



Arctic Science in Circulation at the Royal Geographical Society c.1880–1914

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Abstract

Much historical scholarship has examined the events which took place as various explorers ventured into the Northernmost areas of the earth's surface. Such analysis has sought to understand the multiple and overlapping motivations that lay behind these Arctic expeditionary practices. Importantly, studies have also shown that explorers were key actors in the production of geographical knowledge pertaining to this geographical region and it has also been demonstrated that this knowledge was to have a powerful influence over how the North was envisaged within the Western popular imagination. While the role of individual explorers in these processes has been well documented, a growing body of scholarship has turned its attention toward understanding the wider cultures in which these explorers were situated. In particular, the precise role that was played by various geographical institutions in the formation of these important Arctic discourses has begun to be investigated.

This project, conducted as part of an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award between the University of Oxford and the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), has therefore contributed to and expanded these insightful literatures. Contributing to emerging debates that have considered the geographies bound up in the circulation of scientific knowledge, the thesis draws from the extensive archival collections held at the RGS-IBG to study the ways in which geographical knowledge about the Arctic regions was produced, circulated and mediated by this hugely influential institution. Studying the Society's close connections to three Arctic explorers – Fridtjof Nansen, Ejnar Mikkelsen and Robert Peary – it is shown that the RGS was instrumental in shaping both scientific and lay discourses about the Arctic at the turn of the twentieth century. The thesis also explores the limits to this knowledge circulation by examining the ways in which perspectives from indigenous peoples of the Arctic were marginalised within the historical records of these expeditions. Although 'indigenous intermediaries' assisted explorers in a number of ways during their time in the field, the thesis demonstrates that prevailing imaginaries of the Polar regions have meant that these contributions have continued to remain only 'partially visible' within the subsequent historical narrative.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:
'New' Geographies of Circulation?
Traversing Intellectual Change at
the Royal Geographical Society

*Twinkle, twinkle, Polar Star;
All men wonder what you are?
Fixed on Keltie's coat so high,
What you are, and whence, and why?*

*Stars upon the breast of night
Twinkle, he's our Polar Knight;
Half the year, dear star, you'll glow
Twice a month in Savile Row.*

– 'To a Knight of the Polar Star,' *Douglas Freshfield, 1924.*¹

John Scott Keltie, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society from 1892 to 1915, never set foot in the Arctic Circle. Yet in 1915 he was awarded the Order of the Polar Star from King Gustaf V of Sweden for his services to geographical science.² Indeed, this was not the only honour that was bestowed upon the well-connected Scot. In addition to being knighted by his own monarch King George V in 1918, Keltie was awarded the Order of St. Olaf from the Norwegian crown and the Order of the White Rose from the President of the Finland.³ After diligently seeking permission from Buckingham Palace to wear the medals associated with these honours, Keltie sported them proudly whenever he attended to his official RGS business.⁴ The spectacle of Keltie wearing these awards provided the inspiration for Douglas Freshfield's satirical poem above.

But what had the RGS Secretary done in order to be presented with these prestigious honours and why had he been dubbed the Society's 'Polar Knight'? Although these questions may appear somewhat esoteric, they in fact act as useful starting point for considering the wider themes that have been addressed by the doctoral research presented in this thesis. This is because any attempt to answer them requires a deep understanding of the ways in which the Royal Geographical Society circulated knowledge about the Arctic regions at the turn of the twentieth century and, importantly, also requires an understanding of John Scott Keltie's particular role in facilitating this circulation.

¹ Draft of 'Quips for Cranks' by Douglas Freshfield [RGS-IBG Collections, RGS/AP11].

² 'Obituary John Scott Keltie,' *The Times*, 13 January 1927.

³ The John Scott Keltie Collection [RGS-IBG Collections, SSC/138/1].

⁴ Letter from Buckingham Palace to John Scott Keltie, November 1910 [RGS-IBG Collections, SSC/138/1].

Unlike much of the scholarly literature that has investigated the production of geographical knowledge about the Arctic during this period, analysis of the numerous expeditions that ventured into this region has not been the primary focus of this research. Although such scholarship has obviously been important for understanding how information about the Arctic was collected, it is argued here that expeditions formed only a marginal part of the broader picture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arctic Geography. That is to say, the project has followed Michael Robinson's argument that we must 'look at Arctic exploration as an activity that unfolded not only in the Arctic but also at home.'⁵ As a result, the main body of this research has analysed the historical processes that led up to Arctic expeditions taking place and has been attentive to the intriguing events which took place upon the explorers' return. As will be shown, the communication of information about the Arctic was an essential aspect of these pre- and post-expedition activities and hence a substantial proportion of the thesis has drawn from recent discussions which have centred on the mobile and circuitous nature of geographical knowledge.⁶ Particular attention will be paid to the RGS's role as *facilitator* of these increasingly global flows of geographical information, but also to its arguably more important role as *mediator* of this knowledge. The project has also sought to understand precisely which actors had the ability to contribute to this circulatory knowledge system and, importantly, which actors were not able to contribute their perspectives.

Before these themes can be engaged with in any depth, however, it is important to consider two things. Firstly, we must gain a clear understanding as to precisely what is being referred to when the term 'Arctic exploration' is discussed. To do this, it is necessary to investigate how exploration of the Arctic regions was understood by John Scott Keltie and his British contemporaries during the period under study. As will be argued, the Arctic held a particular place within nineteenth century public discourse and therefore carried with it a number of powerful imaginaries and cultural associations.⁷ Secondly, and of equal importance, we must also gain a clear understanding of the diverse array of

⁵ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, 2.

⁶ Jöns, Meusburger, and Heffernan, *Mobilities of Knowledge*; Keighren, 'Geosophy, Imagination, and Terrae Incognitae: Exploring the Intellectual History of John Kirkland Wright'; Secord, 'Knowledge in Transit'.

⁷ Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*; Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*; David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*.

practices that fell under the rubric of ‘Geography’ at this time. Geographical enquiry was undergoing a period of considerable change in the closing decades of the nineteenth century which meant that its disciplinary boundaries were becoming increasingly uncertain, politicised and contested. This led to a number of heated debates amongst the Fellows of the RGS which was in turn to have profound consequences for the ways in which knowledge about the Arctic regions could be communicated. An investigation of these two interrelated factors will form the remainder of this introductory chapter.

End of the Ice? Tracing Britain’s Place in the Arctic

The first great step has been accomplished by the Royal Geographical Society. Arctic discovery has been revived, an Expedition has been despatched, has completed its work, and has returned with a valuable increase to geographical knowledge. It remains for the Society to consider the next step, and to take care that this one success shall not be a spasmodic effort, but the commencement of continuous work in the same direction, to be persevered in until it is complete.
- *Clements Markham, 1875.*⁸

When the [RGS] Council undertook to advocate Arctic exploration in 1865, it was fully understood that the great work could only be accomplished gradually, and that one expedition must follow another until all knowledge attainable by human means, in that field of inquiry, had been obtained. The Government not only abandoned all idea of continuity, but would not even publish the valuable results of their own expedition. If they had consistently continued the work for a few years longer all the Arctic geographical problems would have been solved long ago.
- *Clements Markham, 1905.*⁹

The history of British involvement in the exploration of the Arctic regions at the turn of the twentieth century is a complicated one. The optimism in 1875 and subsequent frustration in 1905 expressed above by Royal Geographical Society grandee Sir Clements Markham point to the significant shift in wider British attitudes toward Arctic exploration during this period. Throughout the long nineteenth century, exploration of the Arctic regions had been understood unquestionably as a noble and imperative national pursuit.¹⁰ A long legacy of British maritime involvement in the North Polar seas, traceable back to the seventeenth-century expeditions of Henry Hudson and William Baffin, had resulted in a swelling of

⁸ Markham, ‘The Arctic Expedition of 1875-76’, 552.

⁹ Letter from Sir Clements R. Markham to RGS President George T. Goldie, insert in Royal Geographical Society Council Minutes, 4th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Collections].

¹⁰ Kaalund, ‘From Science in the Arctic to Arctic Science: A Transnational Study of Arctic Travel Narratives, 1818-1883’.

nationalist-infused support for sustained British involvement in the Arctic. As the historian Huw Lewis-Jones has explained:

Arctic campaigns fitted the adventure ideal testing bravery and character, the enthusiasm for knightly virtues, heightened moral absolutism, and a fascination with individual action in the service of the state.¹¹

During the early years of the nineteenth century, every man who ventured into the icy seas of the North would return to a reception of unbridled adoration. The likes of James Cook, Horatio Nelson and James Clark Ross all were lionised by nineteenth century British society and were seemingly transformed from mere mortals into timeless national heroes.¹² Indeed, as David Livingstone has explained, the Royal Geographical Society was also not immune from this Arctic fever during its formative years:

The spectre of a Northwest Passage continued to haunt the Society, and so with determined doggedness the RGS perpetuated a search that had captivated seagoing minds ever since the days of John Cabot. Thus, just a year after its formation the RGS announced its interest in a 'land expedition across the territories of Hudson's Bay Company' in search of Captain John Ross, with the added aim of extending 'knowledge of the Arctic shores.'¹³

This Arctic mania was to reach its apogee in the middle of the century when Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition failed to return from an attempt to investigate the existence of the highly-prized Northwest Passage. Franklin's disappearance sparked a decades-long search for his ships *Erebus* and *Terror* and the 'Franklin mystery,' as it came to be known, fuelled further the cultural boom in all things Arctic.¹⁴ The captain's wife, Lady Jane Franklin, mobilised dozens of expeditions to investigate the fate of her husband and, as Adriana Craciun explains, the British public became enraptured by this Arctic saga.¹⁵

As the century wore on however, perceptions of Arctic exploration began to change. Gradually, what were once considered essential and heroic polar endeavours, began to lose favour with the British public. Expeditions in the North became viewed increasingly as jingoistic follies or as frivolous attempts to generate personal fame for the explorers involved.¹⁶ This sentiment was perhaps most keenly

¹¹ Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*, 9.

¹² Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North: The Quest for the North Pole*.

¹³ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*, 161.

¹⁴ Potter, *Finding Franklin: The Untold Story of a 165-Year Search*; Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860*.

¹⁵ Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster; Elce, As Affecting the Fate of My Absent Husband: Selected Letters of Lady Franklin Concerning the Search for the Lost Franklin Expedition, 1848-1860*; Middleton, 'Franklin [Née Griffin], Jane, Lady Franklin'.

¹⁶ Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North: The Quest for the North Pole*.

felt when the scurvy-ravaged British Arctic Expedition under the command of Sir George Nares returned to Portsmouth on 2nd November 1876.¹⁷ Although Nares and his crew had successfully surveyed several of the hitherto uncharted coastlines between Greenland and Ellesmere Island, as well as achieving a new ‘Farthest North,’ the expedition as a whole was generally not considered to be successful enough to merit the enormous amount of public finances that had been spent. A telegram reading ‘NORTH POLE IMPRACTICABLE’ was sent by Nares to the Admiralty upon his return and, as Fergus Fleming explains, was to ‘shatt[er] Britain’s presumption of Arctic competence, the supremacy of the Royal Navy, the Royal Geographical Society’s dreams of conquest and, paramountly, public confidence.’¹⁸ Indeed, this substantial change in attitudes was also reflected in the popular press of the day. In January 1881, an article appeared in *The Times* conveying the dramatic decline in enthusiasm for exploration in the Arctic regions:

There is growing conviction that individual ‘dashes for the Pole’ are a visionary waste of money and since the failure of the splendidly equipped attempt of Captain Nares it is doubtful if any single venture in the old style will ever again be paid for out of any national exchequer.¹⁹

The doubts expressed in the article were proven to be well founded – there were to be no subsequent Arctic voyages funded by the British state for the remainder of the century.²⁰

This loss of national interest in Arctic exploration may be evidenced further by a distinct lack of British representation at several of the international conferences devoted to Arctic and Polar exploration that were emerging throughout this period. As an example, British involvement in the First International Polar Year between 1882 and 1883 was notably minimal.²¹ As Phillip Cronenwett notes:

[It] was a half-hearted effort, to say the least, by the Royal Society and the Canadian Meteorological Office, with observers from the British military. Only the barest minimum of data, including meteorological and magnetic data, was gathered and then published in a single volume.²²

¹⁷ Markham, ‘The Arctic Expedition of 1875-76’; Caswell, ‘The RGS and the British Arctic Expedition, 1875-76’.

¹⁸ Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North: The Quest for the North Pole*, 185–86.

¹⁹ ‘Arctic Exploration’ *The Times*, 3rd January 1881, 4.

²⁰ Caswell, ‘The RGS and the British Arctic Expedition, 1875-76’.

²¹ Baker, ‘The First International Polar Year, 1882–83’.

²² Cronenwett, ‘Publishing Arctic Science in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the First International Polar Year’, 38.

Furthermore, this reluctance to engage with the increasingly globalised nature of Arctic exploration was evidenced further by the fact that the UK sent no delegate to either the 1906 nor 1908 International Congresses for the Study of the Polar Regions.²³ In spite of the desperate pleas from Clements Markham above, a combination of an unenthused public, a reluctance to supply the enormous financial resources required and exciting geographical expeditions being undertaken elsewhere in the world meant that for the British state and for much of the British public, the Arctic had very much become a minor occupation.



Figure 1: Map of the known Arctic Regions in 1876.²⁴

²³ Baker, 'The First International Polar Year, 1882–83'; 'The International Congress for the Study of the Polar Regions, Brussels, 1906' in *Scottish Geographical Journal*; Royal Geographical Society Council Minutes, 9th March 1908, [RGS-IBG Collections].

²⁴ Markham, 'The Arctic Expedition of 1875-76'.

This apparent reduction in British Arctic superiority was to mean that polar explorers began to emerge from other nations. An array of international explorers began to journey into the Arctic regions and set about conducting their own scientific analyses of the region. As Nanna Kaalund has explained:

Whereas the British had largely dominated exploration in the Arctic since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, other nations now took center stage. In particular, leading up to, and after the purchase of Alaska in 1867, the Americans were stamping their authority in the Arctic. The change of colonial power influenced all aspects of how Arctic expeditions were carried out, from the style of the expeditions, to the interactions with the Indigenous populations.²⁵

The Finn-Swede Adolf Nordenskiöld, Norwegians such as Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, Danes Knud Rasmussen, Ludvig Mylius-Erichsen and Ejnar Mikkelsen, and the American Robert Peary all emerged to fill the expeditionary void that had been left by the British. Importantly, as Kaalund further explains, these explorers also began to establish their own national exploratory traditions in the process.²⁶ It must also be noted here that these men were in most cases much more successful in their polar endeavours than their British counterparts.

It could be presumed, then, that such a decline in British state interest in Arctic exploration would also mean that the Royal Geographical Society began to lose interest in this region. After all, many of the Society's Fellows were serving military or colonial officers themselves.²⁷ As Hugh Robert Mill noted, it seemed this was certainly true of some sections of the Society's Fellowship:

Sir George Nares [...] was there with Sir Albert Markham, Sir Lewis Beaumont, and many other of their brother officers, but the old naval men troubled little about the renewal of [polar] exploration. Wooden ships such as they had commanded in their day no longer figured in the Navy List and, apart from the banked fires of Markham's secret hopes, only occasional timid suggestions by [naval officer] Sir Erasmus Ommanney at international meetings bore witness that naval interest in the polar regions was still alive.²⁸

Crucially, however, Mill added an important addendum to this statement: *'It was not so with the men of science.'*²⁹ Mill's distinction between the differing attitudes towards Polar exploration here is absolutely vital. As will now be discussed, the Royal Geographical Society was in the midst a period

²⁵ Kaalund, 'From Science in the Arctic to Arctic Science: A Transnational Study of Arctic Travel Narratives, 1818-1883', 248-49.

²⁶ Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice*; See also Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*.

²⁷ Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*.

²⁸ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 154.

²⁹ Mill, 154.

of profound philosophical change and the labels ‘old naval men’ and ‘men of science’ were indicative of the antagonistic factions that had begun to emerge within the Society’s diverse Fellowship. At a time when British naval interests in the Arctic regions appeared to be dwindling, the stage was set for a new generation of Arctic geographical experts to emerge. This new generation differed from their predecessors in a number of ways. Firstly, as Roger Launius, James Fleming and David DeVorkin have argued, they pursued a much more internationalist agenda in their study of the polar regions.³⁰ Secondly, and as will now be discussed, they deployed a more systematic approach to the study of the circumpolar region than had previously been the case. Both of these aspects were to have profound implications for how the Royal Geographical Society would come to produce and circulate Arctic geographical knowledge as the twentieth century got underway.

A Contested Enterprise

During the nineteenth century, entirely new ontological understandings had swept through Europe and North America and practically no scholarly discipline was left untouched by this fundamental reordering of knowledge. David Livingstone has studied carefully this period of intellectual turmoil and has examined the ways in which Darwinism – or, more accurately, a Neo-Lamarckian infused Darwinism – came to have increased prominence amongst the academic discussions taking place in the salons and coffee houses that hosted the European scientific community.³¹ In broad terms, previous theologically-founded conceptualisations of nature were giving way to more techno-scientific understandings and this in turn meant that the structure of academic study as a whole began to branch into ever more discrete specialisms. With their narrowed ontological foci, bespoke methodologies and the subsequent emergence of distinct scholarly literatures, it was the natural sciences in particular which flourished in this new philosophical era.³²

³⁰ Launius, Rodger, and DeVorkin, *Globalizing Polar Science: Reconsidering the International Polar and Geophysical Years*.

³¹ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*.

³² Daunt, *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*.

This academic ‘Balkanisation,’ as David Livingstone terms it, was to have significant repercussions for those subjects akin to geography, such as anthropology and archaeology, which had traditionally spanned across these emerging intellectual boundaries.³³ Disciplines such as these had constantly drawn from and contributed to many academic fields and had maintained intentionally fluid methodological approaches. Geography had in fact taken pride in this multifarious approach. In a paper before the Fellows of the RGS in 1879, geographer and geologist Archibald Geikie argued:

Geography comes frankly for assistance to many different branches of science. It [...] freely borrows from meteorology, physics, chemistry, geology, zoology, and botany; but the debt is not all on one side. Save for the impetus derived from geographical research, many of these sciences would not be in their present advanced condition. They gain in vast augmentation of facts, and may cheerfully lend their aid in correlating these for geographical requirements.³⁴

The academic specialisation described above was therefore to pose an existential threat to the loosely-delineated geographical discipline. This in turn meant that consternation began to grow amongst some geographers that their subject may be pushed out of serious academic scholarship if it was left to continue on its current ambiguous course. As Livingstone further explains:

In this intellectual environment, integrative subjects like geography seemed to lack the specialized scientific rigour that was required to provide a coherent disciplinary identity. It was clear, then, that if the newly professionalised geographers wanted to retain the subject’s traditional concerns, some fresh conceptual foundations had to be found that would render their project intellectually plausible.³⁵

Lacking a concise intellectual agenda, geography was considered little more than a pursuit for the collection of disconnected facts and figures. In his analysis of the ways in which practices of geography were understood in the early-modern period, Robert Mayhew explains that this was in fact how the discipline had been viewed for much of the previous century:

Some formally recognised that geography had two traditions, a mathematical or general tradition and a descriptive or special tradition. General geography was centred on acquiring knowledge about the situation of places in terms of their longitude and latitude, a task normally viewed as mathematical, following Ptolemy. Within a given situation, special geography then acquired further useful information about the natural and human worlds in the manner exemplified by Strabo.³⁶

³³ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*.

³⁴ Geikie, ‘Geographical Evolution’, 423; For more on Geikie see Oldroyd, ‘Geikie, Sir Archibald (1835–1924)’; Oldroyd, ‘Sir Archibald Geikie (1835–1924), Geologist, Romantic Aesthete, and Historian of Geology’.

³⁵ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*, 117.

³⁶ Mayhew, ‘Halford Mackinder’s “New” Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition’, 775.

Irrespective of which of these two branches of geography was being discussed however, Mayhew explains that the discipline was ‘characterised in its method as descriptive.’³⁷ In contrast to the more theoretical approaches that were emerging in other scientific disciplines, geography was seen to be deficient in its ability to establish useful laws or theories which might further human understanding.³⁸

There was, however, another dimension to the discipline’s perceived lack of scientific standing which it is also important to recognise here. Examining how the Royal Geographical Society was perceived by its contemporaries, David Stoddart explains that other factors lay behind the notion that geography in the nineteenth century was far from what might be considered a rigorous intellectual pursuit.³⁹ Noting the high proportion of ‘men of high social standing’ and low numbers of technically trained practitioners, Stoddart points to the notable differences between the RGS and the other learned societies that had emerged during the era for example the Royal Astronomical Society or the RGS’s sister institution, the Royal Geological Society.⁴⁰ He explains that the RGS was perceived as maintaining ‘a somewhat amateur, if not dilettante, approach to a subject not yet established in professional terms’ and suggests it was disinclined to engage in ‘more scientific or educational pursuits.’⁴¹ John Unstead has added to this suggestion by pointing out the lack of geographical training offered by UK universities or technical colleges during this period, again in contrast to the other emerging scientific disciplines and specialities being developed.⁴² Although a number of prominent nineteenth-century ‘men of science’ do feature in the Society’s Fellowship records – notably Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, Francis Galton and Joseph Hooker – the RGS was undoubtedly tarnished with the reputation of being little more than an elite social club where members with an ‘amiable weakness for honours and decorations’ could enjoy exchanging stories of overseas travel.⁴³

³⁷ Mayhew, 775.

³⁸ See Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographic Science from Cassini to Humboldt*.

³⁹ Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*; Stoddart, ‘The RGS and the “New Geography”’; Jones, ‘Measuring the World: Exploration, Empire and the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society, c. 1874–93’.

⁴⁰ Stoddart, ‘The RGS and the “New Geography”’, 191.

⁴¹ Stoddart, 191.

⁴² Unstead, ‘H. J. Mackinder and the New Geography’.

⁴³ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 64.

As is clear from RGS Fellow Richard Strachey's 'Annual Address on the Progress of Geography' in 1888, these criticisms seemed to be expressed openly by some of the Society's Fellows:

Accounts of personal adventure will always add to the interest that attaches to the exploration of unknown countries, but from the point of view of geography, the mountains, the deserts, and the seas are the main objects of consideration, rather than the fatigues and perils encountered in crossing them.⁴⁴

Even in those instances where more scholarly material was generated by the more scientific practitioners at the Society, the discipline lacked a broader theoretical or philosophical framework through which it could become meaningful.

As a whole, then, geography maintained the appearance of a sprawling collection of unconnected facts and figures about the earth and its peoples – in Halford Mackinder's words; 'a body of isolated data to be committed to memory' – which had been collected by a group of enthusiastic amateurs.⁴⁵ These various anxieties were to mean that some sections of the RGS Fellowship became increasingly concerned that both the RGS, and hence the discipline of geography itself, would be condemned as a curious relic as the nineteenth century drew to a close. A substantial review of geographical education undertaken by John Scott Keltie in 1885 was the clearest articulation of the inadequacy of British geographical study.⁴⁶ The report offered the damning conclusion that; 'geography in this country is almost entirely neglected as a subject of education.'⁴⁷

Gradually, these existential scholarly anxieties began to turn into action. Rather than lament geography's apparently inevitable demise, certain quarters of the Society's Fellowship were instead excited by the opportunities that were on offer now that the 'Columbian age' of geographical endeavour was reaching its end. These Fellows saw that a new approach to the discipline was needed in order to salvage geographical enquiry and began to seize this opportunity. After the publication of Keltie's review in 1885, a small but influential group of Fellows set plans in motion that would lead to the

⁴⁴ Strachey, 'The Annual Address on the Progress of Geography: 1887-8', 409.

⁴⁵ Mackinder, 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography', 143.

⁴⁶ Wise, 'The Scott Keltie Report 1885 and the Teaching of Geography in Great Britain'.

⁴⁷ Keltie, *Geographical Education: Report to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society in Reference to the Improvement of Geographical Education*.

establishment of geographical teaching at the university level. Importantly, these manoeuvres would also carve out a strong disciplinary identity for geography that had so far been lacking.

Scope and Methods

Halford Mackinder's 1887 lecture at the RGS entitled 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography' was premised as providing the antidote to this disciplinary malaise.⁴⁸ Understood more accurately as the culmination of a growing movement among several geographical practitioners, the ideas outlined in Mackinder's paper offered a clear vision of where geography should focus its efforts and what the discipline's purpose should be moving forward. Mackinder's lecture has unsurprisingly received a lot of scholarly attention and can indeed be interpreted through different critical lenses.⁴⁹ What will be taken from it here, however, was the suggestion that exploration for its own sake or for the simple collection of 'geographical facts' had reached its end and that a new era of geography was beginning. In its place, Mackinder articulated the details of what was termed the 'New Geography.' This was to be a more interconnected geography; a geography whereby the physical and human branches of the subject were 'inextricably interwoven' and where an overarching theoretical framework would structure the discipline and give it unity.⁵⁰ Inspired by the evolutionary thinking that was spreading across the European continent, the new approach sought 'a shift from description to explanation, such that thematic and regional texts replace[d] descriptive and global summaries, and that the geographer's task [was] no longer essentially one of collation, but instead of fieldwork, critical reflection and analysis of data.'⁵¹ In summary, there was to be a move away from the mere collection of disconnected data and shift towards the scholarly synthesis of information collected from rigorous scientific fieldwork.

⁴⁸ Mackinder, 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography'; For a detailed analysis on the lecture itself see Hayes, 'Geographical Light: The Magic Lantern, the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society and the Professionalization of Geography c.1885-1894'.

⁴⁹ For alternative takes on Mackinder and his geographical thinking see Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*; Heffernan, 'Fin de Siècle, Fin Du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890-1920'; Mayhew, 'Halford Mackinder's "New" Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition'; Hudson, 'The New Geography and the New Imperialism'; Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography*; Coones, *Mackinder's 'Scope and Methods of Geography' after a Hundred Years*; Unstead, 'H. J. Mackinder and the New Geography'.

⁵⁰ Mackinder, 'On the Scope and Methods of Geography', 145.

⁵¹ Mayhew, 'Halford Mackinder's "New" Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition', 778; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*.

As is often the case when an institution undergoes a period of transition, however, a considerable degree of tension erupted at the RGS as these scientific and educational reforms began to gain traction. Reflecting back on his intervention at the Society some years later, Mackinder recognised that his paper had in fact embroiled him in a ‘battle royal that was being waged within the Council of the Society, between a hitherto dominant part of the explorers, navigators, and map makers on the one hand, and on the other hand a small group of scientific men led by Douglas Freshfield and Francis Galton who saw in geography something more than a mere inventory of facts arranged upon a map.’⁵² The hostile attitudes that had sparked this ‘battle royal’ are somewhat complex and therefore merit close examination here.

A House Divided

To begin with, there many at the Society who saw no need for the fundamental change that the ‘New’ geographers intended to bring about and believed simply that the institution should continue to adhere to the fundamental tenets upon which it was founded. When reading Mackinder’s paper, it is clear that much of his argument rested on the declaration that there were fewer and fewer areas of the world that remained unexplored. As Mayhew explains:

Mackinder’s sense of the need for a ‘new’ geography sprang from the basic observation: with the era of discovery over, the world was now a ‘closed system’ to be imagined as a whole wherein all parts were known and owned.⁵³

Although acknowledging that ‘the Polar regions are the only large blanks remaining on our maps’ – a point which is of particular relevance to this thesis – in his lecture, Mackinder also put forward the notion that:

For half a century several societies, and most of all our own, have been active in promoting the exploration of the world. The natural result is that we are now near the end of the roll of great discoveries.⁵⁴

It is clear many Fellows at the Society were at odds with this viewpoint, however. Comprised largely of naval or imperial officers, this sizeable group felt that there was still considerable need for the

⁵² Mackinder cited in Coones, *Mackinder’s ‘Scope and Methods of Geography’ after a Hundred Years*, 10.

⁵³ Mayhew, ‘Halford Mackinder’s “New” Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition’, 776.

⁵⁴ Mackinder, ‘On the Scope and Methods of Geography’, 141.

promotion of overseas expeditions in order to explore and survey the remaining unknown regions of the earth.⁵⁵ In their eyes, because there was still much more work to be done, there was no need to deviate from the Society's exploratory conventions that had transformed the likes of David Livingstone, Henry Morton Stanley and John Franklin into national heroes earlier in the century.⁵⁶ Unconvinced that the world had been explored in its entirety, these Fellows saw no need to change the essence of what it meant to do geography.

Scholars have also pointed to other factors behind these hostile reactions to Mackinder's intellectual project. Gerry Kearns, for example, has added an important gendered dimension to these analyses when he suggests that one of the reasons the emergent scientific ideas were met with such friction at the Society was that they 'risked the manly reputation of the discipline.'⁵⁷ As many authors have shown, the history of the geography has, to a large extent, been associated with discourses of masculinism and adventure.⁵⁸ Many of the RGS Fellows were of the view that Geography 'relied upon knowledge wrestled from unknown parts through dangerous physical exertion.'⁵⁹ When considered from this perspective, then, it is clear that a considerable proportion of the disapproval expressed toward the introduction of the New Geography at the RGS can be attributed to the fact that this new approach appeared to lack the air of daring and adventurism that had come to define the discipline throughout the previous century. Indeed, seemingly conscious of his own lack of expeditionary experience, Mackinder himself noted; 'At that time, most people would have no use for a geographer who was not an adventurer or explorer.'⁶⁰ Consequently, he organised an expedition to climb Mount Kenya in an attempt to improve his appearance as a credible geographer.⁶¹ As Kearns concludes:

The New Geography represented a claim to objectivity and science, but [it] was also dangerously sedentary compared to the manliness of the earlier explorer tradition.⁶²

⁵⁵ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

⁵⁶ Baigent, "'Deeds Not Words'?: Life Writing and Early Twentieth-Century British Polar Exploration'.

⁵⁷ Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, 97.

⁵⁸ Evans, 'Between Terra Incognita and Home: A Collaborative Expedition through the RGS Archives'; Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970*; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*; Domosh, 'Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography'.

⁵⁹ Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, 97.

⁶⁰ Gilbert, *Sir Halford Mackinder, 1861-1947*, 14.

⁶¹ Mackinder, 'A Journey to the Summit of Mount Kenya, British East Africa'.

⁶² Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, 96.

To certain Fellows at the Society, then, the New Geography posed a threat to the gentlemanly culture that had infused the Society since its formation and therefore ought to be disregarded as the future of geographical inquiry. Yet for others, the New Geography was essential to ensuring that the discipline remained relevant and useful in an increasingly specialised scholarly arena. Elizabeth Baigent provides an effective summary of the competing sides of this fractious dispute when she argues:

Whilst explorers discovered the particular, new geographers sought general explanations. Whilst explorers provided rational entertainment, new geographers were useful. Whilst explorers ranged the globe in the service of empire, new geographers built empires at home, projecting geography in the disciplinary jostle for attention in the school and university curriculum and in professional scientific circles.⁶³

A profound shift had occurred in what could and should be regarded as geographical thinking and the ‘New’ geographers hoped that their discipline would now be able to find a lasting position amongst the other scholarly subjects which were undergoing similar processes of professionalisation during this period. Although there are many dangers associated with declaring sweeping epochal shifts within disciplinary histories, scholars generally agree that this significant transition altered fundamentally the essence of what the geographical discipline ought to be, even in spite of the response from the more traditional Fellows at the RGS.⁶⁴ This transition is well known to geography’s historians and indeed is often a staple of undergraduate teaching of the subject.⁶⁵ Yet, it can be argued that only recently have the *material* consequences of this philosophical transition towards a more scholarly and scientific geographical discipline begun to be appreciated more fully.

New Geography, New Circulation?

The drive towards advancing the more scientific and educational aspects of geography necessarily required improvements to be made in how geographical knowledge could be communicated. Historian Max Jones hints to this important aspect of the philosophical reorientation when he explains:

⁶³ Baigent, “‘Deeds Not Words’?: Life Writing and Early Twentieth-Century British Polar Exploration’, 27.

⁶⁴ Mayhew, ‘Halford Mackinder’s “New” Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition’; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*; Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*; Stoddart, ‘The RGS and the “New Geography”’; Unstead, ‘H. J. Mackinder and the New Geography’; The phrase ‘what geography ought to be’ is derived from Kropotkin, ‘What Geography Ought to Be’.

⁶⁵ Keighren et al., ‘Teaching the History of Geography: Current Challenges and Future Directions’; cf. Barnett, ‘Awakening the Dead: Who Needs the History of Geography?’

The RGS reinforced its new emphasis on the accurate measurement of the world by reforming the ways in which it distributed geographical information, overhauling its publications, library [and] map room.⁶⁶

He notes that an array of material changes took place during this period which meant that the Society was able to communicate geographical knowledge in ways which would have been impossible even a few years previously.

To begin with, as Gerald Crone has explored, the Society's Library expanded significantly during these years.⁶⁷ Crone explains that the array of books and other published materials available to RGS Fellows and Members was to grow well in excess of 30,000 volumes. Interestingly, Avril Maddrell has explained that with the new focus on geographical education, a number of school textbooks emerged that were authored by RGS Fellows and were written specifically to educate school pupils in geographical information.⁶⁸ This also acted to expand the circulation of geographical information considerably and enabled this branch of knowledge to reach a much larger and more diverse audience. The Society's circulatory capacity was expanded in other ways too. Emily Hayes has noted that the magic lantern emerged during this period as a method through which visual geographical information could be circulated. Combined with a significant increase in geographers' use of photography, Hayes has demonstrated that these innovations were a hugely important element within this period of reform:

The RGS's engagement with the lantern needs to be understood in relation to its authorization of photography and the technology of the camera as part of the Society's reform movement and attempts to promote, despite resistance, geographical education and science. [...] The lantern became integral to the founding of the 'new' geography and geography's subsequent academic professionalization.⁶⁹

The lantern was therefore to become an important symbol of modernisation at the Society, meaning its introduction as a tool of geographical communication was also met with considerable contestation.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice*, 35.

⁶⁷ Crone, 'The Library of the Royal Geographical Society'.

⁶⁸ Maddrell, 'Empire, Emigration and School Geography: Changing Discourses of Imperial Citizenship, 1880-1925'; Maddrell, 'Discourses of Race and Gender and the Comparative Method in Geography School Texts 1830-1918'; See also Ploszajska, "'Cloud Cuckoo Land?': Fact and Fantasy in Geographical Readers, 1870-1944'.

⁶⁹ Hayes, 'Geographical Light: The Magic Lantern, the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society and the Professionalization of Geography c.1885-1894', 30.

⁷⁰ Hayes, 'Geographical Light: The Magic Lantern, the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society and the Professionalization of Geography c.1885-1894'; Hayes, 'Geographical Projections: Lantern-Slides and the Making of Geographical Knowledge at the Royal Geographical Society c.1885-1924', 2016.

While it would be wrong to attribute the circulatory changes that were taking place at the Society to one person, as was hinted at the beginning of this chapter, historians of this period in geography's history have returned consistently to the particular role of John Scott Keltie during this important transition. Keltie was Librarian at the Society for seven years before serving as Secretary from 1892–1915 and came to exert a profound influence over the direction in which the RGS was to travel.⁷¹ He was a keen educationalist and was therefore a key member of the group of Fellows who were desperate for urgent geographical reform. Importantly, Keltie's secretarial position at the RGS meant that he occupied a key position within a truly global network of geographical practitioners. It was his duty to respond to the vast quantities of daily correspondence that arrived at the Society, allowing him to develop close epistolary relationships with an array of geographers in all corners of the world. This also meant he was able to keep abreast of all manner of geographical goings-on whenever and wherever they emerged and could then inform the necessary people as and when required. Keltie's journalistic background – he was previously sub-editor of the scientific periodical *Nature* and was editor of the annual gazette the *Statesmen's Yearbook* – was to mean that he was also well-versed in communicating information.⁷² Crucially, these skills meant he was to become absolutely instrumental in increasing the RGS's capacity to circulate geographical knowledge. He rejuvenated the Society's periodical in 1893, transforming it into *The Geographical Journal* that is still in circulation today. This new iteration of the Society's journal was presented with a distinctly more scholarly character in order to foment the new approach to geography amongst the Society's readership.⁷³ Keltie also strengthened significantly the RGS's links to the ever-expanding publishing industry. He maintained incredibly close connections with prominent literary and newspaper publishers of the era which meant that the Society could disseminate its information along these increasingly influential channels. As an example, summarising his role in assisting the anarchist geographer Pyotr Kropotkin to communicate his work to audiences across Europe, Innes Keighren explains:

⁷¹ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

⁷² Jay, 'John Scott Keltie 1840-1927'.

⁷³ The new journal is discussed in more depth in chapter four.

Kropotkin was supported in this publishing endeavour from the late 1870s by John Scott Keltie, who functioned as an editor-cum-agent. In this capacity, Keltie was instrumental in securing Kropotkin commissions and assisting him in navigating the occasionally competing commercial, political, and economic demands of the British periodical press.⁷⁴

Giving an overview of Keltie's hugely significant influence over the transformation of the Society's operations, Elizabeth Baigent has argued:

He was neither the first nor the only person to hope that geography might assume an important place in the school and university curriculum, or to see that continued and exclusive concern with exploration would condemn the RGS to a marginal and anachronistic position among the international geographical societies as the turn of the century approached. But through his good-humoured persistence, quiet conviction, and a journalist's sense of opportunism he succeeded where others failed.⁷⁵

All of these improvements and expansions to the methods of knowledge circulation meant that the Royal Geographical Society was able to maintain and advance its position as the leading centre for the production and dissemination of geographical knowledge as the twentieth century got underway. The Society's senior Fellows were able to accumulate the rigorous geographical knowledge that had been collected by fieldwork undertaken in all parts of the earth and communicate this information via the range of new and expanded media at their disposal. It is clear, then, that such a fundamental role in facilitating the movement of geographical information therefore offers perfect opportunity for detailed study into the intricate means by which knowledge is able to move across space. This focus also offers scope for understanding precisely how geographical knowledge was able to begin these complicated circulatory trajectories and perhaps more importantly for interpreting the ways such information transformed as it took on this mobile nature. It is these theoretical discussions which have comprised the main focus of the doctoral research project presented here.

Overview of the Thesis

The following two chapters will outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks that have guided the research project. Chapter two will begin by outlining the diverse array of geographical and

⁷⁴ Keighren, 'History and Philosophy of Geography II: The Excluded, the Evil, and the Anarchic', 776; Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876–1917'; Ferretti, *Anarchy and Geography: Reclus and Kropotkin in the UK*.

⁷⁵ Baigent, 'Keltie, Sir John Scott (1840–1927)', n.p.

historical sub-disciplines at whose intersections this doctoral project has been situated. Intentionally incorporating a wide range of perspectives and insights, the project has drawn from a number of different areas of scholarship to construct a rich and varied piece of research that will speak to ongoing debates in many different disciplines. As a starting point, it has explored scholarship which has historicised the Royal Geographical Society and has interrogated this complex institution using differing scholarly perspectives. As mentioned above, emerging literatures focusing on the circuitous nature of knowledge have also informed much of the thinking for this project and a comprehensive investigation into these debates will be presented. In order to add a further dimension to these discussions, particular attention will be focussed on the ways in which geographical knowledge was not only facilitated by intellectual institutions such as the RGS, but was also managed, mediated and altered by such circulatory organisations. The chapter will also reflect critically on those literatures which have begun to combine these approaches with ongoing research in Polar Studies and will review research that has investigated how knowledge about the Arctic regions was able to circulate in a variety of different ways throughout the long nineteenth century. Related to this, the project has also been mindful of discussions emerging in postcolonial literatures which have sought to re-evaluate the role of indigenous knowledges in the formation of global understandings of the Arctic regions. This section will consider those theoretical interventions that have called on researchers to examine more deeply the role of indigenous people in the historical production and circulation of geographical knowledge. Finally, chapter two will also discuss those literatures that have studied the ways in which circulatory institutions such as the RGS were active in obscuring or omitting certain types of information – particularly knowledge that was produced by what have been termed ‘indigenous intermediaries.’

Chapter three will move on to offer a detailed examination of the archival materials that have been used to inform this research and will offer a critical reflection on working with those materials which comprise the ‘geographical archive.’ While a great deal of scholarly research has been conducted using the collections held by the RGS-IBG, only in recent years have researchers been able to delve more deeply into the fascinating, intriguing, and at times bewildering array of materials of which it is comprised. Beginning with the ‘unlocking’ of the RGS-IBG archives in 2001, and a now well-developed Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Award (AHRC CDA) PhD

Scholarship programme, the collection has proved immensely fruitful in generating a wealth of scholarship drawing from and focused on this institution's extensive collections.⁷⁶

Following this methodological reflection, the empirical findings of the research project will be presented. Chapter four studies the ways in which geographical knowledge has been framed historically and contextualises the fluid definition of the geographical discipline and its relationship to Arctic exploration as the twentieth century got underway. Norwegian Arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen's arrival at the Society is used to exemplify the emergent approaches to geographical exploration, but more importantly the chapter demonstrates the ways in which this celebrated geographer was involved fundamentally in philosophical reorientation of the entire geographical project. As debates over what the ontological and epistemological foci of the geographical discipline should be began to develop, Nansen offered a template for how geography could be practiced and understood. Breaking away from previous traditions, yet still relying on and continuing others, Nansen was to have a substantial influence upon the Society with which he maintained a genuine affection.

Having explored the ways that knowledge is framed and questioned how the limits to what is regarded as authentic geographical knowledge was (and always is) politicised, we turn in chapter five to consider how such knowledge can be managed, mediated and constrained. When Ejnar Mikkelsen addressed the Society's Fellows in 1905 and vowed to reach the hitherto undiscovered land-mass off the North coast of Alaska, he did not anticipate the substantial difficulties he would face when securing funds for his proposed expedition. After approaching desperately countless wealthy donors and benefactors with little success, Mikkelsen was put in contact with the respected London based book publisher William Heinemann. Requesting the help of RGS Secretary John Scott Keltie to act as his unofficial literary agent, Mikkelsen entered into a complex negotiation process with Heinemann over the publication of an expeditionary account. Although a contract was eventually agreed, it included very stringent restrictions relating to how the information gathered during Mikkelsen's expedition could be communicated. This therefore had obvious implications for the extent to which this important

⁷⁶ Withers, 'Constructing "The Geographical Archive"'; Evans, 'Between Terra Incognita and Home: A Collaborative Expedition through the RGS Archives'.

geographical knowledge was able to circulate. The chapter therefore argues that by unpicking the ways in which early twentieth century expeditions were financed, important limitations and constrictions to the potential mobility of geographical knowledge are revealed.

Chapter six will use the circulatory framework that has been developed to offer new insights into a debate which has received a great deal of both popular and scholarly attention over the past century. When Robert Peary telegraphed the world's press agencies stating triumphantly that he had achieved one of the last remaining geographical challenges – reaching the North Pole – he was unaware that Frederick Cook, his once companion and now Polar rival had sent an identical message to the increasingly globalised media a mere five days earlier. Initial confusion over who was the true 'discoverer' of the pole quickly descended into hostility and both parties began to use the popular press of the day to convince an increasingly perplexed global audience that it was they who had indeed achieved the feat.⁷⁷ As claim and counter-claim were levelled back and forth, the press agencies – desperate for any means by which they might be able to adjudicate on the matter – turned to the geographical societies for their opinion. Thus, the Royal Geographical Society was inundated with requests for information from newspapers and journalists across the globe asking for any piece of information which might shed light on the matter. However, the reality was that the RGS had little real involvement in the controversy whatsoever and consequently its senior Fellows were at somewhat of a loss as to how they ought to respond. This chapter therefore examines closely this infamous geographical controversy from the perspective of the RGS and provides context for the apparently incoherent response that the Society was ultimately to issue.

The fourth and final empirical chapter will take a notably different approach to the framework so far described. Rather than study the RGS's role in facilitating the circulation of geographical knowledge produced by Western explorers, it will instead consider the place of *non-western* indigenous knowledge within this complex circulatory system. Drawing on literatures which have studied the role of 'indigenous intermediaries' within processes of exploration, the chapter will present empirical material which demonstrates the ways in which knowledge produced by the indigenous peoples of the

⁷⁷ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

Arctic was not able to circulate in the same fashion as the knowledges produced by the Western explorers who are discussed in the preceding sections of the thesis. Firstly, the discussion will explore how indigenous people have been represented historically within the different types of geographical knowledge that were in circulation during the period. More importantly, however, it will also consider the extent to which geographical knowledge produced by indigenous peoples during these expeditions was blocked from entering into the circulation of geographical knowledge when contrasted with their Euro-American contemporaries. As a final point, consideration will also be given to the precise role played by the RGS and similar circulatory institutions in the obscuring or omitting of indigenous contributions to geographical knowledge.

The final chapter will reflect upon the key themes that have emerged from this research project in more general terms and will outline the unique contribution it has made to geographical, historical and polar studies literatures. It will also highlight the points of the thesis where there are discernible prospects for future research and point to other scholarly literatures which the framework explored here may potentially offer fruitful and innovative results.

Chapter 2

Exploration, Calculation, Circulation: Centring the Royal Geographical Society in the Arctic

Why should I care about the Geographical Association, or the Royal Geographical Society, or even the International Geographical Union for that matter? What meaningful influence or relevance do they have to my brief, non-permanent study of geography at degree-level?⁷⁸

This extract is taken from a short article entitled ‘A Beginners Guide to the Contemporary Institutionalisation of Geography in the UK’ which was written by an undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge in April 2018 and was featured in *Compass*, the online geographical magazine produced and edited by the Geography Department’s student body.⁷⁹ At first glance, this passage may appear to be a dismissive diatribe against a well-established scholarly enterprise, perhaps written by a student disgruntled by the requirement to study their chosen subject’s disciplinary history as part of their degree programme.⁸⁰ However, the essay in fact reveals itself to be an admission that the author maintains a covert curiosity toward the history of geographical institutions; a curiosity he feels inappropriate for a person of his age or stage of intellectual development – ‘I’m 19, a student, and I really shouldn’t be interested in this.’⁸¹ Precisely what has fuelled the author’s anxieties regarding the pursuit of such interests is not revealed in the article, yet he does appear at least to take some solace in the fact that he is not alone in his interests:

Even if you’re not sure if you should ‘care’ about these detailed, sidenote histories, there’s always consistently been a faction of the geographical establishment that happens to find them interesting.⁸²

One can presume that the ‘geographical establishment’ to which Breckenridge refers is the sizeable group of scholars who have advocated for the importance of studying the histories and geographies of geographical thought and have shown the importance of tracing the complex historical trajectory that the discipline has taken.⁸³ As Breckenridge notes, geographical institutions have played an important

⁷⁸ Breckenridge, ‘A Beginner’s Guide to the Contemporary Institutionalisation of Geography in the UK’.

⁷⁹ For a discussion on the value of analysing student geographical publications see Philo, ‘Reading Drumlin: Academic Geography and a Student Geographical Magazine’.

⁸⁰ There is a considerable literature which reflects on teaching geography’s disciplinary history, see Keighren et al., ‘Teaching the History of Geography: Current Challenges and Future Directions’; Phillips and Healey, ‘Teaching the History and Philosophy of Geography in British Undergraduate Courses’; Meir, ‘The Urgency of Teaching History and Philosophy of Geography’.

⁸¹ Breckenridge, ‘A Beginner’s Guide to the Contemporary Institutionalisation of Geography in the UK’.

⁸² Breckenridge.

⁸³ Driver, ‘Research in Historical Geography and in the History and Philosophy of Geography in the UK, 2001–2011: An Overview’; Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women’s Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970*; Johnston and Withers, ‘Knowing Our Own History? Geography Department Archives in the UK’; Domosh, ‘Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography’; Withers and Mayhew, ‘Rethinking “Disciplinary” History:

part in this scholarship, which therefore begs an important question – what is it about geographical institutions that have piqued the interest of scholars situated both within and beyond the discipline of their concern? As is the case with many scholarly subjects, geographers have discussed their discipline’s own philosophical underpinnings at considerable length.⁸⁴ Yet, as is shown below, geographical institutions – and the RGS especially – have attracted scholarly attention far beyond the discipline’s (albeit porous) intellectual boundaries.

This chapter will therefore explore the range of theoretical frameworks that have been developed and deployed in order to understand the vital role that the Royal Geographical Society has played in the production, circulation and dissemination of Arctic geographical knowledge since its formation in 1830. The project has been influenced heavily by discussions taking place in many different disciplines – particularly postcolonial theory, histories and philosophies of science and Polar studies – so these literatures will be discussed in detail. The chapter will then explore the more recent turn towards studying the *circulation* of geographical knowledge and explain why it has been this conceptual approach that has framed the remainder of the thesis. Finally, the chapter will also discuss the power dynamics that are at play within this circulatory framework and consider which voices were permitted to enter into the circulation of geographical knowledge at the turn of the twentieth century and perhaps more importantly which were not.

A Centre of Empire

It is impossible to divorce histories of geography from their fundamental roots in exploration activity.

As Felix Driver has argued:

While all the sciences were shaped, to some extent, by practices of exploration – the voyage, the survey, the mapping of the earth, the seas and the stars – the field of geography more than any other came to be associated with the figure of the explorer.⁸⁵

Geography in British Universities, c.1580–1887’; cf. Barnett, ‘Awakening the Dead: Who Needs the History of Geography?’

⁸⁴ Cresswell, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*; Hubbard and Kitchin, *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*.

⁸⁵ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, 2.

Although there were certainly strong antecedents in the enlightenment, historians of the discipline generally agree that the scholarly pursuit we recognise today as geography was forged during the long nineteenth century when exploratory activity was at its peak.⁸⁶ It is also crucial to remember that this period was a time of high imperial ambition. As is discussed below, the imperial origins of the geographical discipline have therefore received a great deal of attention and a number of important aspects of geography's contentious past have been revealed. The first section of this chapter will hence discuss these scholarly literatures and will demonstrate the ways in which geographical knowledge has been connected inextricably to practices of exploration. It will then explore how these ideas were combined with histories of colonialism to examine the deep connections that were forged between the emergent discipline of geography and the European imperial project. The discussion will tease out the ways that researchers have analysed precisely what this has meant in terms of the subject's ontological focus and will reflect on the ways in which the RGS in particular has been framed in these debates.

Following the Paths of Exploration Studies

Historian Dane Kennedy has considered the reasons behind the significant amount of scholarly attention that has been devoted to studying histories of exploration. In his introduction to the edited collection *Reinterpreting Exploration*, Kennedy suggests:

As historians and others work to craft integrated narratives of our intersecting pasts as a human community, it is hardly surprising that they have rediscovered the theme of exploration, since it serves as such a ready avenue of access to so many of the central problems that have arisen from those intersections.⁸⁷

The phenomenon that has come to be labelled 'exploration' is an incredibly complex one and therefore has an equally complex historiography. It often seems that as soon as agreement is reached regarding how we might best to define the concept, new considerations are offered that require further work to be undertaken. Indeed, as Kennedy alludes to above, due to its integral role in the foundations of much

⁸⁶ Jones, 'Measuring the World: Exploration, Empire and the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society, c. 1874–93'; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*; Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*; cf. Withers and Mayhew, 'Rethinking "Disciplinary" History: Geography in British Universities, c.1580–1887'; Livingstone and Withers, *Geography and Enlightenment*.

⁸⁷ Kennedy, *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, 13–14.

scholarly thinking, study of exploration may be seen to hold the answers to many of the important questions that are found in almost every academic discipline. The result of a such broad interest in what Driver terms the ‘cultures of exploration’ has been the emergence of certain traditions or schools of thought that conceptualise the topic in considerably different ways.⁸⁸

It must be said that for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, studies of exploration have adhered to a somewhat problematic style of scholarship. Typically, enquiries undertaken during this period devoted time and effort to studying a single expedition and deployed all available historical resources to describe the trials and tribulations overcome by a particular explorer in order for the landscape in question to be triumphantly and heroically ‘conquered.’ As Christina Adcock explains:

Such authors, seasoning their works liberally with drama, often take a largely narrative, less than optimally critical (if not outright hagiographical or celebratory), and decontextualized approach to persons and expeditions.⁸⁹

Such scholarship was centred frequently around the meticulous recounting of dangerous expeditions across inhospitable environments, whereby men (and it was almost always men) challenged themselves and their bodies to the ‘absolute limit’ so as to reach some mythologised location. The protagonists in these narratives were variously described as ‘heroes’ or ‘champions’ and were in some cases elevated beyond the status of mere mortals due to their accomplishment of that which was once thought impossible.⁹⁰ Susan Kaplan and Robert Peck summarise these tropes by arguing:

Disastrous expedition outcomes, individual heroic efforts in the face of adversity, and controversies have [all] served to focus historians’ and novelists’ attention on the personal motivations and character of expedition leaders.⁹¹

While histories written in this style are certainly very entertaining to read and continue to be hugely popular, it has been argued that their relevance to scholarly historical inquiry is somewhat limited. Huw Lewis-Jones uses a suitably geographical metaphor to point to the limitations that became apparent in such literature, when he writes:

⁸⁸ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, 2.

⁸⁹ Adcock, ‘Tracing Warm Lines: Northern Canadian Exploration, Knowledge and Memory, 1905-1965’, 2.

⁹⁰ Archetypal examples of this genre include Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*; Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook*; Coupland, *Livingstone’s Last Journey*; Jeal, *Livingstone*; McLynn, *Stanley: The Making of an African Explorer*.

⁹¹ Kaplan and Peck, *North by Degree: New Perspectives on Arctic Exploration*, xii.

Chronologically encyclopaedic accounts of expeditions are undoubtedly useful but they are unsatisfying. They present narrative histories akin to sailing a coastline, ticking or noting the headlands but not taking time to go into the bays, let alone make much progress ashore.⁹²

The Exploration of Empire

Towards the end of 1980s calls for more critical approaches to exploration studies began to emerge. Such interventions occurred around the time that a large proportion of scholarly attention was being re-centred toward deconstructing the complex histories of the European imperial project and understanding its lasting legacies. As poststructural thinking swept through the humanities and social sciences, those disciplines which held some kind of historical focus – for example literary studies, cultural studies and indeed geography among others – began to investigate precisely how the world had come to be configured in what Edward Said termed the ‘Orientalist’ tradition.⁹³ As Kennedy explains, Said’s work in turn had profound influence on histories of exploration:

[Said’s] influential work, which helped give rise to postcolonial studies as an academic field, was not concerned with exploration *per se*. It did, however, draw heavily on European explorers’ writings in its examination of Western representations of the Orient, and Said used the term ‘imaginative geography’ to connote the culturally constructed nature of those representations. Above all, he made the case that the knowledge the West claimed to have acquired about the Orient by means of exploration and other inquiries served – and still serves – its imperial ambitions.⁹⁴

Said’s writings sparked a flourish of critical engagement with eighteenth and nineteenth century exploration wherein the complex processes bound up in such undertakings were reconceptualised in terms of their inextricable relationship to European imperial expansion. Many researchers began to interrogate the vast array of cultural texts that had been produced during this period in order to understand the development of what Mary Louise Pratt has termed the ‘Eurocentred form of planetary consciousness.’⁹⁵ Drawing on Said’s ideas, Platt’s phrase refers to the notion that understandings of the world had come to be dominated by a particularly western ontology and that practices of exploration played an absolutely crucial part in this construction. Furthermore, Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany*

⁹² Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*, 4.

⁹³ Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*.

⁹⁴ Kennedy, *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, 7.

⁹⁵ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 5.

Bay argued that the hagiographic histories, alluded to above, had in fact acted to replicate and compound the imperialistic world-view that was now under scrutiny:

This kind of history, which reduces space to a stage, that pays attention to events unfolding in time alone, might be called imperial history. [...] The primary object is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate. [...] The fact is that, as an account of foundation and settlement, not to mention the related processes of discovery and exploration, empirical history, with its emphasis on the factual and static, is wholly inadequate.⁹⁶

Conceptualising exploration differently then, these theorists opened up a number of scholarly avenues that revealed the interrelated ways in which eighteenth and nineteenth century exploration was both supportive of and supported by wider processes of colonial expansion. Studying the colonial milieu from which many of the period's explorers emerged, scholars analysed how the landscapes through which these men and women travelled came to be represented so as to make foreign lands appear destined for imperial ownership. As Simon Naylor and James Ryan summarise:

In this way, exploration could be regarded less as some impartial means of 'discovering' the 'unknown' than part of a powerful and enduring projection of Western imperial interests onto other parts of the world.⁹⁷

The task for scholars was now to identify and unpick the colonial motivations that had driven explorers into the field and to interpret further the expansionist ambitions of the respective nation-states or organisations whom they represented. But what did this reconceptualisation of exploration mean for thinking on the histories and philosophies of geographical knowledge?

The Science of Empire

Now that exploration had been understood as an inherently colonial project, attention was turned to examining the scholarly disciplines that had emerged from these expeditionary practices. Returning to Kennedy's work:

The humanities and social sciences began to show the first signs of an intellectual crisis that would inadvertently open up fresh approaches to the study of exploration. Challenged to examine their own epistemological premises by critical theory and related postmodernist doctrines, various academic disciplines became more self-reflexive, probing the assumptions that underwrote their intellectual practices and exposing their heritage of collusion with empire.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, xvi; See also Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*.

⁹⁷ Ryan and Naylor, *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century*, 1.

⁹⁸ Kennedy, 'British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey', 1880–81.

Anthropology, geology, and the branches of biology which were founded upon the practice of collecting natural history specimens, such as zoology and botany, were just some examples of scholarly disciplines whose intellectual origins had come to be recognised as laying within imperial practices of exploration. The strong traditions of conducting ‘fieldwork’ in each of these disciplines made it impossible to separate their origins from histories of exploration – but of course when read through the lens of postcolonial theory, fieldwork was viewed as inseparable from the problematic practices of imperial domination. As Kuklick and Kohler argue in their edited collection *Science in the Field*:

Journeys of exploration might have yielded abstract generalizations about nature, but the search for such generalisations was not inspired by idle curiosity alone; explorations were largely prompted by the desire to inventory the world’s natural resources with a view to their possible uses by colonizing powers.⁹⁹

Unsurprisingly, due to its pride in carrying out fieldwork practices, the discipline of geography was not omitted from these postcolonial critiques.¹⁰⁰ As mentioned above, geography’s inextricable relationship with imperialism during the nineteenth century has received much scholarly attention. Robert Stafford’s *Scientist of Empire*, Felix Driver’s *Geography Militant* and Morgan Bell, Robin Butlin and Michael Heffernan’s edited collection *Geography and Imperialism, 1820-1940* are just some examples of the ways in which study of imperialism’s close connection to exploration have offered new opportunities for deeper reflection on histories of the geographical discipline.¹⁰¹ Derek Gregory’s *Geographical Imaginations* did further work in this field by exploring the ways in which geography and geographical thinking were deeply complicit in the very formation of the Orientalist or imperialist construction of the world as articulated by Said, Carter and Pratt.¹⁰² As Brian Hudson argued in his earlier article:

The study and teaching of [...] geography at an advanced level was vigorously promoted at that time largely, if not mainly, to serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects including

⁹⁹ Kuklick and Kohler, *Science in the Field*, 8.

¹⁰⁰ The concept of ‘The Field’ has been a topic of much debate in geographical literatures, see Powell, ‘The Rigours of an Arctic Experiment: The Precarious Authority of Field Practices in the Canadian High Arctic, 1958 – 1970’; Greenhough, ‘Tales of an Island-Laboratory: Defining the Field in Geography and Science Studies’; Powell, ‘The Sirens’ Voices? Field Practices and Dialogue in Geography’; Yusoff, ‘Configuring the Field: Photography in Early Twentieth-Century Antarctica’; Driver, ‘Editorial: Field-Work in Geography’; Katz, ‘Playing the Field: Questions of Fieldwork in Geography’.

¹⁰¹ Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism*; Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*; Bell, Butlin, and Heffernan, *Geography and Imperialism, 1820-1940*.

¹⁰² Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*.

territorial acquisition, economic exploitation, militarism and the practice of class and race domination.¹⁰³

For a time then, geography became the example *par excellence* of an academic discipline whose imperialistic origins had shaped fundamentally its ontological and epistemological nature.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Driver argues that geography's ties to empire ran so deep during this period that the subject came to be considered as 'the science of imperialism.'¹⁰⁵ Unsurprisingly, this also meant that the institutional home of geography came under the same sustained postcolonial scrutiny. The Royal Geographical Society came to be recognised as the centre of this geographical-imperial complex and therefore as a key site in the coordination of colonial knowledge in order to further these ambitions. Robert Stafford summarised the RGS's deep complicity in the imperial project when he wrote:

From its inception, the cartographers, military officers, colonial administrators, scientists, politicians, diplomats, and travellers who managed the RGS explicitly linked the Society's activities with Imperial affairs.¹⁰⁶

Tracing geography's and the RGS's deep roots in the European imperial project therefore became an incredibly important area of scholarship.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, this area of study was not confined to philosophical reflection from geographers alone. The RGS became a convenient emblem of the ways in which imperialism and science were not only inextricable, but were entirely co-constitutive, and therefore attracted scholars from many disciplines beyond geography.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, it is important to note here that scholars continue to show the ways in which many of these legacies have still not been resolved within our discipline and it has been shown that issues of colonialism remain persistent within our scholarship. Calls to 'decolonise the discipline' are being voiced at many levels and continue to

¹⁰³ Hudson, 'The New Geography and the New Imperialism', 35.

¹⁰⁴ This is a very large body of literature so the list of works cited here is inevitably incomplete. For some overviews see Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado*; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*; Driver, 'Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge'; Driver, 'Henry Morton Stanley and His Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire'; Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism*; Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*.

¹⁰⁵ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

¹⁰⁶ Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire', 296.

¹⁰⁷ Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism*; Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*; Collier and Inkpen, 'The RGS, Exploration and Empire and the Contested Nature of Surveying'.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, 'Measuring the World: Exploration, Empire and the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society, c. 1874–93'; Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice*.

challenge all of our academic practices and traditions (these issues are discussed further in chapter three).¹⁰⁹

These colonial-centred literatures have not been without critique however and some scholars have questioned the usefulness of this approach to studying these histories. That is to say, because histories of exploration and histories of the RGS have attracted scholarship from a number of different intellectual strands, the (post)colonial conceptualisations so far discussed have been just one theorisation used to investigate these important and intriguing histories. Researchers from other schools of thought have offered a number of critiques that question whether such a totalising conceptualisation of exploration as a wholly imperial pursuit has meant that other, more nuanced, motivations behind such practices have been diminished or overshadowed.

Colonial science is typically interpreted in one of three ways: the uses of science for colonizing ends, the colonial shaping of the content of scientific practices, or the colonial scientist's construction of nature and human 'others' or colonized subject. In our opinion, this has created a tradition of homogenizing colonialism as a universal or totalizing aspect of scientific practice.¹¹⁰

Suggestions have been made that studying exploration and geography solely through the lens of postcolonialism has not only resulted in a somewhat limited focus, but also that it uses too narrow a range of sources in order to stake historical claims and hence risks a degree of anti-historicism.¹¹¹ As Max Jones has cautioned:

The history of science and the history of empire were intimately connected through the nineteenth century, their relationship mediated through institutions like the RGS. But the two histories were not identical.¹¹²

As will now be discussed, rather than focus attention on the *imperial* context that has framed historical practices of exploration (and hence the discipline of geography), some scholars, particularly those situating their research in histories, philosophies and geographies of science, have instead concentrated their enquiries more on the *intellectual* environments in which these explorers operated. The men and women who ventured overseas and across foreign lands have therefore been analysed, not with the sole

¹⁰⁹ Esson et al., 'The 2017 RGS-IBG Chair's Theme: Decolonising Geographical Knowledges, or Reproducing Coloniality?'; Radcliffe, 'Decolonising Geographical Knowledges'.

¹¹⁰ Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, 10.

¹¹¹ Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*.

¹¹² Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice*, 48.

intention of interpreting their imperial motivations, but rather to place them alongside the many other drivers of exploration activity during this period.

A Centre of Calculation

Scholars keen to study the intellectual incentives that lay behind practices of exploration have drawn from the theoretical debates that emerged in French philosophy to consider whether alternative ways of thinking about these complex exploratory practices might be possible. This, in turn, has meant the particular role of the RGS has been reconfigured, less as a centre of imperialism and more as what Bruno Latour terms a centre of *calculation*.¹¹³ The project presented here has been influenced heavily by these discussions, so their development will now be outlined.

Situating Science

The truths of science are independent of any local context.

– *Emile Durkheim, 1899.*¹¹⁴

Durkheim's aphorism is indicative of the way in which the troublesome phenomenon we call scientific knowledge has commonly been viewed since the Enlightenment. Although notoriously difficult to define in any stable way, science – with its facts, rules and laws of nature – has historically been held as a universal constant and objective claims that have been systematically proven to be 'true' in one location are therefore expected to be true everywhere and anywhere. Indeed, as Adi Ophir and Steven Shapin have argued, it is the very fact that such information maintains the appearance of having no place of origin that allows it to become considered as scientific knowledge:

It is maintained that ideas have worth by virtue of the disconnectedness of their production from practical affairs or from the customs, conventions, and interests of particular cultural contexts.¹¹⁵

In the early 1990s, following the publication of Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin's influential book *Leviathan and the Air Pump* and Bruno Latour and Steven Woolgar's *Laboratory Life*, the focus of scholarly enquiry into the histories and philosophies of science transitioned from the universal to the

¹¹³ Latour, *Science in Action*.

¹¹⁴ Durkheim, *Selected Writings [Translated by Anthony Giddens]*, 88.

¹¹⁵ Ophir and Shapin, 'The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey', 4.

particular.¹¹⁶ That is to say, sociologists, anthropologists and historians all turned their attention to investigating the *spatial* aspects of scientific knowledge production. These authors started from the important premise that the ‘spaces’ of science had been hitherto overlooked and that the local or cultural contexts in which scientific knowledge was produced had lacked sustained investigation.¹¹⁷ Shapin’s later article with Adi Ophir entitled ‘The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey’ fomented this emergent field of study.¹¹⁸ In their article the authors questioned: ‘What if knowledge in general has an irremediably local dimension?’¹¹⁹ These important interventions sought to incorporate spatial perspectives into the historical and philosophical analysis of scientific knowledge and built on earlier work which had emerged from the ‘constructivist school’ of science and technology studies (STS) – an approach which focuses attention on what is *believed* to be true by social actors, rather than what is considered to be techno-scientifically accurate.¹²⁰ Closely related to the ‘symmetry postulate’ that had emerged within sociological studies of scientific practice, such a framework ‘seeks to understand science as a cultural formation’ and ‘embrace[s] a wide range of different kinds of knowledge,’ hence incorporating knowledge that is considered scientifically ‘true’ *and otherwise* into its analysis.¹²¹ The spatial insights offered by Schaffer, Ophir, Shapin and others allowed this approach to develop into an effective critique that dispensed with the taken-for-granted and highly problematic assumption that scientific knowledge was universal and that scientific ‘facts’ were deemed to be true anywhere and everywhere. In its place, Ophir and Shapin posited:

What if [knowledge] possesses its shape, meaning, reference, and domain of application by virtue of the physical, social, and cultural circumstances in which it is made, and in which it used? ¹²²

¹¹⁶ Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*; Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*.

¹¹⁷ Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*.

¹¹⁸ Ophir and Shapin, ‘The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey’, 4.

¹¹⁹ Ophir and Shapin, 4.

¹²⁰ Ophir and Shapin, ‘The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey’; Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*; Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*.

¹²¹ Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*, 8. For more on constructivist approaches to Histories of Science and Science and Technology Studies see Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*; Naylor and Goodman, ‘Historical Geographies of Science’.

¹²² Ophir and Shapin, ‘The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey’, 4.

