate for any pecuniary reward, but promotion in my profession of a soldier, I should hope for, a fixed allowance will be necessary and a discretionary power should be given to draw on an emergency for such sums as might be thought necessary.

I should wish to be Independent of the Governor of Malta and the consul at Tripoli, except as far as concerns my interviews with the Bashaw — and to correspond directly with the Colonial Office in London.

I should request Letters to the Bashaw soliciting his countenance and support with the Chiefs of the Interior, and presents worthy of his acceptance would be indispensable.

I should wish from what I have been able to learn to select all my Merchandize for the Interior at Tripoli, as I am certain there of procuring the articles most in request by the Negroes —

Good Instruments I should require from England. — <sup>2</sup>

Clearly humility was not one of Lieutenant Denham's more noticeable qualities. Arrogant, almost impertinent, though this communication was, he at least had had the good sense to abandon his earlier project of trying to reach Timbuku<sup>3</sup> in favour of the mission to Bornu which at this time was of much more interest to the British Government.

Denham almost certainly had an influential backer, for otherwise he would scarcely have dared to write as he did; nor would he have suffered no harm from having done so. As it was, he was at once appointed to the Bornu Mission in spite of there not having been any intention to send out more than the two Europeans, Oudney and Clapperton, who had already been appointed. But Denham was not wholly satisfied. He wanted a senior, if not a specially privileged, position. This too he secured, but at the expense of the other two.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Borgu, or Borku, is adjacent to Wadai but is not the same country. W. G. Browne knew about it through his visit to Darfur in 1793-96. See his *Travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria* (London, 1792-8).

<sup>2</sup> C.O. 2/13.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 135 below.

<sup>4</sup> It is possible that Denham enjoyed the backing of no less a man than the Duke of Wellington. A letter survives which was addressed by the Duke in his own hand to 'Lieut. Dixon Denham, Royal Military College, Sandhurst', and dated 17 September 1820, acknowledging the receipt of a letter about army discipline, and ending with an invitation to stay a night at Strathfieldsaye: 'If you will come over & dine & sleep here tomorrow I shall be very happy to see you' (R.G.S.). There is a second copy of this letter, also in the Duke's hand and signed by him, in the possession of Captain H. M. Denham, R.N., C.M.G. Denham tried, unsuccessfully, to name Chad Lake Waterloo. (See Part II, p. 432).

Oudney's appointment was altogether changed. He was still to go to Bornu, but when he got there, instead of exploring the country, he was to establish himself as a vice-consul.<sup>1</sup> His place as head of the mission was to be taken over by Denham regardless of the prior claim of Clapperton. Under the new arrangement, too, the unfortunate Clapperton was to part company with a friend on whose companionship he had counted from the start, and become the underling of an unwelcome interloper.<sup>2</sup> Oudney, similarly deprived of his chosen companion, was to accompany the other two as far as Bornu; but who, during the formidable crossing of the Sahara, was to be in command, Oudney or Denham, no one in London had troubled to decide. Much unhappiness was to flow from the inauspicious start which official incompetence had given to the undertaking.<sup>3</sup>

Denham's appointment dated from 12 June 1821<sup>4</sup> but the new arrangements were not to come to without a good deal of delay and, one suspects, not a little wrangling. It was not till late in August that Denham met Oudney and Clapperton; as the meeting was at the Admiralty it had evidently been arranged by Barrow. The intention of sending all three explorers out together was frustrated by Denham's not being ready in time, having 'so long delayed making my arrangements in consequence of nothing being decided'.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile the travellers had not been wasting their time. In June Oudney wrote to Barrow that he wanted a fortnight in London 'for the purpose of examining the different African herberia & other natural productions of that country: & also to have an opportunity of observing the way Astronomical observations are made at Greenwich . . . In the meantime I am busily engaged with the Arabic & expect in a few weeks to be able to understand the written language tolerably well'.<sup>6</sup>

As far back as April Denham had written to Lord Bathurst from Sandhurst that 'a most favourable opportunity offers itself of my acquiring some knowledge of Arabic by the residence here of a Mr. Leo . . . who is a proficient in that language.' Should Denham's services be

<sup>1</sup> This solution to what was perhaps an embarrassing position was probably suggested by Warrington who was constantly advising the appointment of more vice-consuls in the territory under his care, the limitless hinterland of Tripoli.

<sup>2</sup> Some months later Clapperton wrote, a little acidly, 'Allow me to recall to Major Denham . . . that at the request of Mr. Barrow I agreed to accompany Major Denham' (Clapperton to Denham, 28 December 1822; C.O. 2/13).

<sup>3</sup> As late as April 1822 an official letter from the Colonial Office had mentioned 'the gentlemen attached to your Mission' (Wilmot to Oudney, 26 April 1822; F.O. 8/8).

<sup>4</sup> See p. 23 below.

<sup>5</sup> Denham to Goulburn, 28 August 1821; C.O. 2/13.

<sup>6</sup> Oudney to Barrow, 18 June 1821; C.O. 2/14.