Instead of conceptualising scientific knowledge as a universal constant – or as it has been referred to elsewhere; ‘a view from nowhere’ – these writers sought instead to ‘place’ science within its socio-cultural context and to view it as inherently and entirely situated in particular (geographical) locations.¹²³ It was argued that by studying the localised spaces in which scientific knowledge was produced, it was possible to gain a better understanding of how such ideas were developed and that this in turn could shed light on important aspects of modern-day scientific knowledge production processes.¹²⁴

This substantial ontological and methodological transition formed part of what has been labelled ‘the spatial turn’ in science studies and has since developed into a well-established body of scholarship offering a wide array of insightful studies which examine the situated nature of scientific study. Efforts have focused on examining the localised settings in which the production of particular knowledges has taken place and have shown that these settings influenced fundamentally the type of knowledge that could be produced.¹²⁵ As Diarmid Finnegan explains:

A concern with space in the study of science has been introduced as a corollary of a sociological analysis dealing with the indelible mark left by different social and cultural milieux on the making and marketing of scientific claims.¹²⁶

A multitude of ‘spaces of science’ have subsequently come under the scrutiny of researchers. These range from expected locations such as laboratories, lecture theatres and field stations through to other institutions which had hitherto not yet been considered as necessarily ‘scientific.’¹²⁷ Provincial museums, coffee houses and public houses were all reconsidered as spaces with the capacity to produce scientific knowledge and authors have shown how such inherently situated production in many ways

¹²³ For more on ‘the view from nowhere’ see Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges : The Science Question in Feminism of Partial and the Privilege’; Shapin, ‘Placing the View from Nowhere: Historical and Sociological Problems in the Location of Science’.

¹²⁴ Livingstone and Withers, *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*; Naylor, ‘The Field, the Museum and the Lecture Hall: The Spaces of Natural History in Victorian Cornwall’; Agar and Smith, *Making Space for Science: Territorial Themes in the Shaping of Knowledge*; Crang, ‘Places of Practice, and the Practice of Science’.

¹²⁵ Finnegan, ‘The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science’.

¹²⁶ Finnegan, 370.

¹²⁷ Thrift, Driver, and Livingstone, ‘The Geography of Truth’; Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*; Powell, *Studying Arctic Fields: Cultures, Practices, and Environmental Sciences*.

influenced the types of knowledge that were established.¹²⁸ Conceptualising science as a locally produced phenomenon, then, and understanding how certain spaces permitted or facilitated the production of knowledge challenges the historical assumption that scientific understandings become universal simply because they are true. Geographers – well versed in concepts of space and spatiality – were particularly keen to engage with these conceptualisations. As Richard Powell, Simon Naylor and Diarmid Finnegan have explained, because geographers consider space and place to be their particular areas of expertise, the *geographies* of science subsequently become a well-established area of inquiry.¹²⁹

The RGS as a Space of Science

These theorisations have unsurprisingly meant that the RGS has come to be considered as a space of science. Livingstone made an important point regarding the placing of science when he argued:

In order to achieve the status of ‘knowledge,’ claims had to be produced in the right place and had to be validated by the right public. Where science was conducted – in what physical and social space – was thus a crucial ingredient in establishing whether an assertion was warranted.¹³⁰

The Royal Geographical Society was certainly one of those fora in which geographical information could become credible. Explorers returning from the field were required to present the results of their recent expedition before the Society’s Fellowship in order for the truth claims they were making to become reliable geographical knowledge. Furthermore, as Natalie Cox has alluded to, this knowledge was granted further legitimacy by being considered with reference to the scientific knowledge stored in the Society’s vast library, its extensive map collections and, later, its geographical museum.¹³¹ The RGS therefore seemed to fit perfectly into Latour’s notion of a ‘centre of calculation’ which he describes as a place where ‘specimens, maps, diagrams, logs, questionnaires and paper forms of all sorts are

¹²⁸ Naylor, *Regionalising Science: Placing Knowledges in Victorian England*; Naylor, ‘The Field, the Museum and the Lecture Hall: The Spaces of Natural History in Victorian Cornwall’.

¹²⁹ Powell, ‘Geographies of Science: Histories, Localities, Practices, Futures’; Naylor, ‘Introduction: Historical Geographies of Science – Places, Contexts, Cartographies’; Finnegan, ‘The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science’.

¹³⁰ Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, 23.

¹³¹ Cox, ‘Armchair Geography: Speculation, Synthesis, and the Culture of British Exploration, c.1830–c.1870’.

accumulated and are used by scientists and engineers to escalate the proof race.’¹³² Studying the principles upon which the Society was initially created, Felix Driver echoes this argument:

The task the Royal Geographical Society set itself in 1830 was to coordinate the geographical knowledge producing within this rapidly expanding discourse of exploration. [...] The rhetoric of the Society’s founding document appears to be at first sight to what one would expect of a ‘centre of calculation.’¹³³

The RGS was subsequently situated alongside the plethora of other locations and institutions that had been deemed as spaces which provided legitimation to the diverse range of information that was being accumulated by scientific practitioners in all corners of the earth.

The spaces of science framework, then, has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the social, cultural and material contexts that lay behind the practices of exploration that were undertaken in the nineteenth century and has shown that an imperialist agenda was not the be all and end all of geographical thinking at the RGS at this time. However, it must be noted there are some limitations to this conceptualisation. As will now be discussed, the bounded nature of the geographies of science discussions has left an important set of epistemological questions unanswered in our attempts to understand how science was able to take on its ubiquitous or universal appearance.

A Centre of Circulation

It has since become apparent that inquiry based upon the spaces of science framework has failed to answer some persistent epistemological questions relating to the complex nature of scientific knowledge. Critiques have emerged arguing that this spatial framework has struggled to grasp what is arguably the most important aspect of scientific knowledge – indeed the very aspect of scientific knowledge which scholars had been intent on challenging in the first place. That is to say, no insights were offered that explained how such locally produced knowledge was able to take on the appearance of universal truth. Reflecting on these limitations in 2005, James Secord summarised the problems that continued to be faced by sociologists, historians and philosophers of science when he suggested; ‘the

¹³² Latour, *Science in Action*, 232; See also Jöns, ‘Centre of Calculation’.

¹³³ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, 29; See also Heffernan, ‘Mars and Minerva: Centres of Geographical Calculation in an Age of Total War’.

more local and specific knowledge becomes, the harder it is to see how it travels.’¹³⁴ It became apparent that the means by which situated truth-claims were able to transcend the locality of their production and become accepted as ubiquitous knowledge had not been addressed by science studies scholars. This meant that new theoretical insights were required which could begin to tackle these remaining problems.

Science in Circulation

Secord and others recognised that being attentive to the localised production of scientific knowledge alone could not explain fully how knowledge could take on the universal appearance it has so persistently maintained. David Livingstone articulated a similar point when he posited:

How is it that science, given the local dimensions we have already explored, travels across the surface of the earth with such seemingly effortless efficiency? And how is it that we acquire knowledge of distant peoples, places, and processes when the eyes and minds and bodies of others – not ours – are necessarily involved in first hand witnessing?¹³⁵

Both Secord’s and Livingstone’s use of the word ‘travels’ here is crucial. Scholars keen to uncover the processes through which knowledge was able to take on this transcendental appearance began to put forward the argument that it was the *movement* of knowledge that allowed situated ideas to gain prevalence in different spatiotemporal locations. As Diarmid Finnegan has suggested, such a framework has moved beyond the mere locating of science and has instead begun to think about the specific actions that allow it to become mobile:

A widespread penchant for micro-histories of science that located the production or consumption of scientific knowledge in precise and carefully delimited local settings has been critiqued. [...] Alongside this, a concern with understanding how science became a quintessentially mobile form of knowledge that apparently travelled with unique efficiency across various kinds of boundaries has [emerged]. As a result, calls have been made to study the ‘circulating practices’ of global communication as a crucial context for understanding the spread and influence of scientific knowledge.¹³⁶

This has meant that researchers have centred their analysis, not solely on the local context of scientific knowledge production and consumption, but also on the processes through which the knowledge

¹³⁴ Secord, ‘Knowledge in Transit’, 660.

¹³⁵ Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, 140.

¹³⁶ Finnegan and Wright, *Spaces of Global Knowledge: Exhibition, Encounter and Exchange in an Age of Empire*, 6.

produced was able to become *mobile*. This reformulated framework has created opportunity for a more comprehensive interpretation of scientific practice in that it encourages scholars to trace what happens to knowledge after it has been produced in its local context. The laboratory, the lecture theatre or the coffee house can all still be considered essential to the production of science, but writers centring their analyses on knowledge *circulation* argue that it is equally important to study the ways that scientific information can leave these locations and arrive elsewhere. Thinking of science in this way allows us to understand how ideas are able to gain prominence within scientific discourses. As historian of science Fa-ti Fan notes:

[Circulation] reinforces the now accepted view that knowledge production and scientific practice were not confined to the familiar sites of scientific societies, museums, and laboratories. Ideas and information transmitted by networks and often across cultures played a major role in the making of modern science. [...] It encompasses broad spaces rather than concentrat[ing] on one privileged spot (e.g., a 'center of calculation').¹³⁷

Furthermore, as Richard Powell has noted, geographers are again well placed to offer valuable contributions to these important debates:

Geographers of science are attempting to make distinctive contributions in science studies, perhaps especially in studies of the geographical sciences through investigations of technologies of *circulation, movement, and assemblage*.¹³⁸

Such an approach created the possibility for a wealth of new *materials* to come under scholarly scrutiny as they could now be viewed as vital to the process of scientific circulation. As Livingstone has suggested:

The importance of circulation in the geography of science is not restricted to the movement of species and specimens, of course. Ideas and instruments, texts and theories, individuals and inventions – to name but a very few – all diffuse across the surface of the earth.¹³⁹

Indeed, even Bruno Latour also hinted at the importance of circulation when he discussed the way that geographical knowledge was necessarily made mobile in order for cartographic representations of the earth to be drawn:

The shapes of the lands have to be coded and drawn in order to become mobile, but this is not the case for rocks, birds, plants, artefacts, works of art. Those can be extracted from their context and taken away during expeditions. Thus the history of science is in large part the history of the

¹³⁷ Fan, 'The Global Turn in the History of Science', 252.

¹³⁸ Powell, 'Geographies of Science: Histories, Localities, Practices, Futures', 322 *emphasis added*.

¹³⁹ Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, 138. This is also discussed further in chapter three.

mobilisation of anything that can be made to move and shipped back home for this universal census.¹⁴⁰

A plethora of resources have therefore been opened up for scholarly analysis revealing how scientific knowledge, past and present, is able to move from one location to another and be subsequently accepted as the prevailing understanding.

Several examples of this area of scholarship have emerged in recent years. Examining networks of scholarly correspondence, for example, has been one means of deploying this framework. By studying epistolary communication between key thinkers in the early Enlightenment period, Robert Mayhew and Charles Withers have explored how letters and other types of written correspondence were a vitally important means by which knowledge and ideas could travel between disparate thinkers across Europe.¹⁴¹ A key figure that is often cited in these literatures is the botanist Joseph Banks. Although an important member of Captain James Cook's 1768–1771 expedition to Australia and New Zealand, Banks's lasting legacy has largely been attributed to his ability to coordinate the circulation of a whole manner of objects, texts and ideas through his presidency of the Royal Society in London.¹⁴² As many writers have noted, this titan of the scientific establishment during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was vital in enabling the circulation of a whole manner of different types of scientific knowledge.¹⁴³ Studies into the emergence of a booming publishing industry during this period have also been a further method through which understandings of this knowledge circulation process may be gained.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, academic journals in particular have received a significant amount of attention here. Dean Bond's work studying the journals produced by German geographer A.F. Büsching has shed new light on the ways in which geographical knowledge was able to circulate through its transformation into this textual medium.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Aileen Fyfe's recent examination of

¹⁴⁰ Latour, *Science in Action*, 224–25.

¹⁴¹ Mayhew, 'Mapping Science's Imagined Community: Geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600–1800'; Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*.

¹⁴² Gascoigne, 'Banks, Sir Joseph, Baronet (1743–1820), Naturalist and Patron of Science'.

¹⁴³ Banks and Dickerson, *Sir Joseph Banks: A Global Perspective*; Miller, 'Joseph Banks, Empire, and "Centers of Calculation" in Late Hanoverian London'.

¹⁴⁴ See for example Ogborn and Withers, *Geographies of the Book*; Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820–1860*.

¹⁴⁵ Bond, 'Plagiarists, Enthusiasts and Periodical Geography: A.F. Büsching and the Making of Geographical Print Culture in the German Enlightenment, c.1750–1800'.

the Royal Society's periodical *Philosophical Transactions* again reveals how detailed study of scholarly journals is key to understanding the circuitous pathways of knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Circulation does not only necessitate the movement of textual materials alone however. By studying the movement of artworks created in the field and sent back to Europe by the explorer Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe, Nuala Johnson has shown how visual representations of nature were equally mobile during the long nineteenth century. These paintings again allowed locally produced knowledge to travel vast distances in order to reach audiences hundreds of miles away.¹⁴⁷ Scholars have also analysed other types of visual media. James Ryan, for example, has discussed the increased use of photography toward the end of the nineteenth century as a means through which knowledge about the world could be communicated.¹⁴⁸ The images produced in distant locations that were sent back to the European metropolises can again be seen as containers of information moving across geographical space to inform both researchers and public audiences about the phenomena they depicted. In a similar vein, Emily Hayes has explored how lantern slides were used to circulate these photographs and other types of imagery further once they had arrived in Europe so that this knowledge could reach an even wider audience.¹⁴⁹ Finally, Caroline Cornish and Felix Driver's ongoing research into the circulation of botanical specimens via the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew is a further example that uses such a framework. Their notion of the 'mobile museum' explores the ways in which these natural history collections were constantly in movement as specimens, samples and artefacts – and therefore information – were shared amongst a range of collectors, schools and other museums that often spanned substantial distances.¹⁵⁰ These are just some examples of a rich vein of scholarship which has taken seriously the technologies and materials which have permitted

¹⁴⁶ Fyfe, McDougall-Waters, and Moxham, '350 Years of Scientific Periodicals'. See also Fyfe, *The Secret History of The Scientific Journal*, <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophicaltransactions/>

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, 'On the Colonial Frontier: Gender, Exploration and Plant-Hunting on Mount Victoria in Early 20th-Century Burma'; Johnson, 'Global Knowledge in a Local World: Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe's Encounters with Burma 1901-1902'.

¹⁴⁸ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*; see also Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire*.

¹⁴⁹ Hayes, 'Geographical Light: The Magic Lantern, the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society and the Professionalization of Geography c.1885-1894'; Ryan, 'Travels Through the Magic Lantern'.

¹⁵⁰ Driver and Cornish, 'The Mobile Museum: Economic Botany in Circulation', www.royalholloway.ac.uk/mobilemuseum; Cornish, 'Curating Global Knowledge: The Museum of Economic Botany at Kew Gardens'; Parry, 'New Spaces of Biological Commodification: The Dynamics of Trade in Genetic Resources and "Bioinformation"'; Finnegan, 'Crozier's Penguin: An Object History of Maritime and Museum Science'.

scientific knowledge to move across geographical space and allowed it to ‘touch down’ in different places and in different ways.

Facilitating Circulation

Again, this turn towards understanding circulation has not been met uncritically however. It has been suggested that these circulation literatures often fail to offer clear explanations as to the precise means by which these ideas, materials and objects were able to become mobile. Returning to Fan:

The image of circulation [...] can be misleading. It tends to suggest that people, information, and material objects flowed smoothly along networks and channels. Circulation appears to be a ‘natural’ or default condition. Yet, not only did the movement of knowledge and material objects require work [...] but its trajectory may not have been as teleological as circulation would imply.

Such critiques have therefore raised questions regarding precisely who was involved in *facilitating* this circulation of knowledge. With the acknowledgement that ‘work’ was required in order for knowledge to begin its circulatory journey, it has also been recognised that this work was rarely carried out by those scientific practitioners who dealt directly with experimentation and research. Instead, it has become clear that knowledge was made mobile by all sorts of enablers, distributors and intermediary actors. Livingstone hinted at the plethora of people who were crucial in giving knowledge its vital mobility when he noted that:

Peripatetic mathematical practitioners, public lecturers, merchants, itinerant clergymen, journalists, and a host of others were conduits in the flow of intellectual capital.¹⁵¹

Consequently, a more recent turn in the literature has focused attention on those agents and institutions that facilitated this circulation of knowledge. As Charles Withers suggests:

Looking ‘internally’, as it were, at how different sorts of institutions worked, at what was possible to do and say and write within any given setting and what not, and not simply at their external consequences as if organisations acted straightforwardly and of their own volition, may cast further light on how more exactly knowledge about the globe was made and received.¹⁵²

A wide range of institutions have therefore become of interest to scholars interested in the mobility of scientific knowledge. Although there is an argument to be made that returning attention to those institutions which facilitated and mediated the circulation of knowledge could be seen as a return to

¹⁵¹ Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, 138.

¹⁵² Withers, ‘Afterword: Connections, Institutions, Languages’, 251.

thinking in terms of the situated nature of scientific knowledge production, by reconceptualising these circulatory organisations as unbounded spaces – that is, as spaces enabling information to flow both *in and out* of them – we can see that they do not quite fit the same model as the studies described above.

The ever-increasing publishing industry taking hold during this period has been an important method through which scholars have begun to investigate those institutions vital to the circulation of scientific knowledge. Newspapers, magazines and other printed media were filled with stories about the latest goings-on in the world of science and this allowed a diverse array of information to circulate throughout all levels of society.¹⁵³ Consequently, attention has been turned to the investigation of those institutions which created these textual sources so as to understand their role in enabling these important processes of science communication.¹⁵⁴ It was not only textual information that was circulated by such these facilitatory organisations. The tantalizing lectures that were delivered by scientific practitioners at venues across Europe have also come under sustained scholarly scrutiny. Importantly, a number of different institutions have been identified as playing key roles in permitting these lectures to take place. For example, Bernard Lightman has explored the vast array of different organisations situated in and around London which hosted scientific lectures in the second half of the nineteenth century:

During this period scientific lecturing had become formalized when scientific societies and institutions began to concentrate their activities into a season between November and June. The Royal Institution and the London Institution presented a series of lecture courses through the season. Lectures were also offered by the Russell Institution in Bloomsbury, by the Surrey Institution near Blackfriars Bridge, and by a number of Mechanics' Institutes centered in London. University College and King's College offered scientific instruction as well.¹⁵⁵

As is discussed at several points across this thesis, the arrangements put in place to facilitate such lecturing practices often required a great deal of work on the part of these different institutions. Analysis has therefore sought to understand the process which allowed this information to be conveyed successfully.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences*.

¹⁵⁴ Topham, 'Publishing "Popular Science" in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain'; Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*.

¹⁵⁵ Lightman, 'Lecturing in the Spatial Economy of Science', 100.

¹⁵⁶ See Finnegan, 'Finding a Scientific Voice: Performing Science, Space and Speech in the 19th Century'; Finnegan, 'Placing Science in an Age of Oratory: Spaces of Scientific Speech in Mid-Victorian Edinburgh'; Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences*.

It is important to note that this institutional approach to understanding the circulation of science has been useful in informing both exploration studies and histories of the geographical discipline. A number of recent investigations have used this approach to understand the ways in which institutions proved vital in enabling geographical explorers to circulate the information (scientific or otherwise) that had been collected on their journeys.¹⁵⁷ As Innes Keighren, Charles Withers and Bill Bell note, ‘exploration usually also had a lasting public “afterlife” as the results were debated in scientific institutions as well as in the periodical and newspaper press.’¹⁵⁸ They show that the journals and diaries that were published by explorers circulated widely and were immensely popular with all sections of late nineteenth century society.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, it has also been shown that explorers undertook lengthy lecture tours in order to share their experiences with captivated audiences and in the process communicated new information about the regions in which they had been travelling.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, analysis of the geographical institutions that facilitated these circulatory processes has also been conducted using these insights. Charles Withers, for example, has shown that the mobilisation of knowledge was a key institutional policy implemented by the geographical section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) in order for information to reach as wide an audience as possible:

Geographical mobility was an operational strategy designed [by BAAS] to bring science to the public. [...] The dissemination of science – if it was not to be the preserve of metropolitan elites and of their audiences – required geographical mobility.¹⁶¹

Karen Morin has conducted similar work investigating the role of the American Geographical Society (AGS) in the circulation of knowledge during the same period.¹⁶² Centring her analysis on Charles Daly, AGS president from 1864-1899, Morin examines his exceptional ability to coordinate newspaper coverage of geographical exploration so as to ‘popularize the AGS and its programs while contributing

¹⁵⁷ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*.

¹⁵⁸ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, 7.

¹⁵⁹ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; Withers and Keighren, ‘Travels into Print: Authoring, Editing and Narratives of Travel and Exploration, c. 1815–c. 1857’.

¹⁶⁰ Keighren, ‘Giving Voice to Geography: Popular Lectures and the Diffusion of Knowledge’.

¹⁶¹ Withers, *Geography and Science in Britain, 1831-1939: A Study of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, 233.

¹⁶² Morin, *Civic Discipline: Geography in America, 1860-1890*.

to the public education of the world beyond.’¹⁶³ These studies show the role of geographical institutions was key to the circulation of knowledge during this period and that a number of methods available for the communication of the latest geographical information. It is possible for many other types of intellectual organisations to be analysed using this framework and it is clear there is still some work to do in this area. University departments, research institutes, museums, archives and many other centres of circulation all have the potential to be incorporated into this thinking in order to allow their particular roles in facilitating the movement of knowledge to be exposed, analysed and understood in detail.

Mediating Circulation

All of the studies so far discussed have proved insightful in showing how a range of institutions were active in facilitating the mobility of this scientific information. However, we must also consider to what extent these institutions *changed* the knowledge before, during and indeed after it entered into circulation. Put simply, we must question what role, if any, did the circulators of knowledge play in mediating its content? A number of scholars have recently begun to open up these questions. For example, James Ryan has noted:

A range of more recent scholarship has extended this critical framework, broadening a preoccupation with written exploration texts, to consider the distinct ways in which exploration was *mediated* through distinctive practices, rules and relationships involving explorers, sponsors, scientific societies, publishers, governments and the public.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, Simon Naylor and Martin Goodman explain that; ‘circulation suggests an open flow of scientific knowledge between different sites [but also] the possibility of *mutation and change* of that knowledge *en route*.’¹⁶⁵ Finally, Louise Henderson’s focus on textual circulation draws attention to the ways that such mobility almost always involved some degree of change or alteration which, she argues, led to the creation of new knowledge:

¹⁶³ Morin, 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 9., *emphasis added*.

¹⁶⁵ Naylor and Goodman, ‘Historical Geographies of Science’.

Historical ‘geographies of science’ can complement the work of historians of science and provide meaningful insights into how and why certain claims to knowledge gather prominence in certain spaces. Crucial to this endeavour is an attention to the way that knowledge travels in and between different spaces at a number of different scales, for *transmission regularly results in transformation*, facilitating the production of new forms of knowing in the process.¹⁶⁶

All of these arguments have resulted in attention being turned to understanding the ways in which particular institutions were active in changing and/or shaping the knowledge that they were instrumental in circulating. Keighren, Withers and Bell’s work on the nineteenth century publishing house owned operated by John Murray and his eponymous descendants has again been key here. As the authors discuss, by publishing scholarly journals, travel narratives and many other types of scientific literature, this institution is identified as a crucially important facilitator in the circulation of all manner of scientific knowledge during the long nineteenth century.¹⁶⁷ The important point that the authors make, however, is that this particular publisher was instrumental in *editing* the accounts of exploration as and when they arrived at his premises – therefore complicating the circulation process significantly. As the authors explain:

For different travel authors associated in one way or another with the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), John Murray altered the content and form of their books – the sequence and structure of their narrative – and so altered their status as authors. [...] He was also concerned to amend the narrative sequence in order to make a better book, even to alter the author’s words if necessary.¹⁶⁸

Adriana Craciun has explored similar themes in her study of how information about the Franklin searches was circulated. Rather than understanding books as the product of a single author, Craciun emphasises the importance of what she terms ‘collectivities’ in the construction of textual materials:

Like historians of the book, scholars of authorship increasingly consider authorship as shaped within collectivities located in a social nexus (e.g. the literary, the literary circle, the periodical, the coterie, the family, the salon, the centre of calculation, the laboratory, the coffee house) instead of in the imaginations of geniuses or savants.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Henderson, ‘Historical Geographies of Textual Circulation: David Livingstone’s Missionary Travels in France and Germany’, 230, *emphasis added*.

¹⁶⁷ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; Of particular relevance to this thesis, it was this publishing house which produced and distributed the *Geographical Journal* for over a century, see Newman, ‘Geography in Print: Cultures of Periodical Publishing at the Royal Geographical Society, 1830–1900’.

¹⁶⁸ Withers and Keighren, ‘Travels into Print: Authoring, Editing and Narratives of Travel and Exploration, c. 1815–c. 1857’, 562–64.

¹⁶⁹ Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 5; See also Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*.

Furthermore, Ian MacLaren also explains that the changes that institutions and publishing houses made to this circulated information were crucial to its *legitimation*. Work was required to convert an unpublished manuscript into a fully-published book but MacLaren shows that the finished result meant that readers were much more convinced of the veracity of the particular account before them:

The apparent uniformity of copies and the sheer physical imposition of printed books, once bound, weighed in their favour as being more authoritative than multiple copies of circulated manuscripts [...] It became commonplace to understand that a narrative came to public attention when it came into print.¹⁷⁰

Publishing institutions, then, had the capacity not only to produce and circulate knowledge, but also to change it so as to add further credibility. They can therefore be seen as incredibly important nodes within the circulatory knowledge network and hence require detailed scholarly study.

Returning to lecturing, it is important to consider the role of institutions in mediating these knowledge exchange processes as well. Organisations which facilitated lectures had considerable power to decide who was chosen to perform on these occasions and who was not. Such decisions were crucial for determining precisely the kind of person was deemed fit to appear before audiences and share their expertise. This of course had a direct impact on what kinds of knowledge were able to be circulated. Furthermore, the institution hosting the lecture may also exert considerable influence over what could be said by whomever was conveying the information. Finnegan's work studying the lectures delivered by Michael Faraday at the Royal Institution has revealed that a tangible regulatory climate was often in place which acted to frame these oral discussions:

In addition to the physical properties of the lecture theatre, its cultural 'architecture' also mattered. This took form in part through explicit protocols that conditioned the content and conduct of verbal performance. [...] The Royal Institution, as managed and utilised by Faraday, reproduced a particular kind of speech space that supplied an influential model that shaped the politics of scientific discourse.¹⁷¹

Thinking in this way then it is clear that, like publishing houses, the venues and institutions that facilitated nineteenth-century lecturing were also to have significant influence in dictating precisely what types of information were able to become part of the knowledge circulation landscape.

¹⁷⁰ MacLaren, 'In Consideration of the Evolution of Explorers and Travellers into Authors: A Model', 223; See also MacLaren, 'From Exploration to Publication'.

¹⁷¹ Finnegan, 'Finding a Scientific Voice: Performing Science, Space and Speech in the 19th Century', 198.

Having explored the complex dimensions of this theoretical framework, then, the RGS can clearly be interpreted as a centre of circulation. Its library collections, periodicals, maps, photographs and lantern slides were all in constant motion, each spreading knowledge about the world amongst ever-growing audiences as they undertook their circuitous pathways through nineteenth century society. Importantly, as the thesis will show, the RGS was instrumental in not only facilitating, but also mediating, the circulation of this knowledge and so was an incredibly important actor in establishing prevailing geographical ideas. It's Fellows and Officers corresponded with geographers around the world, edited its various in-house scholarly journals and organised meticulously its public lectures and private meetings, therefore playing an imperative role in the mediation of the geographical knowledge it was so crucial in circulating. The RGS is only just beginning to be considered using this circulatory framework and therefore this thesis intends to contribute new empirical evidence to further this emergent intellectual project.¹⁷²

The Arctic Imagination in Circulation

It is clear then that the RGS was an important institution for the circulation of geographical knowledge at the turn of the twentieth century and therefore offers prime opportunity for deploying this circulatory analytical framework. However, it has likely become apparent that this chapter has yet to consider how all of the approaches so far outlined have been utilised when studying the Arctic. This may be down to the fact that there was some delay to the convergence of these two strands of scholarship. As Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin noted in 2002, only a small proportion of the scholarship discussed above had been deployed in studies of the Arctic region:

Despite the rapidly growing interest in the history of scientific travel, in the history of the field sciences and practice, and in the history of representation of nature and indigenous cultures, comparably few works by sociologists or historians of science, published in the mainstream journals or books, have devoted solely or even slightly to the study of Arctic science.¹⁷³

¹⁷² For emergent research using these themes see Newman, 'Geography in Print: Cultures of Periodical Publishing at the Royal Geographical Society, 1830–1900'.

¹⁷³ Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, 6.

Robert David noted similarly that there has been ‘little or no cross-fertilisation’ between these two sizeable bodies of scholarship, but does argue that there is much value to be gained by combining, but also contrasting, history of science approaches with the particular histories and geographies of the Arctic region.¹⁷⁴ This section will therefore begin by exploring the historical development of what has been a particularly strong representation of the Arctic regions within what Denis Cosgrove has termed the ‘geographical imagination’ and will discuss the arguments made by many scholars which consider the complex and overlapping reasons behind this.¹⁷⁵ Following the themes so far outlined, the section will move on to argue that the circulation of geographical knowledge pertaining to the Arctic has been key to establishing this notion of ‘Arcticism.’¹⁷⁶ Finally it will conclude by arguing that, again, we must consider the role of the RGS in the establishment and circulation of these powerful representations.

Imagining the Arctic

The idea of the Arctic in the western geographical imagination carries with it a host of persistent connotations, associations and impressions in both its cultural imaginings and in its political assemblages.¹⁷⁷ In his work, Denis Cosgrove explains that; ‘the poles represent the final ends of the earth, global destinations of ultimate inaccessibility.’¹⁷⁸ Indeed, it has been argued that this Arctic imaginary has been so powerful that it has ‘become [a] consolidated, self-perpetuating vision, an ‘Arcticism’ in line with Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism.’¹⁷⁹ As Robert David and others have noted, the origins of this imaginary are often said to be found in the processes of Arctic exploration that were undertaken throughout the nineteenth century:

¹⁷⁴ David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*, 9.

¹⁷⁵ Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination*.

¹⁷⁶ Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp, *Arctic Discourses*.

¹⁷⁷ See for example Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*; Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860*; David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*; Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*.

¹⁷⁸ Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination*, 217.

¹⁷⁹ Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp, *Arctic Discourses*, x.

Although active Arctic exploration was eventually eclipsed by the economic, political and strategic demands of British imperialism, the public's appetite for polar images was in no way diminished [...] For most of the century, the Arctic was part of the collective imagination, no less significant to that era than the exoticism of the Orient or the darkness at the heart of Africa.¹⁸⁰

For decades then, writers have questioned how a region of the earth that is occupied by a such small proportion of the global population came to have such significance within western cultures and discourses. Anke Ryall, Johan Schimanski and Henning Howard Wærp suggest that:

Different subject positions offered in the dominant discourse may sometimes compete as representatives of national or cultural discourses, one vision of the Arctic and life in the Arctic perspectivizing another. This makes a comparative and geographically articulated study of Arctic discourses imperative if we are to understand how different understandings of the Arctic, embedded in a differentiated global landscape, mix with and relate to each other.¹⁸¹

These questions have inspired a wealth of scholarship which has sought to understand the historical processes through which specific understandings of the Arctic were produced, circulated and internalised across western societies.

Different approaches have been used to tackle this question within the literature. Francis Spufford's book *I May Be Some Time*, for example, has taken a literary studies approach in order to contribute to these debates. Focusing on how both Poles have been depicted historically within English literature Spufford explores the ways in which they have been associated intimately with the concept of the 'sublime:'

The [polar] sublime was an uncontrolled category of perception that roared through and around the tidy certainties of art and experience. It provided a name for a whole heterogenous group of sensations that all, in their different ways, seemed to go *beyond* the rules and systems that were supposed to govern taste.¹⁸²

Similarly artwork has been the focus of Russell Potter's work. Exploring the ways in which the Arctic imaginary permeated a variety of different types of visual culture during the nineteenth century, the author argues:

The Arctic not only emerged as a recurrent subject of romantic landscapes [...] but dominated popular art forms, among them fixed and moving panoramas, magic-lantern shows, and illustrated books and newspapers.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*, 6; See also Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*.

¹⁸¹ Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp, *Arctic Discourses*, x-xi.

¹⁸² Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, 18.

¹⁸³ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*, 4.

Other studies have emerged which argue that mythology and fantasy have played a notably significant role in shaping and compounding this Arctic imaginary. In Shane McCorristine's recent work for example, the author has noted the strong 'spectral' associations that have been bound up with this region of the earth, as suggests:

Nineteenth-century audiences saw the Arctic as a dreamlike zone that overflowed the cartographic and literary space [...] Because of the spectral power of the Arctic as an idea, it could be sensed remotely, dreamed about, imagined and consumed by people who were at a great distance from the Arctic geographically and politically.¹⁸⁴

Ryall, Schimanski and Wærp have discussed the importance of taking these mythologised associations seriously due to the fact they often have material impacts upon contemporary ongoing processes in the Arctic region:

Many images of the Arctic are myths, fictions or speculations. But although it is important to distinguish between illusion and reality in Arctic discourses, the authors acknowledge that the discourses help make up and are part of the realities of the Arctic.¹⁸⁵

Finally, Huw Lewis-Jones's recent book *Imagining the Arctic* studies the historical role of the Royal Navy in establishing lasting impressions of the Arctic regions. Studying this influential institution's persistence in seeking to transform ordinary men into heroes by sending several expeditions northwards, Lewis-Jones traces the emergence of a particular Arctic narrative as it was carefully constructed by both the Navy and the officers who served as leaders of these journeys:

Managed and manipulated in this way, Arctic campaigns fitted perfectly a number of cultural and literary traditions of the period: the adventure ideal testing bravery and character, the enthusiasm for knightly virtues, heightened moral absolutism, and a fascination with individual action in the service of the state.¹⁸⁶

For Lewis-Jones, the Arctic consequently became synonymous with heroic acts of human endurance and those Naval men who dared to enter the region were deemed to possess the moral qualities deemed worthy of receiving the nation's highest honours and accolades.

In sum then, each of these writers argue that regardless of their basis in empirical evidence, it is incredibly important to take *all* Arctic discourses and imaginaries seriously if we are to appreciate fully how the region has been approached historically, socially, politically and culturally. It is clear that

¹⁸⁴ McCorristine, *The Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration*, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Ryall, Schimanski, and Wærp, *Arctic Discourses*, xiii.

¹⁸⁶ Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*, 9.

these imaginaries have been important starting points for thinking about how the Arctic was viewed by nineteenth century society and go some way in understanding why the region occupied such a strong place in the cultural landscape. While this work has been useful in framing wider understandings of the northern regions, the bodies of literature that have been of most relevance to the themes framing this thesis have been those which consider representations of the region within exploration and scientific discourses.

A Science of the Sublime

It has been argued that, beyond cultural imaginaries of the Arctic, it is important to study the ways in which scientific practice has also led to the construction of particular narratives relating to this region. Bravo and Sörlin offer a useful starting point for engaging these debates. In the preface to their book, the authors argue:

Historically, science has played a central role in the historical formation and shaping of the social, cultural and political worlds in the Arctic regions. The dominance of science in the Arctic as a place of cultural imagination is also unique. The images of the region as a desolate place, a pristine natural laboratory for the field sciences, or alternatively, as a place of evolutionary survival for hunting societies, have a longevity, if not accuracy, that is persistent.¹⁸⁷

The book then goes on to present several studies which have looked at the role that science has played in shaping different cultural representations of the Arctic. For example, Gísli Pálsson's chapter analyses the writings of the anthropologist Vilhjalmur Stefansson in order to reveal the significant influence this Canadian explorer-scientist was able to exert in shaping a particularly powerful and enduring image of the Arctic. Studying Stefansson's concept of 'Arcticity' – in some ways akin to the 'Arcticism' described above – Pálsson argues that understanding these scholarly discourses offers an important means through which we can observe the emergence of this particular way of thinking about the region.

The Arctic Zone was established, if not invented, as a fertile but somewhat slippery discursive space, as a relatively demarcated and monotonous site useful for the exploration of particular themes in contrast to the temperate Euroamerican world. [...] Arcticity [...] characterizes the Arctic as both the home of howling, exotic wilderness (the source of 'strange' knowledge and ancient wisdom) and a semi-domestic, 'friendly' space.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, vii.

¹⁸⁸ Pálsson, 'Arcticity: Gender, Race and Geography in the Writings of Vilhjalmur Stefansson', 277; See also Pálsson, 'Race and the Intimate in Arctic Exploration'.

Once again pointing to the mythologised nature of Arctic imaginaries, Pálsson's work also highlights the contradictions that are often inherent within them.

Janet Martin-Nielsen's intriguing study exploring the history of Eismette has also been important here.¹⁸⁹ As a single field site at the centre of the Greenland Ice sheet, Eismette was visited repeatedly by different groups of scientific practitioners, each of whom, according to Martin-Nielsen were seeking to 'give life to that monochromatic world.'¹⁹⁰ As the author explains, another dimension to the Arctic imaginary has been one of fragility and it is argued that science has had a key role here. Martin-Nielsen's work sheds light on how the successive scientific expeditions that arrived at this location each acted in different ways to construct this fragile imaginary:

The image of Greenland that pervades today's media – one of a fragile, delicate environment teetering on the edge of 'potential climate change catastrophe' – is in part a product of these research stations. It has emerged over a period of decades, spurred by the rise of the global environmental conscious narrative and growing concerns over climatic change. By tracing the course of environmental scientific inquiry at Eismette, I aim to shed light on the historical emergence of this image.¹⁹¹

Sublime Science in Circulation

As discussed above, new practices of exploration and the development of new communication technologies permitted geographical knowledge to be circulated amongst European and North American populations in ways that had hitherto been impossible. This was of course also true for information that had been gathered in the Arctic regions. Therefore, it is argued here that it is necessary to combine the recent theoretical work on circulations of knowledge with this work on the scientific Arctic imaginary in order to understand fully how the ideas about the Arctic so far discussed came to have such strong prominence within Western thinking. It is at this exciting point of intersection which this thesis is situated.

Although very much still in its infancy, there have been some studies that have begun to undertake this scholarly project. Beau Riffenburgh's book *The Myth of the Explorer* was an early example of research that has taken the circulation of Arctic information seriously.¹⁹² Riffenburgh's work

¹⁸⁹ Martin-Nielsen, *Eismette in the Scientific Imagination: Knowledge and Politics at the Center of Greenland*, 3.

¹⁹⁰ Martin-Nielsen, 3.

¹⁹¹ Martin-Nielsen, 4.

¹⁹² Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

focuses primarily on newspaper coverage of various expeditions to explore how this medium was hugely important in allowing accounts of Arctic expeditions to reach wide audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Historian Janice Cavell has also engaged with these ideas. In her insightful book *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, Cavell discusses the curious way in which certain tropes relating to the Arctic have appeared and reappeared consistently across the nineteenth century and studies how such ideas about the Arctic were able to permeate throughout all levels of nineteenth-century British Society. As Cavell explains:

Most [people] would have learned about Franklin as they glanced over the newspaper at the breakfast table or listened to a family member reading aloud from a magazine by the fireside at night. Working men and women might have gathered around a literate neighbour to hear a poem about Franklin's lost expedition along with the latest political opinions from the Radical press.¹⁹³

Russell Potter is another author whose work has begun to bring together these themes. Focussing on visual materials in particular, Potter explains that:

The emergence of media such as the panorama and the magic lantern – through whose assistance a vision of ice and snow could be conveyed to a vast public – and the development of the illustrated press, were almost exactly coeval with this public fascination with the North, was a coincidence that had important consequences for both.¹⁹⁴

Scholars such as Michael Robinson and Lyle Dick have since built on these insights in more recent years and have incorporated many of the insights outlined above into their analysis of this important region.¹⁹⁵ By demonstrating how these Arctic imaginaries were able to circulate amongst both academic and lay audiences in the UK – and in particular how they were also able to influence thinking at the RGS – the thesis will argue that Arctic exploration was absolutely crucial in the reorientation of geographical thinking during this period.

¹⁹³ Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860*, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*, 5.

¹⁹⁵ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*; Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*; Dick, “‘The Men of Prominence Are ‘among Those Present’ for Him’: How and Why America’s Elites Made Robert Peary a National Icon”; Dick, ‘Robert Peary’s North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon’; Dick, “‘Pibloktoq’ (Arctic Hysteria): A Construction of European-Inuit Relations?”

Circulating Indigenous Arctic Knowledge

As was hinted at above, the framework that has been discussed here allows for the power dynamics inherent within the circulation of geographical knowledge to be exposed and analysed. Such dynamics have a particularly significant dimension when we begin to consider the geographical knowledge that was produced and circulated via exploratory activity. The final section of this chapter will consider how the circulatory knowledge system that has been examined across the thesis was certainly not an equal one. A discussion will be offered that investigates the extent to which prominence was afforded to certain types of geographical knowledge and it will be shown that this came necessarily at the expense of other perspectives.

Indigenous Intermediaries

A number of studies have emerged recently that have sought to analyse the involvement of what Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam have termed ‘indigenous intermediaries’ within expeditionary narratives.¹⁹⁶ Such work has built on the postcolonial literatures discussed in the first section of this chapter to re-examine and re-evaluate western travel and exploration in all corners of the earth with the purpose of identifying the complex array of actors who were involved in these processes.¹⁹⁷ In their book *Brokers and Boundaries* Tiffany Shellam, Maria Nugent, Shino Konishi and Allison Cadzow define such intermediaries as:

The guides, translators, hosts, labourers and myriad other ‘locals’ who became involved in expeditions and assisted and facilitated European explorers who ventured out into the world from the eighteenth through to the twentieth centuries.¹⁹⁸

Contributors to these literatures argue that such intermediaries played an absolutely vital role in exploratory activity in all corners of the earth, but in most cases the assistance they offered did not feature in the western travellers’ expeditionary accounts upon their return. The consequence of this omission has been that such people and their contributions to the exploratory enterprise have become

¹⁹⁶ Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries*; Shellam et al., *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Boundaries*; Schaffer et al., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820*.

¹⁹⁷ See for example Pandey, ‘Voices from the Edge’.

¹⁹⁸ Shellam et al., *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Boundaries*.

obscured within the Western historical record and so have been consistently overlooked by historians and historical geographers.

Acknowledgement of these ‘absences’ or ‘silences’ has led to calls being made for researchers to study accounts and narratives of exploration more closely in order to draw attention to the complex social dynamics that existed between western travellers and their non-western companions in the field.

Using an example of Arctic exploration, James Ryan argues:

The presence of non-European people dwelling within supposedly desolate environments such as the Arctic, for example, complicated the myth of enterprising imperial men ‘discovering’ and conquering the unknown. Despite the predominant imagery of the Arctic as desolate and uninhabited, Arctic exploration was often full of encounters between Europeans and Eskimo and Inuit people.¹⁹⁹

It has been shown, however, that Western explorers rarely gave acknowledgment to the diverse contributions that such indigenous actors made to their expeditions. Rarer still did they acknowledge fully their (often substantial) dependence on these people.²⁰⁰ Instead, as Francis Spufford has argued, it was more common for indigenous Arctic peoples to be relegated to the status of passive features of the polar landscape, rather than active and engaged members of the expedition party:

The Eskimos [sic] belonged in descriptions of the region, in accounts of its natural history, studies of its folklore, word-paintings of its scenery. They did not belong in the stories of discovery and achievement.²⁰¹

Furthermore, in those rare instances where the assistance received from indigenous intermediaries *did* feature in these accounts, the contributions would in most cases be reduced to mere physical labour or logistical practicalities. As Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam have pointed out:

Even when the presence of others was admitted, [indigenous] contributions to the exploration enterprise and its outcomes would invariably be obscured by their being reduced to ‘mere servants’ or ‘unnamed assistants.’²⁰²

The result of such acts of silencing is that historians hoping to identify and understand indigenous involvement of any sort must in most cases work ‘against the grain’ of the archival record and deploy

¹⁹⁹ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 113.

²⁰⁰ Jones, ‘Local Knowledge & Indigenous Agency in the History of Exploration: Studies from the RGS-IBG Collections’.

²⁰¹ Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, 188.

²⁰² Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries*, 5.

alternative and/or creative methods to recover their obscured and concealed presence (see chapter three).²⁰³

Indigenous Knowledges

The task of recovering indigenous involvement in expeditionary processes is now commonplace in exploration studies and there has been a significant amount of recent scholarship dedicated to this project. However, the recovery of these indigenous actors raises many deeper epistemological questions. That is to say, much work remains to be done in order to understand fully the extent to which these same indigenous actors were involved in the processes of *knowledge production* during these expeditions. As discussed above, postcolonial theorists were successful in demonstrating that exploration practices were hugely important in producing geographical knowledge that framed the world in particular ways. However, there has so far been less attention paid to thinking critically about the specific non-Western actors who were involved in these knowledge production practices. More recent work has therefore examined the diverse array of people who were involved in these activities ‘on the ground’ and have looked beyond the western explorers or expedition parties who had ventured out into the field. Historian of science Kapil Raj’s work has been highly influential here. In his book *Relocating Modern Science* Raj makes explicit his attempts to:

Contest the all-too-commonly accepted assumption that the history of science or, more modestly, the history of modern surveying and mapping, can be told as an autarkic West European story with no mention of concomitant developments in other parts of the globe and their influence on the course of the shaping of this history. This assumption is based largely on conceit, for a number of studies [...] have documented the crucial contributions of autochthonous peoples to European terrestrial surveying and map-making since the beginning of European expansion.²⁰⁴

Scholars such as Raj seek to demonstrate that a range of complex knowledge making practices unfolded as explorers negotiated their physical and theoretical pathways through the field and argue that indigenous people were integral these activities. Furthering the work of Mary Louise Pratt outlined above and using her concept of the contact zone, Raj continues:

²⁰³ See Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

²⁰⁴ Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*, 11.

By studying the construction of scientific knowledge in the contact zone itself, I hope not only to enlarge the scope of social studies of knowledge by bringing contact zones, along with novel historical source material, into their ambit as legitimate sites of scientific knowledge production, but also to show that important parts of what has been passed off as European, or Western, science were actually made elsewhere.²⁰⁵

This work has been incredibly important and has begun to reveal a more nuanced picture of how knowledge about the world has been constructed historically.²⁰⁶ Of particular relevance to this thesis though, studies of this nature have also been conducted in the Arctic regions. Bravo and Sörlin's work referred to above has been key in showing how Arctic peoples have consistently been omitted from accounts of Arctic exploration. Importantly, however, the authors also argue:

The emerging literature on the localized, or situated, character of knowledge and knowledge production share the same general features in this regard, and even studies of field practices in places and spaces where people are in abundance, can be carried out while completely ignoring the human beings who are present in the landscape. Otherwise where people are introduced into narratives of scientific practice, they tend to be passed over as mere staffage figures, acquiring their positions in the narrative by the scientists and not in any integrated account, although some awareness of the scientific mediator is now gradually entering the literature.²⁰⁷

There is increasing recognition that uncovering the role of indigenous intermediaries in the formation of knowledge about Arctic regions is a crucial task and several attempts are now being made to write these important Inuit actors 'back into' historical expeditions in the Northern regions. In reviewing these literatures though, it becomes clear that very few of these important and insightful studies have engaged with the literatures concerning the circulation of knowledge. As will now be discussed, such lack of engagement has revealed that there is still some way to go in gaining a deep understanding of the processes through which indigenous knowledge was obscured from histories of Arctic exploration.

Silences in Circulation

As with the spaces of science framework outlined above, there has been a tendency in these literatures to concentrate efforts solely on analysing the *production* of geographical knowledge. This has meant significantly less attention has been centred on precisely what happened to this knowledge *after* it had

²⁰⁵ Raj, 11.

²⁰⁶ For an overview of these debates see Radcliffe, 'Geography and Indigeneity I: Indigeneity, Coloniality and Knowledge'.

²⁰⁷ Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, 5.

been gathered. Attempts to understand the extent to which these different indigenous knowledges were able to enter into circulations of geographical knowledge have also been less pervasive. It is argued here that overlooking this important task risks failing to understand fully the ways that such contributions came to be obscured within exploration histories. Therefore, this thesis examines the precise processes which resulted in indigenous contributions to Arctic exploration activities being omitted from published expeditionary narratives and exposes how these practices led to the erasure of indigenous perspectives within circulations of Arctic knowledge. In doing so, it will also draw attention to the ways in which these contributions have consequently received significantly less attention from scholars studying histories of Arctic geographical knowledge.

As an important starting point for this challenge, we return to Kapil Raj's work. Taking cartography as a means through which to explore these complicated issues, Raj argues:

An increasing number of historians have in recent years convincingly developed the thesis that Britain and its empire were co-constituted. I hope to show that the history of the modern geographical map is part of this general narrative and can only be meaningfully told as a connected and *circulatory* story, simultaneously involving and constructing metropolis and colony.²⁰⁸

Raj's work states explicitly that all knowledge is inherently circulatory in nature and that the history of science is in fact a history of ideas moving, meeting and mixing. More importantly though, Raj's work shows that these ideas have in fact originated in *all* parts of the world therefore meaning that 'western' science is and always has been comprised of non-western knowledges.

Other research in this field has used more materialist approaches to interpret the circulation of knowledge and the silences within it. For example, scholars have used insights developed by book historians to consider to what extent authorship may be thought of as a more pluralistic venture that it often appears. Innes Keighren, Charles Withers and Bill Bell have urged us to be acutely conscious of what they term a 'double movement' within published expeditionary accounts:

It is [important] to recognise what we may think of as a 'double movement' in many explorers' narratives: between a declared dependence on indigenous agents for practical matters and an epistemological dependence on indigenous knowledge that was, commonly, undeclared because such knowledge came from and was rooted in a culture deemed inferior to that of the European traveller-author. Either way, explorers and scientists in the field certainly depended on such 'go-

²⁰⁸ Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*, 63–64, *emphasis added*.

between,' local authorities or figures who made themselves into vital intermediaries for the accumulation of knowledge in ways that were indispensable to the explorers' own authorial and authoritative claims, even if it was not acknowledged as such.²⁰⁹

The authors' point relating to a lack of acknowledgement is vital. With well-established ideas relating to race and perceived 'cultural superiority' as well as substantial expectations acting to reinforce the 'heroic explorer' narrative, a reliance on others in the field could signify weakness or ineptitude and could hence challenge the individual's self-representation as master of the land under study.²¹⁰ Studying Captain James Cook's encounters with the indigenous peoples of Nootka Sound, Daniel Clayton explains:

Ways of visualizing and representing Native peoples relied on a set of disciplinary practices: the control that Cook could wield over his own narrative, the discipline he could exercise over his crews, the confidence he could place in the military superiority of his ships, and the means he had at his disposal for keeping the lid on the unseen and the unthought.²¹¹

These expectations meant that any assistance received from intermediaries would often be removed from the final published account, either by the explorer him- or herself, or by the publisher hoping to add further credibility to the author's account.

Following these framings further, we are brought back to the role of the institution in these obscuring processes. As Lowri Jones's research has demonstrated, the RGS-IBG archives are a prime resource for deploying this indigenous intermediaries framework.²¹² In 2009, an exhibition held at the RGS-IBG curated by Lowri Jones and Felix Driver had the central task of 'finding the hidden histories' of indigenous involvement in geographical exploration and set out to answer the question; 'was it possible to make the labours of those others more visible, using the very materials stored up by the explorers and their supporters in one of the metropolises of empire?'²¹³ The exhibition proved very

²⁰⁹ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*, 15–16.

²¹⁰ See for example Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

²¹¹ Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island*, 28.

²¹² Jones, 'Local Knowledge & Indigenous Agency in the History of Exploration: Studies from the RGS-IBG Collections'.

²¹³ Driver, 'Intermediaries and the Archive of Exploration'; Driver, 'Hidden Histories Made Visible? Reflections on a Geographical Exhibition'; Driver, 'Exploration as Knowledge Transfer: Exhibiting Hidden Histories'.

successful and uncovered a host of previously overlooked indigenous intermediaries within this extensive exploration archive.

Once again, however, there has again been a notable lack of attention given over to the exploration in Arctic regions using these approaches.

Narratives travel much more successfully than people, resulting especially in the effacement of indigenous agency. In the literature on Arctic science, there has been, by and large, a relative absence of people, apart from the scientists themselves and their metropolitan sponsors, an observation that is valid to a large extent for the history of science as a whole.²¹⁴

The lack of engagement from Polar Studies in these debates is curious, as indigenous involvement in Arctic exploration is well known. This thesis then will bring together all of these strands and show how the Royal Geographical Society and the publishing firms upon which they were reliant to circulate geographical information were complicit in the obscuring of indigenous perspectives of Arctic exploration.

Conclusion: Arctic Geographical Knowledge in Circulation

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework that has informed the overall thesis and has discussed how the empirical findings presented here will further the important advances that have been made in thinking about the geographies of knowledge. By drawing attention to the RGS's position within a complex circulatory knowledge network, this research has aimed to interpret its hugely influential role in shaping geographical information about the Arctic at the turn of the twentieth century.

Thinking of Arctic exploration in these terms offers us a way of combining or uniting all of the useful scholarly approaches to exploration studies and their close relationship to geographical knowledge that have been discussed in this chapter and in turn gives opportunity for deeper engagement with each. First of all, the framework acknowledges that, although not the primary focus, the *place* of knowledge production continues to be of significant importance. Understanding the physical, social and cultural environments in which geographical knowledge is produced is still absolutely vital, in that it influences the ability for information to circulate at a fundamental level. Knowledge produced during

²¹⁴ Bravo and Sörlin, *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, 5.

an Arctic expedition did not travel in the same way as knowledge gleaned from an experiment conducted using a geographical model in the basement of a UK university for example – yet both were undoubtedly examples of geographical knowledge and both were able to circulate. Furthermore, the placing of geographical knowledge is absolutely key to understanding how its circulation was made possible in the first place.

Secondly, the framework does not diminish the important arguments made regarding the politicised and contested nature of geographical knowledge. The thesis therefore rejects Fan's assertion that:

The image of circulation [...] tends to substitute a general metaphor for a careful examination of what actually happened. There are risks in accepting the metaphor too readily. For instance, the image of smooth circulation probably doesn't encourage a critical analysis of, say, power relations in science.²¹⁵

As will be shown, when considering the colonised nature of geographical knowledge, gaining a fuller understanding of its circulatory capacity in fact *permits* geography's imperial epistemological framings to be exposed more fully. Understanding the mechanisms that allowed geographical information to flow is also to understand the processes that halted information from entering into this circulation. That is to say, revealing the processes which lay behind the obscuring or omitting of certain geographical knowledges leads us to interpret the colonial (or other) power dynamics that have been active in shaping the discipline since its foundation.

Thirdly, the reason such a framework has been used for this project is that the integral role of institutions is brought to the fore. Viewed this way, any intellectual institution's ability to facilitate, enable or disable this knowledge circulation process is made clear and therefore opened up for scholarly analysis. More importantly, their sizeable capacity to shape, manage or mediate the information entering into this system is also revealed.

Finally, the Arctic has been a region that has regularly been omitted as an empirical example in these discussions and so therefore will be the geographical region under consideration here. On account of the important place it occupied in the cultural imagination of the time, a growing number of

²¹⁵ Fan, 'The Global Turn in the History of Science', 252.

studies have begun to trace the means by which information about this region was able to circulate widely. However, as yet, few have offered sustained analysis of the role the Royal Geographical Society played in this process. The thesis will therefore examine the unique role that the Royal Geographical Society – and the Fellows of which it was comprised – in shaping, coordinating and mediating geographical knowledge about the Arctic during the period under study.

Chapter 3

Circulation in and of the Archive: Exploring the RGS-IBG Collections

The overarching objective of this doctoral research project has been to understand the ways in which the Royal Geographical Society facilitated the circulation of geographical knowledge relating to the Arctic regions amongst a diverse range of audiences. While this is a relatively straightforward conceptual premise, when we begin to think about how it can be tackled empirically, a number of significant issues arise.

Conducting research with movement and/or mobility as its primary focus has proved to be a notably difficult task and has consequently required the development of a specific set of methods and empirical tools to achieve its various aims.²¹⁶ Similarly, researching the production of knowledge – a wholly intangible entity and a highly contested concept in itself – has also proved to be a challenging prospect and, again, has resulted in the emergence of particular methodological strategies.²¹⁷ The project presented here has not only brought elements of both of these empirical frameworks together but has complicated the task further by doing so from a historical perspective.²¹⁸ The means by which the historical circulation of Arctic knowledge was achieved were incredibly diverse and numerous technologies were deployed so as to enable the communication of this geographical information. To go some way in appreciating the complexity of these intricate knowledge mobilities – and particularly the RGS's involvement in shaping them – the project has analysed the material remnants of this circulatory system currently residing in the RGS's archival collections. Due to the diverse nature of these materials, the project has been undertaken using the cultural-historical-geographical approach that emerged around the turn of the millennium. As Hayden Lorimer explains:

This pioneering school of historical-cultural research was certainly multi-lateralist in voice, was catholic in its choice of source materials, and so can be understood to have quietly legitimated the greater use of such source materials as paintings, photographs, films, documentaries, commercial advertisements, postcards, cartoons, recorded music and sounds, even household objects and personal effects. In the process, and without terrific fanfare, the limits of the geographers' archive were unbound.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ See Merriman, 'Rethinking Mobile Methods'; Cresswell, 'Mobilities III: Moving On' for overviews.

²¹⁷ These have largely followed the anthropological approaches developed by Bruno Latour. See Latour, *Science in Action*; Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*.

²¹⁸ See Jöns, Meusburger, and Heffernan, *Mobilities of Knowledge*; Finnegan and Wright, *Spaces of Global Knowledge: Exhibition, Encounter and Exchange in an Age of Empire*; Daunton, *The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain*.

²¹⁹ Lorimer, 'Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork', 253.

The materials that have been consulted were once the primary means by which knowledge pertaining to the earth and its inhabitants could be mobilised and shared around the world. Yet because of their current status as archival objects, when we think about these materials today, it is their *immobility* that looms large. It is difficult to overlook the fact that these important geographical relics now lay motionless in the store rooms of the Society's headquarters, unknown by many and touched by few. No longer are they changing hands amongst engaged geographical practitioners, being transported across long distances or sparking the geographical imaginations of audiences keen to learn more about the northern regions of the earth. Instead they remain locked in the temperature-controlled, fire-proof chambers of the Lowther Lodge basement, waiting for their specific Call Number to be scrawled in pencil upon a dog-eared request sheet that will allow them to be moved, only temporarily, from their archival place of rest. It would seem that their once frantic and frenetic circulation around the very world to which their contents refer has come to an indefinite and somewhat unceremonious end.

The purpose of the first section of this chapter, then, is provide an overview of this important geographical archive. It will explore the collection's significance as a repository for exploration activity and will discuss the specific materials which it contains that have been used as key resources for answering the project's four key themes. It will then move on to describe how these various items, objects and documents have been analysed so as to reveal this institution's integral role in the circulation of Arctic knowledge during this period.

Before this this discussion can begin, however, it is important to understand how this project was initiated, administered and supported. The section that follows will describe the structure of the overall project in more detail and, in particular, discuss the role that the RGS-IBG itself has played within this doctoral research.

Collaboration Under Consideration

The thesis presented here has been the product of a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scholarship that was funded by the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The collaboration has taken the form of a partnership between the University of Oxford and the Royal

Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG).²²⁰ Over the past decade the RGS-IBG has partnered with a number of UK universities to facilitate the completion of six CDA projects, while a further six are currently in progress. The programme has proved to be successful in generating a diverse range of high quality scholarship that has primarily used the Society's diverse collections as its empirical base.²²¹

The project has benefited significantly from this collaborative arrangement in a number of ways. Perhaps the primary advantage has been the permission of greater level of access to the materials than would normally be the case for an independent researcher. My status as collaborator has allowed me the time to gain a deeper understanding of the archival collection than could typically be achieved by a non-affiliated researcher. Former CDA student Sarah Evans had a similar experience, explaining that the collaborative element of project 'allowed me to immerse myself in the sources, to take my time, and to become engaged and familiar with the material.'²²² Secondly, my status as collaborator has led to the formation of fruitful relationships between myself and the Society's staff members who curate and maintain the RGS-IBG collections. Hayden Lorimer notes that:

Commonly, the researcher wants to be directed along the shortest, quickest and easiest search routes likely to lead to the desired archival object, or anticipated 'find.' The average scholar may brush-up against such pressing archival considerations of containment, deposition and mobility but in large part the practical day-to-day considerations of maintaining an archive are not their immediate concern.²²³

Working closely with these archival professionals has not only allowed me to understand the depth and complexity of the RGS-IBG collections but has also allowed me to access many materials of which I would not otherwise have been aware. Working with the institution's archivists and gaining a fuller

²²⁰ For further discussion on how historical geographers have engaged with the AHRC CDA/CDP scheme see Driver, 'Historical Geographers in Collaboration: Patterns and Prospects'.

²²¹ Completed doctoral theses include: Wess, 'The Role of Instruments in Exploration: A Study of the Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930.'; Hayes, 'Geographical Projections: Lantern-Slides and the Making of Geographical Knowledge at the Royal Geographical Society c.1885-1924', 2016; Cox, 'Armchair Geography: Speculation, Synthesis, and the Culture of British Exploration, c.1830-c.1870'; Evans, 'Terra Incognita: Women on Royal Geographical Society-Supported Expeditions 1913-1970'; De Pomereu, 'The Exploration of Indlandsis: A Cultural and Scientific History of Ice Sheets to 1970'; Jones, 'Local Knowledge & Indigenous Agency in the History of Exploration: Studies from the RGS-IBG Collections'. See also <https://www.rgs.org/about/our-collections/collaborative-research-on-the-collections/>

²²² Evans, 'Between Terra Incognita and Home: A Collaborative Expedition through the RGS Archives', 45.

²²³ Lorimer, 'Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork', 254.

appreciation of the archive's structure has allowed for a richer understanding of the empirical materials and their particular place within the Society's history. As Evans has further explained:

[The collaboration] has also allowed me the time and space to build good relationships with the collections staff, draw on their expertise, and add to gaps in the exciting institutional knowledge where appropriate.²²⁴

The fostering of relationships with the other CDA students that are working with the Society's collections has also been made possible through the collaborative nature of the project. This growing network of scholars has not only proved invaluable for gaining further familiarity with the archival materials but has allowed for the development of many insightful projects that have built upon connections and linkages that have been identified across our specific research interests. These include conference sessions, scholarly workshops and a walking tour that followed the history of the Society's previous premises.²²⁵

Finally, the collaborative position has allowed me to think about my research in ways which may not be commonplace for most academic researchers. The findings of my project are soon to be presented in the form of a display case situated at the RGS headquarters allowing the Society's visitors to interact with their collections in new and engaging ways. Such exhibitions are important exercises in thinking about how archival materials can be presented in ways that open up scholarly research to new audiences who might not otherwise have contact with academic enquiry.²²⁶ The CDA has also facilitated many other engagement activities with wider audiences such as public lectures, collection presentations and undergraduate and postgraduate teaching sessions using collections-based pedagogical methods (see *Figure 2*).

There are, however, some inevitable drawbacks to this collaborative relationship. An argument could be made that this project has relied too heavily on the RGS-IBG materials as the basis for its

²²⁴ Evans, 'Between Terra Incognita and Home: A Collaborative Expedition through the RGS Archives', 45.

²²⁵ A session entitled 'From Victorian Heroism to Twentieth-Century Professionalism? Tensions in the Royal Geographical Society c.1880 – 1930' was held at the British Society for History of Science Conference in 2017 in which four of the RGS-IBG CDA projects were presented and discussed. The walking tour took place during the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in 2016 and involved presentations delivered by CDA students at each of the Society's former premises.

²²⁶ Driver, 'Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching and Exhibiting Geographical Collections'; Driver, 'Hidden Histories Made Visible? Reflections on a Geographical Exhibition'.

findings. There has been a risk from the beginning that the resultant findings could be critiqued for being overly reliant on one institutional archive, therefore failing to gain a broader understanding of Arctic exploration as it was being carried out during the period under study. However, if we bear in mind that the project's stated aims have never been to understand Arctic exploration in its entirety, but rather to understand the *RGS's* involvement in the circulation of Arctic knowledge, such criticism would be somewhat misguided. In any case, as discussed in more depth below, several other archives and collections have been consulted so as to ensure the project has drawn from a wide empirical base.



Figure 2: Author's collection display in the Foyle Reading Room at the RGS-IBG.

A second and perhaps deeper issue relates to the fact that I have been affiliated with the very organisation that has been the primary object of study in my research. While complete academic freedom over my research project has been ensured from the beginning, it must be acknowledged that unconscious bias or internal censorship may have influenced my work in some way. For example, there may be concerns raised by other researchers regarding my capacity to reflect critically on my research while others may question to what extent my role as collaborator has influenced my work. These are valid points and will be addressed further in the 'Positionality' section below.

Now that we are familiar with the collaborative framework through which this project has been produced, we can now turn to examine the materials held in the RGS-IBG collections which have formed the empirical basis for this research.

Collecting the World and Exploring the RGS-IBG Collections

The news that the RGS-IBG has secured funds in order to ‘unlock’ its archives will be generally welcomed by academic geographers. [...] This moment of success also provides an opportunity for critical reflection upon the nature of the archival record for understanding the history and nature of geography.²²⁷

The archival collections held by the RGS-IBG have proved themselves to be a useful resource for a wealth of fruitful academic enquiry.²²⁸ Although the collections have been both a resource for, and an object of, scholarly enquiry since the Society’s foundation in 1830, the ‘unlocking the archives’ project undertaken in 2001 and referred to by Charles Withers above, resulted in a renewed engagement with the archive that has proved to be particularly fruitful. Countless intriguing and enlightening studies, both in geography and in other disciplines, have since drawn from the range of relics and remnants that are held within this fascinating geographical archive and have offered a host of new insights into both histories of exploration and the history of the geographical discipline.²²⁹

While the project presented here certainly does not claim to have engaged with the entirety of the vast array of materials available to researchers, it has nonetheless involved sustained engagement with a broad cross-section of the various items and artefacts that make up the collections. An overview of these materials will now be presented before a discussion is offered explaining how these materials have been analysed so as to achieve the aims of the project.

Institutional Documentation

We begin our journey into the archive by examining a set of resources that have proved vital in informing this project. The materials that document the official functioning of the RGS as an institution and the minutes that were recorded during the meetings of the RGS Council have been crucial to

²²⁷ Withers, ‘Constructing “The Geographical Archive”’, 304.

²²⁸ Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott’s Antarctic Sacrifice*; Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*; Collier and Inkpen, ‘The RGS, Exploration and Empire and the Contested Nature of Surveying’; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*; Stoddart, *On Geography and Its History*; Stoddart, ‘The RGS and the “New Geography”’.

²²⁹ A very small number of examples include Evans, ‘Between Terra Incognita and Home: A Collaborative Expedition through the RGS Archives’; Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women’s Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970*; Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott’s Antarctic Sacrifice*; Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

understanding the decisions that were made as the Society developed throughout its long history (see *Figure 3*). The Council was (and is) the RGS's main governing body and is comprised of a group of Fellows elected by the membership to shape and manage the institution's operations. The Council is also supported by various Sub-Committees that have been established to govern specific aspects of the Society's operations. Some of these specialist groups were created on a temporary basis to manage a particular concern. For example, a body was created to consider where the Society should be housed following the problems of overcrowding experienced in the early years of the twentieth century.²³⁰ Other committees however, such as the Research Committee established in 1903, were to go on to become permanent departments within the institution.²³¹ The meetings undertaken by each of these committees were documented (albeit with varying levels of detail) and the resultant minutes are now available to researchers.

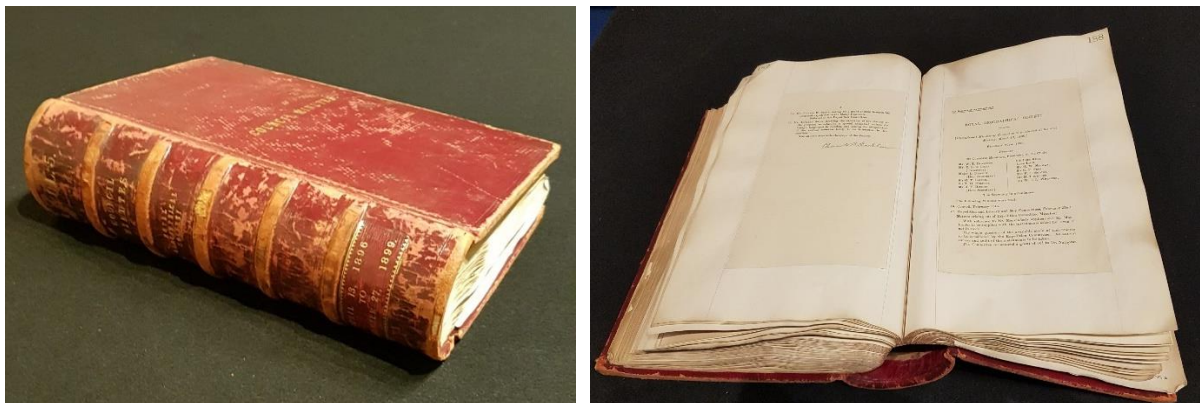


Figure 3: Minutes of RGS Council Meetings.

Study of these institutional documents offers insights into the procedures and decision-making processes undertaken by each respective division of the Society. It is therefore possible to trace broader shifts in policy so as observe the institutional direction in which the RGS was moving, while also allowing potentially divergent agendas to be detected. Minutes of the Finance Committee, the Research Committee and the Expedition Committee meetings have been particularly relevant to this project and have revealed useful information relating to how Arctic exploration was envisaged by the RGS during

²³⁰ Royal Geographical Society Committee Minute Books, 15th January 1892 [RGS-IBG Collections]

²³¹ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

this period. Close examination of the tables of expenditure contained in the Finance Committee minutes for example, indicate which Arctic expeditions were successful in receiving funding from the RGS and, of equal importance, reveals those which did *not* receive societal support. Such details offer important insight into how specific explorers were viewed by the Society and allow us to understand to what extent these people were regarded as capable and trustworthy geographers. The Society's finances also shed light on other aspects of its varied operations. Studying expenditure on the publication of the *Geographical Journal* or on the production of lantern slides allows us to appreciate the full scope of the Society's activities in producing and circulating geographical knowledge during this period. Finally, these minutes are also useful in revealing precisely who was in attendance at each of these meetings which offers important information as to which of the Fellows played key roles in shaping the Society's overarching strategy.

Correspondence Collections

Another of the main resources consulted for this project has been the Society's correspondence collection. This resource is comprised of the copious handwritten and typewritten letters that were exchanged between the plethora of people who maintained some association with the Royal Geographical Society.

A sizeable proportion of this collection is comprised of correspondence between the Society's officers – i.e. the Presidents, Secretaries and Librarians. These documents offer a glimpse into the sustained interpersonal communication that is required to establish and maintain a learned Society during its development over a 188-year period. It can be therefore argued that such letters offer a more detailed history of this Society than that which may be gained from simply reading the Council minutes or from studying 'official' biographical accounts of the Society and its Fellows.²³² Such letters go further than these authorised histories in that they reveal the personal thoughts and opinions of those Society members who were key in guiding the institution. The correspondence collection therefore

²³² Mill; Cameron, *To the Farthest Ends of the Earth: The History of the Royal Geographical Society 1830-1980*.

allows us to understand the reasons behind many of the Council's decisions and also to understand the ongoing processes in which they were framed.

The RGS also holds thousands of letters that were exchanged between the myriad of geographical explorers who maintained some connection to the Society. As might be expected from such a complex institution, a vast array of topics, issues and concerns are discussed amongst the countless scraps of paper that are stored in this extensive archive. More typical exchanges with the Society include requests for expeditionary funding, reports relating to ongoing or completed geographical expeditions and documents containing detailed scientific data that had recently been generated. Importantly however, there are also countless examples of more personal correspondence between those geographical figures who, for whatever reason, picked up their pen to contact the Society. From these material traces, it is possible to follow the establishment – and at times deterioration – of relationships between these past geographical figures and observe how these connections influenced the development of geographical thinking.

As is argued in chapter four, Fridtjof Nansen's hitherto understudied correspondence with the RGS has been of particular importance to this project. The epistolary relationships that developed between Nansen, John Scott Keltie and Clements Markham were vitally important to the emergence of a new style of geographical enquiry during the period under study. Furthermore, as we shall see in chapter five, the correspondence between the RGS and the William Heinemann publishing house has revealed the important ways both of these institutions were vital in shaping and mediating geographical knowledge about the Arctic. Lastly, correspondence has also been a key resource in tracing the Society's involvement in the Cook-Pearry controversy as it unfolded around the world and this is discussed at length in chapter six.

Published Materials

A significant proportion of the study has involved analysis of the diverse range of published materials that are held in the collections. Writers, travellers and explorers all donated their published works to the Society's library, while the Society's succession of Librarians worked tirelessly to 'accumulate a library

of the best books on geography.’²³³ This has resulted in a geographical collection now in excess of 150,000 books of various styles and genres which in some way relate to geographical interests.²³⁴ As the circulation of Arctic geographical knowledge has been a key aspect of this research, detailed analysis of the numerous published expeditionary accounts written by Polar explorers has necessarily been an important task. It is also important to acknowledge that multiple editions of these expedition accounts were published. As chapter seven makes clear, examining different editions of the same published work is key to understanding the complicated way in which knowledge about the Arctic was able reach different audiences and readerships.²³⁵ The RGS-IBG collections have multiple editions of a majority of the accounts that have been studied in this project, however, as will be discussed, in some cases it has also been necessary to consult libraries and collections elsewhere.

The Journals

The RGS’s series of scholarly periodicals have unsurprisingly been a key empirical source for this research. Dean Bond has shown that geographical journals were an absolutely essential component in the geographical knowledge circulation process while John Scott Keltie himself referred to the Society’s journal as an ‘organ’ giving some indication as to the important place it occupied within the functioning of the institution.²³⁶ The period under study in this project saw the emergence of the fourth iteration of the Society’s monthly publication – i.e. *The Geographical Journal* – so this has been the version that has most strongly informed this research. However, it has also been crucial to consult the earlier formats of the Society’s periodicals so as to understand fully the development of this publication and consider how its authoritative voice on all things geographical came to be established.

²³³ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 17.

²³⁴ Crone, ‘The Library of the Royal Geographical Society’; RGS-IBG, ‘About our Collections’, <https://www.rgs.org/about/our-collections/>

²³⁵ See Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*.

²³⁶ Bond, ‘Plagiarists, Enthusiasts and Periodical Geography: A.F. Büsching and the Making of Geographical Print Culture in the German Enlightenment, c.1750-1800’; See also Newman, ‘Geography in Print: Cultures of Periodical Publishing at the Royal Geographical Society, 1830-1900’; Baigent, ‘Keltie, Sir John Scott (1840-1927)’.

Although the journals are now conveniently available as an online resource, Emily Hayes has noted that these digitised versions alone are not wholly adequate for research into the history of the RGS.²³⁷ She explains that some sections of the journals have not been digitised in their entirety (for example advertisements have been omitted), while others have been divided and/or ordered in a different fashion to how the Journal was originally printed. Consequently, a significant degree of these publications' original continuity and clarity has been lost in this digital transformation. It is therefore fortunate that the RGS-IBG still houses both bound and unbound copies of the various iterations of the Society's journals allowing them to be viewed in their initial printed form.

A related, and equally valuable, set of resources available to researchers are the original manuscripts for many (though not all) of the final printed articles that have featured in the Society's journals. These hand-written documents provide opportunity to study these articles as works-in-progress before they were edited, shaped and redrafted into the version that ultimately appeared in print. A few of these manuscripts are also accompanied by reports written by reviewers who had examined and critiqued the work before its acceptance for publication. Reading these reports and studying which aspects of the article had been amended or revised reveals the collaborative nature of knowledge production process, and points to the RGS's role in mediating the circulation of geographical knowledge that again is a key theme referred to throughout this thesis.

Newspaper Clippings

Often the allure of archival research is the possibility that the researcher may stumble across some kind of material that they were not anticipating. In this case, while combing through the sections of collection pertaining to Robert Peary, a sizable folder filled with delicate scraps of yellowed paper was found. These scraps are in fact a mound of newspaper clippings which describe Peary's reaching of the north pole and which have been collated and organised so as to follow the story of the North Pole controversy

²³⁷ The periodicals have been through a series of iterations: The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1831-1880); Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1857-1877); Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography (1857-1877); The Geographical Journal (1893-present); See Hayes, 'Geographical Projections: Lantern-Slides and the Making of Geographical Knowledge at the Royal Geographical Society c.1885-1924', 2016.

as it played out across the early twentieth-century media. Anke te Heesen suggests that the act of collecting these small snippets of journalistic information may be thought of as a meaningful act in itself, explaining:

The act of archiving clippings always focused on the up-to-the minute character of newspaper's contents – events that had just happened and were being reported on for the first time. The point was to follow the passage of time, to observe events as they were taking place.²³⁸

While we know that the hundreds of articles, photographs, drawings and maps printed in various different American newspapers were compiled by a certain 'J. W. Walker of Chicago', there is no further information available in the archive to identify this person.²³⁹ There is still much that can be learned from these cuttings however. First of all, as was likely to be their intended purpose when they were first collated, the articles offer a convenient way of following the quick-paced story as was breaking on both sides of the Atlantic. Printed dates – and in some cases a note explaining whether it was the morning or evening edition of the publication – allow the story to be followed as it unfolded and allow the researcher to understand precisely what information was known or unknown at different points in the dramatic saga. The fact that the collection features stories from multiple newspapers also allows some insight as to how the saga was reported in different ways by each publication.

It is also vitally important to think about this collection of cuttings *as a collection*. It is evident that the mysterious Mr Walker took the time painstakingly to extract this information from the increasingly voluminous amounts of information available to twentieth-century readers and collated it into a personal archive of these events. As Heesen further notes:

Those who wanted to save the reports and knowledge newspapers contained [...] tried to capture the stream of the medium's constant reappearance and the flow of information through it in a slower form of step-by-step documentation.²⁴⁰

This act of collecting is highly significant and gives an indication as to the important place that Arctic exploration played in the global circulation of knowledge during this period. It is also important to recognise that this extensive collection was subsequently deposited into the RGS-IBG collections. That the resource is available for consultation today underlies the fact that at some point, it was decided that

²³⁸ Heesen, *The Newspaper Clipping: A Modern Paper Object*, 3.

²³⁹ RGS-IBG Collections catalogue

²⁴⁰ Heesen, *The Newspaper Clipping: A Modern Paper Object*, 5.

this assortment of loose leaf articles was deemed of such importance to the history of Arctic exploration – or perhaps to the history of the RGS – that it should be placed in the Society’s stores for future use or posterity. Walker (or perhaps his beneficiaries) obviously viewed the RGS as a suitable home for this extensive collection and the Society accepted the donation implying that they obviously concurred.

These physical remnants of these newspaper clippings have been supplemented by access to digitised newspaper archives. The array of historical newspapers that can now be accessed online is remarkable. Furthermore, the tools available to the researcher in order to utilise this resource effectively – such as searching by keyword and narrowing results to specific dates – allow a huge number of news articles from all around the world to be accessed quickly and easily. Such a resource also allows the physical clippings in the archive to be situated amongst the contemporary news agendas of the day that gives some indication as to their relative importance in comparison to other emerging stories. It also allows for even further comparison to be made across different newspapers which again brings divergent takes on the same story to the fore. This can make any contemporary agendas or political positions more detectable and can also shed light on how different audiences and readerships might have interpreted the ongoing events.

Maps and Cartographic Materials

The reputation of any geographical archive is often considered to be founded upon the quality and extent of its map collections. As with the formation of an extensive geographical library described above, another of the Society’s founding principles was to establish ‘[A] complete collection of maps and charts from the earliest period of rude geographical delineation to the most improved of the present time; as well as such documents and materials as may convey the best information to persons intending to visit foreign countries.’²⁴¹ This lofty ambition has gone a significant way to being met with the RGS-IBG now housing one of the largest collections of cartographic materials in the world. Over one million maps in various forms are available to researchers and it is worth noting also that many of these were produced by the Society’s in-house draughtsmen and cartographers such as Edward Reeves and John

²⁴¹ Crone, ‘The Library of the Royal Geographical Society’, 27.

Coles, making this collection a notably unique resource.²⁴² The complexity and variety of maps that have been produced over the Society's long history is certainly worth noting. For example, some were made to supplement articles in the Society's various journals, while others were produced to accompany the lectures and meetings that were hosted at the RGS headquarters. As the extract above declares, the Society was equally keen to collect maps that had been produced overseas meaning that a significant proportion of the collection was created by cartographers from numerous countries around the world. Indeed, an intriguing ongoing project is currently being undertaken to uncover and study those maps in the Society's collection that were produced by or with indigenous peoples from around the world who had received no formal geographical training.²⁴³

The maps which have been of particular use for this study are those depicting the expeditions undertaken by the explorers who have formed the primary focus of the research. Fridtjof Nansen, Robert Peary and Ejnar Mikkelsen all published articles in the Society's journals and all delivered lectures before the Society's Fellows. There are therefore several maps held in the collections that trace their expeditions in the Arctic regions and depict their journeys across these frozen landscapes. As discussed further in chapter four, the extensive amounts of scientific data collected by Nansen during his Farthest North expeditions enabled the first maps of the North Polar Basin to be created and several of these detailed representations also feature in the Society's map collection. Lastly, as discussed in chapters five and seven, Ejnar Mikkelsen produced several hand-drawn sketch maps while conducting his expedition in Northern Alaska and these unpublished cartographic materials are also housed in the Society's collections.

Visual Materials

The Society's Picture Library contains plethora of materials which are grouped together here under the title 'visual materials.' Paintings, drawings and other types of artwork are just some of many possible

²⁴² Reeves, *Recollections of a Geographer*; RGS-IBG, 'About our Collections', <https://www.rgs.org/about/our-collections/>

²⁴³ Slappnig, 'The Indigenous Map', <https://www.rgs.org/about/our-collections/collaborative-research-on-the-collections/the-indigenous-map-native-information-ethnograph/>

starting points for getting to grips with this extraordinarily rich collection. On most expeditions, it was typical that at least one member of the expedition party would be trained in how to represent the earth in some way or another.²⁴⁴ This has meant that the RGS-IBG collections hold a countless array of pieces of artwork that depict places and people from all corners of the world. Botanical specimens, topographical features and anthropological ‘specimens’ are just some of the phenomena depicted in these images and the collection contains a great deal of visual material that has received little scholarly attention. It is not only in the field that artworks were produced however. As we will see in chapter four, sketches were drawn to illustrate Fridtjof Nansen’s reception in London, pointing to the importance of this flamboyant occasion, while portraiture also features prominently in the collection (much of which is visible in *Figure 4* below). Such images allow us to interpret which geographical figures were heralded by the Society to such an extent that their likeness was granted the honour of featuring on the walls of their headquarters and, equally, those that were not deemed of sufficient importance.

Photographs are another vitally important component of the Picture Library collections. The period under study in this thesis saw the increased use of photography during geographical expeditions as explorers increasingly used this technology to document their expeditions as they unfolded.²⁴⁵ Consequently the RGS-IBG archive contains a vast number of photographs taken during various expeditions to all parts of the world, including many taken in the Arctic regions. Several have been of direct relevance to this project, including images depicting Nansen training for his numerous expeditions as well as ones featuring the celebratory launch of his ship the *Fram*, in Oslo.

The Society’s lantern-slide collections are a related resource that has proved particularly useful for this project. These small pieces of glass may be thought of as material remnants of the lectures that were held at the Society and hence provide tangible evidence of geographical knowledge in circulation. Enabling all manner of information and imagery to be projected at a large scale onto a screen during a lecture – for example drawings, maps, photographs and numerical graphs – lantern slides became an

²⁴⁴ Quilley, ‘Introduction: Mapping the Art of Travel and Exploration’.

²⁴⁵ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*; Yusoff, ‘Configuring the Field: Photography in Early Twentieth-Century Antarctica’; Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire*.

increasingly important feature of the Society's meetings and lectures.²⁴⁶ These materials have been of particular interest to this project in a number of ways. Nansen's lecture at the Royal Albert Hall made extensive use of lantern slides; depictions of him and his expedition party travelling across the icy landscapes of the Polar sea were projected before the sizeable audience but, importantly, so too was the scientific information which he had recorded *en route*. Robert Peary also used this technology to present depictions of the indigenous Inuit intermediaries who assisted him during his 1909 North Pole expedition and, as is discussed in chapter seven, this was done in particular (racialised) ways.



Figure 4: The Museum Room in Lowther Lodge c.1920.²⁴⁷

Objects & Artefacts

Finally, analysis of the Society's object and artefact collections has also proved useful in providing insights into the RGS's intriguing involvement in the Arctic regions. When the Society moved to its current location in South Kensington in 1912, the incumbent President Lord Curzon decreed that a

²⁴⁶ Hayes, 'Geographical Light: The Magic Lantern, the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society and the Professionalization of Geography c.1885-1894'; Hayes, 'Geographical Projections: Lantern-Slides and the Making of Geographical Knowledge at the Royal Geographical Society c.1885-1924', 2016.

²⁴⁷ Courtesy of the Picture Library, RGS-IBG Collections [S0012106]

geographical museum be assembled on the premises.²⁴⁸ Explorers were invited to donate a material object to the Society that would be added to the museum collections and exhibited in Lowther Lodge's central hall (see *Figure 4*).²⁴⁹ Although few of these items remain on display today, they continue to reside in the Society's stores and are available for consultation by researchers. Objects-based research has proved to be an invaluable tool for geographers investigating the discipline's complex histories, while also offering new and intriguing insights to histories of exploration.²⁵⁰ An object that has been of particular relevance to this study is the cooking stove that was used by Robert Peary during his 1909 expedition to reach the North Pole. The fact that this item was added to the Society's object collections, and that it remains there today, points to the celebrated status that Peary has maintained at the RGS for over a century. The Society's collection of medals has also been of particular use to the project.

Other Archives & Collections

While the RGS-IBG archives have provided the majority of the materials used in this project, it has also been necessary to consult collections held by several other libraries and institutions. Much of the discussion presented in chapter four, for example, has drawn on the Fridtjof Nansen Collection held at Norway's Nasjonalbiblioteket [National Library]. The correspondence generated in the later years of the study period was produced using a typewriter meaning that carbon copies of the letters written by Keltie and the other RGS Secretaries are therefore retained at the Society. Most of the correspondence between Clements Markham and Fridtjof Nansen was handwritten however, meaning that no carbon copies exist in the Society's collections. It has therefore been necessary to study the extensive collection of Nansen's correspondence with Society figures that is held at Nasjonalbiblioteket. The collection includes the hundreds of letters that were sent from the RGS to the Norwegian allowing a more comprehensive account of this communication to be gained. Intriguingly, the library also houses a series of handwritten documents that are in fact lecture notes written in preparation for the various

²⁴⁸ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

²⁴⁹ Mill.

²⁵⁰ Slatton, 'Materialities and Historical Geographies: An Introduction'; Driver, 'Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching and Exhibiting Geographical Collections'.

presentations that Nansen delivered across Europe upon his return from his expeditions. These have provided a fascinating glimpse into how the Norwegian prepared for his appearances at the various geographical venues and therefore give us some indication of the performed geographies of lecturing during this period.

As described above, an important aspect of this project has been to analyse critically the published accounts of explorers' expeditions. This has involved considering the significance of different editions of the same published account so as to understand how different audiences at different times were able to learn about the Arctic and to analyse the differences between them.²⁵¹ Consequently, the books held by the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford, as well as the University Library and the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) at the University of Cambridge, have been consulted and compared so as to identify any notable differences between these narratives.

The project has also relied heavily on digital and online archives. For example, the resources available at the *Internet Archive* have been accessed frequently throughout this project in further attempts to trace different versions of the same exploratory text.²⁵² This archive is comprised of millions of digitised texts, all of which are able to be accessed and downloaded by researchers for scholarly use. Each of the published accounts that have featured in this study are available via this online resource, however, as with each of the physical libraries that have been visited, different *editions* of each text are not always available. Another online resource that has proved to be particularly useful has been the online photograph archive of the United States Geological Survey (USGS).²⁵³ This collection features high quality digital reproductions of the thousands of photographs contained within the various USGS collections, most of which are physically housed at the USA's National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Again, these are available to researchers as free downloads. This collection of images has been particularly relevant in studying Ejnar Mikkelsen's expedition to Northern Alaska. Mikkelsen's companion on the expedition, Dr Ernest Leffingwell, was a geologist associated with the USGS and he

²⁵¹ For more on this methodological approach see Keighren, *Bringing Geography to Book: Ellen Semple and the Reception of Geographical Knowledge*.

²⁵² Available at: <https://archive.org/>

²⁵³ Available at: <https://library.usgs.gov/photo/> .

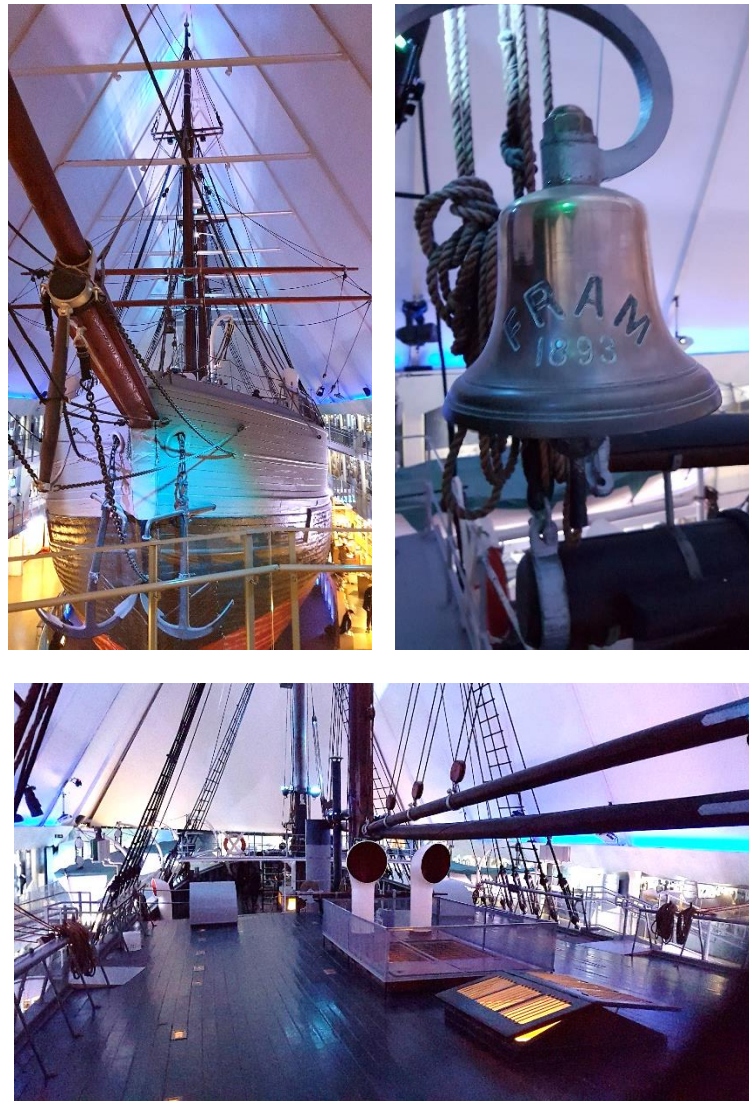


Figure 5: Images of the Fram Museum in Oslo, Norway.²⁵⁴

therefore chose to deposit the photographs taken during the journey into these collections upon his return.

A final important collection for this project has been the Fram Museum in Oslo. The museum has informed the research in a number of ways, although perhaps not in quite the same material terms at the other libraries and museums consulted. Visitors to the museum are able climb aboard Nansen's famous vessel and explore the preserved interior of the ship (see *Figure 5*). Standing on the bow of this carefully-designed ship and immersing oneself its lower decks gives the visitor – and the researcher –

²⁵⁴ Photographs taken by author.

an embodied experience of life on board the *Fram* and allows one to imagine how the crew might have felt as they drifted across the North Polar Sea.

Each one of materials discussed so far are significantly different – both in terms of each item’s individual materiality and also in their significance as an object in the geographical archive. However, although mindful of this fact, the project has aimed to view all of these materials less as individual items but rather as an assemblage of components that enabled and facilitated the global circulation of Arctic geographical knowledge.

It must be remembered that audiences were subjected to all of these materials simultaneously (although it is important to note not all audiences were subjected in equal ways) and therefore we must consider how particular Arctic narratives appeared *across* these various materials if we are to gain a clearer understanding of how the powerful cultural imagination of this icy region was shaped.

Acknowledging Absence

While the range of materials consulted for the project has been considerable, it is important to acknowledge, however, that what *cannot* be found in the archive is always as significant as that which can. Jake Hodder reminds us that archival absence must be treated with the same levels of attention as archival abundance, and notes:

The act of archiving is invariably one of both preservation *and* *discardment*, which, in revealing certain aspects of the past, conceal others.²⁵⁵

Thinking about which materials are not in the RGS-IBG collections and the reasons behind such nonexistence opens up a further realm of archival considerations. The study presented here has taken seriously the notion of levels of absence versus levels of abundance and has consequently allowed a means of interpreting which explorers were valorised by the RGS and which were not. The Society’s collections relating to Robert Peary, for example, are much more extensive than those of his polar rival Frederick Cook. As we will see in chapter six, this disparity is important in that it is reflective of Cook’s status at the Society when compared to Peary’s. Of course, this in turn has had important implications

²⁵⁵ Hodder, ‘On Absence and Abundance’, 2, *emphasis added*.

for how the historical narrative surrounding each of these men is retold. Similarly, in chapter seven, archival absence is vitally important when we think about indigenous contributions to Arctic expeditions. As will be discussed in more depth in the sections below, archives are incredibly political entities in terms of which types of people are present and which are not, and therefore careful analysis is required to uncover those voices that do not feature prominently.

Archival Analysis

Now that we have completed our tour of the RGS-IBG collections and are familiar with the diverse array of archival materials that have been consulted, we can turn to consider how they have been brought together and analysed in such a way so as to answer the research questions at the heart of this project. A number of strategies have been deployed to allow the intriguing historical narratives bound up within these materials to be (re)told and also to permit new histories of the geographical discipline to be revealed. Importantly though, a methodology has also been developed that allows us to observe the ways in which the circuitous journeys that these objects once took were initiated by the RGS and to interpret the important role that the Society played in shaping this circulation. Lastly, the methodology also attempted to allow those voices in the archive which have so far been overlooked to be identified and made visible, again offering new ways of thinking about the history of Arctic exploration and the development of the geographical discipline.

Of Big Names and Small Stories

Although the importance of studying geography's history has been accepted widely, the means by which such a history is written is far from agreed upon.²⁵⁶ Different approaches to studying the discipline's development have emerged over its long history, and each has its own merits and caveats. An overview of these different scholarly traditions will now be presented before the precise methodology used for this project is discussed and explained.

²⁵⁶ Barnett, 'Awakening the Dead: Who Needs the History of Geography?'

Taking the Royal Geographical Society as its primary focus, the project has necessarily centred its attention on those figures in our discipline's history who might be described as the geographical 'establishment.' In a manner which might be considered a more traditional method of investigating geography's development, the thesis has focused its attention on those people who have often been labelled as pivotal to the shaping of the discipline's intellectual trajectory. The debates which played out between such geographical 'heroes' as Clements Markham, Halford Mackinder and Francis Galton have been analysed closely so as to interpret their particular perspectives on the changing nature of geographical scholarship and to consider their position during the contentious period in geography's history under examination here. In doing so, it has followed the style of scholarship described by Hayden Lorimer which 'look[s] towards high academic debate to explore the discipline's modern intellectual provenance and to explain the paradigmatic changes that prompted its different epistemic episodes.'²⁵⁷

It could be suggested that this approach to geography's history is a relatively straightforward one in methodological terms. Scholars following this tradition have analysed the lectures given before the Fellows of the RGS and their subsequent publication in the geographical journal so as to interpret the competing motivations being voiced regarding geography's philosophical underpinning.²⁵⁸ Similarly, the published works and memoirs of key thinkers in our discipline's history have been poured over in attempts to understand how particular personalities viewed the world they sought to understand and how they conceptualised the study of geography.

However, following the cultural turn that swept through the discipline in the 1990s and early 2000s, it became apparent that a consideration of the history and philosophy of geography through the lens of its establishment figures necessarily came with some limitations. This traditional method of interpreting geography's complex history came under sharp critique for its limited focus on a few individuals and its propensity to exclude a host of other important geographical thinkers. As Innes Keighren explains:

²⁵⁷ Lorimer, 'Telling Small Stories: Spaces of Knowledge and the Practice of Geography', 200.

²⁵⁸ David Stoddart's, *On Geography and Its History* is a typical style of this scholarship.

[The] tendency to recount the discipline through the professional achievements of its distinguished practitioners has been subject to criticism, for its paternalistic biographical orientation, hagiographic assessments, and Anglo-American focus.²⁵⁹

Feminist geographers in particular offered important critiques of such an approach, arguing that it contributed to and perpetuated the erasure of the crucial contributions to the geographical enterprise that had been made by women.²⁶⁰ Postcolonial scholars too critiqued these traditional histories of the discipline by making clear their undoubtedly Western/Anglo-American focus and exposing the ways this has had deep implications for the character of scholarly geography and those who practice it.²⁶¹

It was therefore evident that the cultural turn had brought a new paradigm in the historiography of geography. Calls were made to examine the other figures in geography's history who have made important contributions to the geographical enterprise. These more 'grass-roots' studies attempted to reorient attention away from the key theorists in our discipline's history, and instead look to more quotidian examples of geographical enterprise being undertaken. The concept of 'small stories' developed by Lorimer and Spedding offered geographers means of moving past the partial and often uncritically hagiographic tendencies of writing geography's history and instead allowed study of the more 'everyday' practices and processes which have constituted geography's development.²⁶² These insightful studies have offered an array of examples which highlight the diverse ways geography has been influenced by all sorts of people who would not typically come under scholarly scrutiny. In summary, this intervention turned attention to the plethora of hitherto overlooked aspects of geography's history and those continuing to pursue narrow analyses of 'high academic debate' were critiqued as pursuing outdated lines of enquiry.

It can be argued, however, that more recent literatures pertaining to geography's history have seen a tentative return to the study of those people who might be termed the 'geographical greats.'

²⁵⁹ Keighren, 'Breakfasting with William Morris Davis: Everyday Episodes in the History of Geography', 48.

²⁶⁰ Evans, Keighren, and Maddrell, 'Coming of Age? Reflections on the Centenary of Women's Admission to the Royal Geographical Society'; Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970*; Domosh, 'Toward a Feminist Historiography of Geography'.

²⁶¹ Indeed, these debates have resurfaced recently through calls to 'Decolonise the Discipline.' See Esson et al., 'The 2017 RGS-IBG Chair's Theme: Decolonising Geographical Knowledges, or Reproducing Coloniality?'; Radcliffe, 'Decolonising Geographical Knowledges'; Noxolo, 'Introduction: Decolonising Geographical Knowledge in a Colonised and Re-Colonising Postcolonial World'.

²⁶² Lorimer, 'Telling Small Stories: Spaces of Knowledge and the Practice of Geography'; Lorimer and Spedding, 'Locating Field Science: A Geographical Family Expedition to Glen Roy, Scotland'.

Importantly, though, this has been done in a significantly different manner to the problematic hagiographical styles that went before. Following the cultural turn it has been largely agreed that it is no longer enough to study geographers' contributions to geography through their *published works alone* and instead a more holistic appreciation of what has been term their 'geographical lifeworlds' is now required.²⁶³ This rearticulated approach is perhaps most clearly outlined by Innes Keighren's study of the celebrated American geomorphologist William Morris Davis.²⁶⁴ In his work, Keighren argues that:

The lives lived *by* geographers are, fundamentally, lives lived *as* geographers, and the professional contours of the discipline represent the personal topography of its participants. There is value, then, beyond the anecdotal, in engaging with the personal, individual, and idiosyncratic aspects of past geographers' lives and attending to their quotidian archival remnants.²⁶⁵

In such analysis, the nuances, contradictions and eccentricities inherent to all geographers' (or indeed human) lives is laid bare and questions are raised as to how personal moments in the 'lifepath' of these people has had some part to play in the shaping of the subject's thinking.²⁶⁶ As Jake Hodder has summarised, such an approach seeks to differentiate between 'a focus on the internal motivations of past lives and the external factors that shaped them; between a life as text or context.'²⁶⁷ Similarly, Keighren concludes:

Whilst a scholarly attention to the personal life, as it relates to the professional life, might be dismissed merely as avocation, the fact that geography as a *discipline* can be seen as a corollary of geography as a *practice* makes clear the importance of auto/biography as a historical method. There is value in engaging with the 'annoyingly complex and uncertain' facets of past lives.²⁶⁸

Several examples of this contextualised approach to key geographical figures have emerged in recent years. Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt is one figure who has attracted much scholarly attention of late.²⁶⁹ Similarly, the German scholar Friedrich Ratzel's contributions to the geographical enterprise have attracted renewed interest when viewed from this more personal perspective.²⁷⁰ Avril

²⁶³ Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*.

²⁶⁴ Keighren, 'Breakfasting with William Morris Davis: Everyday Episodes in the History of Geography'.

²⁶⁵ Keighren, 54.

²⁶⁶ Daniels and Nash, 'Lifepaths: Geography and Biography'.

²⁶⁷ Hodder, 'On Absence and Abundance'.

²⁶⁸ Keighren, 'Breakfasting with William Morris Davis: Everyday Episodes in the History of Geography', 50 *original emphasis*.

²⁶⁹ Echenberg, *Humboldt's Mexico: In the Footsteps of the Illustrious German Scientific Traveller*; Dettelbach, 'The Face of Nature: Precise Measurement, Mapping, and Sensibility in the Work of Alexander von Humboldt'.

²⁷⁰ Klink and Bassin, 'Introduction: Lebensraum and Its Discontents'; Paddock, 'Spatial Relations and the Struggle for Space: Friedrich Ratzel's Impact on German Education from the Wilhelmine Empire to the Third

Maddrell's work has also followed this style to contextualise the important place of female geographers in histories of geographical scholarship.²⁷¹ Each of these studies have sought to 'put geographers in their place' (to borrow a phrase from David Livingstone) and seek to understand how their lives and experiences were not only a backdrop to their intellectual contributions but were fundamental and integral to their geographical scholarship.²⁷²

The project presented here has attempted to take this contextual approach one step further. The lives of the geographers who are the focus of the study are not considered in scholarly isolation. Instead, they are considered *in relation* to one another. That is to say, the project has sought to add further nuance to histories of our discipline by examining the *personal relationships* that were established and maintained between the important geographical figures who contributed to geographical understandings of the Arctic during this period. In doing so it has followed a number of recent studies that have been interested in tracing how such geographical relationships were crucial to the subject's development at many points in its history. One example can be found in Federico Ferretti's recent work on the emergence of radical geographies in the late nineteenth century.²⁷³ Ferretti examines the connection established between RGS Secretary John Scott Keltie and Russian Anarchist geographer Pyotr Kropotkin to argue that this relationship was essential in allowing anarchist and radical geographies to gain prominence during this period. Trevor Barnes has conducted similar work focussing on two of the most well-known American geographers of the last century, Richard Hartshorne and William Bunge, to analyse the extent to which the intriguing relationship that developed between these two men was vitally important to the philosophical reorientation of geography away from regionalism during the 1960s.²⁷⁴ Perhaps the most extensive use of this methodology, however, can be seen in Geoffrey Martin's recent book *American Geography and Geographers*.²⁷⁵ Martin makes extensive use of this

Reich'; Verne, 'The Neglected "Gift" of Ratzel for/from the Indian Ocean: Thoughts on Mobilities, Materialities and Relational Spaces.'

²⁷¹ Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970*.

²⁷² Livingstone, 'Putting Geography in Its Place'.

²⁷³ Ferretti, *Anarchy and Geography: Reclus and Kropotkin in the UK*; Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876-1917'.

²⁷⁴ Barnes, 'The Odd Couple'.

²⁷⁵ Martin, *American Geography and Geographers: Toward Geographical Science*.

methodological strategy to study the significance of connections made between a staggering array of influential geographers that have been active shaping the discipline in the United States. By traveling to over 150 geographical archives and repositories situated across the United States, Martin ‘consult[ed] data available perhaps nowhere else to comprehend exchanges between unlikely or little-known partners in correspondence, which facilitate[d] understanding of larger matters.’²⁷⁶ While such an approach has clearly been of use to historiographies of geography, it has also been applied in histories of geographical exploration. Christina Sawchuck’s study delved deep into the nuances of relationship developed between the anthropologist Vilhjalmur Stefansson and George M. Douglas to reveal important insights into how different types of Arctic knowledge were (re)produced and circulated between these explorers during their time in the Canadian High North.²⁷⁷ Examining ‘the mechanical and moral operations’ of these explorers’ networks of communication, Sawchuck explains that it was the particularly *social* dynamics of these scholarly networks that were necessary for knowledge to flow amongst their members.²⁷⁸ All of these studies have shown that studying the interactions between geographers and explorers is as important as studying their lives and their writings in attempts to understand how our discipline has changed and evolved.

Each of the studies described above share a concern with demonstrating how studying particular geographers’ relationships to each other can reveal more information about of discipline than can mere publication records or narrow biographies. But what does this methodological approach mean in practical terms? Certainly, it requires more work on the part of the researcher who must consult a much wider array of sources so as to build a complete picture of the geographical connections in question. As has been hinted at so far, in historical research the primary resource that enables researchers to understand and analyse social relationships – particularly for those social relationships that existed across geographical distance – is of course the letter. For this study, it has meant careful analysis of the

²⁷⁶ Martin, xvi.

²⁷⁷ Sawchuck, ‘An Arctic Republic of Letters in Early Twentieth-Century Canada’; For more on the Republic of Letters see Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*.

²⁷⁸ Sawchuck, ‘An Arctic Republic of Letters in Early Twentieth-Century Canada’, 285.

extensive correspondence collections outlined above which contain the hundreds of letters sent between those geographers and explorers who form the main focus of the study. As Martin explains:

The careers and accomplishments of geographers may be joined in a continuous narrative with the accomplishment of geographical societies, national and international congresses, geographical journals, books and other publications, university departments, courses, theses, dissertations, and so on. Yet it is largely from the correspondence saved by individuals or archived by institutions that a legitimate history may be retrieved.²⁷⁹

While this approach has been used across the entire project, its findings are perhaps most clearly articulated in chapter four. By sifting through the enormous volume of correspondence that was generated between Fridtjof Nansen, Clements Markham and John Scott Keltie, we are able to observe that the Norwegian's influence at the RGS was hugely significant in developing a more scientific approach to the discipline than that which had gone before. The genuine affection and amicability that is detectable in these scraps of paper is shown to be vitally important in bringing about substantial change at the RGS and it is shown how such relations were key to reorienting the views of the more conservative members and Fellows at the Society.

Following Knowledge Pathways

Tracing the movement of knowledge has been recognised as an inherently difficult task. However, a number of methodological strategies have been developed for this project which have offered some means by which the ideas and information about the Arctic that were in circulation at the time may be followed at the points before, during and after explorers set foot in the icy landscapes of the North.

As is argued across the thesis, gaining an understanding of the important, yet largely understudied, role that literary publishers played in this circulation of information is a useful way in which we are able to follow these intricate knowledge mobilities. The project has therefore focussed much of its attention on understanding the complex relationships that developed between the explorers in question, the publishers that were tasked with printing their exploratory accounts, and the Fellows

²⁷⁹ Martin, *American Geography and Geographers: Toward Geographical Science*, xv–xvi.

and officers of RGS who acted as key gatekeepers to this geographical information.²⁸⁰ The correspondence collections have again been a key resource here, with the letters exchanged between John Scott Keltie and various contemporary London publishers being of particular interest.²⁸¹ Understanding the Society's close relationships with these publishing houses and tracing their involvement in the production of geographical, printed works is absolutely crucial to appreciating its influential position in shaping the potential mobilities of this geographical knowledge. There are however a number of other materials have also been used to track the influence of these publishers. As mentioned above, studying the minutes of the Finance Committee meetings allows for the Society's expenditure to be scrutinised in detail. This means that any payments made to publishers can be analysed and cross-referenced with the correspondence so as to reveal the tight bonds that existed between these hugely influential institutions. It is also important look closely at certain aspects of the actual textual products that were made by these publishers to reveal much about the way the knowledge contained within them was able to circulate. Publishers' notes and prefaces printed in these books often offer key information relating to their authorship or production that may not otherwise be available, and at times reference particular members of the RGS. Front and end matter can also give clues as to what information has been omitted from these texts – particularly in the case of new editions or versions of the publication. This is of course hugely significant when thinking about the specific *types* of knowledge that were circulated and which perspectives were either included or excluded from being printed in these texts. These issues are discussed in more depth in chapter seven.

This study has also argued that the Society's meetings and lectures were an imperative means by which Arctic geographical knowledge was able to circulate at this time. A number of the materials described above can be used to understand the specific events that took place during these important knowledge exchange ceremonies. To begin with, the Society's series of journals provide documentary evidence for what was discussed during these exclusive affairs. Lecture notes were often sent to the

²⁸⁰ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; Withers and Keighren, 'Travels into Print: Authoring, Editing and Narratives of Travel and Exploration, c. 1815–c. 1857'.

²⁸¹ A similar approach has been used by Federico Ferretti, see Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876–1917'.

Journal Editor ahead of the speaker's arrival at the Society so that the text could be transcribed and printed as soon as possible. While this does allow us to understand the content and argument of the lecture, it gives a somewhat limited impression of how these occasions actually unfolded on the day of the meeting. Some clues may be gleaned by reading the footnotes that were added to these printed lectures with such comments as 'with the President in the chair' or simply 'Research Department' giving an indication as to who was in attendance at these events and to which particular audiences the lectures were directed. Again, however, the information is often limited. Such scant description of precisely what happened when the lectures were taking place means that the journals alone often do not offer a complete picture as to the events that unfolded at the Society's meetings. This means that other materials are needed. Newspaper coverage of these events has played an important part in the analysis. Many of the Society's meetings and lectures were described in articles that appeared in such newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Daily Chronicle*, while some of the more spectacular lectures were depicted graphically in *The Illustrated London News*. Studying these journalistic publications allows us not to only appreciate the sizeable influence that the Society had in everyday life during the period, but also to understand how the lectures were perceived by those who were not in attendance and who learned of explorers' narrative through secondary (and hence mediated) sources. The Society's correspondence reveals much of the planning that went into these events, and provides evidence of the hosts, caterers, journalists and esteemed guests that were contacted in order for arrangements to be made. As we will see in chapters four and six, particularly extensive planning was undertaken for the Society's meetings at the Royal Albert Hall, and Keltie's particular role in carefully coordinating these events is made obvious in the correspondence collections. As mentioned above, the Society's lantern slide collections provide a further dimension to our understanding of how knowledge was circulated at these lectures. The slides enabled photographs, drawings and various other types of geographical information such as graphs and maps to be conveyed to large audiences easily and efficiently. It is also important to note that these materials were often loaned out by the Society to be used in other settings, further expanding

their potential circulatory journeys.²⁸² Finally, study of published memoirs and auto/biographies allow for these lectures to be understood on a more personal level. As is discussed in chapter five, Ejnar Mikkelsen gives an account of his lecture before the Society's Fellows in his published book *Mirage in the Arctic* and offers an intimate and embodied account of this experience highlighting particularly his personal discomfort and anxiety. Similarly, John Scott Keltie's reflections on his thirty-year tenure at the Society published in the *Journal* include tantalising glimpses into his meetings with Fridtjof Nansen before and after his celebratory lecture at the Royal Albert Hall took place.²⁸³ All of these supplementary materials add vitally important context to the ways in which knowledge was able to travel during this period and, furthermore, they give us some indication as to the different people who could come into contact with this Arctic geographical information and importantly *the differences* in how they may have understood or interpreted it.

Visual Discipline

A third aspect of the methodological strategy has allowed interpretation of the array of visual materials outlined above. Felix Driver has noted the strong association between 'the visual' and the discipline of geography throughout its long history when he explains:

The visibility of geography stretches back through the 20th century, encompassing the writings of numerous educationalists, academics and fieldworkers drawn to visual metaphors and techniques of one kind or another.²⁸⁴

With particular significance to geographical pedagogy, it seems visibility – be it maps, drawings, lantern slides or any of the other materials which were and are used to convey geographical information – is inescapably intertwined in the fabric of geographical study.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, visibility has of course also featured prominently in histories of exploration.

²⁸² Hayes, 'Geographical Projections: Lantern-Slides and the Making of Geographical Knowledge at the Royal Geographical Society c.1885–1924', 2016.

²⁸³ Keltie, 'Thirty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society'.

²⁸⁴ Driver, 'On Geography as a Visual Discipline', 227. See also Rose, 'On the Need to Ask How, Exactly, Is Geography "Visual"?' and the special issue of *Antipode* in which these articles feature.

²⁸⁵ Schwartz, 'The Geography Lesson: Photographs and the Construction of Imaginative Geographies'.

Artwork in particular has played an integral part in exploration activity since the earliest expeditions. This has resulted in a great deal of scholarly work centred on analysing the plethora of artistic works that were produced while explorers were in the field.²⁸⁶ Geoff Quilley has suggested however, that there has been a tendency to analyse such artworks through the lens of art history. This means that materiality of the works themselves have been the object of study, rather than a focus on the cultural meanings and symbols they contain. Quilley therefore argues that such works need to be analysed using the same critical approaches used when considering all historical expeditionary remnants, and writes:

Illustrative art work produced in the context of travel [has] for the most part been treated as just that – documentary illustration. Yet, like maps, the mass of travel-related visual culture of this period can be interrogated for its ideological underpinnings and biases.

As mentioned above, the RGS has countless examples of this style of artwork in its collections, ranging from small sketches that were drawn to capture a fleeting moment during an expedition to large oil canvasses that depict wondrous, exoticised landscapes of distant lands (see *Figure 6*).²⁸⁷



Figure 6: Artwork depicting A.H. Markham's sledge journey in 1875.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Felix and Martins, *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*; Quilley, 'Introduction: Mapping the Art of Travel and Exploration'. See also the special issue of *Journal of Historical Geography* which this article introduces.

²⁸⁷ See <http://images.rgs.org>

²⁸⁸ 'Commander Markham's Farthest North', RGS-IBG Picture Library [S0011791].

Photography has been similarly important both in histories of geography and in histories of exploration. Historians and historical geographers have thought deeply about how understandings of the world were reframed extensively at the end of the nineteenth century on account of this new technology. It has been shown that photography changed how audiences in the late nineteenth century perceived the world, as people and places hundreds of miles away could now be viewed in the home, museum or library via these photographic representations.²⁸⁹ James Ryan's work has shown how photography became an increasingly important component of expeditionary activity during the later years of the nineteenth century and explains:

Photography enabled audiences to witness with unprecedented verisimilitude the wonders of the world from the safety of their drawing rooms, amplifying their appreciation for the explorer-photographers whose exertions brought forth such visual discoveries.²⁹⁰

Ryan's words echo those of the Society's official instructor in photography John Thompson who, in an article published in the 1891 edition of the RGS's journal, endeavoured 'to show the growing importance of photography in its application to science, notably to geography; [and] also to urge explorers to avail themselves more fully of the great advantages which a knowledge of photography secures, in enabling them to illustrate their route and register their observations.'²⁹¹ The particular association that photography has had with purporting to convey 'truth' is important here. Gillian Rose argues that:

The 'realism' of the photographic image was produced, not by new photographic technology, but by the use of photographs in a specific regime of truth, so that photographs were seen as evidence of 'what was really there.'²⁹²

In contrast to the problems associated with the artistic depictions mentioned above, photography was heralded as a solution to the ever-present difficulty of verifying the truth of an explorer's account. It

²⁸⁹ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*; Schwartz and Ryan, *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*; Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire*. Schwartz, 'The Geography Lesson: Photographs and the Construction of Imaginative Geographies'.

²⁹⁰ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*, 12.

²⁹¹ Thomson, 'Photography and Exploration', 669.

²⁹² Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 138.

allowed truth claims to be supported using (apparently) irrefutable evidence.²⁹³ Thompson made these convictions clear when he argued:

Where truth and all that is abiding are concerned, photography is absolutely trustworthy and the work now being done is forecast of a future of great usefulness in every branch of science.²⁹⁴

The visual then has been taken seriously in both geography and exploration studies and has therefore played a large part in this project.

But what methods are available to analyse geography's visual dimensions? In order to analyse the visual materials outlined in the section above, the project has drawn from literatures which have offered researchers the necessary tools to interpret the complex meanings bound up in various graphic sources. Gillian Rose's work has been influential in the development of these approaches and starts from the premise that:

It is now often suggested that much meaning is conveyed by visual images. [...] Different sorts of technologies and images offer views of the world; they render the world in visual terms. But this rendering, even by photographs, is never innocent. These images are never transparent windows on to the world. They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways.²⁹⁵

Rose and others argue that it is the researcher's duty to deconstruct the complex and often overlapping meanings that are contained in whichever pictorial representation is under study in order to analyse which particular realities the images are helping to establish. These writers argue that all visual materials are imbued with cultural hallmarks of the environment in which they were produced and can therefore be used to reveal important insights into the wider societal processes that were taking place at their time of production. These visual methodologies have therefore been used extensively in this project and as will now be discussed have been applied to the visual materials which comprise the RGS-IBG archive. The images of Fridtjof Nansen that feature in chapter four (*Figure 12* and *Figure 15*) are a good example of the ways visual materials can be deconstructed using these techniques.

²⁹³ Ryan, *Photography and Exploration*; Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire*.

²⁹⁴ Thomson, 'Photography and Exploration', 673.

²⁹⁵ Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 6.

Reading Against the Archival Grain

Through archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalized.²⁹⁶

Much has been written on the power that is inherently bound up in any archive. Following the work of such post-structural theorists as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, archives – once considered simply as passive repositories of information – are now understood to be vital means by which power is exerted in our Society.²⁹⁷ As Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook have explained:

Archives are not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed. The power of archives, records, and archivists should no longer remain naturalized or denied, but opened to vital debate and transparent accountability.²⁹⁸

A recognition of this power means that it is now incumbent on researchers to think deeply about the archive that is being consulted and make various aspects of its configuration explicit and to uncover the particular interests it serves. Hayden Lorimer explains that:

[There is] widespread acceptance of the need to critically interrogate the *historicity* of the archive as sited repository, and a space of knowledge. The very idea of the archive – its origins, scope, layout, composition, content and treatment – has been stirred up and shaken, and in the process, the status of the information it holds, been rendered more provisional, indeterminate and contestable.²⁹⁹

There is now a strong expectation that historians and historical geographers will analyse, critique and reflect upon all aspects of whichever archival collection they are consulting in order to be fully aware of the historical work they are doing.³⁰⁰ The final section of this discussion will focus on carrying out this important task and will explore the intricate structures of power that are bound up within the RGS-IBG collections.

Although it was not an institution of official colonial governance, Robert Stafford has argued that ‘the RGS more perfectly represented British [colonial] expansionism in all its facets than any other institution in the nation.’³⁰¹ This has meant that the collections of the RGS-IBG are widely recognised

²⁹⁶ Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, 1.

²⁹⁷ Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*; Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

²⁹⁸ Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, 1.

²⁹⁹ Lorimer, ‘Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork’, 253.

³⁰⁰ Moore, ‘Tales from the Archive: Methodological and Ethical Issues in Historical Geography Research’.

³⁰¹ Stafford, *Scientist of Empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism*; See also Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

as being a ‘colonial archive’ and therefore require careful consideration when their materials are being interpreted. Postcolonial scholars have made important interventions in archival theory which have brought the complex power dynamics bound up in any form of colonial archive to the fore. As subaltern studies theorist Gyanendra Pandey has argued in his widely-cited article ‘Voices from the Edge’:

The narratives preserved by the state in archives and other public institutions – that is, the narratives most commonly used by historians – belong overwhelmingly to the ruling classes, and owe their existence largely to a ruling class’s need for security and control.³⁰²

Authors writing from such a perspective argue that because colonial archives were an inherent part of the European imperial project, there is a fundamental disparity with regards those who are, or those who ever can be, represented by their contents.³⁰³ Strict procedures dictating which types of information merited storage in the archive necessarily resulted in the exclusion of a wealth of different types of knowledge and the omission of particular perspectives and contributions.

There are however, a number of writers who have been encouraged by the prospect that it is possible to recover at least parts of those narratives which scholars have shown to have been written out. Returning to Pandey’s work, the author posits the idea that, even in the most carefully curated colonial archives, evidence of what he and other scholars term ‘subaltern voices’ is always present.

Lodged in the records found in these institutions are fragments (traces) of many lost (and usually irrecoverable) narratives, prised out by a predatory official or observer from earlier (often unknown) contexts and situated in others.³⁰⁴

These writers argue that, among the scores of documents produced by travellers in the field or expatriates inhabiting foreign lands stored in the colonial archive, there exist traces of information produced by countless non-western actors. As Cheryl McEwan argues:

Deconstructing the colonial archive also allows for a more subtle analysis of the production of geographical knowledge, and the possibility of de-centering a putatively Western tradition by viewing the production of these knowledges as a complex process of cultural exchange and negotiation, in which the subaltern played an active part.³⁰⁵

It is the possibility of being able to recover these ‘hidden voices’ that has been an important driver of this thesis. As discussed in chapter two, a key aspect of the project has been to examine the extent to

³⁰² Pandey, ‘Voices from the Edge’, 224.

³⁰³ Craggs, ‘Situating the Imperial Archive: The Royal Empire Society Library, 1868–1945’.

³⁰⁴ Pandey, ‘Voices from the Edge’, 224.

³⁰⁵ McEwan, ‘Subaltern’.

which indigenous peoples of the Arctic were involved in the expeditions being studied and to understand the processes through which their contributions to the exploratory enterprise were hidden, obscured or erased from the subsequent circulation of the geographical information produced. This has meant drawing from recent methodologies that have been developed to allow the role of ‘indigenous intermediaries’ within the exploration archive to be uncovered.³⁰⁶ Such approaches have often been referred to as ‘reading against the archival grain’ and have been applied to a number of different repositories with the intention of uncovering such instances of ingenious support in expeditions.³⁰⁷

We turn now to consider how this project has deployed these innovative strategies and has read against the archival grain of the RGS-IBG collections with the intention of identifying those indigenous Arctic intermediaries who have been overlooked in many of the histories hitherto written. This has necessarily involved centring more attention on the particular events which took place during the Arctic expeditions being studied – or rather more accurately, how the events which unfolded were *represented* by the explorers in their published accounts and expeditionary reports. For a start, and as we shall see in chapter seven, close analysis of the expeditionary reports which Ejnar Mikkelsen sent back to the Society while on his expedition to Northern Alaska has been conducted in order to pick out the contributions made by the Iñupiat residents whom he encountered during his encampment on Flaxman Island. These have then been cross referenced with both Mikkelsen’s correspondence collection and his published account of the expedition. By carefully comparing and contrasting which elements of these indigenous interactions are mentioned, and which are not, it is possible to observe how different aspects of the collected geographical information were circulated in different ways amongst different audiences. Similar work has been carried out with regards to Fridtjof Nansen’s crossing of Greenland in 1888. Nansen’s published account of the expedition initially contained a great deal of information relating to the indigenous Greenlanders who assisted the expedition party when it arrived on the island’s West

³⁰⁶ See Shellam et al., *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Boundaries*; Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries*; Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*.

³⁰⁷ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

coast. However, the analysis presented in chapter seven reveals that these interactions were removed from Nansen's narrative when newer editions of this book were printed.

Positionality and Reflexivity

It has been acknowledged that historical geographers rarely devote the same levels of attention to their positionality as colleagues in other branches of our discipline.³⁰⁸ Sarah Mills considers the reasons behind this when she writes:

Although positionality and reflexivity are now familiar concepts in geographical research, they are less often considered in relation to historical methods and archival research. This may, in part, be not so much a characteristic of the sub-discipline and its research practices but rather due to a wider more general relationship to the past in everyday life that is outward (or backward) looking rather than inward (or forward) looking and where emotions (apart from perhaps in personal genealogical research) are largely kept at a distance.³⁰⁹

When conducting any research project however, it is important to consider one's positionality and to think deeply about how this may have some impact or bearing upon the research and its findings. The collaborative element of this project, discussed above, is one dimension which has required me to be mindful of how my particular position as a researcher has influenced the project in different ways. However, there are also several deeper concerns that need to be addressed that relate to my specific positionality as a researcher and my consequent relationship to the research.

To begin with, my training and background as a geographer is an aspect of this project worth noting. I have – both consciously and unconsciously – brought a particular set of historical-geographical approaches to the study of these materials and have hence drawn less from, for example, historical or anthropological approaches. This will undoubtedly have produced a specific (and hence partial) set of research findings and/or will have framed potentially similar findings in a substantially different way. However, as this project is intended to fulfil the requirements for a doctoral degree in 'Geography and the Environment' and will also be primarily targeted at a historical-geographical readership, such an approach is justified fully in this instance.

³⁰⁸ Moore, 'Tales from the Archive: Methodological and Ethical Issues in Historical Geography Research'.

³⁰⁹ Mills, 'Cultural-Historical Geographies of the Archive: Fragments, Objects and Ghosts', 709.

It is also worth noting that this project has to a large extent been undertaken in the tradition of the ‘armchair geographer’ bemoaned by some practitioners in our discipline. Other than 1 Savile Row, Lowther Lodge and the deck of Nansen’s ship *Fram*, I have not set foot in any of the locations that feature in the main body of the thesis.³¹⁰ While this is common in historical research, some critiques may be accurate in their assertion that it is difficult to appreciate fully the experiences of the explorers I discuss without ‘following in their footsteps.’³¹¹ Again, however, such criticism is somewhat misguided in that the experiences of the explorers during their time in the field are not the subject of this study.

In more philosophical terms, I have also had to be wary of the extent to which I have allowed the archive to guide my enquiry in ways which may reproduce the imperialist agendas that it was created to serve. As Lowri Jones noted while conducting her research using the RGS-IBG collections:

The view of archives as unbiased repositories of information has long been debunked. Yet, this does not mean that researchers working on archives are entirely immune to being led by the structure and meta-narratives of an archive, nor to (unwittingly) becoming complicit in the epistemological exclusions of colonial archives.³¹²

Reading through the letters, reports and various other documents of which the collections are comprised, it is easy to have one’s attention skewed towards the particular concerns that discussed in these records, rather than view them as historical sources that require critical study. Simply following the grain of the archive and allowing the materials it contains to dictate the parameters of the research can lead to limited and problematic findings. As described above I have consciously made efforts to avoid such a tendency by incorporating postcolonial perspectives into the analysis and into my thinking.

There are also an important set of considerations that need to be taken in account when writing on indigeneity and the subaltern. The project’s intentions to write indigenous voices ‘back into’ histories of exploration raise a number of ethical challenges which cannot be ignored or concealed. As Gayatri

³¹⁰ 1 Savile Row is now home to an upmarket gentleman’s outfitters, although hints are offered to the building’s geographical past in the shop’s design and artworks. The *Fram* is now housed in the Fram Museum in Oslo.

³¹¹ For a discussion on expeditions as methodological tools see Leshem and Pinkerton, ‘Rethinking Expeditions: On Critical Expeditionary Practice’.

³¹² Jones, ‘Local Knowledge & Indigenous Agency in the History of Exploration: Studies from the RGS-IBG Collections’, 55.

Spivak argued in her influential essay, there is an inherent problem in bringing subaltern histories into (Western) scholarly analysis.³¹³ Cheryl McEwan summarises Spivak's arguments when she writes:

The project of Subaltern Studies has been to create intellectual space to allow the subaltern to speak rather than always being spoken for by either elites or colonizing Western representatives.³¹⁴

The project presented here fails spectacularly in heeding this warning. My position as a white, male researcher conducting research supported by two undoubtedly elitist institutions perpetuates the epistemic problems that are outlined by Spivak. By attempting to represent the indigenous peoples of the Arctic in particular ways, the project has co-opted them into circulations of western scholarly discussions without allowing them to offer their own perspectives. However, it must be noted in this instance that taking Spivak's warnings to their logical conclusion would mean that the indigenous contributions made to these expeditions would continue remain in the archive obscured and unknown. Therefore (although not without some degree of epistemic anxiety) the decision was taken that these stories *should* be recounted in this thesis. It is hoped that by sharing these narratives with wider audiences, it may be possible to attract interest from the indigenous communities which are discussed therefore allowing potential for fruitful future engagement with the materials.³¹⁵

Recirculating the Archive?

Now that we have explored the materials in the RGS-IBG archive and have considered the methodological approaches that have allowed them to inform the remaining chapters of this thesis, it is worth considering precisely what such prolonged and in-depth scholarly analysis has meant in terms of how we think about these collections. As mentioned above, the items held within the RGS-IBG archive have changed little in material terms since they were first deposited over a century ago. Corners of book pages may have been folded, annotations may have been added, objects may have been damaged and

³¹³ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

³¹⁴ McEwan, 'Subaltern'.

³¹⁵ The RGS-IBG has a number of ongoing projects that encourage various different communities to engage with their archival collections. For more information see 'Community Collaborations: Working with the Society's Collections' [available at: <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/what-we-do/public-engagement/community-collaborations/>]. For a critical reflection on such engagement activities see Onciul, *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonizing Engagement*.

papers may have yellowed, but on the whole the collections have largely remained in the same state as when they were first entered into this prestigious geographical repository. However, it is undeniable that the *epistemological* framework for studying the information bound up in these materials is significantly different to the one that was in use when the collections were originally established. That is to say, no longer are the collections being consulted with the intention of, for example, learning something new about the Arctic regions or with the hope of charting a new pathway to the Pole as they might have been a century ago. Instead, the same, unchanged materials are approached in this project with the intention of understanding precisely how this information was communicated.

It might be argued, then, that through this doctoral research and through the writing of this thesis, the RGS-IBG collections are to some extent being *recirculated*. The information contained in the archive is once again transcending the locality of its production and becoming mobile, albeit framed in a significantly different way. Bearing some relation to Claire Dwyer and Gail Davies's notion of 'reanimating' the archive, the project has used a range of innovative methodological approaches described here to once again bring the important historical narratives bound up in these objects into the circulation of geographical knowledge.³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Dwyer and Davies, 'Qualitative Methods III: Animating Archives, Artful Interventions and Online Environments'; See also Mills, 'Cultural-Historical Geographies of the Archive: Fragments, Objects and Ghosts'.

Chapter 4

Re/Fram/ing Geography: Fridtjof Nansen at the Royal Geographical Society

[T]he main object of no sensible expedition should be to give any single man or nation glory, but to increase knowledge. You may think that I look at these questions with a much too theoretical and impersonal way, but I cannot help it. You ought perhaps consider, that I am a man of science, have scientific training, I always looked at it that way, or tried to do so at any rate; and whenever more personal and ambitious feelings arose I tried to kill them.

- Fridtjof Nansen, 1913.³¹⁷

The extract above derives from an extraordinary letter written by the Norwegian polymath Dr Fridtjof Nansen, addressing the former RGS President, Sir Clements Markham. The letter as a whole is interesting for a number of reasons, but this specific section is of particular relevance for the themes addressed in this thesis. The first sentence demonstrates Nansen's clear rejection of the heroic, nationalistic tendencies with which contemporaneous expeditions were frequently (and often purposefully) imbued. But the second point, and important for this chapter, is that Nansen was unequivocally championing the scientific basis for geographical study to Markham, whose career up until that point had been to promote a more expeditionary based geography via a British nationalist rhetoric. The need for Nansen to write this letter, and his motivations for explaining his philosophical approach to expeditionary geography with such clarity, was due to the increasingly contentious atmosphere which surrounded geographical enquiry during this period.

Drawing on the epistolary approaches that are outlined in chapter three, this chapter will show that Fridtjof Nansen was hugely influential in the development of new forms of geographical thinking at the beginning of the twentieth century. As chapter one argued, the Royal Geographical Society – during a somewhat tumultuous period at the turn of the twentieth century – was going through a profound philosophical shift in its approach to geographical enquiry and indeed its entire *raison d'être* was under negotiation by different factions within its Fellowship. The influence of Nansen during this period of transition has yet to receive any substantial examination however, and it is this lacuna that this chapter hopes to correct. As will be shown, Nansen's close relationships with key figures within the Society was to play a crucial role in the philosophical reorientation that took place in both the theory

³¹⁷ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to Sir Clements Markham, 4th April 1913 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ref: 1905.07.31].

and practice of geographical enquiry at the RGS and would hence profoundly shape British geographical thinking for years and even decades to come.

Crossing Greenland

On 28th April 1888, a twenty-seven-year-old Fridtjof Nansen successfully defended his PhD Thesis, entitled *The Structure and Combination of the Histological Elements of the Central Nervous System* which was written during his time as curator of the zoological collections of Bergen Museum (see *Figure 7*). The findings of his meticulous research were incredibly significant for the field of zoology and indeed are still used as a basis for research today.³¹⁸ In producing this piece of innovative research, Nansen had demonstrated his keen analytical approach to the natural world and had secured his entry into the prestigious academic arena.



*Figure 7: Nansen conducting his PhD Research at the Bergen Museum.*³¹⁹

Nansen did not celebrate this impressive academic achievement in a typical manner, however. In his biography of the explorer, Sørensen suggests that the young Nansen was never quite fully accepted by

³¹⁸ Jackson, 'Fridtjof Nansen'.

³¹⁹ Nansen - Portretter-Familie-Privatliv [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, blds_a_4a003].

Norway's emerging 'brandy-and-soda intelligentsia' and that he was viewed by his contemporaries as 'an athletic person [...] but a dunce in science.'³²⁰ It seems that although he was fascinated by the natural world and had pursued a scholarly approach to its study, Nansen was far more comfortable immersing himself *within* nature, rather than merely studying it from afar. Consequently, a mere five days after his successful thesis defence, the newly styled *Doctor* Nansen made the bold decision to leave his detractors in Christiania behind and set off to lead a team of five men to complete what would become the first crossing of the inland ice of Greenland in 1888.

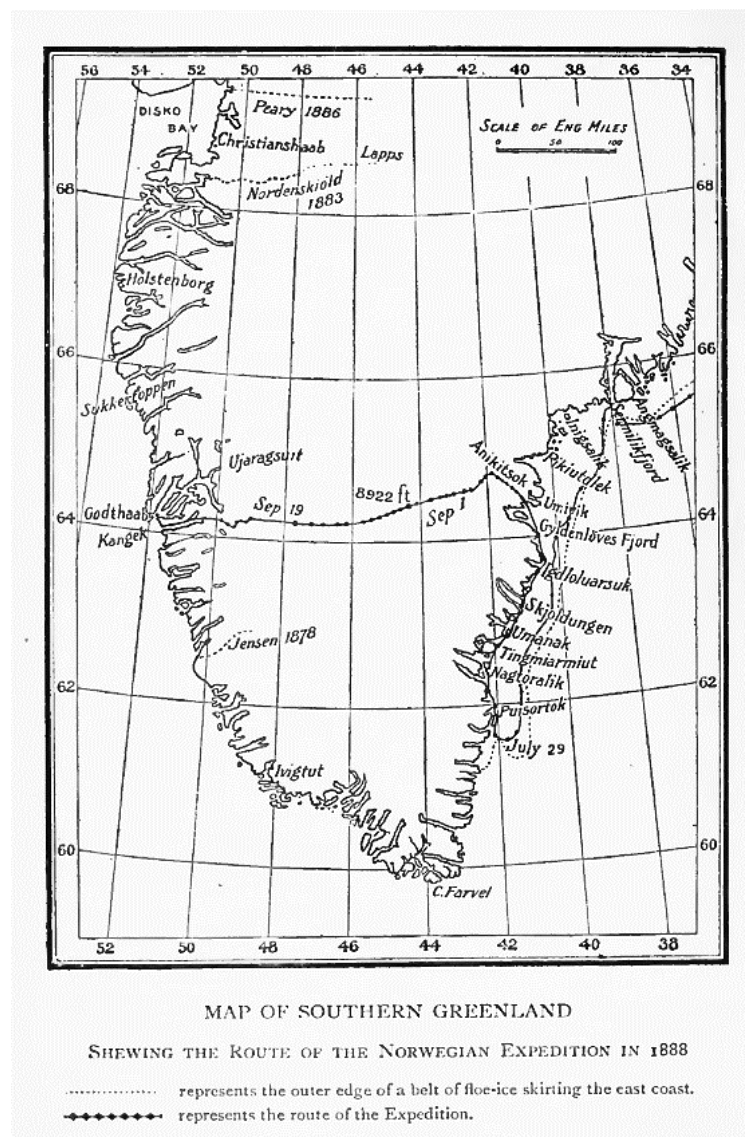


Figure 8: Map of Southern Greenland depicting Nansen's crossing.³²¹

³²⁰ Sörensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*, 56.

³²¹ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland* [Second Edition], xix.

Up to this point, European explorers had barely set foot upon the island, so the primary purpose of Nansen's expedition was little more than simply to discover what was there. In opposition to all previous attempts at this dangerous feat, Nansen had planned to cross the island from East to West (the attempts made by previous explorers are mapped in *Figure 8*). The reason that no one had yet attempted the westerly direction that Nansen had chosen was that this route necessarily meant the explorers had no way of retreating should they run into difficulty during the journey. No matter what eventualities might occur, the men would be forced to continue moving westwards to reach the various settlements along Greenland's west coast, if they had any hopes for survival. In Nansen's words:

In this way one would burn all one's ships behind one, there would be no need to urge one's men on, as the east coast would attract no one back, while in front would lie the west coast with all the allurements and amenities of civilisation.³²²

These plans were met with concern and derision from a host of experienced Arctic travellers.³²³ Indeed, the Norwegian geographer Prof. Werner Werenskiöld went as far as to suggest that Nansen was only successful in his PhD defence 'because he had made up his mind to go and die on the Inland Ice of Greenland anyway, so it did not matter.'³²⁴ However, none could criticise the effort Nansen put into his preparations for the trip. He designed the purpose-build sledges himself and spent time carefully analysing which clothes would be most effective for the journey.³²⁵ He also utilised a revolutionary Scandinavian technique (apparently unknown to 1880s readers of *The Times*) called 'skiing' in which 'a kind of snow-shoe are used for walking, or rather gliding, over the snow.'³²⁶ These tropes – of purposefully choosing no route of escape and of utilising Scandinavian techniques – have very much become part of the heroic mythology that surrounds popular depictions of this Norwegian explorer.³²⁷

Although Nansen and his party successfully completed the crossing in a matter of weeks, they missed the last ship heading southwards that winter and so were forced to spend another five months on the Greenland coast before the next ship would arrive to take them back to European shores the

³²² Nansen, 3.

³²³ Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*.

³²⁴ Werenskiöld, 1927 in Sörensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*.

³²⁵ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*.

³²⁶ 'Dr Fridtjof Nansen's Journey Across Greenland', *The Times*, Issue 32708, May 25, 1889, pg. 8.

³²⁷ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

following spring. Rather than sit idly by waiting for transportation during this unscheduled overwintering in this unfamiliar icy landscape, Nansen and his team spent the winter months studying the indigenous people living on Greenland's West coast. They also made efforts to understand their language and customs, learning many skills for surviving in this harsh physical landscape. Nansen was later to write *Eskimo Life*, a highly regarded account of the Greenland Inuit based on these experiences that is still a key text in Arctic Anthropology today.³²⁸ At last spring broke and transportation arrived to return Nansen and his crew to Norway.

Keltie's Position

As was alluded to in chapters one and two, the events that took place during the expedition are not primarily the focus of this thesis. Rather, it is the events that unfolded at the Royal Geographical Society upon Nansen's return to Europe that will be the main subject of investigation here. When news reached 1 Savile Row that Nansen's crossing had been a success, the ever-diligent John Scott Keltie wrote the following in a letter to the Norwegian dated 30th of January 1889:

Mr. Bates, the Secretary of this Society, whom you saw when you came in London, hopes that when you lecture to Europe you will come to London as soon as possible, and give an account of your remarkable journey at one of the meetings of the Royal Geographical Society. I need scarcely remind you that this is the oldest Society of this kind in Britain, and that in some respects it is the most competent Geographical Society in the world. Its honours are, as you know, much sought after by explorers and travellers. And while we should be greatly gratified if you would come to us of all to tell the story of your journey, probably you yourself might reap some advantage from doing so. I trust, therefore, you will take the first opportunity of communicating with us on the subject.³²⁹

Importantly, as we can see in *Figure 9*, the letter was signed, 'J.S. Keltie, Librarian R.G.S.' Had the letter been sent some years later it would certainly not be surprising that the invite came from Keltie's pen during his long tenure as the Society's Secretary. But for this letter to be written while Keltie was still in post as *librarian* begs further investigation. One reason may rest upon the fact that the incumbent Secretary Henry Walter Bates – 'dear old Bates' as he was affectionately known by the Fellows – was

³²⁸ Nansen, *Eskimo Life*; Jølle, 'The Tension between Culture and Nature: Fridtjof Nansen's Understanding of Arctic Minorities'. This book is discussed further in chapter seven.

³²⁹ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen 30th January, 1889 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

in declining health during these years so was unable to send the invite himself.³³⁰ However, close study of the Society's correspondence collections makes it clear that there were other reasons behind Keltie's authorship of the letter.

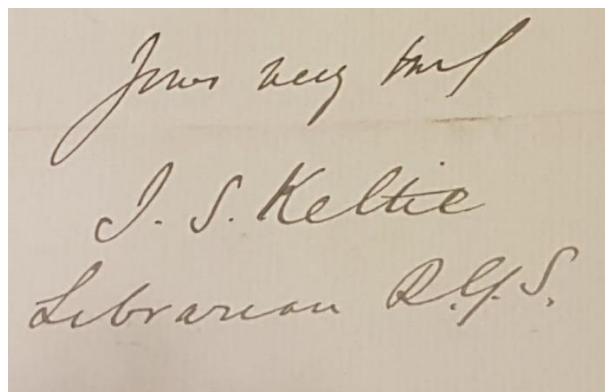
A photograph of a handwritten signature on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The signature is written in a cursive, slanted script. It consists of three lines: the first line reads 'J. S. Keltie', the second line reads 'Librarian', and the third line reads 'R.G.S.'. The ink is a dark brown or black.

Figure 9: Keltie's signature in his letter to Nansen.

As was hinted at in chapter one, Keltie was a keen educationalist and desperate for geographical reform within the Society. Between 1884 and 1885, he had been tasked with conducting a substantial review of how geography was taught in different countries which involved visiting many European schools and universities to inspect their approach to the discipline.³³¹ The conclusions outlined in the subsequent report were to be the most clearly articulated cry for a rejuvenation in British geographical study. Undoubtedly a moderniser in the Society, Keltie was later to exert profound influence over its future direction and it seems that, even at this early stage in his career, he was gradually becoming a key node in a pan-European network of geographers, explorers and surveyors. It seems that the above letter was a tangible product of Keltie's 'sense of opportunism' and was the starting point for a series of careful manoeuvrings by the man who, combined with other reformists at the RGS, was to push for a much more theoretically-informed geography at the Society.

Nansen accepted Keltie's invitation and attended a meeting of the Fellows on 24th June 1889 to discuss the expedition.³³² Perhaps slightly to Keltie's dismay, the paper gave an account of the extreme

³³⁰ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

³³¹ Keltie, *Geographical Education: Report to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society in Reference to the Improvement of Geographical Education*; Wise, 'The Scott Keltie Report 1885 and the Teaching of Geography in Great Britain'.

³³² Nansen, 'Journey across the Inland Ice of Greenland from East to West'.

challenges that had been faced by Nansen and his team as he traversed the Greenland Ice Sheet. The article that was printed subsequently in *Proceedings* reveals that a number of veteran Arctic explorers were in attendance including Sir Leopold M'Clintock, Sir Allen Young and Dr John Rae and it is clear that the paper was targeted largely at these more traditional Fellows.³³³ As Nansen was to triumphantly proclaim during his lecture; 'It was as if we had escaped a long and dreary prison and saw life lying bright and gay before us.'³³⁴ Politely ingratiating Nansen within the Society, M'Clintock responded to the paper by stating that he 'hoped that on a future occasion Dr. Nansen would not be unwilling to pay another visit to Greenland, and if he did, he would be sure of receiving a hearty welcome from [the] Society, on his return.'³³⁵

While Nansen's lecture at the Society may not have focussed on the scientific aspects of the crossing, the book that documented the expedition, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, did feature a lengthy passage which articulated the scientific elements under consideration by the Norwegian. The first edition of the book featured an appendix containing 'the scientific results of the expedition and some considerations suggested thereby' and outlines the substantial scientific data that had been collecting during the expedition.³³⁶ Geological, biological, glaciological and oceanographic insights are all offered in Nansen's writing, along with a lengthy discussion on 'the wanderings of the magnetic pole.'³³⁷ It seems behind the one-dimensional 'rugged explorer' façade which Nansen presented before the RGS Fellows, he was implementing his scientific training and bringing a keen analytical mind to the environments that he was to encounter on his expeditions.

It is curious to note that Nansen did not receive any award from the Society for his expedition until two years later, when he was announced as winner of the prestigious Patron's Medal in 1891.³³⁸ Bates was still officially in the Secretarial position during these intervening years so it seems the

³³³ For more on these men see Anonymous, 'Obituary: Dr. John Rae, F. R. S.'; Markham, 'Sir Allen Young'; Markham, 'Admiral Sir Leopold M'Clintock, K. C. B.'

³³⁴ Nansen, 'Journey across the Inland Ice of Greenland from East to West', 473.

³³⁵ Nansen, 484.

³³⁶ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*. Interestingly the 2nd edition of the book in English omitted this scientific appendix.

³³⁷ Nansen.

³³⁸ The list of Medal Winners is currently displayed in the Society's present-day headquarters at Lowther Lodge.

question of awarding Nansen the medal simply did not enter the Council's consciousness. But with the aforementioned decline in Bates's health, Keltie was to become increasingly involved in the day-to-day running of the Society before his official appointment to Secretary in 1892.³³⁹ Upon Bates's death, Nansen sent a letter of condolence to the Society's newly-appointed Secretary remarking; 'I [will] never forget how he seemed to be broken down, when I last saw him.'³⁴⁰ It is of particular interest to this chapter that in the very same letter, Nansen arranged to meet Keltie at the Society's headquarters during a brief lecture tour of the UK. The importance of this meeting for the future of geographical inquiry cannot be overstated but, frustratingly, the informal nature of Nansen's visit to the Society has resulted in very little record of the pair's meeting. The only other extant source that offers hints as to what took place was made by Keltie himself during a speech commemorating his retirement some twenty-six years later. The Secretary jovially reminisced:

It must have been about 1890, twenty-six years ago, that he first called at the Society after he had returned from his great expedition across Greenland, which brought him into prominent notice. It was interesting to walk along Regent Street or Piccadilly with him in his tight-fitting Jaeger costume and pork-pie hat and watch how many heads he turned, not of one sex only.³⁴¹

To the historian of geography, this meeting is as tantalisingly significant as it is frustratingly under-documented. One can perhaps imagine Keltie spelling out his reformist ideas for a more academic geography to the curious explorer, discussing the findings of his report and appealing to Nansen's passion for the natural sciences. Likewise, Nansen possibly articulated his hopes of conducting further Arctic research to a sympathetic Keltie and discussed the multiple geographical puzzles that still required solving in the region. Sadly, precisely what was said during this amble through London may never be known, but the relationship which was cemented at this meeting was nonetheless hugely significant.

Less than a month after this meeting, Nansen was to send another letter to Keltie, enclosing a manuscript intended to be published in the Society's Journal. Typically, the bibliographical information

³³⁹ Mill notes that Keltie 'had often served as under-study' to his chief, see Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 139.

³⁴⁰ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 22nd February 1892 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/63].

³⁴¹ Keltie, 'Thirty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society', 368.

of a journal article has little importance in relation to its actual contents, but this is not the case for this particular paper. The printed piece which was to develop from Nansen's manuscript took the significant position of *No. 1, Vol. 1* in the newly established *Geographical Journal*. Of course, it must be remembered here that this new journal was primarily edited by John Scott Keltie. 'How can the North Polar Region be Crossed?' was chosen as the flagship article which was to set the agenda for the new mouthpiece (or 'organ' as Keltie named it) for the Royal Geographical Society and that Keltie was at its helm is of extreme significance. As Baigent suggests:

For twenty-four years [Keltie] edited the RGS's *Geographical Journal*, helping to ensure that the Society's publications fully reflected progress in the new academic, scientific geography.³⁴²

Keltie's aspirations for the new Journal to be used as an authoritative educational tool were made clear in an advertisement promoting the publication to an American readership:

The *Geographical Journal* (published by the Royal Geographical Society) has already taken its place as the most popular, as well as the most authoritative, geographical publication in the English language [...] As an aid in education the Journal should prove extremely useful.³⁴³

It seems by choosing Nansen's article as the pioneering paper to commence the new publication – which we must remember was one of the primary methods through which the Society communicated with its growing Fellowship – Keltie was ushering in a new era in the Society's development and changing the nature of its philosophical underpinnings.

'How can the Polar Regions be Crossed?'

Nansen's article in the Journal was not the only circulatory tool used by Keltie to further his reformist agenda. The Secretary also invited Nansen to present a lecture before the Society's Fellows on the 14th November 1892 based on the paper in question. The lecture itself was in fact a meticulously researched plan for how one could cross the Arctic Ocean and answer many of the remaining geographical questions that were yet to be answered. Importantly, Nansen's lecture began by outlining explicitly the scientific ambitions that such an endeavour would to achieve and referred to 'science' no fewer than four times in the opening paragraph:

³⁴² Baigent, 'Keltie, Sir John Scott (1840-1927)', n.p.

³⁴³ Royal Geographical Society Council Minutes, n.d. [RGS-IBG Collections].

As science has advanced, and the world has become more and more known, problems have arisen which can only be solved by observations in these regions; it is now hardly possible to study physical geography, geology, meteorology, and many other branches of science, without being stopped by important questions which can only be answered in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, and in regard to which we can at present only offer highly uncertain hypotheses. It is therefore natural that the interest of the scientific world should more and more be turned towards the exploration of these regions, and I feel certain that all scientific geographers agree that they ought to be explored without delay.³⁴⁴

Furthermore, a detailed map was created to accompany Nansen's lecture which further accentuated the lack of geographical knowledge that was available relating to the North Polar Sea (see *Figure 10*). Nansen then moved on to explain that several years earlier, the USS *Jeannette* under the command of the American George Washington de Long, had become trapped in the sea ice North of the Siberian coastline and had subsequently sank.³⁴⁵ He explained that rumours were circulating which suggested that debris from this sunken ship had washed up on the shores of Julianehaab (Qaqortoq), on the southern coast of Greenland, which threw into question the known flow of oceanic currents in the Arctic circle. After presenting a forensic-level analysis of the hydrographical conditions in the Polar oceans, Nansen concluded his lecture by arguing 'the floe which carried these relics from the *Jeannette* was borne along by the East Greenland current.'³⁴⁶ Then, to the surprise of many of the the people assembled, Nansen announced that he had drawn up plans for a daring Arctic expedition which would involve sailing a specially designed ship into Arctic ocean and use this newly proposed 'East Greenland Current' to sail across the ocean and emerge at the other side on Greenland's coast.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Nansen, 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?', 1.

³⁴⁵ For more on this expedition see de Long, *The Voyage of the Jeannette. The Ship and Ice Journals of George W. De Long, Lieutenant-Commander U.S.N., and Commander of the Polar Expedition of 1879-1881*; Guttridge, *Icebound: The Jeannette Expedition's Quest for the North Pole*; Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North: The Quest for the North Pole*.

³⁴⁶ Nansen, 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?', 24.

³⁴⁷ Nansen, 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?'



Figure 10: Map produced to accompany Nansen's lecture.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ 'North Polar Map to illustrate Dr. Nansen's Paper' [RGS-IBG Collections, mr Arctic G.47].

It may perhaps come as little surprise that Nansen's carefully researched scientific arguments did not convince the more traditional members of the Fellowship. One of Nansen's most vocal critics at the meeting was Admiral George Nares and the captain of the 1875-76 British Arctic expedition was to voice his particular concerns at a certain aspect of the strategy laid out before him. He argued:

The adopted Arctic axioms for successfully navigating an icy region are that it is absolutely necessary to keep close to a coast line, and the farther we advance from civilisation the more desirable is it to insure [sic] a reasonably safe line of retreat.³⁴⁹

It is clear that Nares was far from convinced by the arguments that Nansen had articulated. A firm member of the 'naval veterans' at the Society, Nares was apparently very reluctant to abandon the conventional 'axioms' that had been developed by his naval associates. Unlike the Norwegian, he did not trust the carefully-reasoned scientific calculations that had been conducted and viewed Nansen's plan as an unnecessary endangerment of human life. He concluded his critical remarks by warning Nansen that his ship would be 'to all intents and purposes immovably sealed up in the pack and exposed to its well-known dangers.'³⁵⁰ Quietly confident in his plans, however, Nansen politely responded to the veteran's various concerns with the polite yet firm statement; 'I am of the opposite opinion.'³⁵¹

It is worth noting here that this exchange was remembered fondly within Keltie's reflections of his time at the Society when he was to retire after his long service. As the Secretary reminisced:

One of the most thrilling moments at any meeting of the Society was when Nansen laid the plans of the Fram expedition to the North Pole before it, and answered the entreaties of the veterans to change his plan by "I am going all the same."³⁵²

That Keltie remembered this debate so clearly after his long service in the Society, and that he chose to discuss it in his parting speech, shows and how significantly he regarded Nansen's influence in heralding substantial change at this highly politicised institution. The description of Nares and his associates as 'veterans' also reveals a particularly clear glimpse into Keltie's reformist mindset during these transformative years and the change in direction that he saw Nansen as bringing about. It appears the 'doughty Scottish pioneer' of the New Geography was beginning to kindle the embers of the reform

³⁴⁹ M'Clintock et al., 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?: Discussion', 24.

³⁵⁰ M'Clintock et al., 25.

³⁵¹ M'Clintock et al., 28.

³⁵² Keltie, 'Thirty Years' Work of the Royal Geographical Society', 368.

which he saw as essential for the discipline's future and had now assembled both a frontman (in Nansen) and an outlet (in the Journal) for this new era of geography. However, it was not until Clements Markham was elected as President in the following year that the reformists vision for the discipline was able to generate momentum.

Farthest North

Leaving his critics at the Society far behind, a few months later Nansen and his crew set sail from Christiania on what would become one of the most celebrated Arctic expeditions ever undertaken. Following the precise route that had been articulated to the Fellows in the lecture theatre at Burlington Gardens, the *Fram* – which had been specially designed to avoid being crushed by the pressure of the moving ice floes – drifted day and night across the frozen Polar ocean just as Nansen had predicted.³⁵³ Nansen was praised highly for the crew's exceptional standards of welfare on board throughout the lengthy journey and the skills he had learned from the peoples of East Greenland during his crossing in 1888 meant the worst excesses of the harsh Arctic environment were kept at bay.³⁵⁴ However, arguably the main reason this expedition has attracted so much attention in popular accounts of exploration is the decision that was made by the Norwegian on 14th March 1895.³⁵⁵ Having calculated that the *Fram* was not going to drift across the coveted geographical location of 90° North, Nansen and his scientific assistant Fredrik Hjalmar Johansen took the bold decision to abandon the ship and make an attempt to reach the North Pole, again using their well-honed long distance skiing techniques. Leaving the *Fram* to drift onwards along the now confirmed East Greenland Current, Nansen and Johansen undertook a relentless journey across the dangerous ice hoping to reach the much-mythologised top of the world.

Although the pair failed to reach the Pole, they did reach 86°13'6" N before turning south. This advanced the previous 'Farthest North' recorded General Adolphus Greely on the 1882 Lady Franklin

³⁵³ Nansen, *Farthest North: Being The Voyage of Exploration of the Fram 1893-96 and the Fifteen Month's Expedition by Fridtjof Nansen and Hjalmar Johansen*.

³⁵⁴ Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*; Sörensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*.

³⁵⁵ Nansen, *Farthest North: Being The Voyage of Exploration of the Fram 1893-96 and the Fifteen Month's Expedition by Fridtjof Nansen and Hjalmar Johansen*.

Bay expedition by which had reached 83°24'0" N. In arguably one of the most remarkable coincidences in the histories of exploration, after weeks of skiing across the ice and snows of the Arctic Ocean, Nansen and Johansen arrived on Franz Josef Land whereupon they met the British explorer Frederick Jackson who happened also to be in the Arctic exploring this collection of islands. Jackson arranged for his relief ship to return the explorers to Europe and Nansen emerged from the Arctic ocean in Vardø, Northern Norway on 13th August 1896.

A Hero's Welcome

Nansen's reception upon his return to European shores was rapturous. The expedition had catapulted him to the status of European celebrity and his multinational lecture tours cemented his status in the hearts and minds of the captivated publics who were in attendance. The increasingly sensationalistic late nineteenth-century press in particular were obsessed with the explorer and numerous newspapers and magazines vied to secure access to the Norwegian polymath, jostling to have accounts of his journeys articulated on their front pages.³⁵⁶ For example, the *Daily Chronicle* paid Nansen the substantial sum of £2250 for the rights to publish the first telegram he sent upon returning to the shores of Norway in 1896, which was in fact a reduction from the staggering £5000 promised in the event that he had reached the North Pole.³⁵⁷ It was not just the headlines in these publications that Nansen was occupying; advertisements were also a key medium through which explorers were firmly placed on their heroic pedestals. Felix Driver explains that many companies often depicted explorers in their illustrated advertisements so that 'the glamour of overseas exploration could be associated with consumption at home.'³⁵⁸ Nansen's celebrity was of such a level that his likeness was used to promote a whole range of products from *T. Burberry & Sons* Gabardine style jackets to *Cadbury's* cocoa (see *Figure 11*).³⁵⁹ The RGS-IBG collections also contain a curious manuscript (possibly intended to be included in the journal) which depicts a visit by Nansen to Rouen in France, whereon he was welcomed

³⁵⁶ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

³⁵⁷ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen, 18th August, 1896, [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

³⁵⁸ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

³⁵⁹ Letter from T. Burberry & Sons to J.S. Keltie, 1st February, 1897, [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/63].

by the Town's Mayor and given a jubilant parade in his honour.³⁶⁰ As Robert David explains, all of these different methods of publicity ensured the public were 'absorbed into the world of the explorer, his journeys and geographical and scientific successes.'³⁶¹ Through these media engagements and product endorsements, Nansen came to be worshiped by the general public across Europe and secured his name in the global anthologies of historic exploration.



Figure 11: Nansen's heroic status used to promote Cocoa and Sardines.³⁶²

'Nansenitis'

An important point to note here is that it was not Nansen himself who was arranging all of these various media engagements. Before he had set off from Christiania in 1893, Nansen had entrusted the management of his public affairs with two men whom he believed would act on behalf of his best

³⁶⁰ Georg Yonflier, 'Explorer Nansen's Reception in Rouen' 10th August 1903 [RGS-IBG Collections, SSC/130/6].

³⁶¹ David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*, 75.

³⁶² *The Illustrated London News*, 30th December 1893, p.841; Nasjonalbiblioteket, 'Nansen Brand, 1896' [Available at <https://flic.kr/p/dkX8mR>].

interests. In Norway this sizeable responsibility fell to Alexander Nansen, Fridtjof's older brother who had trained as a lawyer in Christiania.³⁶³ Intriguingly though, and as further evidence of his increasing influence over the circulation of geographical knowledge, Nansen's interests in Britain were left in the hands of John Scott Keltie. As is evident across this thesis, Keltie was an exceptionally well-connected man within the publishing world and was continuously assisting and supporting explorers in having their accounts transformed into written texts.³⁶⁴ In a remarkable display of trust toward his friend in London, Nansen granted Keltie power of attorney over all of his financial interests within the UK and asked the Scot to act as he saw best so as to maximise the earnings from his expedition.³⁶⁵ It was Keltie who arranged to have the first telegram received from Nansen appear in the press and he also secured a deal with the Archibald Constable publishing house to produce the official account of the expedition that was to be written by the Norwegian.³⁶⁶ Keltie handled all of the contractual necessities of Nansen's publications and made deals with several of the leading daily newspapers, ensuring that both he and his remarkable expedition were kept on their front pages. Once again it is clear that the astute Secretary was promoting Nansen – and importantly his scientific style of geography – to those within and beyond the Royal Geographical Society.

Amid the storm of publicity that surrounded Nansen upon his return, Keltie sent a letter inviting the Norwegian to describe his recent exploits to the baying RGS Fellows. Determined to secure an *exclusive* lecture from this latest Polar celebrity, Keltie made it very clear to the Norwegian 'that your first appearance in England should be with us [and] nowhere else.'³⁶⁷ As a way of repaying Keltie for all the help he had offered while he been away, Nansen graciously accepted the invitation and arrangements were made for his visit to London.

On account of Nansen's enormous following, Keltie secured the sizeable Royal Albert Hall for Nansen's lecture before organising a host of social engagements between Nansen and the British social and political elite. The Royal Societies' Club, The Sauvage Club and the RGS's in-house dining group

³⁶³ Letter from Alexander Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 12th July 1893 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections].

³⁶⁴ Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876–1917'.

³⁶⁵ Letter from Alexander Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 12th July 1893 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections].

³⁶⁶ Letter from Alexander Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 30th September 1896 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections].

³⁶⁷ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen, 18th August 1896 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

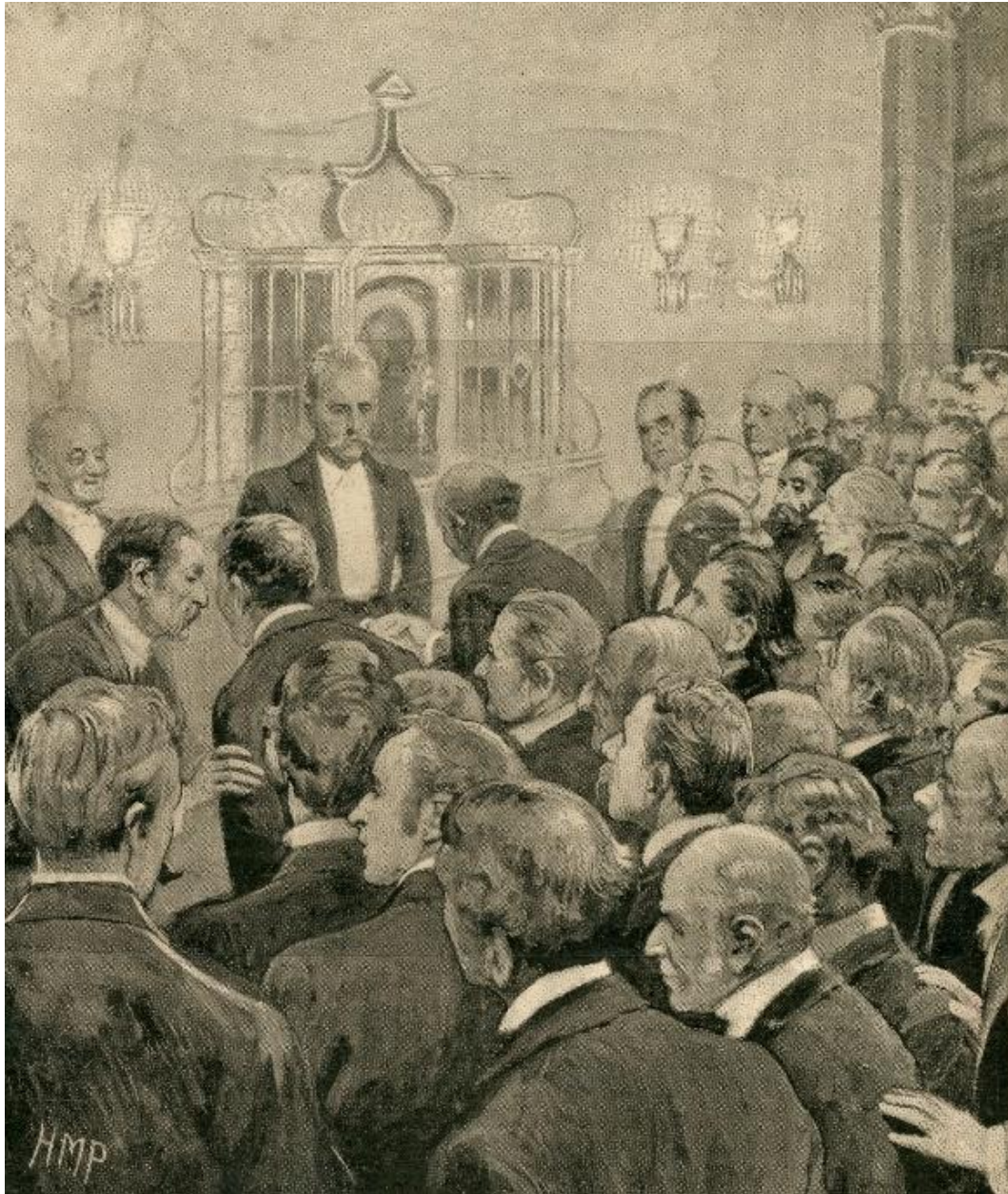


Figure 12: Drawing of Nansen addressing the Royal Societies' Club in 1897.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ 'Dr. Nansen at the Royal Societies Club: The reception after the banquet' [RGS-IBG Picture Library, S0027059].

The Geographical Club all hosted Nansen proudly during his visit (see *Figure 12*). However, it is worth noting here that Keltie made sure that Nansen was to dine with *him* before any other engagement, indeed welcoming him into his home to meet his daughter and son-in-law.³⁶⁹ Nansen's entire list of engagements while in London can be observed in *Figure 13*.³⁷⁰

it is all right.
 As far as I now understand
 the program for my stay in
 London is this:
 February 4 Dinner with Keltie
 5 Royal Soc. Club.
 6 Evening Savage Club
 Could Peter Knudsen perhaps have
 his dinner before the Savage Club this
 day?
 7 Dinner Sir Clements M.
 February 8 Lecture Geogr. Soc.
 9 Lecture James Hall
 10 Westbourn Park Institute
 So not this right? Then

Figure 13: Nansen's letter to Keltie outlining his schedule while in London.³⁷¹

The crowning glory to Nansen's visit to London though was undoubtedly the presentation of a Special RGS Medal that had been struck specifically for the occasion. As can be seen in *Figure 14* the medal featured his stoic profile engraved on the obverse and his legendary ship *Fram* engraved on the reverse. According to the report in the *Geographical Journal*, Nansen's lecture at the Royal Albert Hall was

³⁶⁹ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie 30th November 1896 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

³⁷⁰ The dinner with 'Sir Clements M' on 7th February has significance for the final section of this chapter.

³⁷¹ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie 30th November 1896 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

‘listened to with the closest attention, and enthusiastically applauded’ by the assembled British elites. The Society’s patron, the Prince of Wales, was in attendance and as he presented Nansen with his medal (see *Figure 15* below), the future monarch remarked; ‘We are [...] highly indebted to Dr. Nansen for having given us such an instructive and interesting narrative of his adventures on this arctic exploration, and my only regret was that it was not longer.’³⁷²



*Figure 14: Special Medal presented to Fridtjof Nansen at the Royal Albert Hall Meeting.*³⁷³

When Nansen returned to Lysaker having attended all of these various lectures, engagements and soirees, he found a letter waiting for him from his friend Keltie in which the Scot jovially remarked, ‘[I] am almost recovered from the new disease which I call Nansenitis.’³⁷⁴

Public Science?

While on the one hand all of these flamboyant occasions were in many ways reminiscent of the earlier age of geographical exploration that Joseph Conrad has termed ‘Geography Fabulous,’ when we look more closely at the content of Nansen’s lecture at the Royal Albert Hall there were also some notable

³⁷² Anonymous, ‘The Nansen Meeting in the Albert Hall: Presentation of the Special Medal’, 255.

³⁷³ RGS-IBG Artefact Collections [rgs700828; Artefact G12].

³⁷⁴ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen, 28th March 1897 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

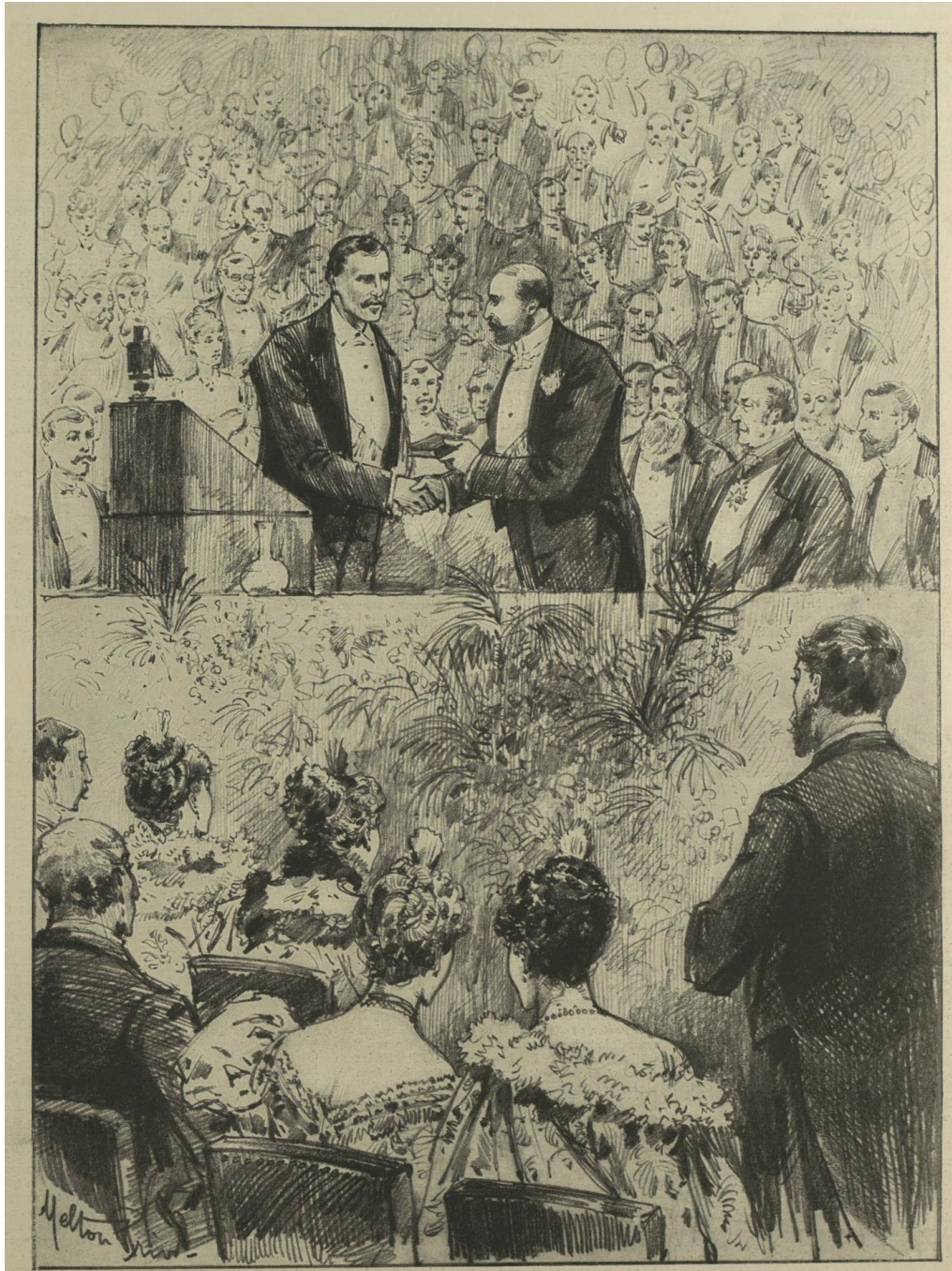


Figure 15: Nansen being awarded the RGS Special Medal by the Prince of Wales.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ *The Illustrated London News*, 13th February 1897.

differences to this model.³⁷⁶ While the presentation certainly struck an entertaining tone, it also included considerable detail relating to the scientific aspects of the expedition. Nansen talked at length about the nature of the East Greenland Current of which his expedition had confirmed the existence, and he also discussed the wealth of oceanographic data which had been collected during the drift.³⁷⁷ Many of the lantern slides which accompanied the lecture offered the audience imagery of Nansen and his crew using their scientific instruments to record various aspects of the icy environment (see *Figure 16*). Indeed, Nansen concluded his lecture by arguing that further knowledge could be gained if future vessels were equipped with complete laboratories so as to permit ‘even the most elaborate scientific investigations’ to be conducted in the field.³⁷⁸ While undoubtedly captivating the audience with a daring narrative of his dangerous voyage, Nansen was simultaneously ensuring that the more scholarly results from the expedition were to feature prominently in his lecture.

Nansen’s appearance at the Royal Albert Hall is therefore a key moment in the intertwined histories of Arctic exploration and the development geographical thinking. This flamboyant display of heroism points not only to the wider culture that surrounded nineteenth-century exploration, but importantly it also highlights the changing nature of the geographical discipline during this period. That is to say, the lecture provides clear evidence of the multiple, overlapping roles which explorers were expected to fulfil in the production and circulation of geographical knowledge. It has been shown that the arduous crossing of the Arctic Ocean marked only the beginning of Nansen’s ‘duties’ as an explorer, and he was aware of this even before he embarked on the voyage. He knew he would be expected to present an account of his experiences in numerous publications, newspapers and magazines and also that he would need to deliver lectures across Europe and North America in order to entertain these various interested audiences. Importantly, because of his connections and experience, Nansen turned to his friend Keltie and asked him to arrange all of these engagements. This again highlights the important role that the RGS played in these numerous knowledge circulation processes. Furthermore, and of particular relevance here, by presenting strongly science-based arguments at the packed Royal Albert

³⁷⁶ Conrad, ‘Geography and Some Explorers’.

³⁷⁷ Nansen, ‘Some Results of the Norwegian Arctic Expedition, 1893-96’.

³⁷⁸ Nansen, 504.

Hall, Nansen offered a clear articulation of what Keltie and others at the Society hoped the future practice of geography might look like.



Figure 16: Lantern slides used during Nansen's Albert Hall Lecture.³⁷⁹

Muddying Markham's 'Mastery'

Clements Markham has been mentioned periodically throughout this chapter and we turn now to pay closer inspection to his close associations with Nansen and the development of the relationship that was to emerge between the two. Markham's involvement in the Royal Geographical Society was as complex as it was long. For over five decades, Markham served on the RGS Council, occupying the post of Honorary Secretary for twenty-five years and President for twelve years before stepping down and turning to pursue the coveted South Pole.³⁸⁰ However, as Mill notes, he continued to maintain substantial sway over the Council's future decisions.³⁸¹ Indeed, that there has been no recent biography of this pioneering figure in the nineteenth-century British establishment is a curious omission.³⁸² Born in the same year that the RGS was founded, the changes which took place, not only at the Society, but also in the wider social, cultural and political world during his lifetime are certainly remarkable. But

³⁷⁹ Courtesy of the RGS-IBG Picture Library [RGS-IBG Collections, rgs239262].

³⁸⁰ Baigent, 'Markham, Sir Clements Robert (1830–1916)'.

³⁸¹ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

³⁸² Clements Markham's cousin (and also an RGS Fellow) A.H. Markham wrote *The Life of Sir Clements R. Markham, K.C.B., F.R.S* in 1917; Blanchard wrote an account of his earlier years in *Markham in Peru: The Travels of Clements R. Markham, 1852-1853*.

the period of Markham's long life that is of interest to this chapter, relates to those years spanning the substantive RGS reform.

As mentioned above, at the end of the nineteenth century the group of reformists at the RGS were only a marginal voice and struggled to have their case heard amongst the other ongoing tensions that were playing out at Savile Row. The heated dispute over the admission of female Fellows had substantially soured the institutional atmosphere and, as Stoddart explains, the Society's 'lion-hunting, toadying and tuft-hunting' reputation continued to deter more progressive members from joining.³⁸³ The scientific presence on the Council had diminished to a handful of practitioners and only forty-four RGS Fellows, equivalent to barely 1% of the Fellowship, were also members of the Royal Society during this period.³⁸⁴ It was clear that those Fellows keen to change the RGS's reputation as an amateurish social club needed to change their marginal position within the Society and have their cause represented in some way on the Society's Council.

It certainly cannot be argued that Markham was strongly in favour of reform at the Society, and he was undoubtedly most closely associated with the 'veteran' Fellows bemoaned by Keltie and others. Much more aligned with military rather than scientific interests, his multiple expeditions to both Latin America and the Polar regions were to earn him profound respect from all corners of the Society's old guard.³⁸⁵ Mill explains that Markham was 'by nature strongly drawn to traditions of the past' and, somewhat unfairly, suggests that he 'was never able to adjust his mind to scientific modes of thought.'³⁸⁶ Were this true however, it would probably have been no detractor in the eyes of his most fervent supporters anyway.

Yet, when analysing the vast remnants of his correspondence, his personal journals and his numerous memoranda to the Council, it becomes clear that Markham was undoubtedly a pragmatist. Few could criticise his ingenious ability to steer the Society, even through the most troubling *fin de*

³⁸³ Stoddart, *On Geography*, 66.

³⁸⁴ Stoddart, *On Geography*.

³⁸⁵ See Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration* for an overview of Markham's Naval involvement.

³⁸⁶ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 136.

siècle years of his premiership and his hard work and dedication meant that he was at least respected by most of the Fellows. As Keltie noted upon his death:

By his friendly, genial and considerate relations with every member of the staff he secured their loyal devotion not only to himself but to the Society, so that the hardest work in carrying out the Society's objects and in maintaining its reputation became a pleasure and not a task.³⁸⁷

It therefore seems that, while Markham may not have been one of the key drivers of educational and scientific reform at the Society, he was not *actively* against it either. It was this level-headed rationality and willingness to concede if fairly persuaded which ultimately allowed the geographical reformists to get a foothold in determining the Society's contested future. During the similar totemic disputes that had taken place within the Society, Markham avoided committing himself to one perspective over another. For example, while he was personally opposed the admission of women as Fellows at the Society, Mill notes that; 'there were no public utterances of his to identify him with the controversy.'³⁸⁸ The remainder of this chapter will therefore contend that it was a similar tacit permissibility under Markham's Presidency that allowed the likes of Douglas Freshfield, Halford Mackinder, Francis Galton and most importantly John Scott Keltie to project their warnings – and importantly their progressive solutions – to the wider Fellowship, in an atmosphere which would have been impossible only a few years earlier. Again, caution must be taken not to designate Markham as the sole reason these reforms were able to gain traction at the Society, as this would again fall into the hagiographic trap previously cautioned against. Instead of attributing these changes solely to 'Markham's Mastery' as Hugh Robert Mill did in his biography of the Society, here, the subtler power relationships which were playing out both behind and beyond the doors of 1 Savile Row will be analysed.³⁸⁹ Once again, a closer examination of the correspondence archive of Fridtjof Nansen reveals a more nuanced picture of the philosophical reorientation which took place at the RGS during this period.

³⁸⁷ Anonymous, 'Death of Sir Clements Markham', 169.

³⁸⁸ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 136.

³⁸⁹ Mill, 133.

A Friendship Blossoms

The point at which Nansen and Markham first encountered one another is difficult to discern, but it is likely to have been during Nansen's visit to the Society in 1889 after his crossing of Greenland. Tracing the development of the pair's friendship, however, is a somewhat easier task, as in a letter dated March 1913, Markham reflects forthrightly upon the moment their relationship became more amicable. Remembering the meeting where Nansen presented his plans for the *Fram* expedition, Markham writes:

My dear Nansen, our friendship dates back for more than twenty years [...] You must remember when you went to London to explain your splendid plan for Arctic research, at a meeting of the Geographical Society. Instead of sympathy you received every sort of discouragement from the pundits who were supposed to know, Richards, Nares, Hooker, and the rest. I was at Copenhagen when you passed through, and hailed your scheme as well thought [through], feasible, and as having every prospect of success. We have been friends ever since.³⁹⁰

The 'hailing' to which Markham refers to here was perhaps slightly exaggerated, as the letter sent on the 21st April 1892 in fact reads; 'I read the paper [...] with much interest'.³⁹¹ It is true that an increasing comradeship between the two can be evidenced in this letter, though, as Markham declared; 'I intend to come over early in July to Christiania to see how your steamer [*Fram*] is progressing.'³⁹²

While preparations were still underway for Nansen's voyage, Markham decided to visit Nansen in his native Norway and went to observe the construction of Nansen's now legendary vessel. It seems Markham's eye for a competent explorer was clearly well honed as in a second letter to Nansen, ahead of his visit, Markham prophesised 'I shall have the pleasure of seeing you I hope [...] as well as of examining the vessel which I hope and trust will become for ever [sic] memorable.'³⁹³ As an experienced sea-farer, Markham was likely intrigued by Nansen's revolutionary naval design for the *Fram*, whereby its broad rounded hull would push the ship upwards in the event it became crushed amongst the Arctic ice floes (or to quote Nansen; 'round and slippery like an eel, she will escape [the

³⁹⁰ Letter from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, 8th March 1892 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

³⁹¹ Letter from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, 8th March 1892 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

³⁹² Letter from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, 12th April 1892 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

³⁹³ Letter from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, [n.d.] July 1892 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

ice's] cold and strong grasp').³⁹⁴ The Society was later to grant Nansen a sum of £300 toward the expedition, so it is also likely to be the case that Markham was scoping the potential suitability of this sizeable financial investment.³⁹⁵ Yet, the jovial tone of Markham's letters seems to suggest he was genuinely keen to reunite with his distant friend and to discuss their shared passion for Arctic exploration.

Over time Nansen and Markham's epistolary relationship was to grow stronger (perhaps to an even greater extent than Nansen's relationship with Keltie) and would span across over one hundred letters, covering two decades. Many of the letters go well beyond the more professional tone used in most of the correspondence between the Society's Fellows and a sense of genuine friendship can be detected in the handwritten scrawls sent between these leading geographical figures. The topics discussed in the letters also covered more than just geographical matters – the characteristics of Norwegian flora and fauna, increasing geopolitical tensions between Norway and Sweden, warm wishes to each other's family and condolences on the deaths of mutual friends are just some of the subjects that are discussed in Markham and Nansen's correspondence and plans to reacquaint in person featured regularly.³⁹⁶ Importantly, a deep mutual respect for the other's opinion can be also detected clearly across the pair's letters, even during points of profound disagreement. Such a close relationship was to prove decisive in pushing through a more scholarly geography at the Society, albeit in a somewhat indirect way.

To Markham, it is probably fair to assume that Nansen was an explorer first and a scientist second (in contradiction to how Nansen classified himself) and easily fulfilled the exploratory criteria required to be recognised as worthy of an RGS Fellowship. However, Markham's intellect and his pragmatic nature outlined above meant that he could foresee the direction in which Geography was heading and reasoned that a transition to this New Geography was going to be inevitable. His 1896 yearly Opening

³⁹⁴ Nansen, 'How Can the North Polar Region Be Crossed?', 13.; The ship was built in Larvig, Norway by the Scottish shipbuilder Colin Archer.

³⁹⁵ Royal Geographical Society Council Minutes, 11th April 1892 [RGS-IBG Collections].

³⁹⁶ Letters from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, 1892-1915 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].



Figure 17: Nansen dining next to Clements Markham at the Royal Societies' Club.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ 'Nansen at the Royal Societies' Club' [RGS-IBG Picture Library, S0027058].

Address, not long after Nansen's triumphant return to Europe, is perhaps the clearest expression of this foresight. In his speech to the Fellows, he described Nansen as:

A great explorer from every point of view in his conceptions, in his scientific attainments, in the completeness of his preparations, in his power over others, in the way he overcomes all obstacles, in his dauntless courage and marvellous endurance.³⁹⁸

Predictably Nansen's scientific approach to exploration is only briefly mentioned (and in reference to past achievements), while his 'power,' 'courage' and 'endurance' are all deemed to be the primary basis for his success. Nonetheless, science *was* mentioned. Markham made an almost identical sentiment at the flamboyant Meeting at the Albert Hall described above, again not focusing on the scientific advances Nansen had made *per se* but nonetheless acknowledging them:

His great ability and resourcefulness, *his great scientific knowledge*, his marvellous powers of endurance, above all, those high qualities by which he made himself loved by all his followers, were the guarantees of that success.³⁹⁹

It seems Nansen's influence on the Society had reached a crucial point. Here, before a 6000-strong audience, RGS President Sir Clements Markham was pronouncing that Nansen's scientific achievements ought to be respected and applauded. This was a remarkable turnaround from the view he took just a few years earlier, where he pronounced those with a scientific approach to the subject as 'doctrinaires.'⁴⁰⁰ It seems Nansen had softened Markham's firm opinions on the matter and had shown the merits of what a coherent, unified and fundamentally science-based approach to geography could achieve. It took a particular moment in the history of Polar exploration, however, to crystallise the differing approaches that each of these men had to geographical exploration and brought these competing visions to a head. To explain this in more detail, the chapter must take an antipodean turn.

Antarctic Antagonisms

It has been argued that Markham's historical legacy is predominantly associated with his ambitions for Antarctica, and in particular with his patronage of Robert F. Scott's efforts to reach the South Pole.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ Anonymous, 'Opening Address by the President, 1896-97', 543.

³⁹⁹ Anonymous, 'The Nansen Meeting in the Albert Hall: Presentation of the Special Medal', 251.

⁴⁰⁰ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 136.

⁴⁰¹ Driver, 'The Active Life: The Explorer as Biographical Subject'.

Countless popular and scholarly texts have documented the fateful events which unfolded in Antarctica in 1913, and the ‘race to the pole’ between Scott and Roald Amundsen has become one of the most well-known events in Polar, or indeed expeditionary, history.⁴⁰² As John Wylie has explained:

The voyages of Scott and Amundsen have been the subject of a diverse and often passionate exegesis: editorials, obituaries, panegyrics, biographies for children and for adults, screenplays, fictions, academic inquiries, revisionist histories, and perhaps above all, the published diaries and memoirs of various members of the expeditions themselves.⁴⁰³

Both the RGS’s and Markham’s participation in this saga has also been well documented.⁴⁰⁴ However, it seems Fridtjof Nansen’s involvement in this perilous saga is slightly less well known (at least in popular Anglophone polar histories).⁴⁰⁵

From reading his correspondence, it is clear that Nansen acted as a mentor to Amundsen. Furthermore, it seems that it was with his guidance and permission that Amundsen set out aboard Nansen’s *Fram* to explore the Bering Strait and emulate his drift across the Arctic ice, but this time with hopes of reaching the Pole. Again, any Polar History text tells us that on hearing of Robert Peary and Frederick Cook’s rival claims to have reached the North Pole (see chapter six), Amundsen made the bold decision to divert his course and make an attempt for the South Pole instead.⁴⁰⁶ What these texts rarely stress however, is that the route Amundsen was to follow across the Antarctic ice sheet was actually drawn up by Nansen during his time on the Farthest North expedition. As Nansen explained in a letter to Markham dated 4th April 1913:

In our hut in Franz Josef Land there was plenty of time to think over the South Polar expedition into every detail, and when I came home, I had my plans perfectly ready, I worked hard to finish the scientific report of my last expedition in order to start the new one as soon as possible.⁴⁰⁷

It is clear that Nansen had intended to travel to Antarctica *himself* once he had returned from his Farthest North expedition and had confided these ambitions in a number of close friends and colleagues:

⁴⁰² Huntford, *The Last Place on Earth*; Ludlam, *Captain Scott: The Full Story*; Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World, Antarctic, 1910-1913*.

⁴⁰³ Wylie, ‘Becoming-Icy: Scott and Amundsen’s South Polar Voyages, 1910-1913’; See also Roberts, ‘Heroes for the Past and Present: A Century of Remembering Amundsen and Scott’.

⁴⁰⁴ Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott’s Antarctic Sacrifice*.

⁴⁰⁵ For an exception to this however, see Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*.

⁴⁰⁶ Huntford, *The Last Place on Earth*.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to Clements Markham, 4th April 1913 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

My intention was to go to the South Pole when I came back from my North Polar Expedition with Sverdrup, and strange to say the last question Sverdrup made me when we parted on the ice in March 1895, was whether I would start the expedition to the South Pole before he came back with the *Fram*.⁴⁰⁸

Indeed, the same letter also reveals that it was only because Nansen viewed Amundsen's proposed Bering Strait expedition as being of substantially more benefit to scientific knowledge, that he granted reluctant permission for Amundsen to use the *Fram*. In doing so, he was of course surrendering his own Antarctic ambitions.

I reasoned with myself, the investigations of different kinds which Amundsen could do on his drift across the North Polar Basin, would be unique, in several respects *would give us scientific material which we highly required*, and would be I thought, of much more value than anything I could do in the south. [...] I told [Amundsen] then "that as I considered his expedition across the Northern Polar basin to be of more importance than my expedition to the South Pole, I would give up my expedition and let him have the *Fram*."⁴⁰⁹

It seems Nansen's dedication to the furthering of scientific understanding had won out over his desire to conclude his exploration career with a final polar expedition – he was never again to find himself amongst the ice at either pole. Providing further evidence for the close relationship that had developed between himself and Markham, Nansen revealed the emotional impact this had on him in a poignant letter to his British friend:

I must confess that it was with a bleeding heart that I thus cut myself off from doing the one thing I had planned and cherished for such a long time, and which should have been a "winding-up" of my career as polar explorer, the "master piece" [sic] on which I should bring the "blessing" of my experience; for I thought I had so many experiences which I felt a craving to see utilised to their full extent.⁴¹⁰

But what relevance does this antipodean departure have for the nature of British geography as the twentieth century was beginning? The answer lies in the fact that Captain Scott's failure at the South Pole was as symbolic as it was tragic. Losing what had undoubtedly become an expeditionary 'race' with a foreign competitor had profound implications that went far beyond mere national identity. Scott's defeat, and indeed his death, came to represent the failure of the particular style of geographical practice

⁴⁰⁸ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to Clements Markham, 4th April 1913 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

⁴⁰⁹ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to Clements Markham, 4th April 1913 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1], *emphasis added*.

⁴¹⁰ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to Clements Markham, 4th April 1913 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1].

that has (perhaps unfairly) come to be particularly associated with one man; Clements Markham. As Driver has noted:

If Clements Markham himself is remembered today, it is not usually in heroic mode: his grandiose vision of a new age of imperial exploration died with Captain Scott in the Antarctic.⁴¹¹

While it was Scott and Amundsen who were physically competing in the harsh environments at the Southern-most points of the earth, it was also true that the philosophical approaches to geographical practice that both Nansen and Markham represented were being contested amongst the ice and snows of the Antarctic. The extract which opened this chapter takes on particular salience when contextualised amongst these highly politicised and intensely emotional historical events. Although it is unrealistic and unhelpful to suggest that a change in geographical thinking can never be encapsulated in a single statement, this passage is perhaps the clearest articulation of a profound shift in the philosophical direction of the discipline of geography. The nationalistic, heroic and somewhat amateurish character of British geographical enquiry had come to an abrupt end and it is clear Fridtjof Nansen had been hugely influential in its demise. While Nansen became the figurehead for the new intellectual project in geographical thinking, Markham has in many ways become an icon of the old. The spectacular defeat at the hands of the Norwegians at the South Pole essentially marked the final point in this protracted and difficult philosophical transition. It was Douglas Freshfield who summed up Markham's presidency of the RGS and his particular transitional role at the Society by announcing; 'he lived amongst two generations of men and ruled among the third.'⁴¹²

Conclusion

Those in the Society who fearfully anticipated a decline in the importance of their as yet loosely defined geographical discipline knew that it would be no easy feat to reorient a Fellowship who had complex and competing visions of what the study of Geography should entail. Halford Mackinder himself, who was to articulate the most coherent (and now most debated) vision for a New Geography was able to recognise his and others' failure to 'cultivate the social bonhomie of a man's man' in keeping with the

⁴¹¹ Driver, 'The Active Life: The Explorer as Biographical Subject', n.p.

⁴¹² Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 135.

Society's expectations of what being 'a geographer' entailed.⁴¹³ The reformers knew they had to find an advocate for this intellectual project who was better suited to the archetypical masculine Geographer in order for it to be given any credibility as an antidote to their concerns.

It seemed Nansen was that man. Undoubtedly a man of science, capable of synthesising his findings into broader theoretical frameworks and an advocate for a geography which spanned the terrains of both physical and human worlds, Nansen could hardly have been a better incarnation of what the New Geography espoused. But importantly he also maintained sufficient appeal to the Society's old guard; 'his tall and well-built figure, with the Norse head and fair hair' certainly made him look the part, and the ways in which his 'manly endeavours' undertaken during his time in the North were projected upon his return meant he won the respect and affections of even the most vocal opponents of his scientific style of geography.⁴¹⁴ Careful interpretation of the personal correspondence archives outlined above has revealed a more nuanced process of transition at the Royal Geographical Society at the end of the nineteenth century, and following Barnes, has shown that an appreciation of personal relationships between key geographical figures can reveal previously hidden or marginalised stories of disciplinary development.⁴¹⁵ The letters in this study expose the careful manoeuvring by Society Secretary John Scott Keltie in striving to bring about his more educational vision for geographical scholarship, and the analysis of letters between Markham and Nansen have traced the tragic circumstances in which a new vision for the discipline of geography was able to gain traction.

As a last example to highlight the value that an epistolary approach can bring to researching geography's history, Nansen wrote the following emotional letter to the Society on hearing of Keltie's death in 1927. The letter encapsulates perfectly the human dimensions of geographical scholarship which as has been discussed above, rarely feature in standard disciplinary histories:

The sad news of the death of my very dear friend Sir John Scott Keltie have only now reached me. May I ask you to accept and to convey to the Council my deepest of sympathy in the great loss for your Society, for Geographical Science, for us all. [...] His influence upon what has been

⁴¹³ Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, 97.

⁴¹⁴ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*, 115.

⁴¹⁵ Barnes, 'The Odd Couple'.

done of geographical work during his years, is difficult to measure, but it was important. He was a man in whom there was no deceit, a true son of Scotland, a noble man, and a true friend.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ Mill, 'Obituary: Sir John Scott Keltie', 287.

Chapter 5

The Pressures and Perils of Polar Patronage: Ejnar Mikkelsen's Sponsorship Saga

On the 13th November 1905, the Royal Geographical Society's Research Department hosted a discussion with the somewhat grandiose and certainly optimistic title 'On the Next Great Arctic Discovery.'⁴¹⁷ Sir Clements Markham, who had by this time relinquished his position as President of the Society but remained still hugely influential in its operations, opened the session and read his carefully researched paper before a select group of gentlemen whom he knew to hold particular interest in the furthering of geographical knowledge relating to the Northernmost regions of the Earth.⁴¹⁸ Among them were Admiral Alfred Parr (Lieutenant on the 1875 Nares expedition), Thomas Holdich (future RGS President himself), respected Cartographer Ernst Georg Ravenstein and, intriguingly, a relatively unknown Danish sea captain by the name of Ejnar Mikkelsen. Markham opened the session by announcing; 'I think that the time has come for taking stock of our Arctic knowledge, and for deciding what work of importance remains to be done.'⁴¹⁹ After giving a lengthy overview of the geographical exploration so far conducted in the region, citing the work of Nares, Parry and Nansen, he concluded; 'the only great discovery that remains to be achieved lies over the continental shelf of the Beaufort Sea.'⁴²⁰ At this point the young Mikkelsen took the floor and using a carefully chosen set of words in the hope of convincing the assembled Fellows that he was an able and capable explorer, he announced his ambitious plan to correct this geographical lacuna (see *Figure 18*). Much to the delight of the young Dane, his lecture was met with approval and he was able to continue making arrangements for the proposed expedition.

However, having never organised an expedition himself before, the young Mikkelsen was apparently unaware of the complexities involved in the sponsorship of early twentieth century exploration. His numerous attempts to generate sufficient money to implement his Arctic plans resulted in the construction of a complex network of financiers and backers, all of whom had particular expectations not only for the expedition itself, but also for what was to be achieved upon Mikkelsen's return to Europe. As will now be discussed, the landscape of exploration sponsorship and patronage

⁴¹⁷ Holdich et al., 'On the Next Great Arctic Discovery: Discussion'.

⁴¹⁸ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

⁴¹⁹ Markham and Mikkelsen, 'On the Next Great Arctic Discovery', 1.

⁴²⁰ Markham and Mikkelsen, 9.

had changed substantially since the days of the Franklin Searches and consequently explorers were forced to adapt to these new ways of accruing funds with varying levels of success.

Going Private

As was discussed in chapter one, by the end of the nineteenth century, a significant change had taken place in British public perceptions of Arctic exploration. What were once considered essential and heroic polar endeavours that furthered the national interest came to be viewed increasingly as frivolous attempts to generate personal fame and trivial celebrity.⁴²² A consequence of this was a sharp decline in state expeditionary sponsorship and this in turn meant that Arctic explorers were forced to turn to private sources of funding if they had any intentions of filling in the remaining blanks at the Northern regions of the world map. As Beau Riffenburgh has explained:

Large amounts of money were needed to [reach] these regions, so private explorers, invariably impoverished, constantly had to solicit patronage, both from wealthy benefactors and from the public.⁴²³

Discussing the plethora of obligations that many of these explorers were forced to fulfil in the hopes of earning enough money for their expeditions, Riffenburgh goes on to argue that explorers ‘began to do anything to create images of lands that not only needed to be conquered, but needed them as conquistadors.’⁴²⁴ He refers to the Norwegian Roald Amundsen who is quoted as insisting ‘no one except an explorer could appreciate the agony [that] fund-raising involved.’⁴²⁵ Clements Markham also reflected on these changes in the 1909 volume of the *Geographical Journal* when he lamented:

There was a time when our Government recognized the exploration of unknown regions and the solution of geographical problems, for the encouragement of enterprise and in the interests of commerce and science as a duty. [...] But now it is neglected and left to private volunteers with inadequate means, thus increasing the difficulties a hundredfold.⁴²⁶

The culture of Arctic exploration sponsorship had changed almost beyond recognition and a new generation of explorers were forced to conduct themselves in substantially different ways to their

⁴²² Lewis-Jones, *Imagining the Arctic: Heroism, Spectacle and Polar Exploration*.

⁴²³ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*, 42.

⁴²⁴ Riffenburgh, 42.

⁴²⁵ Riffenburgh, 42.

⁴²⁶ Markham and Mikkelsen, ‘Arctic Researches’, 494.

predecessors so as to adapt to this new climate. Mikkelsen, although not British himself, was to feel the burden of these new fund-raising duties perhaps more so than most of his UK counterparts when he began making contact with the upper echelons of British Society in the hope of securing their financial backing. His lack of experience in such matters, his imperfect command of the English language and his lower socio-economic status added further difficulty to his sponsorship campaign but, as is discussed below, this certainly did not diminish the determination of the enthusiastic Dane.

The purpose of this chapter then is to consider how the process of approaching wealthy private individuals for expeditionary sponsorship meant that explorers were forced to enact and perform different articulations of geography and of exploration depending on with whom they were in contact. The sponsors that Mikkelsen approached during his funding campaign highlight not only the diverse range of actors who were involved in the production and circulation of geographical knowledge during this era, but also the multiple conceptualisations of geography which explorers needed to negotiate in order to satisfy these sponsor's expectations and demands. As Andrew Stuhl has explained:

The Anglo-American Expedition was, contrary to its name, not a British scheme, or even a joint venture of British and American sponsors. Rather, its bankroll came from a mishmash of philanthropists, royal elite, publishers, scholars, governmental officials, corporations, and relatives of the expedition's leaders. The diversity of the funding sources indicates the expense of an Arctic expedition. But it also suggests the purchase of a Polar Continent to industrial Society.⁴²⁷

Importantly for this thesis, the Royal Geographical Society was one of several institutions that was to become one of Mikkelsen's expedition sponsors and so the Society's archival collections offer an intriguingly rich record of his entire sponsorship campaign. These sources hence add further historical nuance to the partial narrative that is documented in Mikkelsen's published accounts of the expedition.

'Come to England, my young friend'

Mikkelsen had long dreamed of exploring the Polar regions. However, having practically no financial means through which to begin his coveted expedition, he set about approaching the well-to-do of 1900s Denmark, requesting what he considered to be a small donation ('Forty, or fifty, thousand Danish

⁴²⁷ Stuhl, *Unfreezing the Arctic: Science, Colonialism and the Transformation of Inuit Lands*, 43.

crowns. That was nothing.’).⁴²⁸ It seems ‘nothing’ was hard to come by however, as initially Mikkelsen was less than successful in finding an enthusiastic expedition sponsor.⁴²⁹ He writes:

The days ran into weeks, and I had not yet met the multi-millionaire interested in Arctic research whom I had expected to find so easily.⁴³⁰

Eventually forced to abandon attempts to source the money in his native Denmark, Mikkelsen was at a loss as how he might salvage the proposed expedition. Fortunately, a vacation to Denmark by the perennially-mobile Clements Markham provided him with a potential solution. After exchanging polite correspondence, the pair met in Bellevue, Copenhagen and discussed the details of Mikkelsen’s proposed Arctic scheme.⁴³¹ Perhaps seeing potential in the Dane for the rekindling of Arctic exploration under the auspices of a *British* Geographical Society, Markham invited Mikkelsen to speak before the Fellows of the RGS:

Come to England, my young friend. There you will have the full support of the Royal Geographical Society. We will help you as far as we can, and perhaps you will have better luck with people there than here.⁴³²

After some consideration, and obviously attracted by the financial possibilities that the Society offered, Mikkelsen replied to Markham:

You ask me if I should like you to bring my plans to the notice of the Council, and I can only say that I would be very glad to, so much as more [sic], it might give some more chances of securing the necessary funds, which, I am assured will be a very hard work.⁴³³

Mikkelsen therefore arrived on British shores enthused that he would find an array of wealthy benefactors who would be keen to donate their assets toward his expedition. He wrote that ‘my optimism was so stentorian that it quite drowned the voice of doubt.’⁴³⁴ Such enthusiasm, however, certainly came under considerable strain when Mikkelsen began to experience the difficulties and politics that were bound up in expeditionary sponsorship.

⁴²⁸ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 13.

⁴²⁹ Mikkelsen, 13.

⁴³⁰ Mikkelsen, *Conquering the Arctic Ice*, 2.

⁴³¹ Letter, Ejnar Mikkelsen to Clements Markham, 15th February 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴³² Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 14.

⁴³³ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to Sir Clements Markham, 22nd February 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴³⁴ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 13.

Amongst the Aristocracy

Mikkelsen's first port of call in Britain was certainly a wealthy one indeed. It seems a shared nationality proves useful when negotiating the financial matters of a forthcoming expedition, and certainly proved advantageous when Mikkelsen's sponsorship campaign got underway in the UK. In 1905, the regal occupier of Buckingham Palace also happened to be a Dane and, armed with a letter of introduction from Prince Valdemar of Denmark which he had wrangled from his friend and former expedition leader G.C. Amdrup, Mikkelsen managed to secure an audience with Queen Alexandra. The Queen greeted her compatriot 'with a friendly, understanding smile' and after listening to Mikkelsen's scheme agreed to take on the role as the expedition's 'patroness.'⁴³⁵

Mikkelsen had, however, overlooked a crucial aspect of Queen Alexandra's royal engagements when he first approached her for support. Unfortunately, one of the patronages in which she was engaged was that of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). When Mikkelsen later revealed during a newspaper interview that his plan for the expedition would necessarily involve the slaughtering of his canine companions, Queen Alexandra quickly re-summoned the Captain to the palace and withdrew her promised funds.⁴³⁶

Although Mikkelsen recounts this unfortunate situation in somewhat humorous terms in his book *Mirage in the Arctic* and makes light of his past inexperience, his faux pas can in fact be viewed a salient precursor to the problems Mikkelsen was later to face in his attempts to secure sponsorship. As he was to discover, precisely how his forthcoming expedition was perceived and understood by those providing the necessary funds was absolutely imperative to ensuring they would donate their much-needed capital. The Queen, while initially keen to back the enterprise, was forced to rescind her patronage upon hearing that it conflicted with her ongoing activities. It is clear that the politics of 'selling' the expedition in a particular way were made clear to Mikkelsen through this encounter, yet he was not to appreciate fully this important lesson until much later in his campaign.

⁴³⁵ Mikkelsen, 17.

⁴³⁶ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*.

It seemed the ordeal with the dogs had not completely ejected Mikkelsen from the Queen's favours, however, as she remained sympathetic to her increasingly desperate fellow Dane. Queen Alexandra offered to put him in contact with another member of the British aristocracy whom she suspected might be interested in providing funds.

Mary Russell (née Mary Du Caurroy Tribe) was the daughter of Walter Harry Tribe, a Clergyman who had emigrated to Northern India to preach at the frontiers of the British empire. It was there that Mary had met her husband, the Duke and reflecting on Russell's entry to the British aristocracy, her grandson writes:

From the beginning she was a notably unconventional Duchess, though it is clear from the start that she took her social obligations seriously and earnestly if without enthusiasm.⁴³⁷

Such lack of enthusiasm for her ducal duties resulted in the Duchess finding satisfaction from other, perhaps less traditional occupations in her life. She took a keen interest in all aspects of nature and the environment and also had a keen thirst for travel and adventure with a particular fascination with aviation. Indeed, after completing several noteworthy endurance flights throughout the early twentieth century, Russell was later to earn the nickname 'The Flying Duchess' in the tabloid press (see *Figure 19*).⁴³⁸ Her general love for what might be termed 'the great outdoors' is encapsulated by the passage below:

No one place could hold her for very long. She had the wanderlust too strongly rooted in her being. If you have realized her deep love of the beautiful in Nature and Art, her instinctive craving for mountain heights, and, with that, her intense curiosity and interest in human life, you will find reason enough for her periodic flights from the home environment.⁴³⁹

Had the RGS been open to female members during her younger years, it seems likely Mary Russell would have been one of its keenest members. However, 'lady Fellows,' as they were termed, were not to be welcomed fully at the Society for another eight years.⁴⁴⁰ As it transpires, the Duchess's thirst for adventure, as well as her husband's sizeable estate, were both to prove the turning point in the near-impoverished Mikkelsen's fortunes.

⁴³⁷ Russell, *The Flying Duchess: The Diaries and Letters of Mary Duchess of Bedford*, 22.

⁴³⁸ Russell, *The Flying Duchess: The Diaries and Letters of Mary Duchess of Bedford*.

⁴³⁹ Russell, 24.

⁴⁴⁰ Evans, Keighren, and Maddrell, 'Coming of Age? Reflections on the Centenary of Women's Admission to the Royal Geographical Society'.



Figure 19: Duchess of Bedford (R) in her aeroplane.⁴⁴¹

Mikkelsen was invited to stay for a weekend at the Duchess's Woburn estate where the self-conscious and uncouth young sailor found himself amongst a crowd of various British aristocrats and social elites.

There were a whole lot of guests, people who had apparently never been hard up. They were also familiar with their surroundings; they all knew each other and spoke a language I scarcely understood. [...] It wasn't at all easy there, and although the Duchess tried to make me feel at home, I couldn't help feeling like a fish out of water.⁴⁴²

This stress-inducing hobnobbing ultimately proved worthwhile for Mikkelsen though. Although there is little extant record of what was said during his visit to Woburn Abbey, it seems the Dane managed successfully to enchant the various aristocrats by offering a daring impression of his proposed journey. Fascinated by the expedition and perhaps hoping to live vicariously through the young explorer, the Duchess and some of her guests, agreed to give Mikkelsen a contribution toward his desired finances. Clearly overjoyed finally to have secured some capital, Mikkelsen wrote an excited letter exclaiming:

⁴⁴¹ Illustrated London News, 8th October 1927, p.591.

⁴⁴² Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 21.

I have had a very good piece of luck of late – as the Duchess of Bedford – with whom I have been in correspondence – send me a check [sic] of £200!⁴⁴³

By mingling amongst the British upper classes, Mikkelsen had finally secured a small proportion of the funds needed for the journey, and his hopes and ambitions for the expedition were once again reignited. But this was still far from the total amount needed to finance the expedition. It was very fortunate that the Duchess had given Mikkelsen the money as an act of philanthropy, as this was not to be the case for the remainder of his expedition sponsors.

Before the Fellows

Success with the Duchess did not necessarily ensure plain sailing for the rest of Mikkelsen's funding campaign. Another challenge had to be faced on his path to sponsorship; the aforementioned meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. After the initial invitation he had received from Markham, Mikkelsen was to write several letters to the Society politely asking if they might be able to offer him, support. Importantly, a gradual increase in desperation is clearly detectable in the correspondence:

I would be very glad indeed for support from R.G.S. [around] £150-200. [...] If the Society could not be persuaded to give the money, I wonder if they could not be persuaded to loan me the amount, so that I, on the return, could pay it back? There is of course the possibility that that I never come back, but in that case the Society only lose its money – I my life, but I don't see any reason to anticipate the evil, before it is absolutely necessary.⁴⁴⁴

At last the day had arrived for Mikkelsen to share his plans with the Society. Despite Markham having taken the young Dane under his wing during their time in Bellevue, Mikkelsen describes the nervousness he felt when describing the plans for his expedition before the Society's intimidating Fellows. In what is a rare insight into the embodied practice of lecturing at the Royal Geographical Society, he writes:

It was not easy for a young man whose inadequate English called for a certain benevolence in the listener, suddenly to find himself on his hind legs looking out over row upon row of pale faces on which there was no apparent sympathy or understanding to be read, just the indulgent waiting, the same disheartening expression I knew so well from the faces of those to whom I had gone for money when they had already made up their minds not to give a penny.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 4th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 12th November 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁴⁵ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 18.

The reason for Mikkelsen's apprehension was likely due to the fact that for the first time the scientific credentials of the expedition were to be scrutinised thoroughly. Before now, Mikkelsen had deliberately deployed a romanticised narrative of his proposed voyage to convince wealthy aristocrats that he was deserving of their financial investment. While a similar approach would certainly appeal to some quarters of the Society's Fellowship, it would hardly be sufficient to convince the more scientifically minded practitioners in attendance at the RGS.

Deciphering precisely who was present during the Society's meetings is always a challenging task, but the *Geographical Journal* does provide some indications.⁴⁴⁶ Thomas Holdich, who had decades of experience in survey work in all corners of the world, is documented as chairing the meeting. Also present were Admiral Alfred Parr, who had conducted the substantial surveys undertaken during the Nares expedition, and Ernst Georg Ravenstein, a respected and experienced cartographer and former pupil of August Petermann.⁴⁴⁷ These men, with vast amounts of collective experience in accumulating and processing geographical data were unlikely to be interested in a romanticised account of the proposed expedition. Importantly, it appears Mikkelsen was aware of the certain customs expected by the Society and hence tailored his lecture accordingly. The closing remarks of his relatively short discussion read as follows:

We shall achieve results in the following branches: *Geology* and *zoology* at Mackenzie river and Banks Land, and the place where we strike land after the sledge journey; *ethnographical* investigations, wherever Eskimo or remains of them are found; *hydrographical* observations in and Bering strait; and *meteorological*, *magnetical*, and *tidal* series during the stay on Banks Land.⁴⁴⁸

Clearly making sure to highlight explicitly the value that the expedition would have for the various branches of scientific inquiry, Mikkelsen presented a carefully curated description of his plans so as to appeal to those present. In the confines of the hall in Burlington Gardens where the Society's meetings took place, a spectacular or sublime description of the forthcoming journey carried increasingly little

⁴⁴⁶ Markham and Mikkelsen, 'On the Next Great Arctic Discovery'.

⁴⁴⁷ For overviews of these men's life and works see: Anonymous, 'Obituary: Ernst Georg Ravenstein'; Anonymous, 'Obituary: Admiral A. A. C. Parr'; Mason and Crosthwait, 'Colonel Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, KCMG, KCIE, CB'.

⁴⁴⁸ Markham and Mikkelsen, "On the Next Great Arctic Discovery," January 1906, *original emphasis*.

value and so Mikkelsen was to rely on alternative, more academically informed arguments to ensure that the Society would provide its support. Although not experienced in these fields himself, he reassured the audience that he would endeavour to bring those capable of completing the required scientific activities along with him on the journey.

It appears Mikkelsen's case was persuasive. His speech was met with applause and the comments given after the speech indicate he received hearty encouragement from the assembled Fellows.⁴⁴⁹ Indeed, the presentation seems to have been better received than Markham's own opening address which, according to the former president's personal journal, needed to be 'saved from falling flat by Admiral Parr.'⁴⁵⁰ After the formalities of the meeting were dispensed with, the post-lecture reception was a more relaxed affair and also proved vital for the future of Mikkelsen's expedition. The first among the crowd to wish Mikkelsen success was none other than Fridtjof Nansen. The Scandinavian pair shared a friendly conversation 'in a language more natural to [them] both' and it appears Mikkelsen had convinced the Norwegian that his plans had sufficient scientific merit, as Nansen later wrote an article in *The Times* conveying his support for the expedition.⁴⁵¹ Mikkelsen was then approached by 'a tall bearded man' who hinted that he might be able to support the explorer in some capacity. Still overwhelmed and bewildered by the proceedings, Mikkelsen failed to ask the gentlemen his name before he once again disappeared into the crowd.⁴⁵² Fortunately though, it was at this point that Mikkelsen made first contact with another man who was going to prove vital in the future financial negotiations of the expedition. Having witnessed the exchange with the elusive 'bearded man' take place, Society Secretary John Scott Keltie approached the Dane laughing and told him; 'You have a lot to learn yet – that was [Walter] Rothschild. He is very rich, very interested and has his own zoological museum at Tring – you must pay some attention to him.'⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ Markham and Mikkelsen.

⁴⁵⁰ Clements Markham, Personal Journal entry, 13th November 1905 [RGS-IBG Collections, Clements Markham Journal Collection].

⁴⁵¹ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 19; 'A New Arctic Expedition' *The Times*, 19th January 1906, 6.

⁴⁵² Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*.

⁴⁵³ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 19–20; For more on Walter Rothschild see Jordan, "Rothschild, Lionel Walter, Second Baron Rothschild."

As was the case for many budding explorers at the time, this meeting with John Scott Keltie proved to be the turning point for Mikkelsen's expeditionary fortunes.⁴⁵⁴ Over the coming months, Mikkelsen and Keltie were to develop a somewhat bittersweet relationship as the expedition was to get off the ground, but above all both were keen to ensure it was a success. Mill's *Record of the Royal Geographical Society* notes that Keltie was ceaselessly encouraging towards ambitious young explorers and explains that he was always prepared to use his considerable connections to the British exploratory establishment to assist in their endeavours.⁴⁵⁵ It seemed Mikkelsen had become the next candidate for Keltie's geographical apprenticeship.

The meeting of the RGS had been a success in a number of ways for Mikkelsen and he had managed to convince the Society that his plans were suitably well conceived so as to earn a prestigious RGS grant. It must be noted, however, that the Society's Committee Minute Books reveal the funds granted to Mikkelsen were not free from financial caveats:

Mr Mikkelsen, asking for assistance in his proposed expedition to the Arctic Regions. Recommended that £100 be granted, *if Mr Mikkelsen can raise the remainder, £700, elsewhere*, provided the Finance Committee approves.⁴⁵⁶

It seems the Society's grant was explicitly dependent on Mikkelsen being able to raise adequate funds from another external source. This was common practice at the Society which (perhaps contrary to the popular image it purposefully maintained) was rarely in the habit of granting sizeable sums of money toward geographical expeditions. Instead, as Driver explains, it was more typical for the Society to offer its support in more tacit forms such as loans of instruments and access to its substantive geographical library.⁴⁵⁷ These financial stipulations did not deter Mikkelsen though, for he fortunately had one final call to make during his time in London. However, after what had already been a somewhat tumultuous road to securing sponsorship, it transpires that this particular patron would prove the most contentious of all.

⁴⁵⁴ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

⁴⁵⁵ Mill explains that 'to intending travellers [...] [Keltie] was the ideal guide, philosopher and friend,' p.140.

⁴⁵⁶ Royal Geographical Society Expedition Committee Minutes, 6th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Collections], *emphasis added*

⁴⁵⁷ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

Persuading the Publisher

His less than successful encounter with Queen Alexandra was not the only contact Mikkelsen was to make with one of his compatriots in his increasingly desperate attempts to facilitate the Polar voyage. After befriending Mr C. A. Bang – ‘one of the leading lights in the English publishing house of William Heinemann’ and also a Dane – Mikkelsen managed to convince this man to arrange a meeting with his influential (and wealthy) literary employer.⁴⁵⁸

William Heinemann was a highly successful London publisher. Over the course of his career he had a number of leading authors associated with his publishing house, with the likes of Robert Louis Stevenson, H. G. Wells, Sylvia Plath and Rudyard Kipling listed among his authors. Indeed, one of his contemporaries described him as:

A born publisher – by far the most brilliant man I have known in the profession. [...] Among publishers he stands to me *facile princeps* – in that he had an almost unerring instinct for the right book.⁴⁵⁹

Mr Heinemann, it seems, was an extremely experienced member of the British nineteenth century publishing industry.

As has been demonstrated, the publishing of books and other forms of travel narratives was an absolutely essential part of a nineteenth-century explorer’s livelihood.⁴⁶⁰ No matter how comprehensive or sophisticated the scientific accomplishments achieved during an expedition, explorers were inevitably required to produce a popular account of their travels in order to garner some dependable income. The process of converting explorers’ ‘travels into print’ has been shown to be a complex one and has received sustained scholarly attention.⁴⁶¹ However, the relationship that was to develop between Mikkelsen and Heinemann offers a slightly different perspective on the useful discussions that have so far been outlined. The following exchange between the explorer and the publisher allows insights into the relationships that existed between geographical authors and publishers *before* the voyage had been

⁴⁵⁸ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 16.

⁴⁵⁹ St John, *William Heinemann: A Century of Publishing, 1890-1990*, 88.

⁴⁶⁰ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; MacLaren, ‘In Consideration of the Evolution of Explorers and Travellers into Authors: A Model’.

⁴⁶¹ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; Withers and Keighren, ‘Travels into Print: Authoring, Editing and Narratives of Travel and Exploration, c. 1815–c. 1857’.

undertaken. Such speculative sponsorship of an expedition was not a typical venture for the publishing industry and, as will be shown, the fractious nature of the contractual negotiations is perhaps testament to this unfamiliar practice.

The initial meeting between Mikkelsen and Heinemann was fruitful. In exchange for exclusive rights to a book written by Mikkelsen that would give an account of the forthcoming and potentially perilous journey, Heinemann agreed that he would provide a payment in advance that would contribute towards the expedition's expenses. Heinemann's initial offer stood at £600 which, when coupled with the £200 Mikkelsen had secured from the Duchess of Bedford, would release the further grant of £100 promised by the RGS. Seemingly, this would finally provide a solution (or at least a temporary reprieve) to Mikkelsen's financial troubles and mean the hitherto uncertain expedition could take place. However, as seemed to be a regular occurrence with Mikkelsen's financial matters, this transaction was not to be as straightforward as planned.

Mikkelsen was apparently wary of the publisher's offer. Putting his anxieties on paper he wrote a letter explaining: 'I have been in a mental stress about what to do, as I was sure Heinemann was going to get the best out of me'.⁴⁶² The recipient of this anxious letter is an intriguing one, for it was Keltie to whom Mikkelsen had turned in seeking advice on how best to negotiate with Heinemann. Through his previous career in the world of publishing, Keltie had maintained good relations with several key contacts in the publishing industry and was keenly aware of their utility as potential sources of expedition funding.⁴⁶³ Importantly though, he was also very experienced in the minutiae of contractual agreements and even had some legal expertise in matters relating to the publishing of explorers' accounts.⁴⁶⁴ By comparison, Mikkelsen's inexperience in the trials and tribulations of such arrangements are made abundantly apparent in his subsequent correspondence with Keltie.

⁴⁶² Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 4th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁶³ Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876–1917'; Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*.

⁴⁶⁴ As just one example, Keltie had acted as Fridtjof Nansen's legal representative in the UK during his *Fram* expedition and was even granted his power of attorney.

Despite his limited and hitherto unconfirmed finances, Mikkelsen rejected Heinemann's initial offer in the belief he could bargain for more money up front; 'I think that it would be to sell myself too cheap' he wrote.⁴⁶⁵ The rejection of this not unsubstantial sum was to trigger a lengthy negotiation process over the monetary particulars of the publishing contract that was to be drawn up between Mikkelsen and his potential patron. At almost at every point during this prolonged negotiation, Mikkelsen wrote to Keltie to ask his opinion on the matter and enquired as to whether he considered Heinemann's series of offers to be fair. Not wanting to 'let the sledge equipment suffer under insufficient funds as that possibly would mean complete failure,' Mikkelsen was determined to secure as much money as he possibly could from the publisher and turned down a series of sizeable sums.⁴⁶⁶

As the negotiation continued, the polite, business-like nature of the matter became more and more strained. A detectable degree of acrimony developed between Mikkelsen and Heinemann, and both parties began to express their frustrations. Mikkelsen wrote:

I can and will not – unless absolutely necessary for the expedition – have anything to do with Mr. Heinemann.⁴⁶⁷

While Heinemann exclaimed:

I really don't care about the whole business. It is too much of a gamble, and I am not sure that it wouldn't be best for me if the whole thing were dropped.⁴⁶⁸

Interestingly and importantly, it was Keltie to whom both parties turned in expressing these exasperations. Seemingly trusted sufficiently by both Heinemann and Mikkelsen, Keltie had essentially taken on the role as unofficial literary agent in the situation and had found himself occupying a role of 'middle man' between these two increasingly antagonistic parties. Indeed, the entire dispute plays out across the correspondence collection held at the RGS-IBG, with 'My dear Keltie' written at the top of each letter.

⁴⁶⁵ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 6th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁶⁶ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 12th November 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁶⁷ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 6th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁶⁸ Letter from William Heinemann to John Scott Keltie, 21st December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

But was Keltie the person best suited to occupy this mediatory role? While his position in this exchange may be simply viewed as the neutral and careful messenger, we must not forget the substantial power he was wielding by acting as moderator in this epistolary feud. Ultimately, his wise words could determine the funds Mikkelsen would receive for the expedition and consequently whether it would in fact take place at all. His curious and far from disinterested position in this tense affair requires further consideration.

Close reading of the substantial correspondence between these parties appears to suggest that Keltie considered Heinemann a close personal friend. The publisher made frequent visits to the Society's premises at Savile Row – a fact which appeared to come as some surprise to Mikkelsen who wrote; 'Am I [sic] so much surprised to see, that he – on his own account – has gone to the R.G.S.'⁴⁶⁹ A crucial point here too is that Keltie was not wholly free from conflicts of interest in the negotiations himself. At the practical level, as mentioned above, occupying the position of Secretary to the Society which was also contributing funds to the expedition's finances meant he was far from a disinterested circulatory mediator. If we remember that the Society's contribution was dependent on funding provided from elsewhere, we can appreciate the substantial influence Keltie is maintaining in deciding the future success of the expedition. Importantly for this thesis though, we must also consider the important *philosophical* dimensions of Keltie's involvement in this dispute as well. As discussed above, Keltie was committed to ushering in a new style of geography at the Society. His desperation to eliminate less scientific approaches to the discipline would have likely conflicted with his personal ties to Heinemann, as the publisher was not in the habit of producing necessarily scientific material.⁴⁷⁰ Afraid that Mikkelsen's expedition would become yet another frivolous excursion with no other purpose than to sell books, Keltie's personal agenda cannot be ignored within this context. Furthermore, we must also remember Keltie was in charge of his own geographical publication, *The Geographical Journal*, which would be a competitor to any book that Heinemann was ultimately to produce, albeit

⁴⁶⁹ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 4th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁷⁰ St John, *William Heinemann: A Century of Publishing, 1890-1990*.

with its more academically-focussed agenda. As will be shown, these conflicting motivations were to make themselves evident within the trio's fraught correspondence.

As the negotiations over Mikkelsen's proposed book deal wore on, relations began to deteriorate further. Conflicting figures were banded about and confusion reigned over with whom Heinemann was actually negotiating. This meant the arrangement came close to total collapse. Again, confiding in the man whom he considered best placed to help in the situation, Mikkelsen wrote anxiously to Keltie:

I got letter a from Heinemann's manager with confidential underlined seven times that his employer had been at the R.G.S. and had seen you, that you was [sic] too hard on my behalf and that he probably would drop the matter.⁴⁷¹

It seemed Heinemann's patience with Mikkelsen had worn thin and he was quite prepared to wash his hands of any potential deal with the explorer. This would have been disastrous for Mikkelsen because his other sources of funding were dependent on this sizable contribution to the expedition's exchequer being granted. Keltie seemed rather indifferent to finalising the deal and replied to Mikkelsen:

Of course, if you can get the money in some other way, you need not make the agreement, but if not, and if you must have the £500, then there is nothing more to be said I'm afraid.⁴⁷²

Perhaps a sense of duty to ensure that the Dane's voyage would be undertaken prevailed in Keltie though, as he chose to wade in and mitigate this tense situation. The Secretary's impressive knack for 'delicate diplomacy' and his ability to '[hear] every grievance [and] suggest a way out of any difficulty' are described by Mill, and it seems that these carefully honed skills were called upon once again to mediate between the irritated publisher and the inexperienced explorer.⁴⁷³ Through Keltie's careful words and tactful diplomacy – 'If you insist on getting the money you want in this way, well, there is no option for you, but to accept the terms which Heinemann is prepared to give you' – the negotiation drew to a civil (if not amicable) end and at last a publishing contract was signed.⁴⁷⁴ This was to mean that Mikkelsen had finally secured enough money to enable him to commence the next stages of the

⁴⁷¹ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 22nd December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁷² Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 20th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁷³ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 140.

⁴⁷⁴ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 20th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

expedition and he set off across the Atlantic in order to start purchasing equipment for the journey in the United States. But the deal with Heinemann had been a costly one, and if Mikkelsen had not quite realised the full extent of its implications, Keltie had.

‘Captured by the Yankies’

Having finally brokered the publishing deal and now acutely aware of the struggles faced by a polar explorer seeking expedition funding, Mikkelsen headed to the United States to ‘hunt for money in new surroundings, with new methods and different victims.’⁴⁷⁵ At the instruction of the RGS – and one can reasonably assume it was Keltie specifically – Mikkelsen arrived at the premises of his first ‘victim,’ the American Geographical Society (AGS) in New York. The advice to contact the AGS that Mikkelsen had received from the RGS was not, however, solely based on financial incentives. It was made clear to him that there were also more diplomatic reasons that the AGS ought to be involved in the Arctic expedition:

[The RGS] had also said that it was only right and reasonable that America should pay a share of the costs of the expedition, both because it was an American who had recently provided the theoretical evidence for the presence of land there beyond the ice-horizon, and because it would have to become American territory – if it did exist and was found.⁴⁷⁶

It had obviously been suggested to Mikkelsen that, should his expedition prove successful and new land was indeed discovered somewhere in the Beaufort Sea, there could be substantial implications regarding geopolitical sovereignty and ownership. As will be explained below though, it seems Mikkelsen did not appreciate this advice to its full extent.

Karen Morin has explored the long history of the AGS as a key facilitator of exploration sponsorship, and indeed its strong support for Arctic exploration in particular. She writes:

The AGS proposed and endorsed specific surveys and expeditions, served as patrons to various explorers, offering financial assistance or “in kind” help in obtaining funds; provided expeditionary equipment, training, and expertise as well as cartographic support; helped interpret expedition results; offered venues for debating travel routes and physical geography questions; and helped develop the infrastructure necessary for Arctic exploration.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 25.

⁴⁷⁶ Mikkelsen, 24; Mikkelsen is referring to an Article that had appeared in the *National Geographic* magazine written by R. A. Harris which hypothesised the existence of a large landmass off the coast of Northern Alaska. See Harris, “Some Indications of Land in the Vicinity of the North Pole.”

⁴⁷⁷ Morin, *Civic Discipline: Geography in America, 1860-1890*, 128–29.

In stark contrast to the transition toward a more scientific impetus at the RGS, Morin argues that the AGS maintained a much stronger focus on promoting the expeditionary styles of geography, suggesting that ‘the sensationalism of Arctic exploration would come to eclipse its scientific value in later decades [of the nineteenth century].’⁴⁷⁸ Its close association with explorers such as General Adolphus Greely and Commander Robert Peary, who sided more with the sensationalist side of geographical exploration, indicate a lack of attention paid to more scholarly pursuits (Peary’s approach to exploration is discussed further in chapter six). This meant that, yet again, Mikkelsen would have to rearticulate his proposed expedition in certain ways so as to appeal to this more adventure-based institution.

Mikkelsen was welcomed favourably at the AGS and in comparison to the pomp and due process that he had experienced at the RGS, Keltie’s Secretarial counterpart at the American Society, Dr Cyrus Adams, was much spritelier in contacting anyone and everyone who might be able to offer expeditionary support. In addition to this plethora of potential new connections, Mikkelsen also received a substantial sum towards the expedition from the AGS itself.⁴⁷⁹

As ever, it seems no occurrence in geographical circles could escape the attention of John Scott Keltie back at Savile Row. On hearing the news, he wrote the following congratulatory letter:

I am very glad [...] to find that the American Society has dealt so liberally with you. They are very well off, and so far as I can ascertain, are [more] in the habit of spending so much money on Geographical Exploration, and in other Geographical enterprises, as we do. They are therefore, in a better position to help you than we are, and I am glad they have done so.⁴⁸⁰

Intriguingly, Mikkelsen’s success in America was also to reach the desk of his most generous sponsor to date. Once the tensions that had arisen during the sponsorship negotiations had dwindled, it seems Heinemann and Keltie had continued to correspond. It seems that although Mikkelsen had since left the country, he continued to be the object of their discussion.

Commenting on Mikkelsen’s success with the AGS, Keltie contacted Heinemann and wrote; ‘I saw that Mikkelsen had been captured by the Yankies. [...] He has got plenty of money in hand now,’

⁴⁷⁸ Morin, 130.

⁴⁷⁹ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*.

⁴⁸⁰ Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 5th March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

before adding; ‘but I should not be surprised if he thinks he was in a great hurry to conclude a bargain about his book.’⁴⁸¹ Keltie was far from convinced that Mikkelsen had made the right choice in approaching the publisher for expedition funding and he was certainly not of the opinion that the contract that had been signed was a reasonable one. Although he had largely kept his opinions to himself during the negotiations, now in the knowledge that Mikkelsen had much more money at his disposal, he took the liberty of communicating his honest thoughts to him, writing:

I suppose you are sorry now that you made that bargain with Heinemann about your book. You could have done it without his money. However, there is no help for it now, and you must make the best of it.⁴⁸²

Not only had Keltie’s partiality been dubious during the negotiation process, but so too had his belief in the entire publishing venture.

Polar Geopolitics

Queen Alexandra was not the important geopolitical figure that Mikkelsen was to encounter during his prolonged funding campaign. A combined effort on the part of both the American Geographical Society and the Danish Ministry in Washington meant that Mikkelsen found himself before well-known Arctic enthusiast and President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt.⁴⁸³ Although the President did not offer direct financial support to Mikkelsen, he was able to use his far-reaching executive powers to ensure the safe passage of any Scandinavian expedition equipment into the country as well as offering the support of the United States Revenue Cutter Service (USRCS) in the Arctic should it be required. Although perhaps unorthodox and cumbersome in his methods of expeditionary planning, it could be argued that Mikkelsen was certainly effective at achieving results.

His somewhat bumbling nature was to lead to yet more political strife shortly after this Presidential meeting though. Some journalists in the USA, and subsequently others further afield,

⁴⁸¹ Letter from John Scott Keltie to William Heinemann 23rd March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁸² Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 5th March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁸³ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*.

caught wind of Mikkelsen's contact with President Roosevelt and began to speculate that any land found by Mikkelsen in the Beaufort Sea would *de facto* come under the sovereignty of the United States. A newly-discovered landmass was inevitably going to arouse speculation with regards to ownership and sovereignty and the press could sense a story. As further iteration of the fundamentally intertwined relationship between explorers and the growing tabloid press discussed by Riffenburgh and others, the rapid spread of these rumours points to the important cultural role that exploration had in the public consciousness.⁴⁸⁴ Journalists had begun to get wind of what was becoming a fairly substantial international expedition and – as had been the case with Mikkelsen's dogs months before – they were keen to monopolise the situation by pouncing on any potentially contentious story that might sell their newspapers.

The press coverage that this potential diplomatic incident received is important for other reasons too. Back in London, John Scott Keltie had obviously watched the media flurry that had been unfolding on both sides of the Atlantic with some degree of consternation and hence once again felt compelled to intervene in Mikkelsen's affairs. As Federico Ferretti has explored in relation to anarchist/revolutionist politics emerging across the continent, Keltie was very well versed in the intricate nature of international relations (certainly when compared to Mikkelsen). He was hence aware of what was potentially at stake with any new geographical discovery that Mikkelsen might find on his journey. He wrote to the Dane with an unambiguous warning:

I certainly found it difficult to believe the statement that you intended to raise the American flag on any islands you might discover during your Expedition, I was quite sure that you had more common sense. Besides I should have thought that both the English and Russian Governments might have something to say to it.⁴⁸⁵

Demonstrating an acute cognizance of the global geopolitical situation, Keltie made clear to Mikkelsen the dangers of claiming land without meticulous consideration of the implications. In the end, however,

⁴⁸⁴ See Keighren, 'Of Poles, Pressmen, and the Newspaper Public: Reporting the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902–1904'.

⁴⁸⁵ Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 5th March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

Mikkelsen simply disregarded this potentially explosive diplomatic incident as nothing more than ‘a stupid Russian fuss.’⁴⁸⁶ He wrote to Keltie explaining the situation:

Some friends in England have sent me a cutting of ‘*Tribune*’ and it contains the foolish report that I should have promised President Roosevelt to claim the land I hope to find American. Of course, you know reporters’ way well enough to be convinced that I never said anything like that. I assure you that I got so surprised myself when I saw it as I am sure you got [sic]. [...] My actions on the expedition will better than words show how wholly unreliable the report is.⁴⁸⁷

In an intriguing insight into the considerable power that the RGS as an institution was able to exert over geopolitical matters though, Mikkelsen continued his letter as follows:

It is a little early to talk about claiming land, but as the question now has arrived, I will repeat my statement to you, not to do anything of the sort *before I have consulted you* – in fact, the Demarcation Line, will show plainly, what is American and what is English. The ship will probably go under American flag, but it is wholly owing to money I have got here, that made me able to buy one, but nowhere will the American color show, but the English will be behind it.⁴⁸⁸

While not only demonstrating a rather flippant approach to maritime law, this letter also reveals that Mikkelsen intended to consult with the RGS (and Keltie specifically) on any potential land discovered and the related sovereignty claims that would inevitably arise. This provides further evidence of just how much power both the RGS and Keltie held over global geographical processes – in this case within the Arctic regions – and the whole affair also shows the huge implications which geographical exploration could have and the careful and tactical approach required to secure expeditionary funding.

As it transpired, Mikkelsen’s dismissive attitude toward these sensitive geopolitical issues might have actually played to his advantage. Reflecting on the media bluster caused by his carefree attitude to global politics, he suggests that the trouble in fact ‘provided me with an “open sesame” for many doors which had remained closed to the young Arctic explorer.’⁴⁸⁹ The order meant that Mikkelsen was now firmly on the radar of several wealthy donors who had hitherto been unaware of his forthcoming expedition and he found he was all of a sudden amongst several ‘really big capitalists’ whom he could call upon for support.⁴⁹⁰ With yet another crisis averted and a significant proportion of

⁴⁸⁶ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 28.

⁴⁸⁷ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 18th March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁸⁸ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 18th March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59], *emphasis added*.

⁴⁸⁹ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 28.

⁴⁹⁰ Mikkelsen, 25.

the financial burden now lifted, Mikkelsen could finally concentrate on preparing for the expedition in earnest.

Securing the Ship

While Mikkelsen had at last got a grip on the difficult financial struggles faced by a budding Arctic explorer, there were still several practical ones to overcome. He now had to source a method of transportation which would be both reliable and capable enough to withstand what was to be an arduous Arctic voyage. The original plan had been for Mikkelsen and his crew to secure passage to Northern Alaska on board one of the whaling vessels which made frequent journeys North to conduct their trade.⁴⁹¹ However, yet again luck was apparently not on the side of the Dane. The winter of 1905/06 proved to be particularly cold which meant an unseasonably large amount of ice had formed.⁴⁹² This in turn meant that the whalers with whom Mikkelsen had hoped to negotiate passage had become trapped in the frozen seas of the High North and were therefore unable to transport him and his crew to Northern Alaska.⁴⁹³ This meant Mikkelsen was forced to purchase his own Polar-worthy vessel in San Francisco resulting in yet more financial expenditure for what had already been a severely underfunded expedition. The correspondence materials reveal that \$2600 was spent on the purchase of the ship, with a further \$1000 spent on preparing it for the expedition.⁴⁹⁴

While distressingly costly, the purchase was also to throw up some difficult legal issues. A deed of ownership was required for the ship to be registered officially and as the small schooner was discovered to be of Canadian origin it transpired that a great deal of legal bureaucracy would be needed to transfer the certificate to a Danish citizen. In an attempt to circumvent this time-consuming process (which would also incur further expense), Mikkelsen turned once again to the RGS hoping they might take ownership of the vessel:

⁴⁹¹ Markham and Mikkelsen, 'On the Next Great Arctic Discovery'.

⁴⁹² Markham and Mikkelsen, 'Arctic Researches'.

⁴⁹³ Mikkelsen, *Conquering the Arctic Ice*.

⁴⁹⁴ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 23rd March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

It is regard the ship – and its anchor! I have bought her, and of course paid for her, but I cannot own a British ship. [...] Do you think that the Society will register as owner? There is no expense whatsoever in doing so, it is only nominally. [...] I would be glad if the Society would.⁴⁹⁵

Unfortunately, on this occasion, there was little that Keltie could do for the persevering Mikkelsen. He responded to the Dane explaining that the Society was rarely in the business of purchasing sailing vessels and so he had no power to help him in this instance. To his delight however, Mikkelsen found more favour with the first patron that had seen potential in his Arctic expedition:

We hit upon the idea of asking the Duchess of Bedford to be the formal owner of [the ship] and charter her to me for six shillings a year, which would allow me to command her and satisfy the law in letter and spirit.⁴⁹⁶

To show his gratitude, Mikkelsen decided to name the ship after Mary Russell, christening it *The Duchess of Bedford*. This final purchase meant that, at long last, the Dane and his crew left the harbour of Victoria, British Columbia on course for the Bering Strait and on, finally, to the Beaufort Sea. Away from the metropolitan centres and therefore the lines of reliable communication, Mikkelsen seemed finally to be free from financial worries, troubling negotiations and political strife. He could now concentrate on his true passion of Arctic exploration. However, as will now be explained, being difficult to contact did not mean that Mikkelsen's problems had vanished entirely.

Press Leak

Over the course of the expedition Mikkelsen wrote a series of lengthy letters to the Society, updating Keltie and the other Fellows on the progress he had made as well as on his future plans. Covering everything from the comings and goings of the local whaling ships to an unfortunate incident whereby the ship's Mate, Storker Storkersen, caused himself severe injury by shooting himself in the foot, Mikkelsen felt it important that every detail of the expedition should be conveyed to his sponsors back in London.⁴⁹⁷ The reports also included substantial ethnographic information relating to the local indigenous populations and the data collected from his soundings, complete with hand drawn sketch-

⁴⁹⁵ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 23rd March 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

⁴⁹⁶ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 36.

⁴⁹⁷ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 27th December 1907 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59]

maps (see *Figure 20*). While this was fairly standard practice for an explorer in the field, it is how this received information was acted upon however, which is of importance to this chapter.

Keltie welcomed Mikkelsen's regular updates and saw them as a way to boost the future sales of the forthcoming book that was to be published by Heinemann. Although uncertain that the correspondence would reach the Beaufort Sea safely, Keltie continued to respond to the steady stream of updates and suggested 'it is a good thing to keep your name and the expedition before the public.'⁴⁹⁸ Drumming up interest in the expedition and also following the Society's founding principle of 'the diffusion of that most important and entertaining branch of knowledge – geography' Keltie took it upon himself to inform the local press of Mikkelsen's progress in the far north (see *Figure 21*).

The circulation of this information did not sit well with the enterprising Mr Heinemann however. In a particularly shrewd move, the deal that had eventually been negotiated between Mikkelsen and Heinemann had in fact given the publisher legal exclusivity over the account of the expedition that was to be written by the Dane. One of several stipulations which were a feature of this complex book deal, Keltie had voiced his consternation regarding such an embargo on any other publications prior to the text promised to Heinemann at the time. At one point in the lengthy process he wrote:

[Heinemann] gives you £500 down, no royalty on the first thousand copies, 10% royalty on the second and third thousand, and 20% after. These are the essential conditions, although they are *very stringent with reference to the publication of anything in advance by any of your companions*.⁴⁹⁹

But Mikkelsen's financial desperation and his frustration at the tiresome nature of the negotiations meant that he had agreed to the deal regardless of these restrictions. Heinemann now had specific and legally-binding control over how Mikkelsen's expedition could be communicated and can therefore be seen as a powerful mediating figure in the particular circulation of this geographical knowledge.

⁴⁹⁸ Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 5th October 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59]

⁴⁹⁹ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to John Scott Keltie, 20th December 1905 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59] *emphasis added*.

CAPTAIN MIKKELSEN'S EXPEDITION.

COPENHAGEN, Oct. 3.

News has been received here that the Polar Expedition organised by Captain Mikkelsen to examine the unknown regions lying to the west of the Parry Archipelago, in the hope of discovering new land, arrived at Point Barrow (Alaska) in August, on board the schooner *Duchess of Bedford*. The expedition, which left Dutch Harbour on June 23, encountered many difficulties in the way of bad weather and ice. Should the expedition be obliged to winter in Alaska, its duration will probably be three years, instead of two, as originally contemplated.—*Reuter.*

Figure 21: Article in the *Morning Post*, 3rd October 1906.⁵⁰¹

One can perhaps imagine, then, the reaction of Mr Heinemann when he glanced over the morning papers on the 3rd October 1906 and noticed details of Mikkelsen's journey being conveyed without his knowledge. He picked up his pen and contacted Keltie:

I saw in yesterday's *Morning Post* an account of the further progress of Mikkelsen. Can you tell me at all how they can have got hold of this information? He is under the strictest obligation to us not to send any information to anyone except to me, and I think he is not quite playing the game in this matter.⁵⁰²

Heinemann was clearly disgruntled that information relating to Mikkelsen's expedition was being communicated through a medium over which he exerted no control. Furthermore, being beyond his control meant that not only was he not profiting from this information being circulated, he was also potentially seeing the value of the forthcoming book diminished. The book would have far less appeal to an interested public if the knowledge contained within it had already been made freely available via the popular press and so would inevitably affect its commercial value.

⁵⁰¹ *Morning Post*, 3rd October 1906 [Bodleian Libraries Newspaper Collection, Films 1337 - 603577554]

⁵⁰² Letter from William Heinemann to John Scott Keltie, 4th October 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59].

While on the surface, this short article may appear as nothing more than the minor infraction of a publisher-author contract, when viewed in closer detail we can see this as an important moment in the circulation and dissemination of geographical information. Here, Heinemann was explicitly dictating the terms by which geographical information could reach the minds of both scientific and lay audiences and was ensuring that he was to secure a profit in the process. Keighren reminds us that publishing houses were ultimately businesses which needed to be economically viable to ensure their longevity – and at times this was achieved by repudiating the wishes of their client authors.⁵⁰³ Heinemann certainly seemed to be of this clear, business-minded ilk. In an interview with publishing magazine *The Publishers' Circular* he revealed his clinical approach to his industry when he argued ‘*brains in any business must conquer in the end.*’⁵⁰⁴ And so by imposing such restrictions on the flow of information from Mikkelsen’s journey, Heinemann was able to position himself as a vitally important intermediary in the knowledge circulation process. Similar to Keltie’s influence discussed above, by exerting his substantial control over the flow of information Heinemann was essentially in command of who could (and who could not) come into contact with the geographical knowledge that had been gathered by Mikkelsen. As Janice Cavell notes, a morning newspaper was substantially cheaper than a fully published text and was much more accessible to an interested British readership than a fully published monograph:

A wealthy reader who had just paid several guineas for a new, lavishly illustrated exploration narrative clearly did not have the same experience as one who could afford to buy only a penny or twopenny magazine.⁵⁰⁵

This meant that blocking the flow of information to such a publication would alter significantly who was able to learn of Mikkelsen’s travels in the Arctic.

This issue becomes even more convoluted when we remember that it was not even Mikkelsen himself who arranged to have his expedition details published in the press. Keltie had been the one informing his journalistic contacts of Mikkelsen’s progress and was of course still acting on behalf of

⁵⁰³ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*.

⁵⁰⁴ Anonymous, ‘Interview: William Heinemann’.

⁵⁰⁵ Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860*, 9.

the RGS. This adds further intermediary complexity to this knowledge circulation pathway in that two figures were now acting to influence the mobility of this newly gleaned knowledge. In an attempt to pacify a discontented Heinemann, the Secretary explained the situation and stated that it was *he* who had in fact authorised the article in the *Morning Post* and that Mikkelsen had no knowledge of his reports reaching the press:

Mikkelsen is not to blame. The M.P. article is issued on a letter to me, though I did not write it. I don't suppose [Mikkelsen] wrote the letter with a view of my making use of it for publication, but my idea is that it will do him [and] his book good if his name is kept before the public. That is why I gave a certain amount of information to the M.P.⁵⁰⁶

Although offering an explanation for his actions, Keltie did not quite bring himself to apologise. Rather his true feelings were made clear in a letter to Mikkelsen in which he confided that he considered Heinemann's reaction to be somewhat disproportionate:

Mr Heinemann wrote me yesterday on this and seemed somewhat annoyed that anything should have appeared that did not come through him. But I have written to tell him that you are not to blame, that it was I who did it, and that I thought it was a desirable thing that it should be done.⁵⁰⁷

Keltie's involvement adds another dimension to this complex circulation of geographical knowledge. He had become a second intermediary in the communication of Mikkelsen's travels and had taken it upon himself to control his collected geographical information without him even being aware. This complicated entanglement of knowledge production, mediation and distribution processes offers us a small glimpse into the complexities involved in the early twentieth century publishing industry. This in turn allows us to understand more fully the circuitous nature of geographical knowledge at this time. Discerning precisely who came into contact with information arriving 'back from the field' and how this information was acted upon is an incredibly difficult task for the historian of geography and highlights the complex knowledge pathways that were undertaken.

⁵⁰⁶ Letter from John Scott Keltie to William Heinemann, 4th October 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59]

⁵⁰⁷ Letter from John Scott Keltie to Ejnar Mikkelsen, 5th October 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/59]

Conclusion

The narratives of Polar expeditions written by those who carried out this adventurous work are certainly exciting and entertaining pieces of literature, but they often obscure much about the social and political processes through which they were created. When we shift attention away from these (often carefully mediated) adventurous narratives and toward the nuanced practicalities of organising voyages of exploration, we can gain a much clearer understanding of the wider social and cultural worlds in which geographical explorers were embedded at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Janet Martin-Nielsen has summarised:

Usually tightly linked to patronage – the need to raise funds for eye watering expensive expeditions – the narratives crafted by explorers provide a window into their political and public personas, as well as of understanding how they want to be perceived.⁵⁰⁸

By focusing specifically on the trials of securing financial patronage for these expeditions, then, this chapter has considered the ways in which explorers were obligated to curate carefully not only themselves and their public image, but also meticulously manage how their proposed voyage was to be perceived depending on who was involved in the potential sponsorship.

When presenting his plans to the Duchess of Bedford, Mikkelsen struggled to take on the appearance of the ‘gentlemanly traveller’ that would have been expected by the Duchess’s assembly of aristocratic guests. Similar discomfort was felt upon Mikkelsen’s arrival at the RGS. Not only self-conscious of his comparatively humble background, he also knew that the scientific aspects of his voyage would be scrutinised meticulously. Consequently, he carefully tailored the description of his expedition so as to emphasise the range of academic interests that would be covered by the expedition and stressed the large number of scientific personnel who would be involved. With little interest in scientific inquiry himself and with no training beyond the basic survey work he had conducted during his time in the Danish Navy, Mikkelsen was fortunate to have the respected Clements Markham as his geographical mentor to ensure that his plans were approved by the Society and their sponsorship secured.

⁵⁰⁸ Martin-Nielsen, *Eismitte in the Scientific Imagination: Knowledge and Politics at the Center of Greenland*, 7.

Other themes can also be identified as we trace how this lengthy fund-raising saga unfolded. Securing patronage from the publisher William Heinemann proved to be a very difficult task and the bitter contractual negotiations further point to the social politics inevitably bound up in geographical exploration. The complex set of competing interests – Mikkelsen's determination to secure a large sum up front; Heinemann's increasing frustration at these demands, and Keltie's role as sceptical yet vested intermediary – show how broader cultures and politics were inherently bound up in expeditions from their very inception. The fact that the diplomacy required to settle this dispute lay with Keltie points to the Secretary's exceptional influence over geographical exploration at this time and also to the RGS's hugely influential position as key node in the circulation of geographical information.

From this story we also gain a glimpse into the sheer number and diversity of persons directly and indirectly involved in Arctic expeditions. The diversity of actors that played a role in Mikkelsen's campaign is somewhat astonishing – from expected figures such as the secretaries of the RGS and AGS John Scott Keltie and Cyrus Adams and zoological collectors such as Walter Rothschild, via publishers such as William Heinemann, and on to the perhaps more surprising inclusion of the Queen of British Empire and the President of the USA. All of these characters had varying parts to play in Mikkelsen's complicated sponsorship proceedings and are hence indicative of the enormous cultural significance that Arctic exploration maintained across all levels of trans-Atlantic Society. Lastly, Mikkelsen's story also points to the potential for exploration to raise the societal status of whomever was prepared to engage in this dangerous pursuit. Understanding the substantial financial and political gains that were made possible by undertaking a risky expedition is to understand what made journeys like these such a tantalising prospect for hopeful explorers. The various processes documented here explain why Mikkelsen and his fellow Arctic explorers were prepared to risk their lives in pursuit of geographical knowledge, despite having no military or institutional association impetus to do so. In the next chapter, we shall see the extreme ends to which both Robert Peary and Frederick Cook would go to ensure it was they who achieved such lucrative opportunities.

Chapter 6

‘Cook’s Place is in Madame Tussaud’s,
not in Savile Row!’:
Handling Polar Controversy at the
Royal Geographical Society

In July 1917, as he settled into his new role as RGS Secretary following his predecessor's lengthy tenure, Arthur Hinks began rifling through the reams of paperwork that had accumulated in John Scott Keltie's former office.⁵⁰⁹ If the extant materials in the RGS-IBG collections are anything to go by, this certainly would have been no trivial task. Amongst the screeds of letters, reports and countless other materials that comprised Keltie's 'disorderly geographical archive,' Hinks came across a document which seemed to cause him some confusion.⁵¹⁰ Contacting the incumbent President, Major Leonard Darwin, for clarification, Hinks wrote:

I find among the papers left in Keltie's files a proof of a Report of Reeves' on Commander Peary's observations for latitude, together with a note by the President (yourself) on Commander Peary's observations. I think I am right in supposing that these were never printed in the Journal, and I am not quite clear what were the circumstances under which they were held up. Perhaps you would kindly at some convenient moment send me a note, so that I may not make any mistake if the question ever comes up, which in view of the continual agitation in America against Peary is not at all improbable.⁵¹¹

While Hinks would certainly have been aware of the controversy that had surrounded Robert Peary's claim to have reached the North Pole in 1909, it seems he did not appreciate fully the significant strife that this international dispute had caused the Royal Geographical Society only a few years earlier. As this chapter will discuss, Frederick Cook's initial claim to have reached the Pole, coupled with Peary's now (in)famous telegram – 'stars and stripes nailed to the pole' – instigated a bitter dispute that played out across both sides of the Atlantic. Importantly, the RGS did not escape this international fallout.

On account of the North Pole's highly-mythologised nature, it is unsurprising that the saga surrounding the 'discovery' of this entirely theoretical location has received a great deal of attention in popular accounts of Polar exploration.⁵¹² However, close examination of the materials held in the RGS-IBG collections has allowed for a more nuanced and contextualised account of this important historical event to be gained. While the media bluster that surrounded both of these explorers at the time provides

⁵⁰⁹ For more on Hinks see Steers, 'A. R. Hinks and the Royal Geographical Society'; Anonymous, 'Obituary: Arthur Robert Hinks, C. B. E., F. R. S. Secretary, 1915-45'.

⁵¹⁰ Lorimer and Philo, 'Disorderly Archives and Orderly Accounts: Reflections on the Occasion of Glasgow's Geographical Centenary'.

⁵¹¹ Letter from Arthur Hinks to Leonard Darwin, 31st July 1917 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵¹² See for example Wright, *The Big Nail: The Story of the Cook-Peary Feud*; Rawlins, *Peary at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction*; Hunt, *To Stand at the Pole: The Dr. Cook-Admiral Peary North Pole Controversy*; Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels: The Discovery of the North Pole*; Bryce, *Cook and Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved*.

indication of the important place that the Pole maintained in the popular imagination, there are also fundamental theoretical considerations that this entire affair can tell us with regard to the production, circulation and perhaps most importantly the *credibility* of geographical information at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The chapter will critically examine the events that unfolded behind the doors of 1 Savile Row while the ‘Cook-Peary Controversy’ reverberated around the world. It will draw attention to the complicated position in which the Society found itself as accusation and counter-accusation were levelled against these two Arctic explorers. It will also explore the stark contradictions that existed between, on the one hand, the stance offered by the public-facing side of RGS, and on the other, the tense internal discussions that took place as the Society tried to fathom what exactly had happened at 90° North. Contributing to literatures that have considered the difficulties involved in verifying the geographical information that was in circulation during this period and drawing on materials held in the RGS-IBG archives, the chapter will shed light on these tense events and offer new insights into this important period in the history of both exploration and the emerging geographical discipline.

Breaking the ‘Citadel of Silence’

On 1st September 1909, a telegram was sent from the steamship *Hans Egede* to the American newspaper magnate James Gordon Bennett.⁵¹³ The telegram contained information relating to perhaps one of the most coveted of feats that any polar explorer could achieve; at long last the geographical North Pole had been reached. News rang out that the American explorer Dr Frederick Cook’s latest expedition had successfully passed through Smith Sound and had managed to traverse a route northward over the North Polar Sea to the yearned for point of 90° North. Although Cook had left the USA in August 1907 to very little fanfare, his return to European shores two years later was met with an entirely opposite reaction.⁵¹⁴ The news began to spread rapidly around the world and jubilant celebrations broke out across the United States – and particularly in Brooklyn, New York where Cook had spent his childhood

⁵¹³ Henderson, *True North: Peary, Cook, and the Race to the Pole*.

⁵¹⁴ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*.



Figure 22: Celebration of Cook's attainment of the Pole in Brooklyn.⁵¹⁵

(see Figure 22). Banners were flown, parades were organised, and overnight Cook was catapulted to the status of international celebrity. It appeared that humankind had conquered one of the few 'undiscovered' regions on the Earth's surface and Cook claimed to be the first man to have set foot on 'the top of the world.' As an article in the *Manchester Guardian* trumpeted:

If report speaks truly, the citadel of silence has at last fallen and an explorer has penetrated to the North Pole. It is difficult to find words adequate to express the stupendous significance of an event which ends a quest that has gone on steadily for so many scores of years and levied its toll on so many men.⁵¹⁶

Cook had achieved the dream of countless men before him and, as has been explained throughout this thesis, fame and celebrity were inevitably to follow.

⁵¹⁵ Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole*.

⁵¹⁶ 'The Attainment of the North Pole?' *The Manchester Guardian*, 2nd Sep 1909, p.6

Through Telegraphy & Tabloids

The means by which information of Cook's attainment of the Pole was able to spread around the world is important because of two related factors pertaining to the circulation of this knowledge. Firstly, owing to the expansion of the telegraph technology spreading its network of wires across continents and under oceans, the speed with which this exciting news circumnavigated the globe was remarkable. Tom Stanadge has explored how the second half of the nineteenth century saw the increasing ubiquity of telegraphic infrastructure that allowed for the instantaneous communication of newsworthy information:

Thanks to the telegraph, the general public became participants in a continually unfolding global drama, courtesy of their newspapers, which were suddenly able to report on events on the other side of the world within hours of their occurrence.⁵¹⁷

Indeed, people in all corners of the world would be able to learn of Cook's triumph before the man himself had even arrived in continental Europe.

There is also a second important factor to consider when studying this circuitous movement of information. As both Beau Riffenburgh and Michael Robinson have discussed, this significant historical event coincided with the growth of a newspaper industry that was rapidly gaining influence across the United States and Europe.⁵¹⁸ Both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers jumped at the chance to use this exciting human accomplishment to entice their growing readership into following the story across their pages. As Innes Keighren explains, this meant that a symbiotic relationship began to develop between explorers and the press during this period:

The influence of these new journalistic practices, and advances in the technology of news gathering and dissemination, coincided with, and found expression in, the race for the North Pole – an era during which the most sensational Arctic expeditions were mounted, and the 'myth of the explorer' was fashioned. Throughout this period, the symbiotic relationship between explorers and the press became increasingly significant. Whilst the former enjoyed the financial support and publicity provided by newspapers, the latter benefited from the increased circulation engendered by the promotion of heroic myths and sensational tales.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*, 136; See also Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization*.

⁵¹⁸ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*; Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*.

⁵¹⁹ Keighren, 'Of Poles, Pressmen, and the Newspaper Public: Reporting the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition, 1902–1904', 206.

In the tabloids in particular, the coverage of Cook's 'heroic' achievement became increasingly sensationalised as journalists competed to exaggerate the details of the perilous journey he had undertaken (see *Figure 23* and *Figure 24*). Dramatic headlines, images of Cook in his furs, and cartoons depicting the Pole being 'conquered' were spread across the newsstands and all aspects of both the expedition and explorer's life began to be probed and discussed. Once again, we see that newspaper journalism, and the print media more widely, were inextricably bound up in the cultures of exploration at the turn of the twentieth century and were instrumental in circulating geographical knowledge around the globe. Intriguingly, as will be explored, the RGS was equally involved in this troublesome matter.

COOK REPORTS HE HAS FOUND THE NORTH POLE

Reached It April 21, 1908, After
Prolonged Fight with Fam-
ine and Frost.

MADE DASH OF 600 MILES

Started with Ten Eskimos and
103 Dogs with
Sledges.

NO LAND AT THE POLE

But New Territory Discovered
Far North on the
Way.

STARTED TWO YEARS AGO

Chose Winter, When Ice Pack
Was Welded, for Final
Effort.

SENDS NEWS TO WIFE HERE

Expedition Fitted Out by John R. Brad-
ley, Who Went as Far as
Labrador.

IMPERIAL AND FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE.

THE NORTH POLE.

REPORTED DISCOVERY BY AN
AMERICAN.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

NEW YORK, SEPT. 1.

The news that Dr. Cook has reached the North Pole is naturally received here with elation, although it came too late for comment to be made on it by the evening newspapers. At first the reports were scarcely credited, but the receipt of a cable message from the explorer addressed to his wife, who lives at Brooklyn, seemed to silence all doubt. This message read as follows:—

"Successful and well. Address Copenhagen."

So little publicity has been given to Dr. Cook's expedition and so much to Commander Peary's attempt to reach the North Pole that almost everybody here is taken completely by surprise. Even the officers of the National Geographic Society at Washington confessed that they knew little about the expedition. They had almost abandoned hope of hearing from Cook again. Some time ago a relief expedition was fitted out in the hope of finding the explorer, but the fact that the last letter received from him was dated March 17, 1908, seemed to indicate that he had perished.

*Figure 23: Headlines in The New York Times and The Times, 2nd September 1909.*⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ 'Cook Reports He Has Found the North Pole,' *The New York Times*, 2nd September 1909; 'The North Pole,' *The Times*, 2nd September 1909.

FREDERICK A. COOK---THE MAN AND HIS WORK

One Who Knows Him Well
Tells About the Personality
Of the Explorer Who Reports
The Solution of the
World's Greatest Mystery.



The John R. Bradley, the Schooner Conveying the Cook Expedition to the Arctic.

By HENRY COLLINS WALSH.

My first meeting with Dr. Frederick A. Cook was in the dining room of the Hotel New York, in 1904, when he had organized a summer trip into the Arctic region and for which he had chartered the ill-fated steamer the Albatross. I became a member of this expedition and was his lieutenant.

The Albatross, it will be recalled, had many mishaps, colliding with an iceberg off the coast of Labrador, which necessitated a return to St. John's, Newfoundland, where the ship was repaired, and later to run on some hidden reefs off the coast of Baffinland, North Greenland. In this encounter the bottom was torn off the Albatross, but its balance tank saved it from sinking.

We arranged to steam back to Ruk-hetoppen, an Eskimo settlement with a Danish Governor, and from there Dr. Cook, with a small party, set out to look for assistance. His final goal was to reach a Greenland fishing schooner, the Higel, commanded by Capt. Blom. The high-backed Captain gave up his fishing trip, the first that he has attempted off the coast of Greenland, and came to the rescue of the Albatross. Dr. Cook and the Higel were escorted by cable and the steamer towing the schooner, started for home.

Dr. Cook and the rest of us took up our quarters on the Higel, once officers and crew of the Albatross alone remained on that ship. On the second night, however, a stormy one, the hulls of the Albatross began to give way, and a signal of distress went up from the Albatross, and down that the Higel's crew went over to the Albatross and brought over the officers and crew of that ship. The cable connecting the two vessels was cut and the Albatross was abandoned to her fate upon the high seas.

She continued all the way, collecting from her hold brought up, our extra clothes, outfit, guns, ammunition, stores, etc., and all the collections that various members had made in Labrador and Greenland, probably rather unprofitable food even for Arctic fishes. After drifting for a time among icebergs, the little Higel finally foundered seven days later at Sydney, Cape Breton Island, whence the wrecked party had no trouble in making its way back to New York.

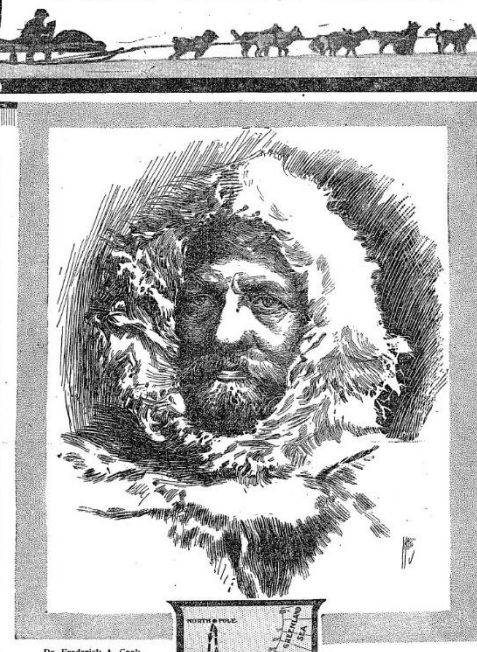
This is a very brief summary of a quite exciting and varied Arctic expedition, the complete story of which is subsequently published in a book, "The Last Cruise of the Albatross," by Dr. Cook, Prof. Wm. H. Brewster, Rudolf Kertling, and other members of the expedition contributed to it.

It was on the way home that the Arctic Club was formed. The idea of the club at first was to keep the members of "Dr. Cook's Arctic Expedition of 1904" in touch with each other after the disbandment that was soon to come and to get as many of them together as possible at an annual dinner. Afterward the club was enlarged in its scope so as to admit others who had been interested in Arctic work, and so that it now numbers among its members almost all the Arctic explorers in America, as well as many from abroad.

Later in the year 1906 I organized, together with Dr. Cook, Gen. A. W. Greely, Prof. J. H. Seale, Cassin Whitney, Col. D. L. DeLamater, Dr. William H. Furness, Frank W. Chapman, Anthony Fels, Prof. H. C. Parker, and others, the Explorers' Club. The object of this club are to aid and assist every man in his power in his explorations all over the world, and to bind explorers in the bonds of their common interest. The first President of the club was Gen. A. W. Greely, who was succeeded by Dr. Cook, who in turn was succeeded by Commander Robert H. Bradley.

Naturally, at the meetings of both these clubs and at the meetings of their officers and Directors, I was thrown in much with Dr. Cook, and also had the pleasure at times of visiting him in his own home. I always found him in a delightful and hospitable host, and it was pleasant to see the kindly domestic side of this man who spent so many years in the wild and far-away places of the North.

His domestic side of a man has little chance of development.



Dr. Frederick A. Cook.

I was minded of Bayard Taylor's well-known couplet:

The bravest are the tenderest,
The loving are the daring,
I have been asked to tell something about Dr. Cook's personality and favorite amusements, but as far as I know he seems to care but little for the various pastimes and amusements I have never seen him play any game of cards, but in one of the upper rooms of his Brooklyn home he had a pool table around which he occasionally took relaxation. We had some games of pool together, but as neither of us was at all expert at the game, nothing remarkable can be recorded except perhaps some remarkable scratches.

I remember that on one occasion, after the doctor had made a remarkable shot, asked by Providence I put up my cue and remarked that I could not play against the combination of the Albatross and a polar explorer. It was a case of old salt.

I do not think that Dr. Cook was ever much given to outdoor sports, either. At least, I never heard him discuss upon any of his own experiences along these lines, though he was, however, very fond of automobile. At his home he had many miles of the various exploring trips, and naturally our talks ran much in the channels of exploration, and it gave me great pleasure when I was able to draw him out to regard to some of his own remarkable experiences, for I think if any man living has had more.

One of Dr. Cook's most remarkable characteristics in this age of self-advertising is his modesty. If he talks of his exploits at all, he does it in a manner so simple, so direct, and so matter-of-fact that one comprehends the wonder of it all only by the mental images that are conjured up.

Though I must attempt it here, it is nearly impossible to sum up briefly all that this extraordinary man has accomplished in the field of exploration, labor that he has capped with the most wonderful feat of exploration, the very of the north pole—the dream and goal of numerous great explorers throughout the centuries. Those who wish to know of part of his work in detail should read his "Through the First Antarctic Night," and "To the Top of the Continent," records of his experiences as surgeon of the Belgian Antarctic expedition of 1897-98, and of his exploration and conquest of Mount McKinley, 1906-1907.

Previously to the Albatross expedition of which I have spoken, Dr. Cook had been north as surgeon of the Peary Arctic expedition of 1897-98 and had commanded the Peary Expedition on a northern cruise in 1895.

After his return from the Albatross expedition Dr. Cook devoted himself to medical practice in Brooklyn for three years, but the call of the wild was strong within him, and in 1897 he started on the Belgian for the Antarctic region and a quest of the north pole. The Belgian was a bark fitted out partly by the Belgian Government and partly by private subscription. The expedition was under the command of Capt. Adrien de Gerlache. The ship sailed from Belgium in August, 1897, and was joined by Dr. Cook at Rio de Janeiro in the capacity of surgeon and anthropologist. This expedition was the first Antarctic expedition which had been fitted out with modern scientific appliances, and the first to enter the southern realm of ice in more than fifty years.

The main results of this expedition were: The discovery of a new strait, nearly as large as the Strait of Magellan; the discovery of about 300 miles of new coast; the discovery of a sub-magnetic plateau west of Graham Land; the making of the most complete and heavy ice pack and carried with the ship for 2000 miles. For a year he was frozen in the centre of an ice field two miles square. The Belgica returned in March, 1899.

In 1901 Dr. Cook was again in northern Arctic seas as surgeon of the Peary auxiliary expedition on the Eric. Upon his return from this expedition, and after a period of rest his still restless spirit led him to begin his attempt to reach the North Pole. The highest of his attempts in North America and the most conspicuous of the Alaskan ranges, putting in his first attempt in 1903, he made a second and successful attack in 1906.

In steam navigation, Robert Fulton, an added man, will be given by the press to G. Cook, and the writer.

It is said to say that in the hands of this committee everything will be done to make the occasion a notable one, in personal friends and comrades who have been long looking for his return. To this dinner the Arctic Club as a whole has been invited, so that Dr. Cook will be surrounded on every side by friends of many years standing, and by whom it is needless to say he will be accorded a royal welcome.

The committee in charge of this dinner are Gen. A. W. Greely, Prof. Marshall H. Seale, P. D. DeLamater, Charles H. Townsend, Stanley Hagar, Frank M. Chapman, John Hays Hammond, Archer M. Huntington, George O. Hays, Louis M. Ogden, Henry B. Kane, F. D. Miller, H. H. Knox, Wal-

Cook's Plan for His Dash.



My Dear Walsh:

I find that I have here a good opportunity to try for the north pole and therefore I will stay here for the year. I hope to get to the Explorers' Club in September of 1906 with the record of the pole.

My plan is to cross Ellesmere land only reach the Polar Sea by Nansen Strait.

I hope you can induce some of the men of the Explorers' Club to come up and meet me at Cape York. It is such a project is feasible talk to Mr. Bradley about it.

Long life to the Explorers' Club. Here is for the pole—with the flag.

Yours cordially,
FREDERICK A. COOK.

Did Dr. Cook Ascend Mount McKinley?

THE controversy as to whether or not Dr. Frederick A. Cook has really discovered the north pole has been further intensified by the publication of a letter in which Dr. Cook has stated that he had reached the top of the mountain in September, 1906. The letter, which was received here on Sept. 10, has been widely quoted, and has been taken up by the North American Continent.

Dr. Cook, who had only been a member of the Cook expedition, had left it before the date of the alleged ascent.

When he started back, according to the story, Dr. Cook, who had been attempting to reach the summit of the mountain, had given up all plans to accomplish the feat. It was therefore very unexpected that he should have returned to the Albatross and had been successful, practically alone.

That the Albatross

That the Albatross, which Dr. Cook now announces he has carried out was planned by him two years ago is shown in a letter he wrote from Ruk-het to Henry Collins Walsh, Secretary of the Explorers' Club, in 1907. It is as follows:

Yacht John R. Bradley.

The Bradley Arctic Expedition.

My Dear Walsh:

I find that I have here a good opportunity to try for the north pole and therefore I will stay here for the year. I hope to get to the Explorers' Club in September of 1906 with the record of the pole.

My plan is to cross Ellesmere land only reach the Polar Sea by Nansen Strait.

I hope you can induce some of the men of the Explorers' Club to come up and meet me at Cape York. It is such a project is feasible talk to Mr. Bradley about it.

Long life to the Explorers' Club. Here is for the pole—with the flag.

Yours cordially,
FREDERICK A. COOK.

Figure 24: Front Page of a supplement in The New York Times, 5th September 1909.⁵²¹

⁵²¹ 'Frederick A. Cook, the Man and His Work,' The New York Times, 5th September 1909.

Savile Row Should Know

After the initial headlines and front-page splashes had appeared, the information hungry press agencies set about sourcing as much detail as possible related to this latest geographical development in order to add further detail – and importantly further credibility – to their reports. Any person or institution that could offer more information was contacted and, as one of the most prominent geographical societies of the time, the Royal Geographical Society was inundated with communications from press agencies around the globe seeking their confirmation and comment. The following telegrams poured through the door of 1 Savile Row, all demanding that any information of which the Society was in possession be relayed to their respective agencies immediately:

Reuter cable states Doctor Cook American explorer reached north pole on the ice floe greatly obliged if you would wire your opinion feasibility and probability truth the statement.⁵²²

The editor of the Daily Chronicle presents his compliments to Dr Scott Keltie and would be obliged if he would please telegraph him today a thousand word aligned article on Dr Cook's discovery.⁵²³

Kindly write brief message views on North Pole Discovery.⁵²⁴

Do you know anything about Cook American explorer stated reached north pole.⁵²⁵

For private and confidential use only what view do you take of Cooks north pole claims.⁵²⁶

That the press expected the RGS to offer an opinion on a matter with which it had little real involvement demonstrates further the RGS's inseparable association with global practices of exploration. Regardless of whether the explorer in question was a Fellow, whether they had received RGS sponsorship or whether they even had any connection to the Society at all, this hugely influential institution was expected to offer comment and expertise on whatever the latest news from the world of exploration may be. It is the Society's response to these requests that is of particular interest to this chapter however.

⁵²² Telegram from Daily Express to RGS, 1st September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵²³ Telegram from Editor of Daily Chronicle to RGS, 2nd September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵²⁴ Telegram from Press Association to RGS, 2nd September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵²⁵ Telegram from Time to RGS, 1st September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵²⁶ Telegram from Shaw Exchange Newcastle to RGS, 6th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Rather than offer their congratulations to Cook and commend his marvellous achievement – as, for example, had been the case when Nansen had returned from his *Fram* expedition – the Society’s President instead presented the baying journalists with a notably muted and non-committal response that was picked up and relayed by newspapers around the world. An article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* read:

Maj. Leonard Darwin, president of the Royal Geographical Society said: ‘There is no reason why the north pole should not have been reached and it is a fine feat to have accomplished. In the absence of detailed information I am not in a position to express a critical opinion, but if, as reported, Dr. Cook reached the pole on an ice floe, I must confess to surprise. That, however, does not make my congratulations any less warm.’⁵²⁷

From this statement it would appear that the official response from the RGS was one of muted congratulations coupled with a large degree of scepticism and doubt. Due to the fact that Cook was largely unknown at the Society and had few connections with any of its Fellows, his claims were not met with the unquestioned veracity that other explorers might have enjoyed. Although he had previously played a part in expeditions to both Polar regions – firstly as surgeon on Robert Peary’s 1891-92 Greenland expedition and secondly on the 1897-99 Belgian *Belgica* Antarctic Expedition – due to the supporting roles he had played in these travels it seems Cook had largely escaped the attention of the RGS and its Fellows.⁵²⁸ Indeed Cook’s marginalisation in some ways points to an issue that has been raised repeatedly in this thesis. Prevailing ideas surrounding exploration activities – both during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries *and* in the ways exploration histories have been written over the past century – have primarily been based on the singling out of one (typically wealthy, white, male) explorer who *led* such expeditions.⁵²⁹ This narrow focus necessarily comes at the expense of the attention paid to the wide range of *other* actors who were also involved fundamentally in allowing these journeys to take place. Multiple and diverse persons played all kinds of important roles in Polar expeditions meaning that the popular conceptualisation of the lone ‘hero’ setting out to reach and survey new lands unassisted is often highly inaccurate. Having hitherto been leader on only one minor expedition – an

⁵²⁷ ‘London Scientist Believes Tale,’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Friday 3rd September 1909.

⁵²⁸ Arctowski, ‘The Antarctic Voyage of the “Belgica” during the Years 1897, 1898, and 1899’; Henderson, *True North: Peary, Cook, and the Race to the Pole*.

⁵²⁹ Driver, ‘Hidden Histories Made Visible? Reflections on a Geographical Exhibition’.

ascent Alaska's Mount McKinley (see below) – it seems Cook had not yet achieved enough to merit recognition from the unquestionably elitist Royal Geographical Society.

After sending the above communication to the press agencies, Leonard Darwin telegraphed Keltie to discuss the obvious vagueness of his statement:

Better hold our hands a bit. Should like confidential opinions not for publication of [Hugh Robert] Mill, [Robert Falcon] Scott and [Ernest] Shackleton. Have written [Lewis] Beaumont.⁵³⁰

Clearly uncomfortable at the prospect of showering Cook with praise straight away, Darwin's deferral to the other influential RGS figures with Polar expertise suggests a general air of doubt was detectable among the Fellows in relation to Cook's claims. The President felt it was essential to consult those who may be able to speak with some authority on the matter and asked them to offer their views and provide advice on how the Society should best respond. The fact he stresses these views are 'not for publication' also suggests he was keen to discuss the matter in private before offering a more public response. It is interesting to note that some Fellows who had *not* been contacted specifically also began offering their perspectives and opinions on the matter. Having followed the story in the newspapers, the hydrographer James Horsburgh wrote to the RGS Secretary expressing his unsolicited views on the procedures that would be required in order for Cook's assertions to be confirmed:

The results would require verification, by a number of methods, before the statement, as to finding the 90th degree of Latitude, can be accepted as being scientifically accurate. In the event (which is not improbable) that some doubt may be cast on Dr Cook's abbreviations, then that doubt would require to be settled in the following way. The tube containing an account of the expeditions, which Dr Cook buried on the spot, which he considered to be the 90th degree of Latitude, would require to be found again, and the observations of Dr Cook would then be capable of verification by another observer.⁵³¹

It seems then that the general feeling across the Fellowship was that Cook should not be believed *prima facie* and that his claims ought to be assessed scientifically before the Society offered any official stance. However, in the days immediately after the news had broken, such reluctance to offer a more affirmative stance on the subject did lead to a degree of difficulty for the RGS.

⁵³⁰ Telegram from Leonard Darwin to John Scott Keltie, 3rd Sep 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵³¹ Letter from James Horsburgh to J.S. Keltie, 4th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69]. For more on Horsburgh see Chakravorty, 'James Horsburgh'.

The fact remained that there was still a possibility that Cook had indeed achieved the feat. Some sections of the press had already decided that they were vehemently behind the American and began to support his claims with increasing aggression.⁵³² This of course meant that the Society could not dismiss Cook entirely. If his assertions were proved to be correct, it would be hugely embarrassing for the Fellows to imply that Cook was in some way untrustworthy as this could make a potential enemy out of the world's newest explorer-hero. The gravity of the situation clearly began to alarm Darwin as he wrote an anxious letter to Keltie outlining his concerns:

This is a terribly puzzling situation. We may damage the Society seriously by a false move. I quite see the advantage of doing something. But [o]n the whole, the danger of taking the wrong line now strikes me as greatest.⁵³³

Importantly, the President also went on to confide his own opinion on the matter to the Secretary. In their search for further information to supplement their reportage, the newspaper journalists had begun to investigate Cook's previous exploratory activities. This meant further details had begun to emerge relating to Cook's earlier climb of Mount McKinley in Alaska.⁵³⁴ In many cases the *character* of an explorer was equally as important as the feats of exploration that they claimed to have accomplished.⁵³⁵ Hoping to use his past activities as a method of determining Cook's credibility, the newspapers dissected the Mount McKinley expedition in order to cross-examine his credentials and the outcomes of these investigations were mentioned in Darwin's worried message to Keltie:

Every day more suspicious circumstances turn up. He went alone up that American mountain which some think was a fake. In many other respects his accounts seem so utterly improbable. [...] Whatever we wire will be held up by him as an approval from us, and if he is, as I suspect a regular swindler, we should be in a jolly mess.⁵³⁶

Cook's ascent of Mt. McKinley had thrown up some irregularities relating to the manner in which it had been conducted. It seemed the final stages of the expedition had been conducted by Cook alone and a suspiciously short amount time had elapsed between Cook setting off for the top of the mountain and

⁵³² Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

⁵³³ Letter from Leonard Darwin to J.S. Keltie, 5th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵³⁴ Mount McKinley is now named *Denali*.

⁵³⁵ Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

⁵³⁶ Letter from Leonard Darwin to J.S. Keltie, 5th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

him returning to join the rest of the expedition party. This led the expedition's artist, Belmore Browne, to voice publicly his scepticism of the claim that Cook had truly reached the summit when the team returned in 1907.⁵³⁷ Although these allegations accusing the Brooklyn man of fraud had been halted abruptly due to 'Cook's threat of a libel suit and then by his sudden disappearance to the Arctic,' his latest claim to have reached the Pole inevitably reignited the suspicion surrounding this previous journey.⁵³⁸

It is also clear from his letter that Darwin was acutely aware of the fact that any utterance of support issued by the Society would be used by Cook to combat his growing number of detractors who were starting to voice their scepticism in the media and in scientific circles. The backing of the Royal Geographical Society would undoubtedly add a great deal of much-needed credibility to Cook's claims and would likely influence the verdict of other geographical societies around the globe. Clearly still uncertain, Darwin ended his letter as he had his earlier telegram – with a plea for more opinions:

I shall judge a good deed by what is in the papers on Monday. Would it be worth wiring Nansen for an opinion? I am sure the danger of h[e]arty action is very great.⁵³⁹

It seems the President was very reluctant to give any indication as to the Society's public position one way or the other. Asking Keltie whether it would be useful to contact Fridtjof Nansen – good friend to many at the RGS, including Keltie – for his judgement, he again deferred the responsibility of giving a more conclusive statement for fear of the repercussions it would inevitably cause. As an institution then, the Society seemed to have reached an impasse over the best course of action to take. Meanwhile the newspapers continued to speculate and pontificate with no credible evidentiary basis on which to do so. In his reply to Darwin however, Keltie seemed untroubled by the RGS's apparent paralysis:

I have read both the *Times & Chronicle*. The former is decidedly in favour of Cook's honesty; the latter is markedly pessimistic. You will see that many Societies have lo[a]ned congratulations: *The Times* states the RGS is an exception. That will do us no harm.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Browne, *The Conquest of Mt. McKinley*.

⁵³⁸ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*, 185.

⁵³⁹ Letter from Leonard Darwin to J.S. Keltie, 5th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁴⁰ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Leonard Darwin, 6th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Like Darwin, Keltie knew that wading into the dispute would have considerable consequences for the Society, yet in opposition to the President he was apparently content to remain silent on the matter. Hugh Robert Mill notes that a reluctance to act without due consideration was a common trait of the dependable Secretary, explaining “when in doubt do nothing” was a phrase he often used and always acted upon.⁵⁴¹ However, the news that was to arrive at Savile Row just a few days later meant that the Society was no longer able to remain silent on this increasingly sensationalistic matter.

‘Stars and Stripes Nailed to the Pole’

On the 6th September 1909 the RGS was to receive yet another telegram – one that would turn this already confusing situation on its head. The communication read:

[News agency] Reuter has sent out following message today Indian Harbour [to] Cape Ray Newfoundland, September Six: ‘Stars and Stripes nailed to north pole, Peary.’ Do you think this message genuine?⁵⁴²

The eight words referred to in the telegram were to send shockwaves around the world. They suggested that the widely celebrated Arctic explorer Robert Peary had also reached the North Pole and that the hallowed location had been claimed triumphantly in the name of his home nation. Many people were aware that Peary had been making an attempt on the pole and his expedition had received a large degree of publicity upon its departure. However, over a year had passed since Peary’s flamboyant send off from New York on board the *Roosevelt* and combined with the fact that this was not the first time the US Navy Commander had undertaken to reach the pole, the public had largely lost interest in this latest attempt.⁵⁴³ All of a sudden though Peary was back in the spotlight and had become the most talked about man in the Western world.

The news caused a global sensation. Both the press agencies and the wider public were now faced with the difficult task of comprehending the fact that *two* men were now claiming to have accomplished this most daring of feats – and even more puzzlingly, both were adamant that *they* were

⁵⁴¹ Mill, *The Record of The Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930*, 140.

⁵⁴² Telegram from Daily Chronicle to J.S. Keltie, 6th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69], punctuation added.

⁵⁴³ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.



Figure 25: Cartoons satirising the Cook-Peary Controversy.⁵³⁷

⁵⁴⁴ 'Here's a Pretty Predicament', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9th September 1909; 'More Annexation Troubles', *The Literary Digest*, vol. 39, 1909.

the first to have done so. The situation descended into a bitter dispute that played out across the spectrum of transatlantic front pages and was satirised extensively in the newspapers (see *Figure 25*).⁵⁴⁵ No end of commentary and discussion was offered from pundits and ‘experts’ who all vied to have their views printed.

Again of interest to this thesis though, is the way in which the RGS responded to this perplexing situation. Once the message had arrived at the Society notifying the Fellows of Peary’s accomplishment, Darwin immediately picked up his pen and wrote to the American with a letter of hearty congratulations:

It was with great pleasure that I sent you a telegram expressing the warmest congratulations – on behalf of this Society – on the achievement of what may be regarded as your life’s work. Your unparalleled determination and perseverance have reaped for you a great reward.⁵⁴⁶

The contrast between this letter and the non-committal statement issued by Darwin to the press in response to Cook’s claims is stark. Commenting on his capabilities as a man of resolve and fortitude, the President lauded Peary’s accomplishment in a similar way to the praise that had been heaped on Nansen over a decade earlier. This then raises the key question that this chapter has sought to address – why was Peary’s attainment of the Pole accepted so magnanimously when the identical claim offered by his rival less than a week earlier was met with scepticism and suspicion?

The answer lies in Peary’s already well-established connections to the RGS. The explorer had visited the Society on multiple occasions over the previous two decades and had received its highest honour – the Patron’s Medal – in 1898.⁵⁴⁷ Furthermore, the American had formed friendships with many senior Fellows of the RGS, including the ever-hospitable John Scott Keltie. Accompanied by his wife Josephine, Peary visited London in December 1897 and his meeting with Keltie seems to have been a particularly amicable affair, as the correspondence between the American and the Scot became much friendlier after this point. As was the case with many of the explorers who had previously passed through the doors of 1 Savile Row, Peary had been invited to dinner with Keltie’s daughter and son-in-

⁵⁴⁵ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*; Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

⁵⁴⁶ Draft of letter from Leonard Darwin to Robert Peary, (n.d.) [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁴⁷ Anonymous, ‘Meetings of the Royal Geographical Society, Session 1897-98’.

law, and the American would often ask to have his regards relayed to the young couple. For example, a decade before his North Pole expedition, Peary had written the following amicable letter:

Remember me to Sir Clements, Mill [and] the rest of my friends in the Society [and] give my regards to your daughter [and] her husband.⁵⁴⁸

His enduring relations with the RGS and its Fellows meant that, in opposition to Cook's widely disputed claims, Peary's purported attainment of the Pole was met with a notably lower degree of scepticism or scrutiny. Darwin invited him immediately to return to Savile Row at the earliest opportunity and requested that he give an account of his triumphant expedition:

We are naturally most anxious to hear you give an account of your notable exploration and I write to assure you that – if it would be possible for you to visit London – you would receive a most hospitable and warm reception. If your arrangements do permit of you the sooner you can come the better for us; and nothing would please us more than if you could open our [session] in November.⁵⁴⁹

Darwin's comment on 'a warm reception' was an obvious reference to the notable hostility that Peary had already begun to receive in some quarters of the tabloid press. Peary's absolute rebuttal to Cook's claims had resulted in him being accused of pettiness and jealousy by some of the newspaper journalists.

As Michael Robinson notes:

Peary voiced doubts that had already been raised by many in the press about Cook's claims. Yet coming from Peary, the charge struck many [...] as partisan and self-serving.⁵⁵⁰

Furthermore, as mentioned above, several newspapers in the USA and the UK had previously declared their loyalty to Cook and they remained steadfastly supportive of their champion, irrespective of Peary's recent revelations. They vehemently denounced the older man as nothing more than a sore loser.⁵⁵¹

Initially though, this did not seem to affect Keltie's close relationship with Peary. The pair's continued friendship was made apparent when the Secretary took it upon himself to write his own letter to the American, expressing his personal admiration at the feat:

I need not tell you how delighted and gratified I am at the crowning success of your life and of the happy consummation of all your efforts during the last 23 years. You have had a trying time, and to have gone through it all as you have done with apparently no injury to your health argues

⁵⁴⁸ Letter from Robert Peary to J.S. Keltie 13th August 1898 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁴⁹ Draft of letter from Leonard Darwin to Robert Peary, (n.d.) [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁵⁰ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, 144.

⁵⁵¹ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

a constitution of iron. I hope now that [you] will reap the rich rewards of your life's work which you so eminently deserve.⁵⁵²

Similar to Darwin's letter, a celebratory tone is clearly present throughout Keltie's communication – and it is interesting to note the repetition of the phrase 'your life's work', giving the indication Keltie likely had a hand in writing Darwin's official response. Obviously very keen that Peary should return to the RGS as soon as possible, Keltie went on to reiterate the invitation that had extended by Darwin:

Our president is sending you a very cordial invitation, which has already been sent out by telegram, to come over here during the present session and give us a personal account of your great achievement. I do hope you may be able to do this: you may be assured of the warmest possible welcome. If you could come in time to open our session in the beginning of November it would be a very great thing for us.⁵⁵³

The guarantee of a warm welcome is stressed again and the fact Keltie hoped Peary would visit during the current session of lectures suggests he was desperate to ensure that the RGS was the first institution to receive him in Europe. It is also interesting to note that, unlike Darwin, Keltie makes explicit reference to Cook in his correspondence with Peary. Although avoiding direct criticism of Peary's Polar rival, Keltie's personal position on the dispute was made abundantly clear in the following extract:

With regard to the other man, I think it wiser that I should say nothing at present. I have just had put into my hands a telegram stated to be sent through Reuter's Agency stating that Cook should not be taken too seriously, that the two Eskimos who accompanied him say he went no distance North and not out of sight of land, and that other men of the tribe corroborate this.⁵⁵⁴

Remarkably, Keltie even asked Peary if he *himself* might be able to aid the Society in getting to the bottom of Cook's troublesome claims when he wrote:

I need not say how anxious we all here are to get all the light possible thrown upon Dr Cook's statements. If you could do anything to help us we should be very grateful.⁵⁵⁵

These series of letters are hugely revealing. They appear to show that, at least initially, the Society had crowned Peary the victor in this sensationalised dispute with practically no scrutiny whatsoever was

⁵⁵² Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 8th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁵³ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 8th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁵⁴ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 8th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁵⁵ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 8th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

afforded to him or his expedition. Still on his way back from the Arctic Circle, Peary managed to send out a telegram thanking the Society for their kind words and support:

Greatly honoured and gratified by your telegram of congratulations. Kindly convey to Society my thanks and appreciation.⁵⁵⁶

Officially congratulated by the RGS, invited by its senior Fellows to give a lecture on the expedition and even requested to assist in bolstering his own claims, it is apparent that Peary had been granted the support of the RGS before he had even returned from the icy lands of the North.

‘A monopole of his own!’

In the days and weeks after the initial story broke, the storm in the media showed little sign of abating. Peary had not reacted well to having competition for his attainment of the Pole and by the time he had finally arrived back in the USA his fury toward Cook had only increased.⁵⁵⁷ He issued a bombardment of abuse against both Cook and his supporters, and these ungentlemanly words were duly relayed by the press and reverberated around the globe. As Lyle Dick explains:

For Peary, it was not enough to promote his own claim; it was also necessary to discredit his major rival. [...] He led an aggressive attack on Cook, including intelligence gathering, carefully planned media strikes, and lobbying to isolate his competitor in the exploration and scientific communities.⁵⁵⁸

It was not long before these attacks were inevitably picked up in London and they caused much consternation behind the doors of 1 Savile Row. The President was unimpressed by Peary’s outbursts and the admiration that he had initially expressed towards Peary seemed to have diminished. In a note to Keltie, Darwin wrote:

I don’t think I will write to Peary for a few days, just to see how the row develops. If he is going to be violent, we had better hold our hands a bit.⁵⁵⁹

Although still of the opinion that Peary had done as he had claimed, it seems the tirade against Cook was not deemed appropriate behaviour of an RGS Corresponding Member. His actions had lessened

⁵⁵⁶ Telegram from Robert Peary to J.S. Keltie, 14th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁵⁷ Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels: The Discovery of the North Pole*.

⁵⁵⁸ Dick, ‘Robert Peary’s North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon’, 23.

⁵⁵⁹ Letter from Leonard Darwin to J.S. Keltie, 10th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

the explorer's reputation in the eyes of his geographical acquaintances and Keltie's opinion of the explorer in particular seemed to be shaken by his brash comments. In reply to a letter on the matter from the Swedish Geographer Sven Hedin, Keltie wrote the following in which he reveals his personal views on the matter:

It is very unfortunate indeed, that Peary has not been able to restrain his language. If he has been to the Pole, as I do believe he has, it is unnecessary for him to do anything but simply submit his proofs, and it is a great pity that he has abused his opponent as he has done. [...] I very much regret indeed that my old friend has not behaved in a more dignified manner.⁵⁶⁰

It is clear then that Peary's actions had damaged his honourable reputation at the RGS. It must also be noted that his abusive attitude toward his rival also had the effect of establishing a swell of public support for Cook. Furthermore, some sections of the press began to echo and reaffirm this.⁵⁶¹

Distaste for Peary's behaviour within the wider public opinion and a tangible degree of uncertainty amongst the RGS Fellows meant that Leonard Darwin continued to agonise over the issue. In a note to the RGS Secretary, he attempted to justify the Society's earlier support of Peary to himself as much as to Keltie:

I am confident we have done right. We cannot ride on two horses. If [Cook] did get to the pole, we have a good case in favour of caution, because he has given no proof. If he did not get there – [and] I bet 20 to 1 he did not – we have sensed heavily [sic].⁵⁶²

As Darwin feared, however, the Society's earlier certainty on the matter was now coming under an increasing degree of criticism. Some Fellows began to question the assured stance that the RGS had issued initially and were not convinced that the best course of action had been taken. Hedin had written to Keltie remarking:

I was very glad to learn from our papers here the R.G.S. did not take any steps at all [regarding Cook] but waited. Now I see that the R.G.S. has welcomed Peary, invited him and decided to give him a special gold medal as he has already got the primary one. And I was sorry to find that the R.G.S., before having arguments [or] any prooves [sic] in them having [taken] such a step. IF Cook has discovered the North Pole it is wrong and unjust to ignore him and give the second man the honour. [...] [Peary] seems to believe that that pole is a MONOPOLE of his own.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶⁰ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Sven Hedin, 17th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁶¹ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

⁵⁶² Letter from Leonard Darwin to J.S. Keltie, 10th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁶³ Letter from Sven Hedin to J.S. Keltie, 17th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Hedin was a highly acclaimed empirical scientist and, like Peary, a previous winner of the Patron's medal. His letter reveals he was clearly disgruntled that the RGS had extended their congratulations to Peary – and had therefore snubbed Cook – based on no scientific evidence whatsoever. A similar view was held by former President Clements Markham. Seemingly based upon the men's nationality alone, Markham argued that both Cook and Peary should have been commended but that neither should have been the Society's preferred choice before their observations had been assessed. In a stern letter to Keltie, Markham wrote:

Both Cook and Peary ought to have been formally congratulated. We must take American explorers at their own valuations or not at all, but without expressing any opinion.⁵⁶⁴

The speed and excitement with which the events had unfolded, coupled with the Society's historic penchant for celebrating lavishly the achievements of its Members and Fellows, had meant that Peary's claim was had been met uncritically by key figures at the RGS. Yet the correspondence reveals that some members of the Fellowship were dissatisfied by such sycophantic behaviour and had voiced these concerns to the Society's senior Officers. The absence of any firm empirical basis on which to prove whether either of the two men had even reached the Pole (regardless of which had been the first to do) meant that the media, the public and now even the respected learned societies were forced to rely on little more than the perceived reputations of the two men to make their judgements. As Robinson argues:

Although the character of Arctic explorers had always been important to the press and the public, it took on added significance in the North Pole controversy because other means of proof remained insufficient or unpersuasive.⁵⁶⁵

This dependency on nothing more than social reputation is hugely important when we situate these events amid the ongoing transformation in geographical thinking that was taking place at the Society at this time. We have seen that the Senior Fellows' implicit trust in Peary was not based on any empirical proof or geographical evidence but was instead based entirely on his prior social connections with this prestigious institution. Yet it was this unquestioned faith in an explorer's testimony that several members of the Society (including Keltie) had hoped would be eliminated when they advocated for a

⁵⁶⁴ Letter from Clements Markham to J.S. Keltie, 13th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁶⁵ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, 144.

transition toward the ‘New Geography.’ Placing trust in an explorer based solely on their social status was considered by many of the modernisers to be emblematic of the more dilettante style of geography which was typical of the Society in the nineteenth century. As events surrounding the Cook-Pearry controversy have shown, however, in lieu of any reliable criteria with which they could reach a more plausible conclusion, the senior Fellows at the RGS once again resorted to perpetuating these problematic traditions.

Problems of Partiality

The confusion reigned for several weeks and both the press and the public became desperate for a concrete basis upon which to form a more informed opinion on the matter. This meant that both explorers came under immense pressure to submit the observations they had recorded during their expeditions to a reputable institution in order for them to be scrutinised. Indeed, Keltie took it upon himself to insist that Peary should submit his materials for inspection – albeit *after* he had extended Peary’s invitation to the Society:

All this wrangling over yourself and Cook is very unfortunate, and I have every sympathy with you in the matter. What is wanted now, is that your observations and those of Cook, with all the data that would indicate the positions attained, should be submitted to impartial experts, and there is no need to go beyond the United States for that. Whatever Cook may do, I am sure you will lose no time in submitting your evidence.⁵⁶⁶

While offering his sympathies to Peary so as to avoid his friend taking offence, it is clear that Keltie felt the information collected during both expeditions should be submitted to reliable organisations in order to bring an end to this damaging dispute. Only after a substantial delay both did explorers finally agree to submit their observations, but as will now be discussed they were not presented to the ‘impartial experts’ that Keltie had envisaged.

Cook, who was recuperating from his expedition in Denmark, agreed to submit the observations recorded during his expedition to *Københavns Universitet* for their analysis (see *Figure 26*). However, there were problems associated with these geographical deliberations from the outset in that the

⁵⁶⁶ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 1st October 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

partiality of the institution chosen to solve this dispute was immediately called into question.⁵⁶⁷ The fact that the University had been one of the first organisations to celebrate Cook's apparent success when he had arrived in Denmark meant that any impartiality on the matter was somewhat undermined. Furthermore, the Crown Prince of Denmark had met with the explorer when he had arrived in the country to offer his personal congratulations (see *Figure 27*). Therefore, being forced potentially to negate the words of the nation's sovereign was a troubling prospect for those working at the University. This meant that, unsurprisingly, Peary's supporters rejected the prospect that the University would be able to reach an impartial decision on the matter and so any conclusions that were reached by this institution were unlikely to help settle the dispute in any way.

While the scrutiny of Cook's observations was met with due suspicion, if anything, Peary's chosen arbitrator was even more objectionable in terms of its ability to cast a fair judgement. Peary agreed that his observations would be submitted to a specially convened Committee of the National Geographic Society (NGS). However, this act was largely viewed as a tactic to put pressure on Cook rather than necessarily to verify his own claim and as Lisa Bloom has suggested:

Although Peary supporters suspected Cook would fail, they were still concerned that Cook would cheat Peary out of his victory. Determined to protect his interests [...] Peary chose as the arbitrator in the controversy the National Geographic Society in Washington, which had published accounts of the Arctic Peary Club and had been one of the financial backers of his 1909 expedition.⁵⁶⁸

As had been the case with Cook, Peary's choice of arbitrator was viewed with suspicion from the start. It was widely known that Peary enjoyed a lifelong association with the NGS and was well acquainted with almost all of its senior members. As Bloom continues:

National Geographic also took an active role in securing and protecting Peary's reputation both throughout his career and posthumously. [...] That the Peary-Cook controversy is still going on [...] is in part the result of the backing of the National Geographic Society and of its ability to impose Peary as both a national hero and an exemplary representative of National Geographic's particular *image* of masculinity, nationalism and popular science.⁵⁶⁹

Furthermore, some of the first expeditions to which the NGS offered sponsorship were those led by Robert Peary to Northern Greenland and the institution had also contributed substantial funds to the

⁵⁶⁷ Dick, 'Robert Peary's North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon'.

⁵⁶⁸ Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, 30.

⁵⁶⁹ Bloom, 17, *original emphasis*.



Figure 26: Cook's observations being assessed.⁵⁷⁰



Figure 27: Frederick Cook meeting the Crown Prince of Denmark.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ 'Dr. Cook Being Put Through His North Polar Paces,' *Illustrated London News*, 11th September 1909.

⁵⁷¹ 'Royal Recognition of Dr Cook in Copenhagen', *Illustrated London News*, 11th September 1909.

very North Pole expedition which it was now tasked with assessing.⁵⁷² On account of these close ties between the explorer and his patron institution many people on all sides of the dispute viewed this investigation with substantial scepticism. Mirroring the investigation into Cook, it was generally believed that it would be highly unlikely for the NGS to arrive at any conclusion *other* than that Peary's claims were genuine.⁵⁷³

It is clear then that both of the investigations tasked with scrutinising both men's expeditionary records were flawed from the outset. Both explorers had chosen institutions that were extremely unlikely to return a decision that went against their claims and, in any case, both groups of supporters already had sufficient grounds to reject the investigation into their opponent's credibility. Although both explorers had bowed to public pressure demanding that they have their claims verified, neither man had acted in such a way as to bring the dispute to a satisfactory conclusion.

Of Geographical Concern?

There is a wider point to be made about this entire adjudication process, however. Regardless of the notable partiality of these two enquiries – which had to all intents and purposes been tasked with crowning a 'winner' – a further fundamental problem can be detected when thinking about this highly-sensationalised controversy more broadly. An inescapable fact that lay at the root of this heated debate was that the North Pole is a mathematically-defined location and hence not actually a geographical one. When considered in this way, the events which had unfolded at the North Pole were not *necessarily* a matter for scholarly geographical community, or more specifically, they were not an issue that should be of particular concern to those geographers who were pushing for a more scientific geography at the Society. Although Peary had conducted a few oceanic soundings and tidal observations during his journey, neither his expedition nor Cook's had been particularly rigorous in terms of the scientific practices that had been carried out *en route*. As Keltie was to explain in reply to Hedin's earlier letter,

⁵⁷² Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*; See also Dick, "The Men of Prominence Are 'Among Those Present' for Him": How and Why America's Elites Made Robert Peary a National Icon'.

⁵⁷³ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*.

simply setting one's foot on the Pole did not improve the scientific community's knowledge of the Arctic regions in any way:

We do not, as you know, place any value on simply reaching the Pole, either North or South. What we want are *geographical results* from the careful examination of the ocean in the North, and the land in the South. Cook has done nothing of this; he has simply made a rush for the Pole and says he has got there. Peary did carry out several soundings, one quite close to the Pole, which is extremely important; conducted very valuable tidal observations, and in other ways made his expedition more than a mere dash for the pole.⁵⁷⁴

While clearly still providing justification for Peary's recently awarded medal, Keltie was notably vague in his description of the American's scientific accomplishments. The truth was that neither expedition had done much to advance scholarly enquiry into this boreal region. In a surprising remark made to Keltie in a private letter, even Clements Markham – typically a passionate champion of any form of Polar exploration – also found the entire controversy beyond the realms of that which he considered should comprise geographical enquiry:

It is absurd to talk about scientific experts deciding between them, for the north can easily be presented to all appearance right [...] I hope now there will be an end of this North Pole tomfoolery, and that *future Arctic work will be in the interest of geography*.⁵⁷⁵

In a number of ways, then, this whole affair seemed to undermine entirely the new agenda of scientific scrutiny for which many of the reformers at the Society had long strived. As mentioned above, it appears the RGS had reverted to its old ways of sycophantism and sociability rather than valuing those who successfully withstood sustained academic scrutiny. More than this though, the magnitude of this controversy meant that the RGS had been dragged into a dispute which undermined the careful and tactical manoeuvring of those Fellows that had been striving for a more scientific style of geographical enquiry. The Cook-Peary controversy was not a problem that ought to be of concern to the 'New Geographers,' yet because of the RGS's prestige and lofty self-image, it was obligated to make some kind of intervention in the dispute. As Lyle Dick has concluded:

An irony of the Race to the North Pole is that while debates over its conclusion turned on issues of evidence, the battle for both public and scientific acceptance owed much to the rhetorical power of fictional models and the effectiveness of public relations strategies.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Sven Hedin, 17th September, 1909, [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69], *emphasis added*.

⁵⁷⁵ Letter from Clements Markham to J.S. Keltie, 13th September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69], *emphasis added*.

⁵⁷⁶ Dick, 'Robert Peary's North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon', 7.

Filled to the Rafters

On the 1st November 1909, with considerable fanfare the National Geographic Society released the report of their Sub-Committee's investigation into Peary's claims. As was predicted widely, the committee proclaimed them to be credible. Peary's supporters celebrated jubilantly and despite the obvious questions surrounding the partiality of the investigation, the NGS's accreditation was largely accepted around the world as sufficient proof to declare Peary the ultimate Polar victor. The final report was sent to the RGS whereupon it was copied into the RGS Council's minute books and stated:

Commander Peary has submitted to this Sub-Committee his original journal and records of observations together with all his instruments and apparatus and certain of the most important of the scientific results of his expedition. These have been carefully examined by our Sub-Committee, and they are unanimously of the opinion that Commander Peary reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909.⁵⁷⁷

Apparently concerned that these conclusions were not decisive enough, the authors of the report then continued:

They also feel warranted in stating that the organization, planning, and management of the Expedition, its complete success and its scientific results, reflect the greatest credit on the ability of Commander Peary and render him worthy of the highest honors [sic] that the National Geographic Society can bestow upon him.⁵⁷⁸

As mentioned above, the primary authors of this report were close associates of Peary and so the report they produced can in many ways be viewed as yet another thinly veiled attempt to bolster the American's claims.⁵⁷⁹ Michael Robinson has pointed out that, despite the assertive language used, the scrutiny devoted to Peary's observations was, in reality, not as rigorous as the statements would appear to suggest:

The Committee reported that it had reached its decision after it 'carefully examined' Peary's instruments and observations. A later investigation revealed that committee members only briefly examined Peary's diaries and instruments, that some of them were longtime admirers of Peary, and that they had been predisposed to validate his claims of discover. Yet it seemed to be enough.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ Royal Geographical Society Council Minute Books, 6th December 1909 [RGS-IBG Collections].

⁵⁷⁸ Royal Geographical Society Council Minute Books, 6th December 1909 [RGS-IBG Collections].

⁵⁷⁹ Dick, "The Men of Prominence Are 'Among Those Present' for Him": How and Why America's Elites Made Robert Peary a National Icon'.

⁵⁸⁰ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, 155.

It 'seemed to be enough' for Fellows of the RGS as well. When Keltie learned of the Committee's outcome, he relayed his pleasure (and likely relief) at learning of the outcome in a letter to Peary a few days later:

I am very glad indeed to learn of the report which has been made by the National Geographic Society upon your observations; I felt quite confident they would stand the test.⁵⁸¹

Assuring the explorer that he had always maintained his absolute faith, Keltie had seemingly forgiven Peary for his earlier aggressive behaviour and was keen to once again see his friend lecture before the RGS Fellows. In response, Peary thanked the Society for the support he had received throughout the ordeal and referred specifically to the correspondence that had been sent from Darwin and Keltie:

Nothing has been more gratifying to me from the first than the clear insight and splendid stan[ce] of the Royal Geographical Society, and I wish to express here my sincere appreciation of the position and the kindly telegrams from Major Darwin, the President, and from you. I look forward eagerly to the time when I can personally express to you both and to my other friends in the Society how deep my appreciation is.⁵⁸²

Now that the outcome of the investigation into Peary had been decided in the United States, the RGS was finally able to put forward an official position on the matter with more certainty. The minutes of their meetings reveal that the Council was content to accept the findings of the National Geographic Society's Sub-Committee. Sir Lewis Beaumont, who had earlier served on the 1875 Nares expedition and was a frequent commentator on Arctic matters at the Society, led the push to accept Peary's claims:

Sir Lewis Beaumont said that in his opinion the finding of the American Committee should be the basis of action of the Council, and that the Council should undertake no examination of his proofs. Sir Lewis Beaumont then proposed a formal resolution as follows: 'The Council accept the finding of the Sub-Committee of the Research Committee of the National Geographic Society of Washington on the Peary expedition, and consider that no further examination of Commander Peary's proof is necessary.'⁵⁸³

The resolution was carried unanimously meaning that at long last the Society's official position was settled. All that remained to be done, as far as the Council were concerned, was to organise Peary's triumphant visit to the Society and plan the festivities to welcome their latest Polar hero.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸¹ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 9th November 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁸² Letter from Robert Peary to J.S. Keltie, 28th November 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁸³ Royal Geographical Society Council Minute Books, 11th April 1910 [RGS-IBG Collections] For more on Beaumont and his associations with the RGS see R. T. G., 'Obituary: Sir Lewis Beaumont', 1922.

⁵⁸⁴ Royal Geographical Society Council Minute Books, 11th April 1910 [RGS-IBG Collections].

In May of the following year, like Fridtjof Nansen's lecture over a decade earlier, the Royal Albert Hall was again chosen as the venue to celebrate this latest Arctic hero. Indeed, the extant correspondence relating to this event suggest that it was an even more spectacular affair than the previous ceremony had been in that Keltie struggled to accommodate the enormous number of Fellows who were desperate to attend. In response to several letters of complaint relating to the allocated seating, Keltie was forced to reply:

The applications have been so numerous, more numerous than ever before in the case of an Albert Hall meeting, that allotting two adjoining seats to each Fellow, several hundreds have had to be carried up into the Balcony. I regret this very much but it is absolutely unavoidable.⁵⁸⁵

In typical RGS style, no airs and graces were spared during Peary's visit to London (see *Figure 28*). In introducing Peary to the assembled Fellows, Darwin's speech was largely as fawning as the other celebratory lectures that the Society had been hosting for decades.

It is intriguing to note, however, that not all of Darwin's address was of a congratulatory nature. Clearly conscious of the fact that the audience would be aware of the controversy that had preceded the occasion, Darwin felt compelled to deliver a carefully worded address so as to account for the sensitivities surrounding Peary and his expedition. This is evidenced by the fact he commenced proceedings with a direct reference to the practices that had been involved in determining Peary's credibility. 'The methods by which a traveller can ascertain that he has actually reached this goal are well known,' the President began, before adding, 'yet one or two observations on this head may perhaps not be out of place.'⁵⁸⁶ Arguing that the task of verification is in fact a relatively easy process *in theory*, Darwin then went on to concede that such practices are often not quite as exact as they might appear:

When a traveller asserts that a certain spot is in a certain latitude, what he means is that the true position does not differ from the assigned position by *more than this margin of error*.⁵⁸⁷

The implication of Darwin's statement was that it might be possible that many explorers may not actually have achieved the feats they had claimed if margins of error were taken into account. This was an unusually provocative statement to make before an audience comprised of RGS Fellows, many of

⁵⁸⁵ Letter from J.S. Keltie to L.C. Alexander, 28th April 1910 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁵⁸⁶ Nares et al., 'Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9: Discussion', 144–45.

⁵⁸⁷ Nares et al., 'Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9: Discussion', 144–45, *emphasis added*.



Photo, Sport and General.

THE DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH POLE IN LONDON: COMMANDER ROBERT E. PEARY ENTERTAINED AT LUNCHEON AT THE ROYAL SOCIETIES CLUB. Commander Peary was entertained at luncheon at the Royal Societies Club on Tuesday last, and at the gathering the great explorer gave a short narrative of his historic journey. Further, he stated that he quite believed that success would attend Captain Scott in his attempt to plant the Union Jack at the South Pole, so that "the world itself shall whirl between the ensigns of the Anglo-Saxon race." Lord Halsbury presided at the luncheon. Commander Peary was on his right, and Lord Strathcona on his left. Amongst the others present were Sir George Taubman Goldie, Captain Bartlett, Captain Scott, Major Leonard Darwin, Lord Roberts, Sir George Nares, and Dr. J. Scott Keltie.

Figure 28: Robert Peary dining at The Royal Societies Club.⁵⁵⁰

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⁵⁸⁸ 'The Discoverer of the North Pole in London,' *The Illustrated London News*, 7th May 1910.

whom would have led their own expeditions across the world. Furthermore, it was an odd way to introduce a lecture that had been preceded by a lengthy and bitter controversy involving its speaker. It is therefore evident from his speech that Darwin was acutely aware of the range of opinions felt by the diverse audience before him and so felt the need to, if not convince them of Peary's attainment of the Pole, at least gesture to those who might not yet be persuaded.

After this slightly awkward tangent, Darwin returned the large audience's attention to Peary and described in detail the reasons he had been awarded the medal with which he was being presented (see *Figure 29*).

Turning now to the hero of the evening, Commander Peary was awarded our Gold Medal twelve years ago, which is a sufficient proof that he is an Arctic traveller of the highest reputation. [...] His efforts have been marked by such splendid persistency as to make success appear to be the inevitable result.⁵⁸⁹

We can again detect Darwin's attempts to consolidate the Society's support for the explorer, making sure to remind the audience of Peary's hitherto admirable reputation. Alluding to the scrutiny which had permitted the RGS to confirm the American as the true 'discoverer' of the Pole, Darwin then continued his efforts to remove any lingering feelings of doubt that may still be present among the assembled Fellows and guests. He declared:

An exceptionally capable committee of his fellow-countrymen, appointed by the National Geographic Society of Washington, have examined his original records, and have emphatically endorsed his claims. This judicial task could not have been more appropriately placed. It is on these grounds that I stand here tonight as the representative of the Royal Geographical Society, and, armed with the full authority of its Council, to welcome you, Commander Peary, as the first and only human being who has ever led a party of his fellow-creatures to a pole of the Earth.⁵⁹⁰

Mentioning both the NGS Sub-Committee and the Council of the RGS, Darwin was clearly demonstrating that the decision to commemorate Peary was proper thing to do and hence hoped to placate any of Peary's remaining detractors. As mentioned above, however, scepticism over Peary's attainment of the Pole was not the only reason the American's adulation by the Society had not been shared by all quarters of the Fellowship. Darwin went on to address directly those concerns that had been expressed previously by the likes of Sven Hedin and Clements Markham that there was a severe

⁵⁸⁹ Nares et al., 'Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9: Discussion', 144–45.

⁵⁹⁰ Nares et al., 145.

lack of *geographical value* in Peary's achievement. Stressing repeatedly that merely reaching the Pole was not the sole reason Peary had been awarded the Special Gold Medal by the Society, Darwin announced:

We are, however, tonight not alone concerned with this aspect of Arctic exploration; for in the course of the many arduous journeys, full of dangers and difficulties, which explorers have made when dragged northwards by the loadstone of the pole, a large amount of scientific work has been done, and our geographical knowledge has been greatly increased. Commander Peary's expeditions form no exception to this honourable record. And this should not be forgotten [...], it has been the policy of our Society not to honour any mere race to the Pole.⁵⁹¹



Figure 29: Special Gold Medal presented to Robert Peary by the Royal Geographical Society.⁵⁹²

Darwin then concluded his remarks and let Peary take the stage to deliver his captivating lecture, detailing at length the dangers he had overcome in the Arctic environment. His speech was accompanied by a series of enchanting lantern slides clearly mirroring the triumphalist tone of the speech. They depicted the icy landscapes which he and his party had traversed as well as the iconic image of the five flags flying at the supposed North Pole (see *Figure 30*). The exhilarating nature of the lecture was obviously a final attempt by Peary to present himself as a capable and heroic figure and to eliminate any scepticism which may persist among the audience assembled.

⁵⁹¹ Nares et al., 'Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9: Discussion'.

⁵⁹² Special Gold Medal presented by the RGS in 1910 to Robert E. Peary for Arctic Exploration 1886-1909 [RGS-IBG Collections, Artefact G12].



Figure 30: Robert Peary and his expedition party at the North Pole.⁵⁹³

It is important to note here, however, that other processes were taking place during Peary's time in London. Not mentioned during the celebratory proceedings was the fact that Peary had brought copies of his observations with him to London in order to present them to the RGS for their own scrutiny and verification. Intriguingly, this important aspect of the North Pole controversy does not appear to have attracted much scholarly attention. Furthermore, and of particular relevance to this thesis, it is worth noting that the motivation behind this move was the result of one man – John Scott Keltie. The Secretary had written to Peary asking if it might be possible for the RGS to analyse his observations and for a group of its Senior Fellows to adjudicate the result for themselves. He wrote:

I need hardly say that we are quite satisfied with the result of the examination of the original diary and records of your observations, by the special Committee nominated by the National Geographic Society, and the confidence which the Council have in your records is guaranteed by the fact that they have awarded you this special Gold Medal. At the same time, if you did not mind, *we should all be interested here to see those original records* which in the end will no doubt be deposited in some public institution in the United States.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ Peary, *The North Pole: its discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club*

⁵⁹⁴ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 25th January 1910 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69], *emphasis added*.

It is hard to overstate the significance of Keltie's request in this instance. Here, the ever-tactful Secretary was asking to see the very documentation that was the basis for the enormous controversy which had been reverberating around the world for months. Furthermore, that the RGS was to be one of the very few institutions which would ever gain first hand access to these now crucial observations again points to the importance of this institution in global processes of exploration. As Riffenburgh notes:

The only official organisation [other than the NGS] that received any of his documents was the Royal Geographical Society, which was sent a copy of [Peary's] journal and a limited number of observations.⁵⁹⁵

It is curious to note that many of the historians who have delved into the nuances of this deliberation process have paid little attention to the involvement of RGS. This is significant as it could be argued this institution was less biased in its support of the explorer when positioned in comparison to the NGS (although perhaps only slightly). More importantly, however, and as Riffenburgh has alluded to, there were in fact only a limited number of RGS Fellows who were actually supportive of Peary once these observations had been consulted and analysed:

When his submission was considered for approval (*after* he had received the Society's gold medal), only 17 of the 35 committee members appointed to study his claims were present. Eight voted for Peary, seven against, and two abstained, thus passing his proofs with less than 23 per cent of the committee in favour.⁵⁹⁶

In his autobiography *Reflections of a Geographer*, the Society's Map Curator at the time Edward Reeves reflects on his own analysis of Peary's observations (see *Figure 31*). Adding a degree of credence to Peary's claims, Reeves remarked:

[I] decided to do all I could to test Peary. He gave me a copy of his observations for latitude taken at widely different hours in the neighbourhood of the Pole, one of which appears in his book, *The North Pole*. I recomputed them with great care, and obtained results that differed very little from his. In other ways I tried to find out if his claim that he had reached the Pole could be substantiated, and finally came to the conclusion that everything went to prove that he had been at any rate within a few miles of the Pole. Taking all possible sources of error into consideration, an uncertainty of about ten miles is, I feel, as much as should reasonably be allowed. He may not perhaps have been at the Pole by a few miles, but that he must have got very close to it is the conclusion I came to.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*, 188.

⁵⁹⁶ Riffenburgh, 188, *original emphasis*.

⁵⁹⁷ Reeves, *Recollections of a Geographer*, 78.

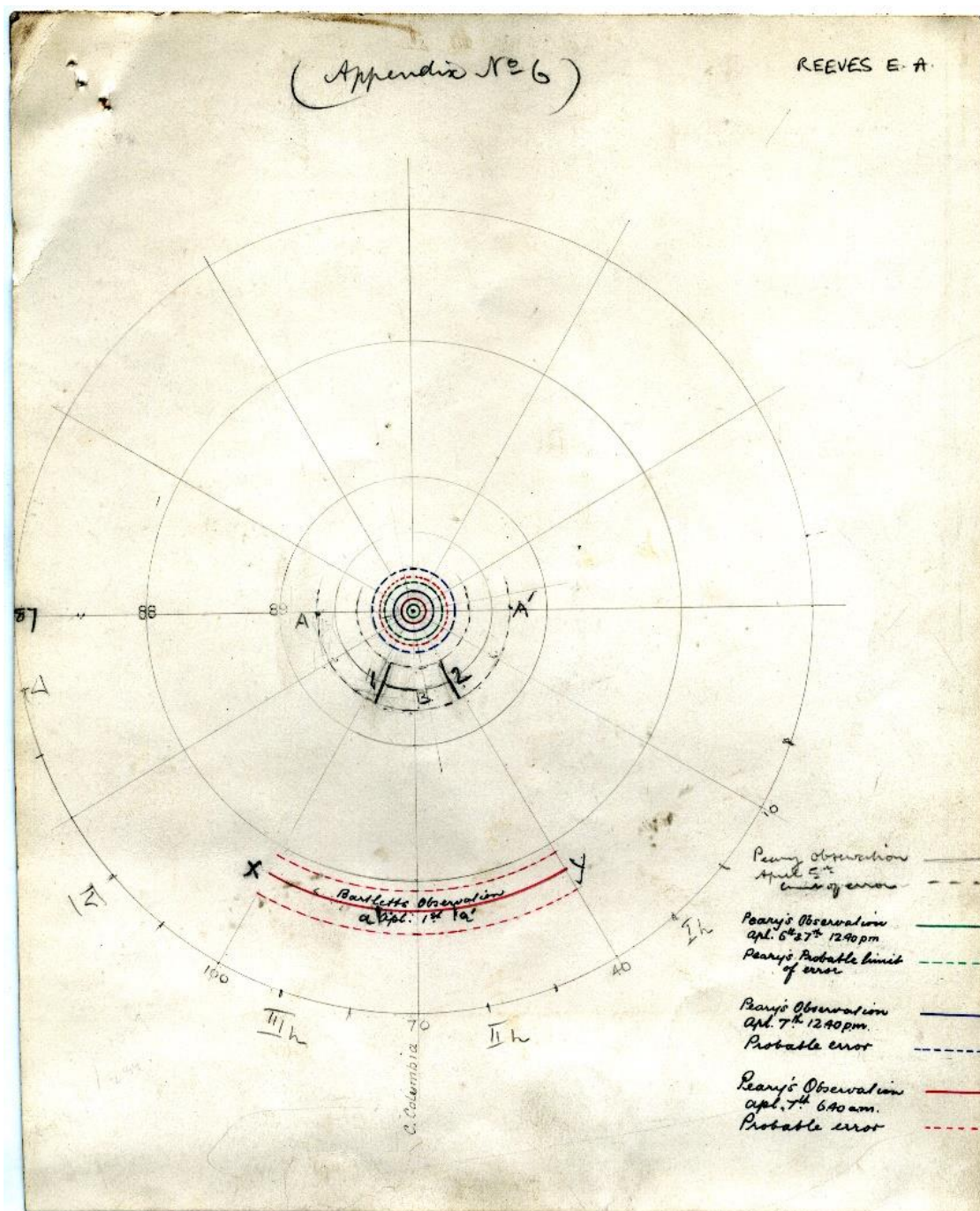


Figure 31: Diagram drawn by E.A. Reeves to Calculate Peary's Observations.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁸ 'Appendix No. 6,' The Reeves Collection [RGS-IBG Collections, EAR].

Regardless of the margins in the sub-committee's vote and of Reeves's personal opinions, the official record continued to state that the Council concurred with their American counterparts and had declared that Peary's observations were sufficient to prove he had reached as near to the Pole to claim it as his own. Over a year after the initial news had broken, Darwin wrote to Peary to reaffirm this position and finally to declare him with the victory that the American so desperately craved:

Please accept our sincere thanks for the documents you have sent us, including copies of the observations taken by you at the Pole. They have been thoroughly examined by us. In the opinion of my Council, there is nothing in this or any other new matter which has come to their notice that in any way affects the position indicated by me, when I, on behalf of this Society, presented you with a Special Gold Medal at the Albert Hall for your explorations, during which you were the first to reach a Pole of the Earth.⁵⁹⁹

Cook's Downfall

While the outcome of deliberations over Peary's observations led to jubilant celebration, it also increased the sense of anticipation that surrounded the investigation into Cook's claims. As the world waited impatiently for a decision from the Copenhagen University, so too did the Fellows of the RGS. In the same letter in which he had congratulated Peary on the outcome of his NGS investigation above, Keltie took the opportunity to comment on the inquiry that was still being conducted in Denmark.

One will be very curious to see what will be the result of the other man's observations, which he says he is 'preparing'. I should have thought that what was wanted was the original observations – diary, log-book, field-book, the actual documents which were made on the spot.⁶⁰⁰

Clearly unimpressed that Cook appeared to be manipulating his observations in some way before submitting them, Keltie's letter indicates clearly his personal feelings on Cook. In his reply, attempting to further denounce his opponent, Peary repeated his widely reported view that Cook would have little or no evidence to support his claims:

By the time this reaches you, the question of Cook's observations, or whether he has ever had any at all, will, perhaps, have been determined. The whole affair has been a most extraordinary one.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Letter from Leonard Darwin to Robert Peary, Royal Geographical Society Council Minutes, 5th December 1910 [RGS-IBG Collections].

⁶⁰⁰ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Robert Peary, 9th November 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁶⁰¹ Letter from Robert Peary to J.S. Keltie, 28th November 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Peary's prediction was proved correct. Less than a week after he had sent his letter to Keltie, the University of Copenhagen announced their damning conclusion; Cook's observations were insufficient to prove beyond doubt that he had indeed reached the Pole. An article in the *New York Times* printed the statement that had been released by the committee which read:

The data in the documents submitted to us are of such an unsatisfactory character that it is not possible to declare with certainty that the astronomical observations referred to were actually made. [...] The Commission is therefore of the opinion that the material transmitted for examination contains no proof whatsoever that Dr. Cook reached the North Pole.⁶⁰²

Although the University did not prove conclusively that Cook had *failed* to the Pole, once this statement had been released to the media, it was impossible for Cook's reputation to be salvaged. Irrespective of the fanfare to which he had been welcomed back to the United States earlier in the year, wide-spread scepticism surrounding his Mt. McKinley expedition coupled with this latest revelation meant that the explorer was now a figure of public humiliation. On top of this, many of his previous backers rapidly withdrew their support.

Historians have strived with great difficulty to piece together Cook's actions after receiving this devastating blow to his credibility. As Robinson explains, because he was being hounded by newspaper journalists asking questions about both expeditions, the Brooklyn man went into hiding. It emerged some months later he had in fact fled the United States.⁶⁰³ In the spring of 1910, several reports indicated that Cook had arrived in London and some newspapers even speculated that he had been in attendance at Peary's Albert Hall Lecture. However, Keltie was quick to shut down such rumours – in reply to the Danish geographer Captain O. Olufsen, who had written to the Secretary asking if the press speculation was accurate, Keltie responded:

I do not know anything about Dr Cook, except what has appeared in the newspapers. I believe however, it is quite true he has been in London for some time, though it is not true that he was at the Peary meeting in the Albert Hall. I have had no communication from Dr Cook of any kind.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² 'Cook's Claim to Discovery of the North Pole Rejected', *New York Times*, 21st December 1909.

⁶⁰³ Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, 155.

⁶⁰⁴ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Capt. O Olufsen, 5th October 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Cook remained extraordinarily elusive for the decade after the controversy had erupted. The RGS-IBG collections contain a series of newspaper clippings which appear to suggest someone was attempting to trace Cook's movements during this period.⁶⁰⁵ It seems he was still determined to gain recognition for his attainment of the Pole and conducted a lengthy lecture tour, arriving at any venue that would host him to explain his side of the story.⁶⁰⁶ At one point he was even bold enough to approach the RGS itself in the hope that this lofty institution might allow him to make his case despite receiving a hitherto hostile reception. Cook's tour manager Samuel McCracken had written to Keltie asking if his client might be invited to lecture at the Society, adding the spurious assertion that public opinion was firmly on Cook's side. His note read:

Dr. Frederick A. Cook the Arctic Explorer would appreciate an opportunity of being heard under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society in a public lecture in London on or about the 20th of the present month. As you are possibly aware the sentiment of the American people is now largely in Dr. Cook's favour. Will you kindly submit the matter for the immediate consideration of the officials of the Society and advise me as early as possible as to their decision.⁶⁰⁷

Clearly disinclined to acquiesce to this request, Keltie replied to McCracken's letter in a notably frosty manner; 'I have to inform you that all the meetings of this Society up to the end of the year are already filled up.'⁶⁰⁸ The Scot's unfavourable opinions of Cook were again made evident upon the publication of *My Attainment of the Pole*, the book published by Cook in 1911 as a final attempt to substantiate his claims.⁶⁰⁹ In a letter discussing the book with a member of the Society's Arctic experts Alfred Parr, Keltie did little to hide his dismissive tone:

Dr Cook I understand is lecturing all over Europe at present trying to convince people that he is the right man and that his story is absolutely trustworthy. I am told he has a most persuasive manner and has a wonderful knack of convincing people that his story is truthful, but if his book is all that he has to support him I am afraid there is only one conclusion to come to.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ 'Typed copies of American press reports on Peary/Cook dispute,' [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁶⁰⁶ Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

⁶⁰⁷ Letter from Samuel McCracken to J.S. Keltie, 7th October 1911 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁶⁰⁸ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Samuel McCracken, 16th October 1911 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

⁶⁰⁹ Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole*.

⁶¹⁰ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Admiral Parr, 13th April 1912 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Cast out from the leading geographical societies as well as most of the elite social circles in the United States, Cook's activities then took on a somewhat unusual and spontaneous character. The explorer conducted an anthropological expedition to the Malaysian island of Borneo, before returning to his homeland to attempt geological survey work in Wyoming.⁶¹¹ Several years later, Cook's fortunes took an even further fall when, in a failed attempt to seek fortunes in the petroleum business, Cook was sentenced to fifteen years in prison in 1923 for financial irregularities relating to the sale of oil fields in Fort Worth, Texas.⁶¹²

Conclusion: Exploring the Expeditionary Afterlife

Over the past the century a staggering amount has been written about the events that have been discussed in this chapter. As mentioned above, countless popular texts have been produced, each purporting to offer new insights or opinions on the controversy and each maintaining their own position on who should be crowned the true Polar champion (if anyone at all). As Lyle Dick has explored, a wide range of methods have been deployed which have attempted to reach a reliable conclusion on this matter:

Over the last century, much of the debate has turned on issues of scientific reliability of evidence brought back by the explorers, in terms of latitude readings, the positioning of the sun, ocean soundings, and other data. Since neither explorer provided definitive evidence, literary techniques of rhetoric and narrative form assumed a particular importance, even in the structuring of the diaries the explorers asserted had been written down in the field.⁶¹³

However, each of these has inevitably come with its own set of caveats and detractors. As just one example, in January 1988 the *National Geographic* magazine tasked the *Foundation for the Promotion of the Art of Navigation* – a largely amateur group of enthusiasts who promote the use of traditional methods of navigation – with reanalysing Peary's observations in the hope of proving or disproving his claims once and for all. The *Foundation's* lengthy 230-page report has been deposited into the RGS-IBG collections and begins with the following introduction:

We, the directors of the Navigation Foundation, are pleased to report that we have unanimously concluded that Robert E. Peary, Matt Henson and their four Eskimo companions reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909. [...] Our conclusion is based upon a year of intensive research by members of the Foundation who have combed through 225 cubic feet of papers at the National

⁶¹¹ Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*.

⁶¹² Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery*.

⁶¹³ Dick, 'Robert Peary's North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon', 11.

Archives, and have reviewed materials from the archives of the American Geographical Society, the National Geographic Society, the Explorers Club of New York, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Studies Center at Bowdoin College, Maine and many other public and private institutions.⁶¹⁴

However, the techniques used by the *Foundation*, such as photogrammetric analysis of Peary's photographs, are still considered largely speculative rather than an example of rigorous scientific practice. Lisa Bloom has also analysed this report and summarises its somewhat troubling tone when she argues:

The report concludes by legitimizing the authority of the *Geographic*'s older discourse of male heroism over that of scientific accuracy.⁶¹⁵

Indeed, many of the investigations that have attempted to conclude this chapter in Arctic history have retained such problematic discourses. The large number of books which seek to capture the intrigue of this story tend to focus solely on the personal qualities of both men and often fail to contextualise the controversy in its wider societal setting. In summary, it is impossible to know how events truly unfolded in the icy landscape at 90° North but it seems this has certainly not deterred countless authors from trying.

Such a goal has not been the pursuit of this chapter however. Instead, the chapter has sought to understand and contextualise the events that unfolded when these two Arctic explorers returned from their respective Arctic expeditions. Using hitherto unpublished materials held within the RGS-IBG collections, it has been shown that the Royal Geographical Society was involved substantially in the Cook-Peary controversy as it unfolded on both sides of the Atlantic in the early years of the twentieth century. The process through which the Society became embroiled in a controversy with which it had little real connection reveals a number of important aspects of its character and function at this time. Firstly, these events point to the hugely influential position that this elite institution was able to maintain around the world and its status as global adjudicator on all things geographical is made clear. Secondly, and more significantly, it has been shown that the controversy also had deep implications for the RGS itself. By analysing and comparing the statements that were issued by senior figures at the Society in

⁶¹⁴ Davies, Robert E. *Peary at the North Pole: A Report to the National Geographic Society by The Foundation for the Promotion of the Art of Navigation*, 5.

⁶¹⁵ Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, 20.

response to both explorer's claims, it has been shown that the philosophical transformation that was taking place at the Society was not as smooth or as one directional as it appeared. As discussed in chapter one, a key tenet of the New Geography that was taking hold at the Society was to dispense with much of the fawning and sycophantism that had been evident in preceding years of the Society. It was argued that faith should be placed in scientific evidence rather than in the social status of the people concerned. Yet as the materials presented above have shown, the RGS's acceptance of Robert Peary's claim to have reached the North Pole was not based on robust empirical evidence, but rather on his social standing and close personal relationships with key Fellows at the RGS. Furthermore, it has been shown that Cook's claims were also *rejected* for this very reason. With few prior connections to the geographical establishment in the United States and fewer still with the Fellows of the RGS in London, Cook lacked the respect of these key institutions who would be supportive of his claims.

Chapter 7

A ‘Citadel of Silence’? Tracing Indigenous Involvement in Arctic Expeditions

Circulating Another Narrative

I feel that I must devote a special chapter to another narrative of a somewhat peculiar kind.
- Fridtjof Nansen, 1890.⁶¹⁶

As was the case with chapter twenty-four of Fridtjof Nansen's *The First Crossing of Greenland*, this chapter will appear as somewhat of a departure from the preceding sections of this thesis.⁶¹⁷ The reasons behind this departure are intentional and purposefully provocative – in some ways mirroring Nansen's motivations when he wrote his chapter in 1890. As was explained in chapter two, many scholars have offered salient critiques of the particular style of exploration histories that have so far been discussed within the empirical chapters of this thesis. The main critiques that are responded to here are those which question the highly problematic assumptions surrounding those persons designated as the key actors in the generation and circulation of geographical knowledge relating to the Arctic during this period. As this chapter will show, multiple *indigenous* people made vital contributions to the Arctic geographical knowledges that were being produced during each of the expeditions so far described. Yet because of the well-established traditions that surrounded Polar exploration at this time, many of these important knowledges and perspectives were silenced, obscured or simply ignored upon the Western explorer's return from the Arctic. As the results from Nansen's, Mikkelsen's and Peary's respective expeditions were incorporated into the global circulation of geographical knowledge, the indigenous contributions that were made during each of these journeys were understood in a vastly different manner to the similar actions of each explorer.

The discussion that follows then will continue to present archival material relating to the important themes framing this research – that is, attention will still be centred on the processes involved in the circulation of geographical knowledge and how these in turn established prevalent (and prevailing) ideas and imaginations relating to the Arctic. However, the focus will be shifted so as to examine the ways in which the knowledges, ideas and perspectives that were offered by the indigenous

⁶¹⁶ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 217.

⁶¹⁷ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*.

peoples of the Arctic were either blocked from entering into the contemporary geographical discourse or were dismissed as lacking sufficient credibility to be taken seriously. Furthermore, and again relating to the themes of the thesis, it will be shown that in many ways the Royal Geographical Society played a direct role within this silencing process and was therefore complicit in erasing these important contributions from the dominant geographical discourses over which it had such a powerful influence. As a consequence, it is clear that the geographical imaginary of the Arctic that has been produced via these processes of circulation is one that is inherently and entirely mediated in particular ways.

By taking this approach, the chapter aims to achieve two things. Firstly, it will reveal the contributions made by those important yet overlooked indigenous people who have in one way or another been silenced within scholarly geographical discussions – both in the preceding sections of this thesis but also in the wider histories of Arctic exploration that have hitherto been written. But an equally important purpose has been to demonstrate the ease with which it has been possible for both writers and readers of histories of exploration to marginalise certain voices in favour of establishing certain (partial) narratives within such histories. As Mitchell and Smith have argued with respect to histories of the geographical discipline:

We have no excuses for continuing to write histories that are essentially an exclusionary chronological litany of white, male aristocratic heroes.⁶¹⁸

It should be noted that such an intervention is not to detract from the excellent scholarly work that has previously been conducted into Arctic and Polar exploration, much of which has been cited here. Instead, the aim is to point out the limited scope upon which much of this research has been based. The research also hopes to demonstrate the exciting opportunities that are on offer when such histories are reoriented, re-centred and reconsidered.

Of course, it is imperative to recognise at this point that there were countless other people who were involved in each of the expeditions that are examined here but whose contributions to geographical knowledge will never be fully appreciated. This is due to the fact that their actions or their ideas have left no historical trace that would permit historians and historical geographers to study their lives and

⁶¹⁸ Mitchell and Smith, 'Bringing in Race', 223.

involvements within Arctic expeditions. Nonetheless, by giving sustained attention to those actors who *have* left ‘fragments’ or ‘traces’, it is hoped that this will encourage further research in this style and importantly highlight the processes by which these voices have been (and in many cases continue to be) obscured in exploration discourses.⁶¹⁹ In summary, then, this chapter intends to go some way in challenging the statement offered by Nansen by no longer designating the inclusion of such indigenous narratives within accounts of polar exploration as ‘peculiar’ and instead understanding them as deeply-embedded components of these expeditionary practices.

I. Giving Voice to Greenlanders

As was mentioned in chapter four, upon his return from the crossing of Greenland in 1889, Nansen was greeted with a letter of hearty congratulations from his friend John Scott Keltie. As ever, the enterprising RGS Secretary was keen to offer his assistance in ensuring that Nansen could monopolise financially on his captivating journey as much as possible:

No doubt you will also publish a narrative of your journey as a book, with maps and illustrations. If you have not made any other arrangements, I should be pleased if I could be of service to you in securing a good English publisher. You must be careful to make a proper agreement with your publication, so that you may receive a good share of the profits.⁶²⁰

Again, we see that from this early moment in the pair’s relationship Keltie was already positioning himself as Nansen’s literary agent. Helping to facilitate the circulation of the Norwegian’s account as quickly as possible, Keltie hoped to capitalise on the excitement that surrounded the expedition so as to maximise the potential profits from the book. Of course, it is also worth noting here that Keltie’s involvement in the publication of this important book would ensure that the RGS had some degree of involvement in its circulation.

It took over a year for Nansen’s account to be drafted so Keltie was forced to contact the Norwegian again, cautioning him against prolonging its publication any further. He explained; ‘you should not delay it too long else Stanley’s book will be out, and I fear everything else will give way to

⁶¹⁹ See Pandey, ‘Voices from the Edge’; McGeachan, ‘Historical Geography II: Traces Remain’.

⁶²⁰ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen, 30th January 1889 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

that.⁶²¹ It seems Henry Morton Stanley – the controversial explorer of central Africa and purported ‘discoverer’ of David Livingstone – was obviously perceived to be of such importance within the public consciousness that the imminent publication of his expeditionary account would grossly overshadow any contribution that Nansen could make to the already sizeable body of *fin de siècle* travel literature.⁶²² Keltie clearly hoped that Nansen would be able to publish his book before Stanley’s account so that public appetites for exploration literature would not be lessened by the latest account of Stanley’s exploits.

As further evidence of the growing relationship between the two men, when the English version of the book was finally published by Longmans Green under the title *The First Crossing of Greenland*, as a gesture of thanks for his help in its production, Nansen invited Keltie to write the book’s foreword.⁶²³ The passage was a gushing celebration of the explorer’s achievements and concluded with the remark; ‘by both physical training and by the habit of scientific research Dr. Nansen is well qualified for the task of exploration; his narrative will show that he is equally skilful in the use of his pen.’⁶²⁴ These words were emblematic of the important relationship that was developing between Nansen and Keltie and again point to the Scot’s close connections to the ever-expanding publishing industry.

The book itself is fascinating for a number of reasons and has received attention from literary scholars due to its curious hybridity.⁶²⁵ Although the book is directed at a general readership, it incorporates many different intellectual discussions within its pages. Indeed, its high levels of scientific content may be another reason that Keltie was keen to ensure its speedy publication, as it appeared to be well suited to the new style of geography that he was so keen to bring about at the RGS.⁶²⁶ Furthermore, the book is widely considered to be an enjoyable read and the level of detail pertaining to every aspect of the expedition is extraordinary. It is not for these reasons that the book is of particular

⁶²¹ Letter from J.S. Keltie to Fridtjof Nansen, 19th February 1890 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

⁶²² Stanley, *In Darkest Africa; or, The Quest, Rescue, and Retreat of Emin, Governor of Equatoria*; It is also worth noting here that Stanley was not viewed favourably by all at the RGS, so Keltie’s comment might also be viewed as further evidence of his drive to depart from the exploratory style of geographical practice that Stanley represented. See Driver, ‘Henry Morton Stanley and His Critics: Geography, Exploration and Empire’.

⁶²³ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*.

⁶²⁴ Nansen, x.

⁶²⁵ See Wærp, ‘Fridtjof Nansen, *First Crossing of Greenland* (1890): Bestseller and Scientific Report’ for a discussion on this.

⁶²⁶ Wærp.

interest to this chapter, however. As discussed below, in a curious deviation from the typical accounts of polar exploration that were in circulation at this time, Nansen's book contains multiple references to people other than the 'heroic' explorer whose name appears on the cover.

The 'Children of Nature'

When Nansen began the process of assembling the expedition party that would assist him in his 1888-89 crossing of the Greenland ice sheet, he specified that every member should be 'thoroughly accustomed to the use of ski, and men, too, of proved energy and endurance.'⁶²⁷ Despite receiving several applications to join the expedition from men of many European nationalities, ultimately Nansen decided to choose three of his compatriots to accompany him – Otto Sverdrup, Oluf Dietrichsen and Kristian Kristianisen.⁶²⁸

Importantly, however, from the early stages of planning the expedition, Nansen had also envisaged that men should be recruited from the Sami populations of Northern Norway.⁶²⁹ Reflecting on his reasons for choosing to include members of these northern communities in his expedition, Nansen wrote:

[I] imagined, that some Lapps [sic] would be of use to me, as possessing that sense of locality and power of adaptation to all sorts of circumstances which such children of nature have as a common birthright.⁶³⁰

The labelling of these people as 'Lapps' is only the least troubling aspect of this extract.⁶³¹ There are several problematic assumptions that can be detected in Nansen's description of these people; many of which were common in late nineteenth-century thinking on Arctic race and indigeneity.⁶³² In some ways similar to the concept of environmental determinism that would become a dominant way of thinking within geographical discourses in later years, indigenous peoples were often understood to be 'closer

⁶²⁷ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 14–15.

⁶²⁸ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*.

⁶²⁹ For a discussion on the wider relations between Norwegian and Sami people see Minde, 'Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences'.

⁶³⁰ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 9.

⁶³¹ Today these people identify themselves as Sami.

⁶³² Jølle, 'The Tension between Culture and Nature: Fridtjof Nansen's Understanding of Arctic Minorities'.

to nature’ and were inherently equipped with the skills required to survive in the natural environment through being an integral part of it.⁶³³ As Robert David similarly notes:

The romantic image focused [...] on man in tune with an environment which provides all his needs, and who naively accepts his predicament; and secondly on admiration for his technological prowess, revealed in his ability to utilise natural resources in a way increasingly lost to Western industrial societies.⁶³⁴

As evidenced by the statement above, Nansen was clearly of this ‘noble savage’ mindset and saw indigenous Sami heritage – and the knowledges commonly associated with such a heritage – as being essential to his expedition’s chances of success. Consequently, the Norwegian hired two members of the Sami community named Ole Ravna and Samuel Balto to assist him and his party during the expedition. Discussing the reasons behind Nansen’s recruitment of these Sami people, Wærp has noted:

While the three Norwegians had been chosen because of their personal qualities, the Sami are seen as representatives of their group. [...] From the very first pages of the travelogue the Sami are depicted as an exotic element of the expedition.⁶³⁵

Wærp makes it clear that Ravna and Balto were not selected based on their personal characteristics or their aptitude for taking part in the expedition. Instead, Nansen viewed their Sami upbringing and their assumed resilience as proof that they would be able to withstand any of the obstacles that the expedition would likely entail. Indeed, such a belief in the pair’s perceived suitability to the Arctic environment was repeated within the pages of *The Geographical Journal*. A note appeared ahead of the expedition’s departure which described Nansen’s plans to use these indigenous people’s skills during the journey:

Nansen will attempt to evade [the ravines] by sending on the Lapps of his party in front to reconnoitre, a purpose for which they are particularly adapted by their *indifference to privation and great skill in ski running*. This was amply proved by the Nordenskiöld expedition [...] and it is Nordenskiöld’s opinion that no future Arctic land expedition should be without these *hardy sons of the Lapland desert*.⁶³⁶

As was often the case in those rare instances where indigenous peoples are referred to in the *Journal*, Ravna and Balto remain unnamed in the short article. Indeed, it is worth noting here that the men’s

⁶³³ Gísli Pálsson, for example, has highlighted the strong undertones of environmental determinism that were present in Vilhjalmar Stefansson’s writings on the indigenous inhabitants of the Arctic, see Pálsson, ‘Arcticity: Gender, Race and Geography in the Writings of Vilhjalmar Stefansson’.

⁶³⁴ David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*, 18.

⁶³⁵ Wærp, ‘Fridtjof Nansen, First Crossing of Greenland (1890): Bestseller and Scientific Report’, 52.

⁶³⁶ Anonymous, 592, *emphasis added*. For more on Nordenskiöld’s 1883 Greenland expedition see Nordenskiöld, ‘Nordenskiöld on the Inland Ice of Greenland’; Kish, ‘Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832-1901): Polar Explorer and Historian of Cartography’; Anonymous, ‘Obituary: Baron Nordenskiöld’.

names appear only once across all of the *Journal* articles which relate to the expedition when they are mentioned briefly in Nansen's lecture during his visit to London.⁶³⁷ This sustained omission is demonstrative of the ways in which such contributions to geographical expeditions from indigenous peoples are rarely given prominence in the subsequent accounts that are produced and so consequently do not receive adequate attention in many historical analyses. Although Balto and Ravna feature prominently in Nansen's published account, they are excluded from the 'official' circulation of geographical knowledge that was produced and mediated by the RGS.



Figure 32: Woodcut of Samuel J. Balto and Ole N. Ravna in *The First Crossing of Greenland*.⁶³⁸

Further insight into Nansen's opinions of his Sami colleagues is revealed in *First Crossing*. It seems the expedition leader was somewhat disappointed by Balto and Ravna's performance during the expedition and the pair are criticised repeatedly throughout the book. As Harald Dag Jølle has noted:

⁶³⁷ Nansen, 'Journey across the Inland Ice of Greenland from East to West'.

⁶³⁸ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 25.

In contrast to the two strong Norwegians, the Sami members were portrayed as afraid, and their contribution to the expedition was not given much attention. In the travel description there are several discriminatory stereotypes concerned with being a Sami, and several of Ole Nielsen Ravna and Samuel Balto's actions were presented as strange and characterized as typically 'Lappish.'⁶³⁹

Described variously as lazy, unintelligent and unhelpful, at points Nansen portrays these men as a more of a burden than as useful and engaged members of the expedition party. It appears that the two Sami explorers did not match Nansen's stereotyped expectations in terms of their abilities to traverse the icy polar landscape with ease. Reading Nansen's book in this way, then, it would be reasonable to argue that the Norwegian was simply another historical example of those countless European explorers who displayed deeply troubling attitudes when indigenous peoples were incorporated into their expeditions and who treated these people in hugely problematic ways.

However, to label Nansen as entirely dismissive of his Sami companions would be inaccurate. First of all, it is clear that Nansen intended to learn from these people and hoped to adopt the skills and techniques that they and their communities used in living in the frigid temperatures of Northern Norway. As Francis Spufford has argued, the adoption of Inuit skills and traditions was becoming increasingly common amongst those European explorers venturing north during this period:

In the last years of the [nineteenth] century a belated transfusion began of Inuit technologies into exploring practice. What had been a rare willingness to learn [...] became a hungry appetite for the useful details of sledge-runners and clothing among the most innovative explorers.⁶⁴⁰

Both Nansen's published works and his personal correspondence collections reveal that he was constantly striving to improve both the equipment used on his journeys and it is evident he was keen to adopt any practices that could increase his likelihood of his expeditionary success.⁶⁴¹ Furthermore, in spite of the troubling depictions of these two Sami people that had so far been described, it is important to note that Nansen was determined that *their perspectives* of the Greenland expedition should be shared with readers across Europe.

⁶³⁹ Jølle, 'The Tension between Culture and Nature: Fridtjof Nansen's Understanding of Arctic Minorities', 15.

⁶⁴⁰ Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination*, 230.

⁶⁴¹ Nansen, *Fridtjof Nansen Brev 1-5*.

In notable contrast to many Arctic explorers of the era, Nansen encouraged Samuel Balto to record his experiences on the Greenland ice sheet in writing so that they may be circulated amongst audiences in Europe. As Ørnulv Vorren explains:

After [the] expedition to Greenland 1888-1889 was completed, Samuel Johansen Balto, one of the expedition's participants, was urged by Nansen to write a report about the expedition.⁶⁴²

Although Balto did not record any of the expedition's events as they unfolded, an account was drafted shortly after the party's return to Norway.⁶⁴³ Vorren implies that the reasons behind Nansen's encouragement of Balto to describe his experiences on the Greenland Ice Sheet are somewhat of a mystery. Such actions could perhaps be explained by Nansen's belief that all aspects of the journey should be documented so as to establish as detailed a picture as possible of the journey. However, as discussed below, it is more likely that Nansen's political opinions on colonisation may offer an insight into this unusual drive to have Balto's experiences documented print.

Nansen's intentions for Balto's perspectives to be circulated amongst the readers of Europe was not to be realised during his lifetime, however. Upon its completion, Balto's written account was deposited into the *Universitetsbiblioteket* in Oslo and was to remain largely unread for nearly a century. It was not until 1980 that the account was able to circulate beyond the confines of the library when *Med Nansen over Grønlandsisen* was published in 1980.⁶⁴⁴ This intriguing and important book offers the reader Balto's written account in both Sami and Norwegian languages, highlighting the substantial shift that had taken place with respect to the recognition of Sami heritage in Norway during the intervening years.⁶⁴⁵ More significantly, though, it offers a rare account of a 'heroic' polar expedition from the perspective of someone other than its celebrated leader. In notable contrast to other Arctic explorers of the era – for example Robert Peary who did not allow anyone other than himself to publish accounts of his travels without his explicit approval – Nansen actively facilitated the inclusion of an alternative Sami voice into the circulation of geographical knowledge and endeavoured to give voice to this

⁶⁴² Balto, *Med Nansen over Grønlandsisen i 1888, Min Reise Fra Sameland Til Grønland* [With Nansen over the Greenland Ice in 1888, My Journey from Saamiland to Greenland], 7 [Author's Translation].

⁶⁴³ Balto, 7.

⁶⁴⁴ Balto, 7.

⁶⁴⁵ Minde, 'Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences'.

indigenous intermediary who had joined him on his expedition. Although it is clear Nansen's opinions of his Sami companions were not wholly favourable, it is still important to acknowledge his attempts to challenge the dominant trope among expeditionary narratives. Furthermore, as will now be discussed, it was not just the Sami peoples whom Nansen and his party were reliant upon during their crossing of Greenland.

'An Eskimo Narrative'

In chapter twenty-three of his exciting published account of the Greenland crossing, Nansen details the events which took place upon the party's arrival on the island's Western coast in September of 1889. Having survived their gruelling march across the ice sheet, the expedition party divided themselves into two groups. Nansen and Sverdrup remained in Godthaab [Nuuk] and made attempts to secure a ship that could transport the weary explorers back to mainland Europe. Meanwhile, the remaining members of the party – Dietrichsen, Kristiansen, Ravna and Balto – were ordered to retrieve a large amount of equipment which the group had left on the edge of the ice sheet at the head of Ameralikfjord. The four-man team embarked upon a perilous journey up the frozen fjord – during which Dietrichson fell through the thin ice into the freezing Arctic waters – before finally reaching their belongings and packing up them up in preparation for the return journey (see *Figure 33*). By this point it was too dangerous to return across the fjord on foot, so the team were forced to await the arrival of some small boats which would transport the supplies and the men back to Godthaab. However, as the wait was to be longer than any of the men had anticipated, the party were forced to construct a temporary encampment to shelter them while they awaited rescue. Clearly growing increasingly impatient and desperate to receive support from his colleagues at the coast, Dietrichsen wrote; 'every day now we might expect to hear from Godthaab.'⁶⁴⁶ Sympathetic to his companions' growing discomfort, Nansen decided that some provisions should be sent in order to offer them some relief.

It is at this point we learn of the important contributions made to the expedition by two indigenous Greenlanders named Silas and Peter. Like the party that they had been ordered to assist, these men were

⁶⁴⁶ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 201.

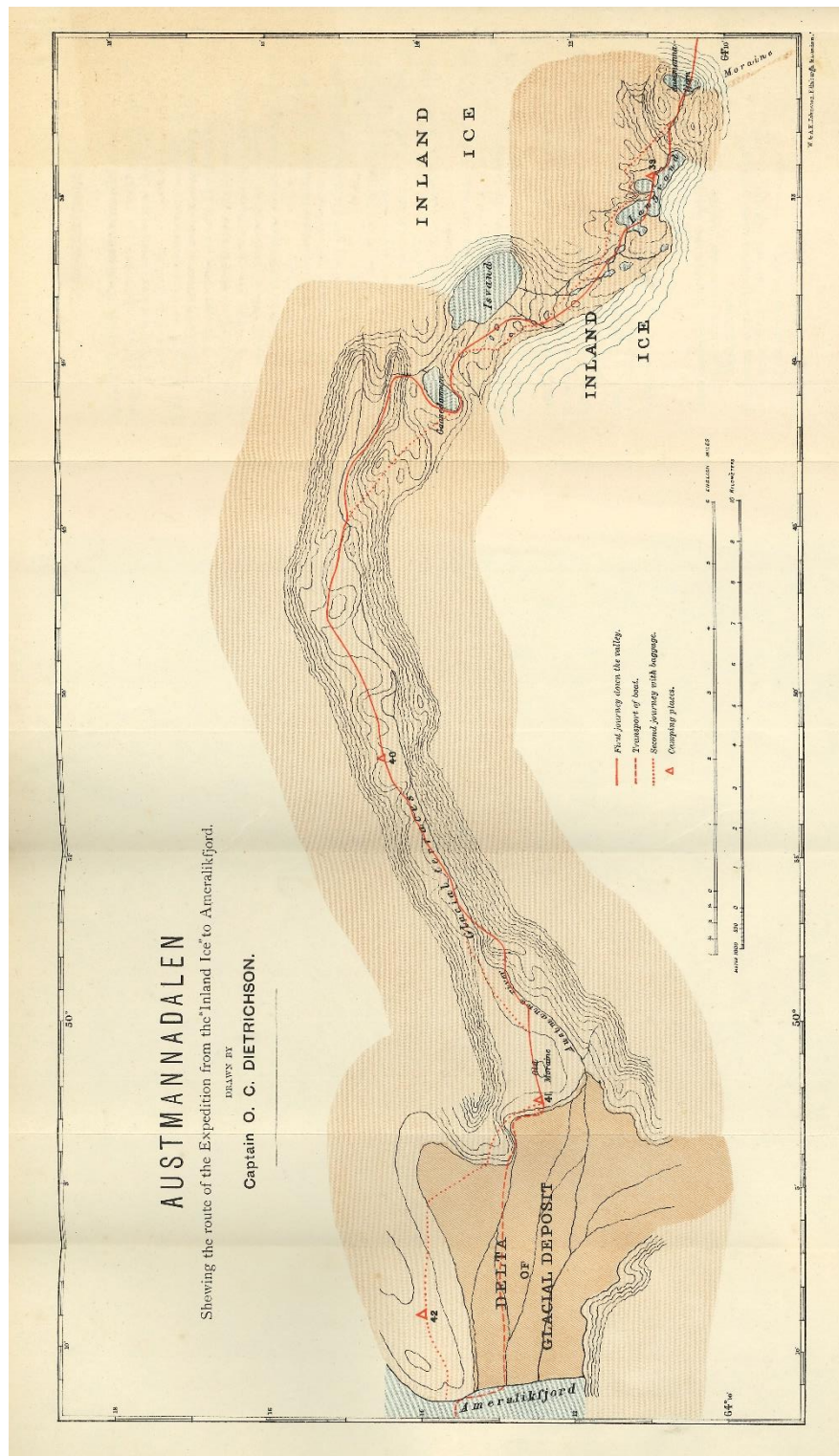


Figure 33: Map showing the encampments on Ameralikfjord. 645

asked to travel up the fjord and reach the stranded explorers. However, in this instance, the men had been burdened with alcohol, cigars and sugar in order to rally the spirits of the stranded Norwegians. After Silas and Peter made the treacherous journey up the fjord and arrived at the encampment, Dietrichsen noted:

When I was half-way to the point I heard a shot. I hurried up to the ridge to see who it could be, and soon caught sight of two Greenlanders coming up from the water and carrying packs on their backs. [...] As I had, of course, guessed, they proved to be two men sent off in “kayaks” by Nansen.⁶⁴⁸

By instructing the Greenlanders to transport the goods up the perilous fjord, Nansen can again be seen as acting in a manner similar to those countless other explorers who relied fundamentally on local populations for the success of their expeditions. As Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam have noted, it was often the case that indigenous people were ordered to complete the more menial expeditionary tasks, while the European explorers took credit for the most spectacular or heroic feats that were accomplished during the journey.⁶⁴⁹

Of particular interest for this thesis, however, chapter twenty-four of Nansen’s *First Crossing* includes a lengthy passage recounting the journey up the fjord that was *written by Silas* himself. Similar to Samuel Balto’s account above and in notable contrast to many of the travel narratives described in chapter two, the book not only includes a passage by this ‘indigenous intermediary’ but also makes overt efforts to give voice to Silas by placing his perspectives within the expedition narrative. In his introduction to this intriguing chapter, Nansen writes:

This is an account written in his own tongue by Silas, one of the two ‘kayakers’ who were sent from Umanak into Ameralikfjord to relieve our party. It was originally printed in Eskimo in the journal which bears the eccentric title of ‘Atuagagdliutit’, is published in Godthaab once a month, and is distributed gratis among the Greenlanders.⁶⁵⁰

The specificities involved in the circulation of this account are notable. A key objective of the Danish missionary activity taking place on the West coast of Greenland at this time was to develop literacy

⁶⁴⁸ Nansen, 202.

⁶⁴⁹ Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries*.

⁶⁵⁰ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 217.

amongst the indigenous population.⁶⁵¹ This led in turn to the establishment of several Greenlandic publications and Silas's account initially appeared amongst this local circulation of information between the communities of West Greenland. The fact that Nansen made efforts to source this piece of writing, translate it into Norwegian (and subsequently English and German) and then publish it as part of his own travel account is hugely significant.⁶⁵² Considered through the lens of knowledge circulation, it is clear that such translation enabled Silas's writing to travel far beyond the Arctic island on which it was produced and meant that his account was able to reach a readership across Europe and further afield.

The narrative itself gives an intriguing account of Peter and Silas's ascent up the fjord and describes their success in supplying the stranded Norwegians with their amenities. Although it does not conform to the narrative offered by Nansen in the other chapters of the book, it is nonetheless a hugely important piece of writing. We must remember that travel accounts such as *First Crossing* were undoubtedly written to appeal to the wondrous and sensationalistic side of geography and, as many scholars have argued, had their own set of conventions and implicit rules which dictated what could and could not be published.⁶⁵³ However, in this case we see Nansen attempting to challenge or subvert these traditions by including the voice of an indigenous intermediary within the published account of his expedition. By including perspectives from the other actors who played a vital part in these expeditions, it seems Nansen hoped to offer a more realistic depiction of his and his party's time on the Greenland ice sheet.

The Norwegian's attempts to incorporate such voices into the circulation of knowledge were not met without resistance, however. It was shown in chapter two that the circulatory system in place during this period permitted rarely the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and this was again to be the case with Silas's contribution to Nansen's account. It was argued above that literary publishers were

⁶⁵¹ Langgård, 'Greenlandic Literature from Colonial Times to Self-Government'.

⁶⁵² For a discussion on the translation of explorers' accounts of their travels, see Henderson, 'Historical Geographies of Textual Circulation: David Livingstone's Missionary Travels in France and Germany'; see also Rupke, 'Translation Studies in the History of Science: The Example of Vestiges'.

⁶⁵³ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*; Ogborn and Withers, *Geographies of the Book*.

able to exert significant influence over how exploration narratives were circulated upon an explorer's return from their expedition. As Innes Keighren, Charles Withers and Bill Bell remind us:

Edition history is no less a matter of correspondence: how much did later editions correspond in form and content to the first published edition? Publishers – always mindful of audience – make the final decision on content, print run, volume size and costs, not authors.⁶⁵⁴

Therefore, when *First Crossing* was reprinted in the UK and sold as a new edition, the publisher Thomas Norton Longman made the decision to edit Nansen's writing substantially. In the second edition, several chapters were removed so as to reduce the two-volume text into a single book.⁶⁵⁵ The sections that were selected for omission are revealing. Hoping to ensure the text appealed to a wide audience, Longman removed Silas's chapter from the published account, along with some of Nansen's more scholarly contributions. As Longman himself wrote in the preface to the new edition:

In preparing the present edition of Dr. Nansen's account of the first crossing of Greenland in one volume, some curtailments of the larger work have been found necessary. Fortunately I have found it possible to effect this *without reducing the space allotted to the narrative of the actual expedition*. [...] In vol. ii the account of the crossing of the "Inland Ice" until the expedition arrived in Godthaab is reprinted entire, while the chapters entitled "An Eskimo Narrative," "The Eskimo of Greenland," and "A Shooting Trip to Ameralikfjord," together with the appendix, have been omitted.⁶⁵⁶

Although it was shown in Nansen's writing that Silas's and Peter's contributions to the expedition were absolutely imperative, it seems they did not merit being included in a description of the 'actual expedition' as was perceived by the publisher. Furthermore, Nansen's important attempts to include the chapter written by Silas had also been negated. It seems public appetites for polar exploration narratives – or at least the publisher's perception of them – dictated that there was no place for indigenous perspectives within Nansen's exciting travel account and so the chapter was removed from this important and influential geographical text. In spite of Nansen's efforts, the act of silencing the contributions made by indigenous intermediaries appeared to be a persistent feature in the circulation of exploratory narratives during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁶⁵⁴ Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*, 19.

⁶⁵⁵ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland [Second Edition]*.

⁶⁵⁶ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland [Second Edition]*, ix–x, *emphasis added*.

What still remains somewhat unclear, however, was the motivation behind Nansen's inclusion of these indigenous voices within his writing. As the next section will explain, its only through an understanding of the Norwegian's political viewpoints that we are able to discern the reasons behind the important inclusion of these indigenous voices.

'A Sacred Duty to add my Protest'

As described in chapter four, Nansen and Sverdrup's attempts to secure return passage to mainland Europe before the Arctic winter set in proved ultimately fruitless. Although hopes were raised that the *Fox* – the same ship that Admiral McClintock had captained during his search for Franklin over thirty years earlier – might be able to offer passage, it was discovered that it would be too dangerous to steer the ship through the unfamiliar icy waters burdened with more passengers than had been originally anticipated.⁶⁵⁷ Consequently, the party was forced to overwinter on the Greenland coastline and began to prepare for life among the indigenous community. As Nansen describes:

As we now knew that we had no chance of getting home this year, we became resigned to our fate, and reconciled to the idea of spending the winter where we were. As time went on our intercourse with the natives grew closer, and the interest we took in them of course increased.⁶⁵⁸

Rather than see this situation as a setback, Nansen instead seized the opportunity to learn more about the indigenous population on the island's West coast. Turning his keen analytical mind to the cultures and customs of the local inhabitants, he embraced life with the Greenlanders and recorded all of his observations and experiences while he and his crew lived amongst the community during the winter of 1888. Reflecting on this overwintering, Nansen writes:

I myself spent most of the winter in studying the peculiarities of native life. I lived with the Eskimo in their huts, studied their methods of hunting and seal-catching, their customs and manner of life generally, and learnt, as far as I could in the short time at my disposal, their difficult language.⁶⁵⁹

So much material was recorded during this unplanned ethnographic study, that Nansen later collated his findings into the well-regarded ethnographic study *Eskimo Life*.⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, the Norwegian seemed

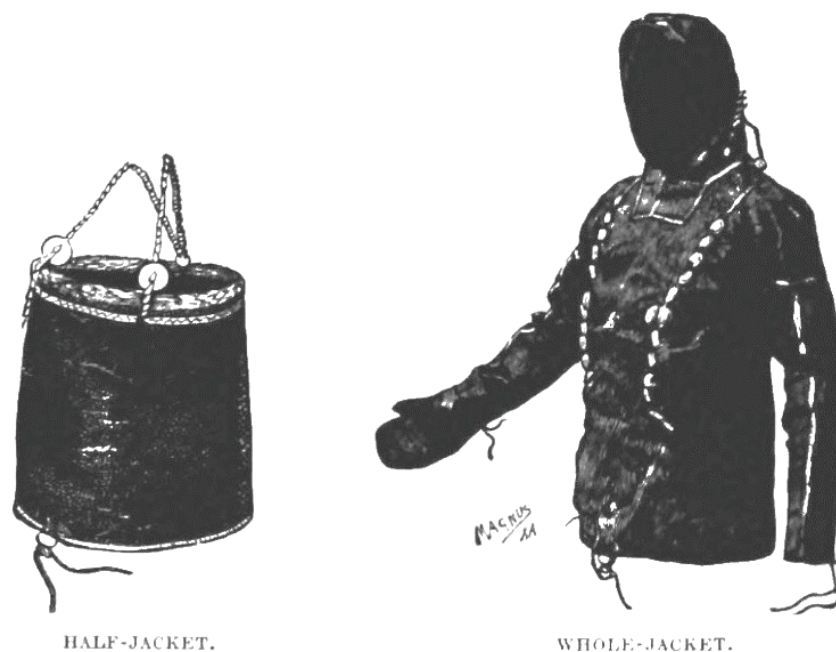
⁶⁵⁷ For more on the *Fox* see Erskine and Kjaer, 'The Arctic Ship Fox'.

⁶⁵⁸ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 251–52.

⁶⁵⁹ Nansen, 253.

⁶⁶⁰ Nansen, *Eskimo Life*.

to be rather proud of his work as, in a post-script to one of his correspondences with Keltie, he wrote: ‘I must sen[d] you a copy of my wonderful book on Eskimo Life.’⁶⁶¹ While *First Crossing* had already offered European readers a considerable amount of detail pertaining to the lives of the West Coast Greenlanders, *Eskimo Life* gave even thicker descriptions of the cultural practices that Nansen had encountered during this overwintering among this indigenous community. The book’s list of contents alone reveals the diverse aspects of Inuit life which Nansen felt needed discussion: ‘Appearance and Dress’, ‘The Eskimo at Sea’, ‘Love and Marriage’ and ‘The Position and Work of Women’ are just some of the cultural characteristics of this community that are described. Each chapter is illustrated with drawings to add further anthropological and archaeological detail (see *Figure 34* and *Figure 35*).⁶⁶²



*Figure 34: Depictions of Greenlandic clothing featured in Eskimo Life.*⁶⁶³

It is clear that this book is not solely an objective anthropological study, however. Rather than offer an impartial description of the peoples and practices that Nansen had witnessed on the Island’s West Coast, a distinct political agenda can be detected throughout the work. In the foreword to the book, Nansen’s writing takes on a notably philosophical tone and the explorer engages in a lengthy reflective

⁶⁶¹ Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 13th May 1897 [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

⁶⁶² Nansen, *Eskimo Life*, xiv.

⁶⁶³ Nansen, 50.

passage putting forward his personal views on the ongoing processes of European colonialism that were taking place in Greenland at the time. He writes:

In Greenland the Eskimos fell in with the Europeans. First it was our Norwegian forefathers of the olden times; then they gradually overcame. But we returned to the charge, this time bringing with us Christianity and the products of civilisation; then they succumbed, and are sinking ever lower and lower. The world passes on with a pitying shrug of the shoulders.⁶⁶⁴

It is at this point that the explorer puts forward his explicit motivations for writing this intriguing book. It seems Nansen was intending to use his increasingly global status to draw attention to what he viewed as the injustices of colonialism that were taking place in Greenland. He describes an urge to change popular perceptions of the Greenlandic communities and his political opinions on the matter are put forward explicitly:

Whenever I saw instances of the suffering and misery which we have brought upon them, that remnant of a sense of justice which is still to be found in most of us stirred me to indignation, and I was filled with a burning desire to send the truth reverberating over the whole world. Were it once brought home to them, I thought, people could now be awoken from their indifference, and at once make good the wrong they had done.⁶⁶⁵

It seems Nansen hoped that, through constructing a more favourable depiction of these indigenous peoples, he would be able to change widely held perceptions of the Greenlanders – and the peoples of the North more generally – and therefore bolster support for the preservation of their ways of life. As Jølle explains:

Nansen wish[ed] to present an alternative view of “the other” than that most commonly held in his time, and he considered it a matter of moral necessity to inform others of the actual facts so that they did not draw the inaccurate conclusion that the Inuit had a lower status of cultural achievement.⁶⁶⁶

It is clear that Nansen was conscious of the fact that it would be a significant challenge to circulate this ‘truth’ amongst his European contemporaries. Indeed, in an impassioned statement responding to the criticisms levelled at him by his opponents, Nansen reveals the personal anguish he felt while witnessing the colonial practices that were playing out on the island:

⁶⁶⁴ Nansen, ix.

⁶⁶⁵ Nansen, x.

⁶⁶⁶ Jølle, ‘The Tension between Culture and Nature: Fridtjof Nansen’s Understanding of Arctic Minorities’, 3.

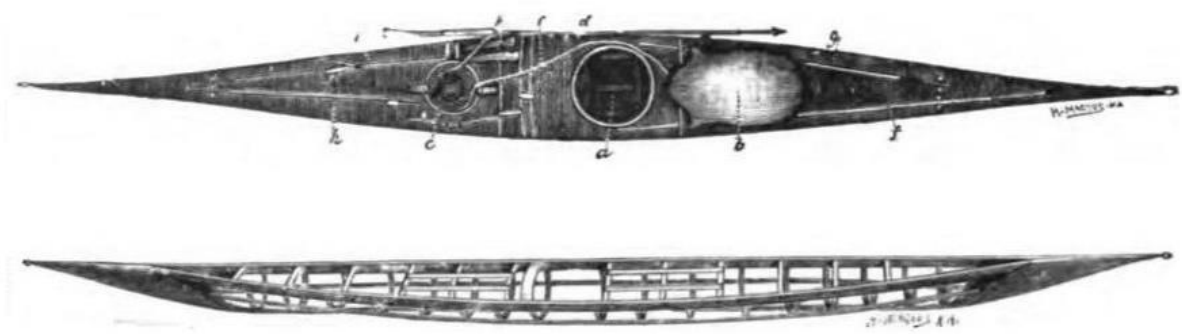


Figure 35: Depiction of Greenland kayak featured in *Eskimo Life*.⁶⁶⁷

Poor dreamer! You have nothing to say which has not been better said before. The hapless lot of the Greenlanders, as well as of other 'native' races, has been set forth on many hands, and always without avail. But, none the less, I felt I must unburden my conscience; it seemed to me a sacred duty to add my protest to the rest.⁶⁶⁸

Fervent cries against colonisation are present throughout the book and are stated most explicitly in the chapter entitled 'What have we Achieved?.' Extrapolating his views on Greenland and applying them to other parts of the world, Nansen writes:

We must not imagine [...] that we have the right, as we have done in Greenland and in other places, to swoop down upon a primitive race with our civilisation and impose it upon them.⁶⁶⁹

Again, the use of 'primitive race' reiterates Nansen's undoubtedly problematic view of non-European peoples and hence sits somewhat uneasily with his more progressive views on the ongoing European colonisation project when reading his work today. Yet this is perhaps the clearest expression of Nansen's deep criticism of colonial practices that were being undertaken by European states across the world and is essentially an attempt to convince his compatriots and other European countries that they should question their continued occupation of foreign lands beyond their borders. It is clear, then, that by centring the text on the indigenous peoples and describing all that could be learned from these 'children of nature,' Nansen intended to confront widely held views on European racial superiority and challenged the assumed right to continue the colonisation project that was held by many Europeans.

⁶⁶⁷ Nansen, *Eskimo Life*, 44.

⁶⁶⁸ Nansen, x.

⁶⁶⁹ Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, 334.

Nansen's experiences in Greenland clearly stayed with him during the course of this life and evidently provided an impetus for his later political career. Jølle has explored the Norwegian's involvement in the Greenland sovereignty dispute that arose between Norway and Denmark in the 1920s. Nansen's views on the matter were stated explicitly in a newspaper article that appeared in 1924:

The country's rightful owners, the Eskimos, and their interests is what should be the deciding factor. The right thing for both the Danes and Norwegians and other peoples to do, if possible, would be to stay away and let the Eskimos live in peace without any European intervention.⁶⁷⁰

Furthermore, it has been argued that such a drive to assist those afflicted by what he saw as the failings of the European nation-states was also a factor in Nansen's later appointment as High Commissioner for Refugees in the League of Nations.⁶⁷¹

It is therefore apparent from the evidence presented in this chapter that Nansen strived to ensure that the indigenous voices of both the Sami and the Greenlandic communities were included within the circulation of Arctic knowledge. Although he continued to perpetuate many of the troubling stereotypes of the era, his attempts to bring Sami and Greenlandic perspectives into the circulation of geographical knowledge – and hence equate their ideas and traditions with European thinking – nonetheless gave voice to these indigenous communities in a way that was notably lacking in many other contemporary accounts of Arctic exploration. It is also evident, however, that certain processes acted to impede these efforts. As has been shown throughout this thesis, the pressure to present Arctic expeditions in particular ways meant that tacit restrictions were in place dictating what could and could not be circulated. To ensure that the expedition conformed to popular imaginations of Arctic exploration we have seen that Nansen, his publishers and the Royal Geographical Society all mediated the involvement of these people within his subsequent polar narrative. Through these processes, the accounts gleaned from the Arctic indigenous intermediaries were marginalised and obscured within the telling and retelling of this celebrated exploratory narrative.

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⁶⁷⁰ Nansen, 'Grønlands-saken', *Tidens Tegn*, 22nd February 1924 in Jølle, 'The Tension between Culture and Nature: Fridtjof Nansen's Understanding of Arctic Minorities'

⁶⁷¹ Fosse and Fox, *Nansen: Explorer and Humanitarian*.

II. 'Supposed-to-be-Land'

The second section of this chapter will turn to focus on Ejnar Mikkelsen's 1906-07 expedition to Northern Alaska that was the subject of study in chapter five. It will explore the intermediary position occupied by Sachawachick – a local inhabitant of Flaxman Island who assisted Mikkelsen during his expedition – and consider to what extent his involvement in Mikkelsen's expedition was incorporated into the circulation of geographical information at the beginning of the twentieth century. As will be discussed, similar to the indigenous Greenlanders who aided Nansen, Sachawachick played a crucial role in the functioning of Mikkelsen's expedition and assisted the Dane and his crew in many different ways as they endeavoured to find the hypothesised Keenan Land. Again, however, it is shown that Mikkelsen's attempts to include the information generated by Sachawachick in the circulation of Arctic geographical knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century was met with notable resistance.

Island Reconnaissance

Once Mikkelsen and his crew had completed their voyage along the Alaskan coast and had at last reached their intended field site on Flaxman Island, they set about establishing their winter quarters. As the party began unloading their bulky supplies from *The Duchess of Bedford*, the scientific members of the party began to conduct some initial meteorological observations and erected a rudimentary astronomical observatory 'out of old boxes.'⁶⁷² Meanwhile Mikkelsen and the ship's surgeon Dr Howe began to investigate the island which was to be their home for the thirteen months.

During this exploratory journey around the island, Mikkelsen encountered an Iñupiaq family who occupied a small settlement on the Eastern tip of the island. In *Conquering the Arctic Ice*, Mikkelsen provides a detailed description of this point of contact and outlines the family's characteristics, noting in particular the atypical nature of their familial dynamics. He writes:

Uxra was a strapping young man of about thirty-five years, a great hustler and a good hunter. His wife Tullik was also young and had a very pleasant face, but spinal tuberculosis had made her a cripple [sic]. [...] She could not do the hard work which usually falls to the lot of an Eskimo woman, and Uxra had to do half of her work as well as his own.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷² Mikkelsen, *Conquering the Arctic Ice*, 96.

⁶⁷³ Mikkelsen, 97.

In an attempt to maintain a ‘friendly footing’ which had been established between the two groups, Dr Howe offered to help with Tullik’s back pain by ‘fix[ing] a plaster of Paris jacket so as to support her spine.’⁶⁷⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly though, Tullik was far from comfortable with her new appendage and, as it was making it impossible for her to sleep, it was hastily removed within a matter of days.⁶⁷⁵ Nonetheless, these attempts at fostering friendship with the Flaxman Island community did lead to the establishment of a largely amicable relationship and the family began to assist the explorers in a number of ways during their stay.

As was the case with Nansen’s books above, in his published accounts of the journey, Mikkelsen includes substantial descriptions of this indigenous family’s diverse contributions to the functioning of the expedition. Furthermore, the book also contains multiple photographs of these indigenous intermediaries (see *Figure 36*) and Mikkelsen offers several examples of the help they offered:

Tullik was very nice; she made boots for us, cooked our food, and taught us words and phrases of the Eskimo language.⁶⁷⁶

It is noted that Uxra and Tullik joined Mikkelsen and Dr Howe on a caribou hunting trip, with the Europeans making use of Uxra and Tullik’s *umiak* (canoe). Mikkelsen explains the vessel was ‘decidedly better than a wooden boat’ due to its dexterity, durability and ease of repair.⁶⁷⁷ The trip along the Alaskan coastline lasted nearly two weeks and, with efforts from the entire hunting team, was largely a success with a number of caribou being captured.

The journey back to the established base camp was much more testing ordeal however – partly due to the added weight of several large deer but also due to the waters of the Beaufort Sea beginning to freeze over as the Alaskan winter began to set in. A decision was made to jettison Uxra’s and Tullik’s *umiak* and resort to dog-sledging to complete the last stage of the journey. However, this created a problem when the party arrived at a sand-spit within sight of the base camp.

⁶⁷⁴ Mikkelsen, 104.

⁶⁷⁵ Mikkelsen, 104.

⁶⁷⁶ Mikkelsen, 102.

⁶⁷⁷ Mikkelsen, 100.



Figure 36: Image of Tullik and Uxra featured in *Conquering the Arctic Ice*.⁶⁷⁸

An open channel remained in the sea severing the route to their temporary home. Furthermore, a recent storm had swept away the small boats that had been moored at the crew's base camp. Consequently, neither the hunting party nor those stationed at the base had any way of crossing the widening lead. While this dangerous situation had the potential to turn quickly fatal, as seems to have been the case throughout his expedition, Mikkelsen was once again graced with a considerable degree of luck.

It was to transpire that a new group of Iñupiaq people had arrived on Flaxman Island while the party had been away on their hunting trip. A man named Sachawachick, his wife Douglamana and their two young children had ventured onto Flaxman Island hoping to trade with members of the expedition. These new arrivals were able to use their *umiaks* to cross the open channel, rescue the stranded hunting party and transport Mikkelsen and Dr Howe safely to the basecamp to be reunited with the rest of the crew. The perilous nature of this whole ordeal once again provides a prime example of European explorers being utterly reliant on their indigenous intermediaries, as in this case it is clear that the men's

⁶⁷⁸ Mikkelsen, 97.

lives were ultimately in the hands of Sachawachick and Douglamana who were fortunately on hand to offer their assistance.

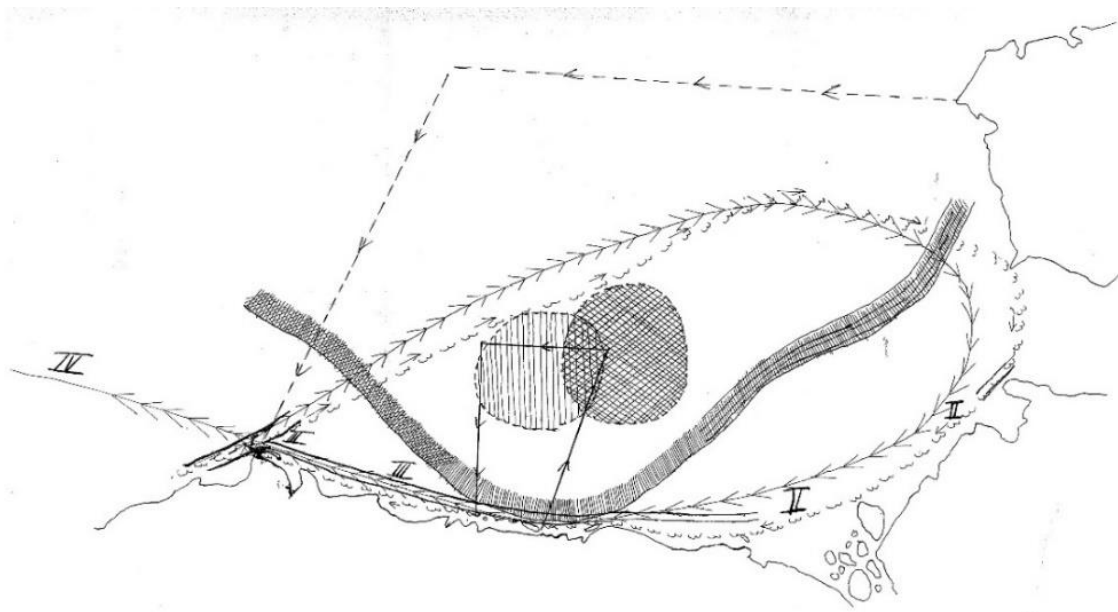
Of more importance to the themes of this thesis, though, is the fact that the crew's interactions with both Iñupiaq families are acknowledged in substantial detail within both of Mikkelsen's accounts of the expedition – *Conquering the Arctic Ice* and *Mirage in the Arctic*.⁶⁷⁹ Uxra and Tullik are presented in both books as being essential members of the hunting party, while Sachawachick and his family are described as vital to the rescue of the Europeans trapped across the open channel. Although it could be perhaps argued that Mikkelsen was simply using detailed descriptions of these events to present the Arctic region as a dangerous environment and therefore to demonstrate further his ability to survive in the area, it is argued here that including this in the exploration narrative was the result of other motivations. The sustained attention on the Flaxman Islanders in Mikkelsen's accounts of the expedition seems to imply that, as Nansen had attempted a few years earlier, Mikkelsen was keen to convey an honest depiction of his dependence on these local indigenous inhabitants for his survival, therefore allowing readers across Europe to see these indigenous actors as possessing their own agency. This would therefore appear to be another instance of a European Arctic explorer seeking to challenge to the conventional accounts of Polar exploration that were in circulation at this time. However, as is discussed in more detail below, Mikkelsen's attempts to include such voices in this circulation were again met with notable resistance.

'I must tell you what I know of Sachawachick'

Once the initial excitement of arriving on the island had died down and the crew were safely encamped in the snowy landscape, Mikkelsen endeavoured to make contact with the RGS Fellows hundreds of miles away back at Savile Row. He was able to send mail from the whaling station at Point Barrow and sent regular updates to both John Scott Keltie and Clements Markham, notifying them of his progress to date and outlining his future plans for the expedition. Keen to convey the latest findings from his geographical investigations into the hypothesised Keenan Land, Mikkelsen wrote several letters

⁶⁷⁹ Mikkelsen, *Conquering the Arctic Ice*; Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*.

containing lengthy (and at times slightly incoherent) details purporting to provide substantive evidence of its existence.⁶⁸⁰ The sketch map in *Figure 37* was drawn by Mikkelsen during his time on Flaxman Island, and was enclosed with one of the letters that was sent to Markham. It shows the sledging routes that the Dane proposed to undertake during the following spring as well as some depictions of the migratory routes of Arctic wildlife, including the ‘probable route of geese and [ducks] to [their] breeding place’ and a ‘probable route of the whale.’⁶⁸¹ These migratory routes, Mikkelsen argued, provided further evidence that the proposed island (also drawn on the map) did in fact exist and would therefore soon be discovered. Intriguingly though, this map was not the only evidence that was sent to the RGS Fellows by the Dane.



*Figure 37: Sketchmap showing Mikkelsen’s evidence for land in the Beaufort Sea.*⁶⁸²

Sachawachick, the Flaxman Islander who had assisted Mikkelsen and Dr Howe across the open water, proved to be of considerable interest to Mikkelsen as he and his crew made preparations for the

⁶⁸⁰ [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁸¹ Letter from Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 24th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁸² [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

approaching Alaskan winter.⁶⁸³ As alluded to above, both published accounts of the expedition contain lengthy descriptions of this local inhabitant and detail his personal history in and around the coastal region. Intriguingly, both books also establish Sachawachick as a man of notable repute among the indigenous peoples, labelling him ‘the best native in the vicinity, intelligent, helpful and considerate.’⁶⁸⁴ Mikkelsen also explains that the Flaxman Island resident had developed a reliable reputation across the number of Iñupiaq communities that stretched far along the Alaskan coastline, adding:

We had heard Sachawachick spoken of in Point Barrow as a great man among the Eskimoes, the best hunter and trapper on the coast, a great catcher of whales.⁶⁸⁵

It is interesting to note that Mikkelsen also took the time to describe Sachawachick in a number of the letters that were sent to the Fellows at the RGS. As with the descriptions featured in his books, the Dane documented the Flaxman Islander’s considerable involvement in the expedition to date and again points to his reputable personal character – this time describing him as ‘a perfectly truthful man.’⁶⁸⁶ The letters also add additional information when they outline Sachawachick’s involvement with previous expeditions in the region some years earlier. They similarly depict him as being well regarded by other European travellers who had ventured to Point Barrow:

He assisted Lieutenant [sic] Howard of the Stony expedition, meeting the party inland in a starving condition, with food and transportation to Pt. Barrow. He also assisted Lieutenant Jarvis of the Relief Expedition to the imprisoned whalers at Pt. Barrow in 1896 with dogfood, and Jarvis speaks highly of him in the Government Report.⁶⁸⁷

Such lengthy and specific praise for this Iñupiaq islander begs an important question; why did Mikkelsen take the time to describe Sachawachick in such detail to the Fellows at the RGS? The descriptions he provides are considerably different in content and style to the detailed anthropological studies that were typically sent to the RGS from travellers in the field. As was the case with *Eskimo Life* discussed above, such accounts would typically refer to the local inhabitants in general terms and

⁶⁸³ The name of this man changes depending on the source, ‘Sachawachick’, ‘Sachawachiak’ and ‘Sakavaichik’ are all used. The first of these will be used for the remainder of this chapter.

⁶⁸⁴ Mikkelsen, *Conquering the Arctic Ice*, 106.

⁶⁸⁵ Mikkelsen, *Mirage in the Arctic*, 61.

⁶⁸⁶ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Clements Markham, 24th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁸⁷ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

describe the cultures and customs as they were perceived by the explorer. In this instance though, Mikkelsen describes Sachawachick's reputation alone, and no other people or ethnographic details are mentioned. It can be concluded then, that the focus purely on Sachawachick did not stem from scholarly interest or anthropological curiosity but rather was offered for other reasons.



Figure 38: Photograph of Sachawachick taken by Ernest Leffingwell during the expedition.⁶⁸⁸

The Tales of Sachawachick

In a private letter sent to Clements Markham dated 24th November 1906, Mikkelsen wrote the following while still encamped on Flaxman Island; 'enclosed will you [sic] find a copy of a letter to the R.G.S., containing some new information regard the land, and I think that the tales are worth noticing.' The lengthy expedition report to which Mikkelsen referred began as follows:

⁶⁸⁸ 'Shugavaichaik, Flaxman Island. Canning district, Northern Alaska region, Alaska. 1908', USGS Denver Library Photographic Collection [lek00101].

Since the letters I sent out to you from here, have I got more eviden[c]e of land to the North of here, and eviden[c]e of great interest. On this island lives a native from Pt. Barrow, called Saschawaichik, about 45-50 years old, who, through a man I met in this country, Mr H.T. Erris, has told me some interesting facts about the supposed to be Land.⁶⁸⁹

Mikkelsen's report then went on to explain that Sachawachick possessed some important information that had been passed down to him by his ancestors and which pertained to the existence of land in the Beaufort Sea. Keen for any piece of information that might increase his chances of locating the illusive landmass, the Dane had listened intently to what Sachawachick had told him. He reported that the Flaxman Islander had relayed to him a series of 'tales' purporting to signal the existence of land somewhere in the sea beyond the coastline. In keeping with the longstanding traditions of storytelling as means of conveying all types of knowledge about the local environment within Iñupiaq communities, Sachawachick's narratives centre around members of his community identifying aspects of the local environment which necessitated land nearby.⁶⁹⁰

The first tale that Mikkelsen attributes to Sachawaichick dates back to 'just before his grandfather's time' and involves a man named Tooksra who ventured out onto the sea ice whereon he arrived at some kind of landmass. He then met a group of Inuit who were living on the island and preceded to interact with these inhabitants using his own language.⁶⁹¹ Upon his return from this venture though, Tooksra's story of land in the ice was met with scepticism by members of his home community. Determined to convince the others that he was telling the truth, Tooksra then undertook the journey again but this time returned with a piece of bone that featured an engraved image of a seal and 'a charm to prevent sickness.'⁶⁹² It seems these items were deemed sufficient evidence to convince the rest of his Iñupiaq community of the island's existence, and as Mikkelsen explains:

The natives believed him now, being sure that neither the images nor the charm was made anywhere on the coast. Sakawaichik was very positive about this tale, and he said that a native would never tell a tale like that to any other Eskimo.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁹ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁹⁰ Stern and Stevenson, *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*.

⁶⁹¹ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁹² Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁹³ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

The remainder of the tales that Mikkelsen cited as evidence for the ‘supposed-to-be-land’ are short enough to present in full. In an attempt to include this (albeit mediated) indigenous voice within present day circulations of geographical knowledge, Sachawachick’s subsequent tales will be relayed here in their entirety.

The second tale featured in Mikkelsen’s report claimed that a scattering of vegetation had been discovered somewhere far out on the ice. The information was relayed by Mikkelsen and subsequently to the RGS Fellows as follows:

People have now and again been carried of[f] from Point Barrow on the ice, but Sakavaichik would not admit, that any other to his knowledge had seen land, but told us that his stepfather and another native, when he yet was a little boy, had been carried away on the ice, and one night, while travelling to reach the mainland, found some leaves or a plant on the ice, of an absolutely unknown kind to them. They thought for this reason, that they were close to the mysterious land, but being far out on the ice, they had to travel as fast as possible, to regain their homes, so they did not wait for the day to find out for sure.⁶⁹⁴

The existence of flora present on the sea ice would offer a clear indication that soil and nutrients must be located somewhere in the vicinity and therefore pointed to the existence of land. Sachawachick’s third tale similarly relates to the natural environment of the region but in this instance refers to fauna that had reportedly been observed while his ancestors had been travelling in the region:

A man, Arrenekresogarak, came adrift on the ice from somewhere east of Pt. Barrow, and came to a[n] Island which he could walk round in one day. There was one mountain on it, and he saw Mountain sheep, Caribou, Foxes and Bears. The foxes were so numerous, that he had to build a fen[c]e around himself in order to sleep in pea[c]e. He found no natives on the Island, but several seal carcasses. He walked back to the mainland in one day and night. As to how long ago this have happened, Sakavaichik could not tell, but he knew the man’s grandmother, a woman called Kunark, and who is still alive.⁶⁹⁵

A rich array of wildlife would again indicate the existence of an ecosystem able to support life and so would again infer that land was present somewhere in the Beaufort Sea. The fourth of the tales relayed by Mikkelsen involved a sailing vessel adrift somewhere beyond the Alaskan coastline:

On another occasion land [had] been seen by a boat crew, who travelled along the coast from Pt. Barrow to Bartar Island. The boat was blown out to sea, while in Harrison Bay, and drifted for some time around in the fog, and out of sight of land. When the fog lifted, they saw a[n] island with one high mountain on, and with a sandspit pointing out to the south. They did not land, but

⁶⁹⁴ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁹⁵ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

were quite close to the island, and could not say, w[h]ether some erect [sic] figures on the beach were people or driftwood. Knowing that this Island was not [their] own land, they turn[ed] away from it and regained the mainland. No[ne] [of] this happened in Sakavaichik's time, and as [I] said, he would not g[u]arant[e]e the truth.⁶⁹⁶

The fifth and final tale offered by Sachawachick seemed to suggest that the mythological island had been under discussion for a long time by those living in and around the Point Barrow region:

At the present time is there a woman on the Island, who sa[y]s that she has seen land in the same vicinity. The woman's name is Sukareinna and is about 50 years old. When she was a girl, about 9 years old, she was travelling along the coast with her family, and while between Cape Halkett and the south of the Colville River, they saw an Island a little to aft of beam. She described it as a high, single mountain, with some creva[s]ses down the sides. She said that it was mirage which showed the island (refraction?), which showed the land up, as it disappeared after a couple of hours. The top was snowclad. I asked her, whether the land was upside down, as it would have been if it had been a mirage, but she denied this. She was born at Cape Halkett, and confirmed a statement made by Sakavachik, that Car[i]bou tracks lead out on the ice from the Cape, toward the north, and too far to be for the purpose of licking salt, the people have never seen the end of it.⁶⁹⁷

The information contained across all of these intriguing 'tales' is fascinating for a number of reasons. They demonstrate, for example, the important place that oral histories and storytelling have played historically within the Iñupiaq community. They are also indicative of this Inuit community's intimate knowledge of their local environment and their sensitivities to features of the natural landscape which indicate the existence of land. Finally, as is the case with a significant proportion of the materials contained in the archives of exploration, they have not received any previous scholarly attention.

As has been made clear in the preceding sections, however, it is not the details contained within these tales *per se* that are of interest to this chapter. Rather, it is what happened to these snippets of indigenous geographical information when they arrived at 1 Savile Row that is of more pertinent interest here. As the remainder of the chapter will show, attempts to include the data which Mikkelsen had gathered from this indigenous Arctic intermediary in the global circulation of geographical information were to prove ultimately unsuccessful.

⁶⁹⁶ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

⁶⁹⁷ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

A Note in the Journal

Despite his earlier insistence that Sachawachick should be considered a worthy source of geographical information, close reading of Mikkelsen's correspondence with the Society's Fellows reveals that the Dane was somewhat cautious when citing the Flaxman Islander as the source of these findings. Clearly concerned that the fellows may not share his trust in Sachawachick's reliability, Mikkelsen wrote the following:

As I myself to a certain extent have discredited the native ledgans [sic] about land and said that the natives were not quite rel[i]able, I feel, that I must tell you what I know of Sakavaichik. [...] He is one of the most esteemed natives on the whole coast, as well by white men, as by natives, on account of his straightforwardness.⁶⁹⁸

Yet again reinforcing Sachawachick's reliability (seemingly in contrast to that of the other Iñupiaq community) and trying to justify further his reliance upon this indigenous inhabitant as a source of information, Mikkelsen implied that any information offered by the Flaxman Islander should be considered to hold more credibility than those 'legends' or 'myths' that would typically be expected from other indigenous peoples. The need for Mikkelsen's repeated insistence here is revealing. The continued attempts to grant Sachawachick geographical authority are illustrative of the ways in which knowledges gained from indigenous peoples were rarely considered worthy of serious scholarly consideration. The perceived credibility of geographical knowledge – and more specifically the different value that has been attributed to different sources of geographical knowledge in different times and places – has been discussed repeatedly throughout the thesis and we see here that once again the value placed on geographical information was inextricably bound up with the person or persons from whom it had been obtained. By sending these tales back to the RGS and fully acknowledging their source, Mikkelsen was acting contrary to typical processes of geographical knowledge production and, like Nansen above, was in some ways challenging the expected structures of geographical knowledge production. At the same time however, it must be acknowledged that he continues to refer to Sachawachick's narratives as 'tales' (rather than say 'reports' or 'evidence') therefore restricting them somewhat to the realm 'of the indigenous' and indicating they are not to be trusted without a degree of

⁶⁹⁸ Letter Ejnar Mikkelsen to Royal Geographical Society, 20th November 1906 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB7/59].

scepticism. This seems to suggest that Mikkelsen was still wary of granting full geographical credibility to his indigenous intermediary. Nonetheless, the fact he sent them to the Fellows of the RGS and suggested that they be considered worthy of scholarly attention suggest that the Dane was determined to include these voices within the circulation of geographical knowledge.

The final step in the movement of these intriguing pieces of geographical knowledge before they reached readers in Europe is also vitally important. As was discussed briefly in chapter five, once Mikkelsen's correspondence had been opened and read by John Scott Keltie, the decision was made that readers of the *Geographical Journal* should be notified of the Dane's progress. In April 1907, the 'Monthly Record' section of this influential periodical contained the following short note under the subheading 'Mr. Mikkelsen's Expedition':

Mr. Mikkelsen has sent us a statement of the position and prospects of his expedition at the end of last September, together with a discussion of the evidence which seems to point to the existence of land not far from the north coast of Alaska.⁶⁹⁹

It is important to recognise that the note was published several months after the September date to which it refers and, although not explained as such in the text, is in fact an amalgamation of the various letters which Mikkelsen had sent to the Society and to Clements Markham. The note is largely a repetition of Mikkelsen's belief that land should exist somewhere close to their winter quarters on Flaxman Island. Crucially, though, the note also offers brief details as to the sources of information that had led Mikkelsen to reach this conclusion:

From his own observations, and from careful inquiries *among the whalers*, his belief in the existence of land to the north has been much strengthened. He has convinced himself of the heavy nature of the ice of the Beaufort Sea, and of its general nearness to the land.⁷⁰⁰

This passage is hugely revealing when considering the presence of indigenous knowledge within the circulation of geographical knowledge. The information contained in the article is attributed to the non-indigenous whaling community that operated in and around this region. Absolutely no mention is made of Sachawachick. Indeed, only a fleeting reference is made of any indigenous geographical

⁶⁹⁹ Anonymous, 'The Monthly Record'.

⁷⁰⁰ 'The Monthly Record' *emphasis added*.

contributions to Mikkelsen's expedition across the entire run of *The Geographical Journal* when a brief note the second half of the article reads:

After alluding to the land reported by Captain Keenan, who is said by the whalers to have been a thoroughly reliable man, and to *Eskimo legends* pointing in the same direction, Mr. Mikkelsen lays stress on the existence, year after year, of a great crack in the ice, which is used by the whales in their annual migration to north-east towards the end of May, between which date and July they are never seen on the coast.⁷⁰¹

The voluminous information that Mikkelsen had gleaned from Sachawachick on Flaxman Island which had then been transported hundreds of miles to the RGS in London was reduced to a mere two words when printed in what was considered widely to be the official geographical record. Furthermore, by designating such information as 'legends' the account offered by Sachawachick is again given notably diminished credibility when placed alongside the supposedly more trustworthy information generated by Mikkelsen's observations of the migratory routes taken by the local wildlife. The omission of Sachawachick's information and the consequent centring of the expedition and its (non-indigenous) leader evident here is a prime example of the processes through which indigenous people's actions and contributions to the exploration narrative came to be erased and ignored. Keltie's decision not to inform the readers of *The Geographical Journal* that much of the important information pertaining to the geography of the Beaufort Sea stemmed from a member of the Alaskan Iñupiaq community was to mean that Sachawachick's entire involvement in the expedition was essentially written out. As Innes Keighren, Charles Withers and Bill Bell explain:

Such engagement with local knowledge systems and with the bearers of that knowledge could present problems for authors who were later keen to be seen to document things from first-hand experience or whose own standing depended, for their testimony to be believed, on their informants being of an equivalent or better social position. This returns us to arguments about the connections linking truth, credibility, and gentlemanly social status.⁷⁰²

Although there is no documentation to reveal precisely why this significant epistemological decision was taken, Keltie's stated intentions to ensure that the *Journal* reflected the new scientific geography taking hold at the Society (discussed in chapter four) may provide some context. It seems that this type

⁷⁰¹ 'The Monthly Record' *emphasis added*.

⁷⁰² Keighren, Withers, and Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859*, 15.

of information did not meet the evidentiary criteria that Keltie was hoping to instil within the revitalised publication.

Mediating a Mirage

As was explained in chapter five, it was to transpire that the hypothesised Keenan Land did not exist.

As Andrew Stuhl explains:

The alleged Polar Continent turned out to be a mirage – a trick of the eye that mistook bumpy sea ice for firm ground. It was one of many phantom islands that appeared in the accounts of explorers as Norway, Germany, England, the United States, Russia and Denmark combed the circumpolar region.⁷⁰³

It seems Mikkelsen's expedition had proved to be somewhat of an exercise in futility. It is important to note, however, that this did not bring an end to interest in the Beaufort Sea. As Stuhl continues:

The illusory continent created real consequences [...] Neither Harrison nor the Anglo-American Expedition found the supposed offshore land. Many scientists grew to doubt the island's existence while others maintained that the limited measurements taken by scientists on the Anglo-American Expedition could not disprove the Polar Continent. In a peculiar way, failures of science beget renewed commitments to science. Harrison, Mikkelsen, and Leffingwell thus helped stimulate two more expeditions, the Stefansson-Anderson Expedition of 1908-12 and the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-18.⁷⁰⁴

Mikkelsen and his crew had hence initiated a flurry of expeditionary activity in this region of the Arctic and several expeditions were sent subsequently to investigate it further including the important work undertaken by the anthropologist Vilhjalmur Stefansson.⁷⁰⁵

It is clear, then, that Mikkelsen's expedition to the North coast of Alaska in search of the hypothesised Keenan Land was reliant to a considerable extent on the involvement of the local inhabitants of Flaxman Island for the day-to-day practicalities of living and surviving in the region. As the discussion in chapter two explained, such non-European indigenous involvement in processes of exploration has been a largely overlooked aspect of historical scholarship and only recently have the considerable range of actors involved in these processes received more sustained attention. It has been

⁷⁰³ Stuhl, *Unfreezing the Arctic: Science, Colonialism and the Transformation of Inuit Lands*, 42.

⁷⁰⁴ Stuhl, 42–43.

⁷⁰⁵ Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*; Stefansson, 'The Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913 to 1918'; Jenness, *Stefansson, Dr. Anderson and the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1918: A Story of Exploration, Science and Sovereignty*.

shown that Mikkelsen's belief in the existence of the landmass and hence his continued commitment to the expedition was fuelled by information gleaned from these local people. His decision to send this information to the RGS marked a notable rupture in the typical processes of geographical knowledge production and indeed appeared to suggest that the Dane considered such indigenous knowledge to be trustworthy and reliable. However, as we have seen, once the geographical information reached the RGS, the testimony of this indigenous intermediary was eschewed and marginalised within the 'official' geographical record, i.e. *The Geographical Journal*. This provides further evidence of the complex dynamics at play when geographical information was made to circulate and points to the varying levels of credibility attributed to the actors involved in the production and circulation of this important knowledge.

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### III. Inuit Testimony

The RGS's involvement in the controversy that surrounded Frederick Cook and Robert Peary's rival claims to have reached the North Pole was the topic of consideration in chapter six. However, as this section will show, the actors discussed within that chapter were not the only ones involved in this highly contentious dispute. That is to say, the involvement of indigenous intermediaries has yet again been overlooked in historical narratives of this expedition. As was the case with each of the expeditions studied above, both Peary and Cook relied heavily on indigenous people to facilitate their expeditions in these icy polar regions. This was to mean that these Arctic peoples became inevitably embroiled within the bitter international feud that erupted upon both men's return. Like the other sections in this chapter, the aim here is to correct these people's omission from the historical record and show that although the testimonies of the Inuit – which could have been vital in offering supporting evidence for both explorers – were entered into the global circulation of information, they were immediately disregarded as being credible sources. Once again, it is shown that this marginalisation is attributable entirely to their indigeneity.

### *Race at the North Pole*

Much has been written on Robert Peary's encounters with the communities of Inuit people upon whom he relied during his four Arctic expeditions between 1893 and 1909. His troubling attitudes toward his indigenous companions have been well documented and many writers have attempted to understand his particular views by placing them in relation to wider racial thinking during the period. Study of the institutional milieu in which Peary was situated has been cited as one method of interpreting his racialised outlook and in particular, his association with the National Geographic Society (NGS) has been analysed. Lyle Dick argues that it is impossible to divorce Peary's approach to Inuit peoples from this institution's explicit associations with troubling views relating to race during this era.<sup>706</sup> Dick points to the expansionist attitudes that were held by many members of the NGS and explains the ways in which these coincided with problematic understandings of perceived racial hierarchies.

Most noted American intellectuals of the late nineteenth century were Social Darwinist and expansionist; that is they were both convinced of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon "race" and advocates of its leading role in world affairs.<sup>707</sup>

The white American men who were associated with the NGS perceived themselves to be the highest tier of their self-constructed racial hierarchy and as such believed they were the force necessary to guide the rest of the world into following their path to development.

Although this wider institutional climate gives some context to Peary's racialised views, his attitudes toward the Inuit are more clearly understood by studying the practices carried out during his time in the Arctic region. *En route* to each of his intended field sites in the Arctic Circle, Peary would regularly recruit men, women and children from the villages situated on coastlines of Smith Sound, utilising them as porters and assistants for the remainder of the expedition (see *Figure 39*). Peary referred to his constructed Arctic assemblages as a 'travelling machine' which in many ways dehumanised these indigenous intermediaries. As Lisa Bloom explains:

It is important to recall that Peary's discourse upsets conventional notions of what constitutes 'technology' by including Eskimo men and women as well as dogs in its definition. Thus what he refers to as his 'travelling machine' actually consisted of technically advanced Western ships

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<sup>706</sup> Dick, "The Men of Prominence Are 'Among Those Present' for Him": How and Why America's Elites Made Robert Peary a National Icon'.

<sup>707</sup> Dick, 6.

and navigational equipment as well as Eskimo peoples and dogs, who are included on the basis of the function they served.<sup>708</sup>

In line with the practices of many of his European exploratory predecessors, by reducing his companions to the status of machine parts within his polar narratives, Peary ensured he was seen to be the one in control of these 'heroic' expeditions. Furthermore, it was not only through acting as labourers, porters and game hunters that these people would become involved in Peary's expeditions. The American would regularly conduct troublingly invasive anthropological studies on the peoples he was to encounter while travelling in the North. As an example, when Peary and Cook were travelling together during their 1891-92 expedition to North Greenland, they visited one of the local villages to conduct a 'census' of the local population.<sup>709</sup> In one of his lectures to the RGS on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1897, Peary described this invasive study in more detail:

In the field of ethnology, th[is] expedition can claim to be the first that obtained complete and accurate information of the peculiar and isolated tribe of arctic highlanders. Dr. Cook made a complete census of the little community of Smith sound Eskimo, showing the relationship and approximate age of every man, woman, and child in the tribe. The total, according to this census, is 233. He also made anthropometrical measurements of seventy-five individuals, and with his assistance I took a complete series of photographs of the same individuals, comprising portrait, and front, side, and rear elevations in the nude of each subject.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, 62.

<sup>709</sup> Peary, *Northward over the 'Great Ice': A Narrative of Life and Work along the Shores and upon the Interior Ice-Cap of Northern Greenland*.

<sup>710</sup> Peary, 'Journeys in North Greenland', 226.



Figure 39: Peary recruiting Inuit women on board the *Roosevelt*.<sup>711</sup>

In this instance, we again see the status of the Inuit diminished – this time by transforming these people into subjects of scientific enquiry rather than active participants exerting agency within Peary’s expeditions. This once again allowed the American to present himself as the unquestioned expedition leader. It must also be noted here that Peary’s relationships to the Inuit have also been considered from more intimate perspectives. As Gísli Pálsson explains:

Some members of Peary’s expedition became involved in sexual relations with local women. These relations were complicated by differences in power that sometimes disrupted the existing spousal relations of Inughuit men and women. Peary had an instrumentalist view of the sexual role of indigenous women, dispensing them to his employees as if they were his personal property.<sup>712</sup>

Indeed, Peary’s own sexual relationships with female members of these communities have received particularly critical discussion.<sup>713</sup> Patricia Pierce Eriksen explains that Peary maintained ‘long-term sexual relations with a young Inuit girl named Aleqasina, eventually fathering two children with her.’<sup>714</sup>

<sup>711</sup> Peary, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club*, 54.

<sup>712</sup> Pálsson, ‘Race and the Intimate in Arctic Exploration’, 365–66.

<sup>713</sup> Dick, *Muskox Land: Ellesmere Island in the Age of Contact*; Pálsson, ‘Race and the Intimate in Arctic Exploration’; Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*; Counter, *North Pole Legacy: Black, White and Eskimo*.

<sup>714</sup> Eriksen, ‘Homemaking, Snowbabies, and the Search for the North Pole: Josephine Diebitsch-Peary and the Making of National History’, 270.

Eriksen does note, however, that this was not an infrequent occurrence and that ‘in pursuing sexual relations with indigenous women (exploitative and consensual), the behaviours of members of the Peary expeditions was not unique compared to widespread practices in the history of colonialism.’<sup>715</sup>

All of these complex and troubling approaches to the Inuit suggest that the relationships which Peary and his crew formed with these indigenous intermediaries were largely reminiscent of the unequal power dynamics established by the countless Western explorers before him.<sup>716</sup> Importantly, as will now be shown, these prejudices undoubtedly played a role in the dominant discourses being circulated when the controversy surrounding the North Polar expedition took hold.

#### *‘It is Absurd to Examine Eskimo’*

Having discerned Peary’s troubling approach to the Inuit during his Polar expeditions, it is now possible to understand the context in which these indigenous people became embroiled in the whirlwind of controversy that erupted when Peary’s claims to reach the North Pole were challenged. As mentioned in chapter six, Keltie was bombarded with correspondence from Fellows across the RGS membership offering their views and opinions on how best to respond to the controversy. Amongst this flurry of letters, it is important to note that there are (albeit fleeting) references to the Inuit assistance offered to both explorers while they were on their respective expeditions.

The first instance appears in the same letter from Sven Hedin to John Scott Keltie that was discussed in the previous chapter. After expressing his concerns to the Secretary that the RGS had been too hasty in congratulating Peary, Hedin then went on to write, ‘I am much surprised that Sverdrup has much-taken to examine the two eskimoes.’<sup>717</sup> The letter offers little context to explain this unusual statement, so some unpacking is needed here.

The comment was in fact a response to the controversial intervention that had recently been made by Otto Sverdrup – the Norwegian Polar explorer who had guided Nansen’s *Fram* across the North

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<sup>715</sup> Eriksen, 270.

<sup>716</sup> Shellam et al., *Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Boundaries*; Konishi, Nugent, and Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries*.

<sup>717</sup> Letter from Sven Hedin to John Scott Keltie, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB8/69].

Polar Sea.<sup>718</sup> It seems one of the many strategies that Peary had deployed in his attempts discredit his Polar opponent was to highlight the apparent inconsistencies in Cook's narrative when it was compared against that offered by the Inuit companions whom the Brooklyn man had relied upon during his expedition. As a statement in *The Times* read:

Commander Peary's long-expected statement of the evidence on which he bases his statement that Dr. Cook did not reach the Pole is issued tonight by the Peary Arctic Club. In effect it repeats Commander Peary's declaration that Dr. Cook was never out of sight of land. The most important feature is an Arctic chart which the two Eskimos who, Dr. Cook says, accompanied him on his journey to the Pole traced the route of the real journey, indicating the points at which incidents such as the killing of game, the abandoning of sledge[s], camping for several days, occurred.<sup>719</sup>

It transpired that during his return journey from the Pole, Peary had interrogated Cook's Inuit assistants and had provided them with a map to detail the route which their party had taken during the purported attempt on the Pole. After adjudicating that it would not be humanly possible for the route drawn on the map to be traversed, Peary issued a statement in which he concluded:

The boys answer that they killed no game, made no caches, and lost no dogs, returning to land with loaded sledges, makes the attainment of the Pole a physical and mathematical impossibility, as it meant feeding three men and more than 20 dogs during a journey of 1,040 geographical miles on less than three sledge-loads of supplies.<sup>720</sup>

Cook's response to this accusation was immediate. He announced that he and Otto Sverdrup were in the process of drawing up plans to return to the region in which he had been travelling and were intending to transport the Inuit intermediaries to the United States so that their testimonies may be heard by the sceptical exploratory establishment. Inevitably, Cook's response was printed subsequently in newspapers around the world:

In reply to the foolish charge that I did not leave the mainland, I will only say that I am organizing at my own expense an expedition under the command of the brave Arctic explorer Captain Otto Sverdrup, to go to the North and to bring [the Inuit] to civilization to tell their story to the world.<sup>721</sup>

Obviously aware that such a move would be highly controversial on account of the Inuit people's perceived 'under-development', Cook's statement made sure to grant as much credibility to the Inuit as he possibly could:

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<sup>718</sup> J. M. W., 'Obituary: Captain Otto Sverdrup'.

<sup>719</sup> 'The Polar Controversy: Statement by Commander Peary,' *The Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1909.

<sup>720</sup> 'The Polar Controversy: Statement by Commander Peary,' *The Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1909.

<sup>721</sup> 'The Eskimo's Evidence,' *The Times*, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1909.

They will confirm every word of my story; and, although they are not men of science, their evidence is entitled to the weight due to the testimony of men who are familiar with the Far North.<sup>722</sup>

Cooks attempt to equate these indigenous perspectives of the expedition with those held by the ‘men of science’ in the United States was somewhat remarkable. Such a tactic was entirely antithetical to most thinking on race and indigeneity at the time and when placed in the context of the white-supremacist intellectual climate of the geographical establishment described above, the statement becomes even more astonishing. Indeed, it seems Cook was well aware of this. Obviously reticent to suggest that his claims would be wholly dependent on this Inuit testimony and nothing else, Cook ended his statement with the following:

Until [the Inuit] come, I ask the world to believe in me, and I will soon furnish to it the evidence gathered by me with scientific observations, and I am confident that the jury of the whole world will render the verdict that I have planted the flag of my own country at the extreme North.<sup>723</sup>

As has been the case throughout this chapter, we again find evidence of a western explorer intending to include Inuit voices within the body of Arctic knowledge that was in circulation during this period. Yet again however, even when he was arguing that the Inuit would provide the most conclusive evidence for his claim to the Pole, Cook could not bring himself to depend solely on their testimony. The ‘surprise’ that Sven Hedin expressed in his letter upon hearing of Cook’s plan alludes to the scepticism that Cook received when attempting to use these Inuit men as evidence for his claims. Conscious that men like Hedin and the influential members of the National Geographic Society were highly unlikely to accept the words of a distant Inuit villager, Cook was resigned to making the claim that science would also support him, even though both sides knew this was unlikely to be the case.

The testimony that could potentially be provided by the Inuit members of the expedition party also came to the attention of another of RGS Fellow. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Clements Markham held neither of the protagonists in this saga in particularly high regard and was certainly not as enamoured with Peary’s earlier accomplishments as some of the other Fellows at the Society. He had revealed his impressions on the American in an earlier letter to his friend Fridtjof Nansen:

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<sup>722</sup> ‘The Eskimo’s Evidence,’ *The Times*, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1909.

<sup>723</sup> ‘The Eskimo’s Evidence,’ *The Times*, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1909.

I have not yet been able to get time to read Peary's book; but no doubt he is rather inclined to look upon North Greenland as his own preserve, and he is certainly not an authority on any historical point.<sup>724</sup>

As mentioned in chapter six, as the Cook-Peary controversy played out across the various twentieth century media Markham played an uncharacteristically muted role. However, the news of Cook and Sverdrup's plan to co-opt the Inuit into giving their testimony seemed to startle the Polar authority to such an extent that he felt obliged to pick up his pen and contact the RGS Secretary. Writing to Keltie, Markham expressed his incredulity at the possibility of these Inuit people providing a solution to the debate. He wrote; 'it is [...] absurd to examine eskimo, who could only tell the number of days out, and that from memory.'<sup>725</sup> It seems Markham was baffled by the prospect that the Inuit – who, aside from their indigeneity, had not undergone the rigorous survey and cartographical training which the RGS veteran believed to be essential for any credible explorer – could offer any viable solution to this fiercely contested dispute. Furthermore, he was highly sceptical that even *if* the Inuit could be viewed as capable of adjudicating on the matter, any contributions they could offer would be 'from memory' and so would therefore be equally unreliable.

Like Hedin, Markham's view encapsulated perfectly the opinions held by many of the geographical establishment. The notion that indigenous perspectives – even those who were known to have accompanied Cook to the Pole and therefore could provide first-hand testimony – might be seen as credible sources of geographical information was met with scorn and derision by the 'professional' geographers on all sides of this dispute. The prevailing attitudes described throughout this chapter relating to who could and who could not be involved in geographical debates meant that it was considered both illogical and inappropriate for any indigenous perspectives to be included in the discussions over the Cook-Peary controversy. Both Markham's and Hedin's words provide yet more examples of the way in which such indigenous contributions were marginalised within the circulation of ideas or, in this case, were in fact blocked from entering entirely.

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<sup>724</sup> Letter from Clements Markham to Fridtjof Nansen, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1898, [Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Brevs 48].

<sup>725</sup> Letter from Clements Markham to John Scott Keltie, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1909 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, RGS/CB8/69].

Although it is clear that the Inuit were deterred from entering into the scholarly debates surrounding the Cook-Peary controversy behind the doors of Savile Row, this was not the case within the circulation of the more spectacular side of Arctic exploration. As has been shown throughout his thesis, the public appetite for all things Arctic was insatiable during this period and Peary knew precisely how to capitalise on this. Consequently, and as will now be shown, the Inuit members involved in his expedition were presented and exploited for the amusement of audiences on both sides of the Atlantic and especially for those interested Fellows at the RGS.

### *The Presentation of Prejudice*

Peary's spectacular lecture before the Fellows of the RGS at the Royal Albert Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1910 was an extremely significant moment within histories of Arctic exploration. When viewed with a critical lens however, a number of important (and somewhat troubling) aspects of this lecture come to light. The Inuit were referred to on multiple occasions during Peary's lecture and the explorer explained that 'the best Eskimo, sledges and dogs were retained' for use during the early stages of expedition as the party moved along the settlements on the coastline of Smith Sound.<sup>726</sup> Repeating the impression that these people had been co-opted into his 'machine,' Peary was again demonstrating beyond doubt that he was the one in control. As he exclaimed:

My party might be regarded as an ideal one, loyal, and responsive to my will as the fingers of my right hand.<sup>727</sup>

Although recognition of indigenous people within explorers' expeditionary narratives was rare within RGS lectures, such contributions did make up a significant proportion of Peary's presentation. However, when reading the account of the lecture printed in *The Geographical Journal* it is clear that any indigenous agency which might be detected in Peary's account was obscured within the American's account. Instead, again it was Peary who was demonstrated as being the one in control. In contrast, the Inuit were presented as exotic curiosities that had been discovered *en route*, rather than active and engaged members of an expeditionary party which had reached one of the most coveted positions on

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<sup>726</sup> Peary and Harris, 'Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9', 134.

<sup>727</sup> Peary and Harris, 134.

earth.<sup>728</sup> Indeed this tone was reinforced by Peary's use of imagery during the lecture. Lantern slides depicting many of his Inuit intermediaries were projected by the magic lantern on the venue's specially erected screen. The sizeable audience were therefore presented with exoticized representations of these people dressed in their traditional furs and carrying out typical Inuit practices (see *Figure 40*). Situated firmly within the Arctic environment, many of the prevalent 'Eskimo' tropes that were reinforced by all of the explorers in this chapter are clearly detectable within Peary's depictions of his expedition.

It is important to note here, though, that eschewing one's own 'heroic' interactions with the Arctic landscape and instead centring the images on the Inuit was a slightly unusual practice for an Arctic explorer. We saw in chapter four in that Nansen and his crew took pride of place in most of the images that accompanied his spectacular lecture at the RGS. In contrast, Peary featured in only one of the slides that were presented during his lecture – an image of him standing with the expedition party at the pole (see *Figure 30* in chapter six). Bloom gives an insightful explanation of this unusual absence within Peary's imagery when she notes:

Although Peary is the subject and agent of his narratives, he rarely appears in the photographs that document his stories. Controlling the look, he leaves himself out of the pictures. The photographs of his expedition are often of women and the Inuit people that were the work force of his expedition. His body is exempted from scrutiny because it is taken for granted, whereas Eskimo people are extensively defined and photographed. Sexual and social meanings are imposed on their bodies, not on that of the white man.<sup>729</sup>

Peary's lecture at the Albert Hall can therefore be seen as another process by which Inuit peoples were entered into the circulation of Arctic geographical knowledge during this period. Yet once again this was done in a particular way so as to reduce and/or remove any suggestion of indigenous agency which could detract from Peary's carefully constructed appearance as master of the journey. The Inuit are depicted as exotic curiosities intended to entertain and enchant the assembled audience. This of course meant that any indication of the support they offered to Peary and his crew was eliminated from Peary's presentation.

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<sup>728</sup> Brody, *Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North*.

<sup>729</sup> Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, 78.

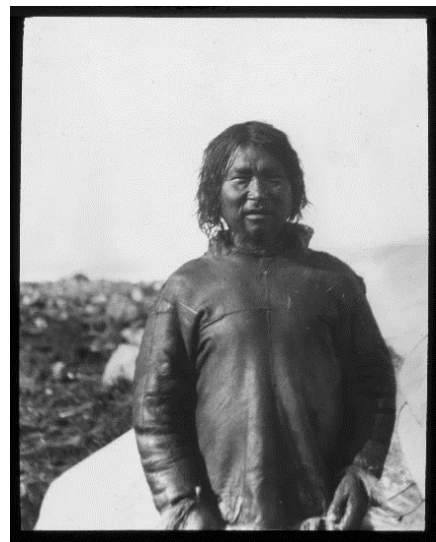


Figure 40: Lantern Slides depicting Inuit used during Peary's Albert Hall lecture.<sup>730</sup>

### *Prejudice in Print*

As a final example of the ways in which indigenous intermediaries became eschewed within Peary's expeditionary narratives, we can turn to the explorer's published account of the expedition. It was not long after Peary's lecture at the Society that his narrative was printed and, unsurprisingly, it quickly became a best-seller. Like both Nansen's and Mikkelsen's books analysed above, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club* does include several detailed descriptions of the indigenous peoples who were involved in this expedition. In a similar way to Nansen's *First Crossing*, Peary's book also includes a standalone chapter that describes the cultural practices of the Inuit whom Peary and his expedition party encountered during their advance toward the Pole.<sup>731</sup> In further parallel to Nansen's work, the book also continues the trope of eliding the actions of the Inuit people with childlike behaviour. For example, in a passage offering a lengthy description of the Inuit cultural traditions surrounding death and mourning, Peary writes, 'Eskimos are children in their grief, as in their pleasure.'<sup>732</sup> Furthermore, their ability to thrive in the Arctic environment is also considered in terms of these 'childlike' qualities:

<sup>730</sup> Courtesy of the Picture Library, RGS-IBG Collections [LS 676(16); LS 676(24)].

<sup>731</sup> Peary, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club*.

<sup>732</sup> Peary, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 Under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club*, 67.

The Eskimos can nearly always tell who built an igloo. Though they are all constructed on one general principle, there are always peculiarities of individual workmanship which are readily recognized by *these experienced children of the North*.<sup>733</sup>

It is clear, then, that many of the ideas relating to the relationship between the Arctic and its peoples which have been recurrent throughout this chapter were once again evident in Peary's writing. That is to say, the depictions featured in *The North Pole* reinforce the troubling tropes that were already in circulation audiences across Europe and America. Rather than make clear the vital contribution these people made to his expedition, Peary simply reproduced and added to the popular impressions of the Inuit in his book so as to appeal to and hence maximise his potential readership.

### Conclusion

The three expeditions that have been presented in this chapter have shown that, although indigenous peoples of the Arctic were inextricably involved in Polar exploration during this period, their insights, perspectives and knowledges did not enter into the circulation of geographical knowledge in the same way as those Euro-American heroic explorers that have been discussed in previous chapters. A combination of factors, mostly attributable to highly racialised understandings and perceptions of Inuit peoples during this period, meant that this valuable geographical knowledge was either marginalised within these discussions or was blocked entirely from entering circulation. We saw that upon returning from his crossing of Greenland in 1889, Fridtjof Nansen was determined to allow the indigenous Arctic intermediaries who assisted his expedition to have their perspectives shared amongst the diverse readership across Europe and beyond. The Norwegian hoped to present the indigenous population of the island in a positive light and drew attention to their remarkable adaptability in surviving amongst the challenging Arctic landscape. In doing so, Nansen was intent on denouncing the ongoing practices of colonialism that were being carried out by several of the European nations – many of which, it must be remembered, were the target audience for his writing and narratives. However, as we have seen, the culture that surrounded the publishing industry (particularly in the UK) was to mean that Nansen's depictions of the Inuit – as well as his salient critiques of the imperialist practices that were having

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<sup>733</sup> Peary, 308–9, *emphasis added*.

consequences for these people's livelihoods – were omitted in later editions of his published work. This process resulted in the obscuring of these important indigenous perspectives.

Analysis of Mikkelsen's expedition to Northern Alaska has shed light on similar processes of indigenous erasure. Close reading of Mikkelsen's account of his overwintering on Flaxman Island reveals that he and his crew were assisted in a number of ways by the Iñupiaq community they encountered during the expedition. Indeed, their assistance was so significant that at one point these people essentially saved the lives of Mikkelsen and his crew. Yet when details of the expedition were published in the RGS's official publication *The Geographical Journal*, almost none of this vital assistance was described in any detail. Of more importance, however, the geographical information that Sachawachick had offered to Mikkelsen during his time on the Alaskan coastline was also obscured during the publication process. The tales that the Flaxman Islander had relayed to Mikkelsen – crucial in sustaining the Dane's belief that land must exist in the Beaufort Sea – were erased entirely from the geographical narrative upon their arrival at 1 Savile Row. The decision made by John Scott Keltie to omit these tales from the journal's pages is yet again demonstrative of the ways in which indigenous perspectives were erased frequently from the official geographical record.

Finally, the re-evaluation of Robert Peary's and Frederick Cook's infamous North Pole controversy has uncovered further processes through which indigenous Arctic people's voices have been regularly written out of the exploratory narrative. The discussion above has drawn attention to the sustained lack of credibility that was afforded to the Inuit assistants upon whom Cook depended during his attempt to reach the North Pole. In spite of the first-hand testimony that Cook's companions could offer, the announcement that he was planning to use the Inuit intermediaries to bolster his claim to have reached the Pole was met with scorn and derision by actors on all sides of this dispute. We also saw that although indigenous people featured prominently during Peary's lecture at the Society in 1910, any indication of their indigenous agency was excluded completely. Instead, Peary's slides presented these people as exotic curiosities rather than active and engaged members of his expedition party.

In conclusion then, it is clear that several processes were in place which acted to obscure the contributions made to Arctic expeditions by the indigenous inhabitants of the region. It has been shown that processes took place at *each stage* of the circulatory system described above, each of which

contributing to this indigenous erasure in different ways. We have seen that the explorers themselves, the learned Society with which they were each affiliated, the publishers they used to communicate their narratives and the imagery they presented all acted to remove any sense of indigenous agency from these historical accounts of Arctic exploration. This in turn has meant that such contributions have been largely omitted from the frequent retellings of these expeditions, acting to compound further this sense of erasure. There is obviously much work to do in recovering fully these crucial historical omissions, but the examples presented here demonstrate there is great value in undertaking this task and providing a more accurate historical record of Arctic exploration.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion: The Circulation of Arctic Knowledge and its Limits

This thesis has explored the important role played by the Royal Geographical Society in the circulation of geographical knowledge pertaining to the Arctic at the turn of the twentieth century. The analysis has focused on the ways in which a diverse range of information was transmitted to the RGS whereupon the Society's Fellows facilitated its circulation amongst different audiences in Britain and beyond. Each of the empirical case studies presented above has traced the nuances of these circuitous knowledge pathways as they meandered from the icy landscapes of the north to the minds of the British public. Importantly, it has also been shown that the RGS played an imperative role in the mediation of this information as it entered into circulation. This meant that it was able to maintain considerable influence over how such knowledge was interpreted and understood during this period.

Using this framework, a number of common themes have become apparent across each of the episodes discussed. The first section of this concluding chapter will therefore present a summary of these arguments in order to accentuate and contextualise the changes that took place in the cultures surrounding Arctic exploration during this important period. Recognising and reflecting on each of these elements is crucial if we are to appreciate fully both the complexity of the geographical discipline at this time as well as the intricacies of the circulatory processes that were taking place. Moving on to reflect critically upon the project as a whole, the second section of this chapter will then offer suggestions as to potential areas for future research based on the theoretical framework that has been developed for this project. Finally, by way of a conclusion, the final section will review the overall success of the project and demonstrate that the key objectives of the overall research have been attained.

### Retracing Our Steps

#### *Geography and Exploration in Transition*

The significant changes to the cultures of geographical enquiry that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century have been one of the primary themes discussed across this thesis. As has been alluded to throughout, when studying this period of intellectual transition, any attempt to apply the precise labels 'geography' or 'exploration' to the complex array of practices that were carried out under the auspices

of the RGS quickly becomes a highly problematic exercise.<sup>734</sup> This is because these two definitions were not only blurred and used interchangeably during the period in question, but were also highly politicised. As has been shown, two broad schools of thought emerged within the complex myriad of geographical sensibilities and, importantly, adherents to both of these schools were adamant that theirs was the correct means by which to conduct geographical enquiry. On the one hand, there were those who believed the Royal Geographical Society should follow the traditions upon which it was founded and continue to promote overseas expeditions which explored and surveyed the remaining unknown regions of the earth's surface. On the other were the more scientifically-minded Fellows at the Society who strived for a more intellectually rigorous pursuit of geographical information. The latter group were desperate to secure a lasting place for geography amongst the increasingly specialised scientific disciplines that were emerging across the broad scope of scholarly enquiry. Furthermore, this group were resolute in their belief that the geographical discipline ought to be of significant educational value and strived to transform the discipline into a subject that was more suitable for study at the university level. While in general terms, it has been shown that the 'New Geography' emerged victorious from these heated disputes, it was certainly not a smooth transition from one style of geography to the other.<sup>735</sup>

These significant scholarly tensions have been evident throughout the thesis. We saw in chapter four, for example, that Fridtjof Nansen was to have a profound influence on the future philosophical direction that Society was to take. As the RGS traversed an uneven pathway toward a more professional style of geography, the Norwegian explorer was used as a template for the new philosophies that the reinvigorated discipline was to adopt. His scientific training and deep interest in learning more about the oceanic currents in the Arctic Ocean meant that he encapsulated perfectly the more scholarly approach to geography that Halford Mackinder, John Scott Keltie and the other reformist Fellows at the Society were keen to initiate. In order for this transition to be achieved, however, Nansen was obligated to adhere to many of the customs and conventions that had been a feature of the older generation of explorers who had ventured to the northern regions in the preceding decades. During his multiple

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<sup>734</sup> Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

<sup>735</sup> Jones, 'Measuring the World: Exploration, Empire and the Reform of the Royal Geographical Society, c. 1874–93'; Mayhew, 'Halford Mackinder's "New" Political Geography and the Geographical Tradition'.

lectures at the Society, Nansen presented his Arctic expeditions as daring feats of triumph and heroism and in his published accounts he similarly depicted the Northern landscapes in the romantic style familiar to readers of earlier Arctic exploratory narratives. Such tactics meant that he not only managed to command the respect of the 'naval veterans' at the RGS but that he had the ability to analyse and articulate the scientific dimensions of his expeditions which was of obvious appeal to the Society's more scholarly Fellows. In summary, the thesis has argued that this celebrated Norwegian explorer not only acted as an important force in the unification of this deeply divided institution but that he was also an important influence in changing the character of British geographical study.

Competing visions for what 'geography ought to be' were also evident in the analysis of Ejnar Mikkelsen's attempts to secure funding for his expedition to Northern Alaska.<sup>736</sup> We saw that the Dane was required to act in certain ways depending on with which of his potential benefactors he was in contact. For example, in order to secure funds from Mary Russell, the Duchess of Bedford, Mikkelsen had to portray his planned expedition as a daring feat of heroism in order to enchant this wealthy sponsor and her assembled guests at Woburn Abbey into supplying him with the necessary funds. In doing so, it is clear that Mikkelsen channelled many of the cultural tropes that had been a feature of Arctic exploration throughout the previous century. Indeed, the Dane also used a similar approach when he crossed the Atlantic and arrived at the American Geographical Society. This institution was equally keen to hear the daring aspects of Mikkelsen's plans and the AGS Secretary Cyrus Adams quickly set about contacting his rich American contacts who, based on Mikkelsen's narrative, would be inspired to donate money to the expedition. In stark contrast, however, during his lecture at the Royal Geographical Society, it was necessary for the Dane to explain in considerable detail the scientific aspects of the forthcoming expedition so as to secure the backing of the Fellows affiliated with this more scientifically-minded institution. The notions of heroism and spectacle that had satisfied previous generations of RGS Fellows were no longer sufficient to convince the New Geographers that Mikkelsen was credible explorer. He therefore had to outline the contributions that his expedition would make to scientific understandings of the region in question in order to convince them he was worthy of their investment.

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<sup>736</sup> Kropotkin, 'What Geography Ought to Be'.

It is clear, then, that like Nansen, it was necessary for Mikkelsen to present himself and his expedition in different ways in order to satisfy a varied group of interested parties, each of whom had considerably different ideas on what the purpose of a geographical expedition should be.

Finally, the uncertain nature of this geographical transition was also apparent in the analysis of RGS's reaction to the North Pole controversy. When Frederick Cook and Robert Peary's rival claims to have reached the North Pole were circulated via the world's print media, the RGS was inundated with requests for further information from the increasingly international press. Numerous agencies telegraphed the Society demanding that its Fellows offer their expert opinion on this highly contentious matter. This meant the Fellows found themselves in a somewhat difficult position. Not only was there no empirical evidence on which to base any definitive judgement as to who should be declared the victor, but the competition over the attainment of the North Pole was antithetical to the more scholarly approach to geography which many at the Society were keen to establish. As Keltie made clear in his correspondence with Sven Hedin, identifying who had been the first to set foot on the North Pole was not necessarily a matter of scientific concern. Neither Cook nor Peary conducted significant scientific study during their expeditions and neither was concerned particularly with advancing human knowledge of the polar regions. Therefore, in the eyes of the RGS Secretary, the attainment of the North Pole was much more akin to the exploratory style of geographical endeavour that he and others at the Society were striving to bring to an end. However, we saw that sustained pressure from the news agencies and various other interested parties meant that the RGS was nonetheless forced into taking a position on the matter. This meant that, with no means by which to reach a more substantive conclusion, the Society had to revert to following the problematic historical traditions with which it had been associated for most of the nineteenth century. Rather than basing their judgement on his contributions to geographical knowledge, the Society offered its support to Robert Peary based solely his prior associations to this historically-cliquish institution. Although the New Geography was emerging as the dominant style of geographical practice, it is clear that, in this instance, the RGS fell back into following many of the problematic tendencies that had dogged the institution since its foundation in 1830.

Taken as a whole, then, the thesis has highlighted the nuances of this uneasy transition toward a more scholarly style of geographical enquiry. Furthermore, by studying the relationships which the

Society maintained with Nansen, Mikkelsen and Peary, it has been shown that the exploration of the Arctic regions in particular had a hugely significant part to play in the transition toward the New Geography at the RGS and beyond.

### *Making Knowledge Mobile*

In each of the case studies presented, considerable attention has also been devoted to understanding the precise processes which enabled Arctic geographical knowledge to enter into circulation. The role of the RGS as a vital node in the increasingly global network of geographical information has been explored in detail and the Society's ability to facilitate the entry of knowledge gleaned from Arctic expeditions into this circulation has been highlighted. These aspects have been demonstrated most clearly through a sustained focus on the hugely significant position occupied by the RGS Secretary John Scott Keltie. Attention has been drawn to his ever-increasing influence in communicating information to the wider public but also to his considerable sway over the Fellows at the RGS. Both of these aspects were to mean that all of Keltie's actions, arrangements and carefully orchestrated manoeuvres had a profound effect on the ways in which geographical knowledge was communicated during this period.

In chapter four we saw the substantial role that the Secretary played in enabling information relating to Fridtjof Nansen's Arctic expeditions to circulate amongst diverse audiences. Utilising his extensive connections to the various newspaper publishers and organising the spectacular lecture at the Royal Albert Hall, Keltie was able to present Nansen as a template for how geographical enquiry may be undertaken in the future. We saw that he also acted as literary agent to his Norwegian friend, ensuring that his books would be published and read by as large an audience as possible. Lastly, he made sure that Nansen's plans to cross the Arctic Ocean were to be the very first article featured in the Society's newly-rejuvenated periodical, making it clear that a new intellectual agenda that was taking hold.

The Scot also played an imperative role in the discussion presented in chapter five. As the complexities of Mikkelsen's attempts to garner expeditionary funding were examined, Keltie's role as mentor to the inexperienced explorer meant that his position as an information intermediary was again critical to enabling Arctic geographical knowledge to circulate. By putting Mikkelsen in contact with the publisher William Heinemann and acting as mediator between these two men during their dispute,

Keltie ensured that the knowledge gleaned during the Anglo-American Polar Expedition would be circulated amongst as wide a readership as possible upon the Dane's return. Indeed, we saw that Keltie included regular updates in *The Geographical Journal* in order to inform its readers of Mikkelsen's progress during his time on Flaxman Island and also published the findings of the explorer's (ultimately unsuccessful) investigations into the hypothesized Keenan Land in the same publication. Finally, we saw that (much to Heinemann's dismay) Keltie also notified the *Morning Post* of Mikkelsen's progress, increasing further the audiences who would learn of the Dane's expedition. It has therefore been argued that, on account of Mikkelsen's relatively obscurity amongst the exploration community, by providing opportunity for geographical information pertaining to his expedition to be circulated via this range of different media, Keltie ensured that Mikkelsen was able to command the respect of the Polar veterans, both at the RGS and beyond.

The intricate complexities of knowledge circulation, and Keltie's important role within these processes, were made particularly apparent in chapter six. As the Cook-Pearry controversy engulfed the attention of the world's print media, the Royal Geographical Society – and Keltie specifically – was drawn reluctantly into a global circulatory fiasco over which it had practically no control. With the newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic speculating wildly over who should be declared the true victor of the 'race to the North Pole,' the Society was forced to proceed with extreme caution as its senior Fellows were aware that any information that was issued would instantly enflame further the growing media bluster. The analysis has therefore shown that the RGS's important position as circulator of geographical knowledge also carried with it a considerable burden of responsibility, and that at times the Fellows at the Society struggled to handle this considerable duty.

In summary, then, the thesis has argued that the RGS's status as a key institution in the circulation of geographical knowledge meant that it was able to exert extraordinary power in shaping understandings of the earth and its inhabitants. As the leading geographical Society in the world, the RGS was expected to offer its expert opinion on all geographical matters – even when it maintained little direct connection to the expedition in question. It has also been shown that, in spite of their carefully curated appearance, the Society was not always in complete control of the geographical

information that was being circulated and therefore at times had great difficulty in deciding how to respond to contentious geographical disputes.

### *Circulatory Limits*

While much of the analysis presented above has highlighted the means by which the Society was able to make all of this Arctic geographical knowledge mobile, it is important to note that the *limits* to this circulation of knowledge have also been an important theme throughout the thesis. As we have seen, by examining closely the dimensions of these circulatory processes, it becomes clear that geographical knowledge was not entirely free from restraint or restriction.

A first example of this was found in the strict regulations that were imposed on Mikkelsen by the publisher William Heinemann. The shrewd businessman stipulated that any information gleaned during the Dane's expedition could not be circulated by any means other than through the book which his firm was contracted to publish. Such strict conditions regarding the specific means by which the information pertaining to Mikkelsen's expedition could be disseminated reveal some incredibly important aspects of the knowledge circulation process. Heinemann's attempts to control precisely how this knowledge could be communicated, then, points to the power dynamics that are inherent to any circulatory system. By limiting the means by which information about Mikkelsen's expedition could circulate, Heinemann was also dictating precisely which members of the British public would learn of its progress and results. Different circulatory media – i.e. newspapers, scholarly periodicals and published monographs – all attracted significantly different readerships during this period which therefore meant that blocking any one of these knowledge pathways would restrict considerably who would be able to attain this information. As a final point, Heinemann's anger upon discovering that these circulatory restrictions had been broken again point to the delicate political issues that explorers and circulatory institutions were forced to negotiate in the process of communicating geographical knowledge.

The limits to knowledge circulation were clearly evident in the Society's response to the Cook-Pearry controversy. When the news broke that Cook was claiming to have reached the North Pole, the Fellows at the Society delayed offering any response to the situation until more information was known.

Because Frederick Cook was largely unfamiliar to the Fellows of the RGS, his standing as a credible explorer was also unknown. This meant that Society chose to offer no response to his claim on the Pole, even in spite of the increasing demand from the various journalists and press agencies. This is because they were acutely aware of the substantial consequences should they issue an incorrect verdict. By comparison, when it was announced that Peary was also claiming to have accomplished the feat, the Society wasted no time in circulating a statement in support of their close acquaintance and recipient of their prestigious Patron's medal. Indeed, several of the Fellows communicated directly with Peary to offer their congratulations and he was immediately invited to deliver a lecture at the Society as soon as possible. From this analysis it is clear that the RGS had considerable liberty to decide when, and by what means, it communicated the geographical information it had accumulated. Again this makes abundantly clear the RGS's enormous influence over the circulation of geographical knowledge pertaining to the Arctic regions.

Taken together then, the thesis has shown that there were multiple factors at play which limited the ways in which geographical knowledge could circulate. It has been shown that, while in some cases the RGS was able to choose how and when their accumulated knowledge was able to circulate, on other occasions this decision was more or less beyond their control. It is therefore the case that we must gain a full appreciation of these circulatory dynamics if we are to understand precisely who would be able to come into contact with this important information.

### *Indigenous Intermediaries*

Perhaps the clearest articulation of the limits to knowledge circulation, however, was when our attention was turned to the indigenous involvement in each of the expeditions discussed in chapter seven. Following insights that have been offered by post- and de-colonial theorists, the thesis has explored the limitations that were evident when indigenous perspectives on Arctic expeditions were embroiled in these knowledge circulation processes. As the first section showed, when Fridtjof Nansen published an account of his 1888–89 crossing of Greenland, he included lengthy descriptions of the substantial assistance he had received from the indigenous Greenlandic population. He also went as far as to include a chapter written by Silas, the Greenlander who had ventured up *Ameralikfjord* to provide supplies to

Nansen's stranded expedition party. Crucially though, we saw that when the publisher Thomas Norton Longman produced a second edition of this hugely popular travel account, each one of the lengthy descriptions pertaining to the indigenous Greenlandic population had been omitted from the new version. As publishers necessarily catered to what their readers desired to read, it seems these more unconventional passages were removed so as to increase the book's public appeal. However, when viewed through the lens of knowledge circulation, it becomes clear that this process was in fact a hugely important act of indigenous erasure. By reworking the book in this way, Longman eliminated all traces of the indigenous assistance that Nansen had received from the official account of this incredibly important expedition. This is therefore a clear example of the ways in which indigenous people's involvement in Arctic expeditions was not circulated in the same way as their European or American counterparts, meaning that their involvement in these expeditions has subsequently been obscured from the historical record.

A similar act of silencing occurred with regards to the information gathered during Mikkelsen's expedition to the shores of the Beaufort Sea. We saw that the Flaxman Islander Sachawachick was a vital actor during Mikkelsen's expedition and contributed a significant amount of geographical information to the Dane's investigation into the hypothesized landmass. Importantly, it was shown that all of Mikkelsen's new geographical information was communicated to the RGS whereupon it entered into circulation via both the newspaper press and in the Society's periodical. However, close analysis has shown that Sachawachick's geographical contributions to this knowledge did not appear in either of these media. On account of his indigeneity, Sachawachick was not perceived as being a credible source of geographical information and was therefore excluded from the 'official' geographical record. This significant omission indicates clearly that different types – or perhaps more accurately different *sources* – of geographical knowledge were not able to enter into circulation on precisely the same terms as others. This has in turn meant that many contributions to the expeditionary enterprise made by indigenous peoples have been erased from the historical record resulting in the effacement of these people's role in the production of geographical knowledge. Only through the analysis of Mikkelsen's correspondence presented here has Sachawachick's true involvement in the expedition been recognised to its full extent.

Finally, a similar lack of circulatory potential was afforded to the Inuit who accompanied Frederick Cook during his North Pole expedition. In a desperate attempt to bolster his claims to have reached the Pole, the Brooklyn man announced his plans to return to the Arctic in order to collect the testimonies of the Inuit indigenous intermediaries upon whom he had relied during his journey. However, the analysis shows that such a strategy was refuted almost as soon as it was proposed. Sven Hedin and Clements Markham, both influential voices at the RGS, were just two members of the geographical establishment that expressed their incredulity at the prospect of using indigenous peoples of the Arctic as potential adjudicators in the matter. They stated explicitly their belief that relying on Inuit peoples to provide an answer to this conundrum was simply unthinkable. Indeed, we saw that such attitudes were also reflected in the contemporary popular press with many articles and columns seeking to refute outright any testimonies that these people might have been able to offer. Again, it is evident that despite being with the explorer during his purported attempt on the pole, a lack of geographical credibility was afforded to these indigenous Arctic intermediaries, again based purely on their indigeneity.

All of these examples therefore highlight the limits to the knowledge circulation process. They also reveal the power dynamics that are at play within the governance of this knowledge circulatory process and show that the landscape of knowledge circulation was certainly not an even one. Certain actors were able to exert considerable power and influence over this circulatory system, which necessarily obscured the contributions made by others. While there is clearly much more work to be done in this area, the examples presented here have nonetheless opened up opportunities for future engagement with these important ideas.

### Venturing Beyond

As was discussed in chapter three, it is vitally important to reflect deeply on any piece of scholarly research that has been undertaken and to think critically about the contributions that the work has made to our understanding. If done properly, it should also be the case that any constraints or limitations inherent within the project will also become apparent. There have certainly been some aspects of this study which, for a number of reasons, have not been granted sufficient consideration in this thesis. The

following discussion will therefore reflect on some of the themes that have received only brief attention in the analysis above and which consequently offer exciting prospects for important future research to be undertaken.

### *Missing Means of Circulation*

The diverse array of circulatory materials that were consulted for this project were discussed in chapter three, yet there were certainly many other means of communicating geographical information available at this time. A brief overview of these technologies will now be discussed in order to indicate potential avenues for further research using the theoretical framework that has been developed.

As a first point of consideration, although the importance of telegraphy was discussed briefly in chapter six, there is much more work to be done in order to appreciate the true impact of this technology on the circulation of geographical knowledge. As Roland Wenzlhuemer has explained, ‘much of the historical research on telegraphy has also chosen to look at the technology in the context of imperial control and territorial expansion.’<sup>737</sup> This means that this technology has largely been overlooked in terms of its use within exploration activity. This is a significant omission as the increased prevalence of instantaneous communication around the world was to have considerable implications for how geographical knowledge produced on expeditions could be circulated. For much of the nineteenth century, due to the length of time taken for a letter to travel along the circuitous global postal networks of the nineteenth century, there had been an unavoidable delay in the information communicated from the field to the scientific metropolises. The increasing ubiquity of telegraphy, however, combined with the laying of the Transatlantic cables, meant that the latest events which had taken place during on an ongoing expedition could now be communicated around the world within a matter of minutes.<sup>738</sup>

Relating to the mediatory aspects of circulation discussed in this thesis, it is important to note that newspapers would often pay substantial sums of money to secure first access to emerging news of

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<sup>737</sup> Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization*, 79.

<sup>738</sup> Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*; Finn and Yang, *Communications Under the Seas: The Evolving Cable Network and Its Implications*.

any geographical expedition that was being undertaken. Explorers were therefore able to negotiate vast amounts from their publishing sponsors upon the agreement that they would inform their newspaper's journalists – and their journalists alone – of the latest expeditionary events that had taken place. Importantly, there is some evidence to show that, again, the RGS had an important role to play in influencing this particular medium of knowledge circulation. As explained in chapter four, Fridtjof Nansen gave John Scott Keltie power of attorney over all of his British affairs. Mentioned only briefly, however, was the fact that Keltie and Alexander Nansen, Fridtjof's brother, had both been tasked with raising as much money as possible from Nansen's expedition. The pair made arrangements to sell the exclusivity rights to a telegram that the explorer was to send from Vardø once he had returned from his Farthest North drift. Importantly, as analysis of the correspondence between Keltie and Alexander Nansen reveals, the temporal dimensions of telegraph technology were to play a significant role within these negotiations. The Norwegian newspaper *Vardens Gang* was desperate to ensure that their news organisation would be the first to announce Nansen's return. However, London's *Daily Chronicle* was equally keen to secure this important journalistic advantage. Therefore, Alexander Nansen and Keltie were forced to orchestrate a careful set of circulatory manoeuvres in order to ensure that both parties could be satisfied with the communication of this information. As the Norwegian lawyer wrote in his correspondence with Keltie:

The *Vardens Gang* editor is willing to warn me before he publishes any telegram in his paper. I should like to know when *The Daily Chronicle* comes out, whether in the morning or the evening, before anything is settled here. I think the following agreement would be the best; that you wire to me and to *Vardens Gang* that the telegram you have got will be published in the *Chronicle* (or another paper) at such and such a time (hour and minutes) so that the paper may be able to publish it before the news [is] wired here from London.<sup>739</sup>

It is clear, then, that not only did both of these circulatory intermediaries intend to coordinate how the information would be distributed to audiences around Europe, but they also carefully coordinated *when* the geographical information could be shared so that it could appear in both countries' newspapers. Such meticulous time management had not been a significant requirement in previous years on account of the much slower pace of global communication. There is therefore much work to be done here in

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<sup>739</sup> Letter from Alexander Nansen to John Scott Keltie, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1896 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collection, SSC/138/2].

considering how this temporal dimension may have affected how geographical knowledge was able to circulate.

### *Attending to Audience*

With the thesis's primary focus on those *institutions* that facilitated the circulation of geographical knowledge, there has been necessarily somewhat less attention given over to the investigation of the specific *audiences* that this information was to reach. Many geographers and historians have argued that it is vitally important to investigate precisely how knowledge was 'consumed' through a variety of means and in different geographical settings.<sup>740</sup> As historian of science James Secord has argued:

[The] history of science, even more than most historical fields, has focused on origins and producers. [...] We need to analyse audiences and readerships closely and carefully, with the same awareness of cultural nuance we might bring to an account of life in the laboratory. Otherwise we are simply reproducing the notion that science passes from highly individualized sites of production to an undifferentiated mass public.<sup>741</sup>

In order to achieve this, a number of strategies have been developed which focus scholarly attention on the consumers of geographical and other types of scientific information, rather than just focus on the institutions which facilitated its circulation. Although it has been acknowledged that, in most cases, researchers are only ever able to gain partial understandings of the ways in which such information was interpreted, it is nonetheless important to at least consider the reception of geographical and other types of knowledge so as to understand the nuances of how such information was able to travel.<sup>742</sup>

One way we can begin to understand how geographical information may have been interpreted in different ways is by taking the term 'audience' in its more literal sense. It was noted in chapter three that there are considerable difficulties involved in deducing precisely who was in attendance at the lectures and meetings that were hosted at the RGS. Some clues can be found in the footnotes and end notes that appear in *The Geographical Journal* and, on occasion, the Fellows also mention attending

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<sup>740</sup> Withers, 'Scale and the Geographies of Civic Science: Practice and Experience in the Meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Britain and in Ireland, c. 1845–1900'; Bravo, 'Ethnographic Navigation and the Geographical Gift'.

<sup>741</sup> Secord, 'Knowledge in Transit', 662.

<sup>742</sup> Keighren, 'Bringing Geography to the Book: Charting the Reception of Influences of Geographic Environment'; Bravo, 'Voices from the Sea Ice: The Reception of Climate Impact Narratives'.

these various engagements in their correspondence with the Society. Yet, by and large, it is a sizeable challenge to identify precisely who was in the room during these important moments of knowledge circulation. This is an incredibly important omission because, as Charles Withers has noted with reference to his investigation into public engagement with the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS):

Understanding the geographies of civil science demands attention to the relationships between and within given levels of geographical scale and the nature of the activities undertaken there: from national policy, to local city-based realization, to the nature of particular buildings and [...] even to individual rooms (whether they were big enough for science's audiences, to too hot, or if people had to sit on the mantelpiece, or could hear at all), and so to the embodied experiences of different individuals.<sup>743</sup>

This approach used by Withers has influenced the research in this thesis, but there is certainly scope for further engagement with these ideas. As has been discussed, both Fridtjof Nansen and Robert Peary had flamboyant jubilees thrown in their honour at London's Royal Albert Hall upon their return from their respective expeditions. This of course meant that many thousands of people had to be accommodated in this enormous venue, which in turn led to the Society receiving a raft of correspondence relating to the logistics of these arrangements. Some of these fragments of information continue to reside in the Society's collections and offer tantalising glimpses into the events that unfolded before, during and after these spectacular occasions. One example includes a letter written by a certain L.C. Alexander on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1910 which was sent to the Society ahead of Peary's lecture. The letter was written to notify the Secretary of the author's apparent displeasure at the seating arrangements in place for the occasion:

I have just received two tickets for the meeting at the Royal Albert Hall, on the 4<sup>th</sup> proximo and one other ticket, and that a GALLERY one. I am indignant and surprised to find myself so seated; it is almost as if contemptuousness about it, or, at best, a bout of nominal performance only. Who is responsible for this? [Firstly] the cutting down of my modest request for two extra tickets then at the priority to me of ONE GALLERY TICKET. And again I ask who is responsible for such an insult to a fragile old fellow.<sup>744</sup>

Clearly despondent at the notion of being allocated a seat in the upper balcony of the Hall on account of his infirmity, Mr Alexander felt compelled to contact the Society in order to convey his dismay.

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<sup>743</sup> Withers, 'Scale and the Geographies of Civic Science: Practice and Experience in the Meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Britain and in Ireland, c. 1845–1900', 117.

<sup>744</sup> Letter from L.C. Alexander to John Scott Keltie, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1910 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

Similarly, a second anonymous Fellow contacted the Secretary after the lecture had taken place, again complaining about the logistical details of the lecture:

I applied some time ago for two tickets for Peary's Lecture. The seats allotted to me were K1069 and 1070 and were so far away from the speakers that I could not hear a very few words [sic]. I can't help feeling that my period of membership entitled me to better seats or if that is not the case it is obvious that the doors are much too widely open in the way of friends. It seems to me that at all events [F]ellows should be placed in a position to hear the proceedings.<sup>745</sup>

Both of these indignant notes sent to the Society's Secretary point to some of the intricacies involved in the communication of knowledge that are often overlooked. At first glance, such issues of accessibility might seem somewhat trivial when the wider dynamics of knowledge circulation are being discussed. However, these nuances and subtleties in the geographies of circulation again allow important insights to be gained relating to the precise means through which this information was relayed and interpreted *in situ*. Much work still remains to be done in gaining a fuller understanding of these embodied processes of knowledge communication and there is certainly potential for further study into the disparities that may be present when knowledge was communicated to the full range of the RGS audiences.

There are other means through which we can begin to appreciate how geographical knowledge was understood differently by particular groups of people. Another strategy that has been developed involves examining the specific ways in which children and young people were to learn of the world and its inhabitants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Teresa Ploszajska, in her study examining how regions of the world were represented in geography-themed school textbooks, has conducted a detailed analysis into how information targeted at children was often communicated in a manner that was significantly different to the ways in which it was targeted at an adult readership.<sup>746</sup> Studying closely the content of various styles of geography textbook, Ploszajska along with Avril Maddrell have shown that these texts were often written in the style of a travelogue. This allowed the young reader to be taken on an imaginary 'world tour' and encouraged them to envisage their movement

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<sup>745</sup> Letter from Anonymous to John Scott Keltie, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1910 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB8/69].

<sup>746</sup> Ploszajska, 'Geographical Education, Empire and Citizenship 1870-1944'.

across the earth's continents.<sup>747</sup> As just one example, in the textbook *Lessons in the New Geography* published in 1907, the following passage appears in the introduction:

We all sail around the earth in the sea of our imagination. There are many who can never do it in reality, and if this little book will help them to sail and to see in fantasy the real scenes, the moving and feeling life of the earth, the object for which it was written will be accomplished.<sup>748</sup>

These books also contained many images (woodcuts, sketches and later photographs) again in the hope of stimulating further interest amongst their young readership. According to Ploszajska, the images and accompanying text sought to '[conjure] into children's imaginations vivid pictures of the places studied and an understanding of what it might feel like to be there.'<sup>749</sup> These authors' analysis makes it clear that, because they were tailored specifically for the younger reader, the contents of these books are substantially different from the information contained within *The Geographical Journal*, for example. A number of techniques were deployed in order for this information to appeal to younger readers meaning that these books offer us as a way in which we can interpret how knowledge about the world was able to be circulated amongst specific geographical audiences.

Indeed, there is potentially further work to be done here. Like the examples presented in chapter seven, the power dynamics bound up within this circulation of knowledge are of extreme importance. Turning attention to the Arctic, Robert David's work has examined how this region in particular was represented within these school textbooks.<sup>750</sup> David provides insights into how the Arctic regions and the peoples who live there came to be constructed within their pages. Crucially, he shows that the relationships established between readers of these books and the people they depict was typically one of superiority versus inferiority, with European peoples given assumed supremacy over the indigenous populations that were the topic of discussion. As the extracts below taken from geographical school textbooks indicate, different peoples and ethnic groups were categorised according to various hierarchies, usually with reference to how 'civilised' or 'developed' they appeared:

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<sup>747</sup> Maddrell, 'Discourses of Race and Gender and the Comparative Method in Geography School Texts 1830-1918'; See also Maddrell, 'Empire, Emigration and School Geography: Changing Discourses of Imperial Citizenship, 1880-1925'; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*.

<sup>748</sup> Trotter, *Lessons in the New Geography: For Student and Teacher*, iii.

<sup>749</sup> Ploszajska, 'Geographical Education, Empire and Citizenship 1870-1944', 69.

<sup>750</sup> David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*.

The people of the Tundras are small stunted men of the yellow race. Those of Europe are called Lapps, and the country in which they live is in Europe called Lappland. They are better off than the Eskimo, because they have herds of tame reindeer which give them milk and draw their sledges over the snow.<sup>751</sup>

It is a very, very hard life for them, and so we find that the Eskimo and similar tribes, such as the Samoyeds and the Lapps who live in Northern Europe and northern Asia, are what we should call stunted people. They do not grow very tall and are not very progressive.<sup>752</sup>

Indeed, these hierarchies were usually based on some kind of environmental (or geographical) basis. While indigenous peoples were seen to be living *in and with* nature, European explorers were depicted as *conquering* nature or using it more expertly or efficiently.<sup>753</sup> It is clear, then, that the intertwining of fascinating descriptions of children inhabiting frozen lands with these stereotypical/racist assumptions was crucial to forming an incredibly powerful narrative of the Arctic and its peoples within the young reader's mind. As this was often a child's first introduction to the world beyond their ken, it is important to take seriously these racialised descriptions and think critically about the types of imagery that are being conveyed.<sup>754</sup>

As a whole then, there is certainly much scope for taking seriously the diverse audiences that were the consumers of the geographical information in circulation at this time and there is still a great deal of work to do in gaining a clear understanding of the precise means through which information was communicated so as to reach people of different ages, genders, classes, ethnicities and (dis)abilities. Although certainly a challenging task, the fragments presented here suggest such a goal may yet be achievable.

### *Post-Polar Politics*

As a final point, while the wider geopolitical climate that surrounded these expeditions has been discussed at several points across this thesis, it is undoubtedly a dimension that merits further attention. It will be apparent to the reader that the events studied here have, to a large extent, been isolated from

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<sup>751</sup> Marsden and Smith, *First Lessons in Geography*, 63–64.

<sup>752</sup> Stamp, *A Smaller World Geography*, 141.

<sup>753</sup> Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*.

<sup>754</sup> Maddrell, 'Discourses of Race and Gender and the Comparative Method in Geography School Texts 1830–1918'.

their context within the mounting global tensions that were to result ultimately in the outbreak of the First World War. Again, this is a significant omission as many scholars have demonstrated that the Royal Geographical Society was certainly not exempt from involvement in the dark period in human history that was to emerge in the years immediately following this study's historical timeframe.<sup>755</sup> As Michael Heffernan has explained:

On 31 July 1914, 48 hours before news reached London of the German attack on Belgium, Freshfield placed what he later called 'the personal and material resources' of the RGS at the disposal of [Walter Coote] Hedley's GSGS [Geographical Section of the General Staff]. From that date until 31 March 1919, the RGS remained on an emergency wartime footing.<sup>756</sup>

As Heffernan and others have shown, the information that was produced and circulated by the RGS became of paramount importance to British military interests.<sup>757</sup> While the RGS itself was entangled deeply with various arms of the state during the War, as will now be discussed, the explorers featured in this thesis were also engaged in various geopolitical issues that were unfolding around the world.

After undertaking in the expeditions examined in this thesis, Fridtjof Nansen went on to pursue an influential career as international diplomat and humanitarian.<sup>758</sup> It is interesting to note that early indications of these political inclinations can be found amongst the correspondence that the Norwegian exchanged with Keltie. As the union between Norway and Sweden became strained increasingly in the closing years of the nineteenth century, Nansen became an ever more vocal commentator on this matter.<sup>759</sup> He wrote columns in several newspapers across Europe that sought to put forward the Norwegian perspective on the situation. As he explained in a letter to the RGS Secretary in 1898:

I have just finished a letter to *The Times* on the relations between Norway and Sweden, in order to correct some serious mistakes in the article on the subject in *Times* for Oct. 25th. I am sending the article tomorrow and hope that *The Times* will publish it, as it is of great importance for us that this unfortunate conflict is not described in a way which is not fair to us. I can see every week that *The Times*' correspondent has either been a Swede or has been inspired by Swedes. He was in many respects very well informed. My article states nothing which is not the absolute truth beyond dispute.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> Heffernan, 'Geography, Cartography and Military Intelligence: The Royal Geographical Society and the First World War'.

<sup>756</sup> Heffernan, 507–8.

<sup>757</sup> Heffernan, 'Mars and Minerva: Centres of Geographical Calculation in an Age of Total War'.

<sup>758</sup> Sørensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*.

<sup>759</sup> Fosse and Fox, *Nansen: Explorer and Humanitarian*; Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*.

<sup>760</sup> Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1898 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/63].

Intriguingly, and once again highlighting Keltie's close connections to the newspaper industry, the Norwegian also added a direct plea to his friend in London, writing:

If you could use your influence to make *The Times* publish the letter as soon as possible, you would do me and I may say the Norwegians a great favour.<sup>761</sup>

This request for assistance in matters of international politics in some ways mirrors the issues that Mikkelsen experienced after meeting President Roosevelt ahead of his Alaskan expedition. As we saw in chapter five, the Dane contacted Keltie with regards to the claims that had appeared in the newspapers relating to territorial claims to any new land in the Beaufort Sea. Again, we see that Keltie was involved intimately with global geopolitical affairs and particularly how they were to be represented within the print media.<sup>762</sup>

Returning to Nansen, his apparent tact for international diplomacy and the considerable fame that he had attracted following his Arctic expeditions meant he was urged by many of his compatriots to run for Prime Minister of the newly independent Norway. Although he declined these calls in order to continue his career in Arctic oceanography, with the outbreak of the First World War, politics once again interrupted his scientific pursuits and his engagement with international affairs was reignited.<sup>763</sup> When the food supplies in Norway began to come under sustained threat due to a United States blockade on supplies of grain being transported across the Atlantic, Nansen travelled to Washington in an attempt to negotiate a Norwegian exemption.<sup>764</sup> After a year of arduous negotiation with the future President of the USA Herbert Hoover, Nansen's efforts proved successful and a deal was struck between the two countries. These important negotiations were in fact to be the beginning of Nansen's long career as international diplomat and humanitarian. There are, however, too many intriguing aspects of his political life to be articulated here. What is worth noting, however, is that many authors have concluded

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<sup>761</sup> Letter from Fridtjof Nansen to J.S. Keltie, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1898 [RGS-IBG Correspondence Collections, RGS/CB7/63].

<sup>762</sup> Ferretti, 'Publishing Anarchism: Pyotr Kropotkin and British Print Cultures, 1876–1917'.

<sup>763</sup> Sørensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*.

<sup>764</sup> Fosse and Fox, *Nansen: Explorer and Humanitarian*; Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*.

that his early years as Polar explorer and geographical scientist were certainly influential in shaping this Norwegian hero's internationalist political mindset.<sup>765</sup>

There is also much political consideration to be taken of Mikkelsen's exploratory career in the years following the Anglo-American Expedition. In 1922, the Dane drew up plans to displace a community of indigenous Greenlanders from Angmagssalik in the South East of the island and relocate them on Scoresby Sound situated further north along the eastern coast. As Mikkelsen wrote in *The Geographical Journal* upon returning from an expedition to the island:

During my three years' stay on the east coast of Greenland, principally on Shannon Island and the Bass Rock from 1909-1912, this thought often occupied my mind, and I formed a plan to colonize Scoresby Sound.<sup>766</sup>

Two years later, rival Danish and Norwegian territorial claims that had been made recently to the island were settled when the East Greenland Treaty was signed. The Danish government then went on to decree that the coastline around Scoresby Sound was now to be 'reserved' for the indigenous Greenlandic population and as a result of this policy, Mikkelsen's migration plan for the Greenlanders therefore began to gain increasing governmental support before being implemented the following year. As Mikkelsen wrote in 1933:

The finished settlement was presented to the Danish Government, who next year transferred eighty-five Greenlanders from Angmagssalik to Scoresby Sound, with all their possessions, sledges, kayaks, skin tents, weapons, and household goods. Many more would have liked to go, but the authorities did not dare to allow more than the original eighty-five, for they wished to obtain practical experience of the conditions of living in Scoresby Sound before giving permission for further Greenlanders to be transferred.<sup>767</sup>

This plan has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention but the connections to Mikkelsen's earlier expedition do not appear to have received the same degree of scrutiny.<sup>768</sup> Of importance to this thesis, Mikkelsen was also to receive the RGS Patron's Gold Medal in 1935 for his involvement in this process of relocation.<sup>769</sup> It is undeniable that Mikkelsen's earlier experiences with the Iñupiaq Inuit of

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<sup>765</sup> Fosse and Fox, *Nansen: Explorer and Humanitarian*; Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero*; Sørensen, Jon [Translated by Watkins, J. B. C.], *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*.

<sup>766</sup> Mikkelsen, Spender, and Bocher, 'The Blosseville Coast of East Greenland', 386; See also Anonymous, 'Captain Ejnar Mikkelsen's Expedition to East Greenland, 1932'.

<sup>767</sup> Mikkelsen, Spender, and Bocher, 'The Blosseville Coast of East Greenland', 387.

<sup>768</sup> Mikkelsen, 'The Scoresby Sound Committee's 2nd East Greenland Expedition in 1932 to King Christian IX's Land, Leader: E. Mikkelsen'.

<sup>769</sup> Anonymous, 'Meetings: Session 1933-34'.

northern Alaska were to have some bearing on his future endeavours in the Arctic and hence much more scholarship needed to interpret these important historical processes.

### Conclusion

In spite of these omissions, the doctoral research presented here has been successful in achieving the intended aims set out in the introduction. Using the extensive archives held by the RGS-IBG, a sustained investigation has been undertaken which has studied the role of the Royal Geographical Society in circulating geographical knowledge about the Arctic regions at the turn of the twentieth century. Importantly the institution's key role in shaping these influential narratives has also been examined. Not only have these circulatory practices been situated within the important historical transformation of the geographical discipline, but the limits to this international circulatory system have also been analysed. The project has therefore been successful in advancing our understandings of the precise means by which the Arctic regions were constructed within the Western geographical imagination and has shown the ways in which these lasting ideas and connotations were able to gain saliency during the early years of the twentieth century. Such a project has been vitally important because, for the reasons outlined by Susan Kaplan and Robert Peck, the Arctic regions have seen a sharp increase in international attention during recent years:

Investigations of northern regions are intensifying daily, as communities, animals, plants, and the very geography of the region feel the effects of climate change and rapid modernization. Arctic nations are rushing to lay claim to segments of the Arctic Ocean as countries and companies consider exploitation of newly accessible natural resources. As a result of ice-free Northeast and Northwest Passages, increasing numbers of vessels are venturing into and through these fabled waters, raising the possibility of new commercial enterprises and international shipping routes – but also creating serious concerns about the impact of vessel traffic on marine mammals, the ecology of sensitive regions, and the well-being of coastal communities. This activity is also raising sovereignty and national security issues for Arctic nations.<sup>770</sup>

This myriad of interrelated processes means that not only is the contemporary Arctic changing in physical terms, but it is also changing within the geographical imagination(s) around the world. It is therefore crucially important to understand the means through which particular historical framings and

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<sup>770</sup> Kaplan and Peck, *North by Degree: New Perspectives on Arctic Exploration*, xvi; See also Powell and Dodds, *Polar Geopolitics?: Knowledges, Resources and Legal Regimes*; Dodds and Powell, 'Polar Geopolitics: New Researchers on the Polar Regions'.

imaginaries of the Arctic have been produced, circulated, mediated and interpreted at different points in both place and time.<sup>771</sup> While this thesis has gone some way to achieving this task, it obviously remains far from complete. Much research remains to be undertaken in order to appreciate fully how this important geographical region has been framed in particular ways within contemporary debates and also what impacts this will have for its environmental, socio-economic and geopolitical future(s).

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<sup>771</sup> For an insightful discussion on the ways in which historical framings influence contemporary debates over the future of the Arctic see Stuhl, 'The Politics of the "New North": Putting History and Geography at Stake in Arctic Futures'.

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RGS/CB8/69 (i) – Correspondence between Keltie and Herbert Bridgman.

RGS/CB8/69 (j) – Correspondence to and from Commander Peary.

RGS/CB8/69 (k) – Correspondence Re The Peary Meeting.

RGS/CB8/69 (l) – Correspondence concerning Dr. F.A. Cook, 1911-13, S. McCracken, Admiral Parr.

RGS/CB8/69 (m) – Typed copies of American press reports on Peary/Cook dispute. (1910-11).

RGS/CB8/69 (n) – Correspondence with W. Henry Lewin, 1911 concerning Lewin's book about Peary.

RGS/CB8/69 (o) – T.S. Dedrick's statement on the Peary Expedition. Typescript. Received by RGS November 17 1909.

RGS/CB8/69 (p) – Letter from Sir W. Martin Conway, Feb 26 1914, enclosing letter from E.C. Rosh

RGS/CB8/69 (q) – Correspondence with R.E. Peary, 1913.

RGS/CB8/69 (r) – Newspaper clippings compiled by J W Walker of Chicago who sent the cuttings to the RGS in 1926.

RGS/CB9/112 – Correspondence from Fridtjof Nansen to the Society.

RGS/CB9/108 – Correspondence from Einar Mikkelsen.

LMS M 29 – Account of the Anglo-American Arctic expedition.

*RGS-IBG Picture Library:*

LS/295 – Lantern Slides of Nansen's Expeditions in the Arctic.

LS/326 – Lantern Slides of Nansen's North Polar Expedition.

LS/646 – Lantern Slides of Nansen's Expeditions in the Arctic.

LS/676 – Lantern Slides of North Pole Expedition.

S0027058 – Nansen at the Royal Societies' Club.

S0027059 – Dr. Nansen at the Royal Societies Club: The reception after the banquet.

S0012106 – RGS House, Lowther Lodge – The Museum Room.

PR/054364 – PR/054401 – Photographs by Einar Mikkelsen.

NOR230, 201235 – Pictures taken by C. J. A. Dick pertaining to the launching of the 'Fram' at Larvik in S.E. Norway.

*Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo, Norway:*

1890.02.19 – Correspondence H.W. Bates to Nansen.

1898.02.13 – Correspondence Curzon to Nansen.

Ms.fol. 1924: 10: b: 1 – Correspondence Clements Markham to Nansen.

Brevs 48 – Correspondence John Scott Keltie to Nansen.

*Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, UK*

MS 1325/25/1;D – Fridtjof Nansen, Correspondence with HR Mill.

MS 366/15;BJ – Fridtjof Nansen, Correspondence with R.F. Scott.

MS 153/140/1-2;D – Fridtjof Nansen, Correspondence with R.F. Scott.

MS 1537/2/21/16;D – Fridtjof Nansen, Correspondence with Emily Shackleton.

MS 100/56;D – John Scott Keltie, Correspondence with HR Mill.

MS 932/9/1;D – John Scott Keltie, Correspondence with HR Mill.

MS 7;D - John Scott Keltie, Correspondence with Kathleen Scott.

MS 1453/121/1-3;D – John Scott Keltie, Correspondence with Kathleen Scott.

MS 1453/122/1-8;D – John Scott Keltie, Correspondence with Kathleen Scott.

MS 648;D – Robert Peary, Correspondence with Clements Markham.

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