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Mungo Park's Ghost

In 1816, the British sent two large, ambitious expeditions to Africa, one to follow the Niger River to its outlet, the other to trace the Congo River to its source. Their shared goal was to complete the unfinished mission of Mungo Park, who had disappeared during a journey to determine whether the Niger and the Congo were the same river. Both quests ended disastrously and were soon forgotten. Telling the full story of these failed expeditions for the first time, Dane Kennedy argues that they provide fresh insight into British ambitions in Africa. He places them in the contexts of the imperial rivalry with France, the slave trade and the abolition campaign, and the independent power wielded by African states and peoples. He also shows that they were haunted by the same sense of hubris that would afflict many of the expeditions that followed. This hubris was Mungo Park's ghost.

Dane Kennedy is a historian of the British imperial world who has written eight books, including *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (2013), and has edited or co-edited three others. An emeritus professor of history and international affairs at George Washington University, he has served as Director of the National History Center and President of the North American Conference of British Studies and he has been awarded Guggenheim and National Humanities Center fellowships.

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The Haunted Hubris of British Explorers in Nineteenth-Century Africa

Dane Kennedy
George Washington University, Washington, DC

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For Hazel and Caleb

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was written during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had completed the archival research earlier, so when the pandemic forced all of us into isolation, I retreated to my basement study and entered the distant world described in these pages. I'll leave it to the reader to decide if its conditions of production have left their mark on what I've written.

I am very grateful to the following individuals for the assistance and support they gave me during the preparation of this work. Charles Withers, whose knowledge of Mungo Park and British exploration's geographical context is unparalleled, kindly read the entire manuscript. He also shared his own excellent book about Park and the search for the Niger while it was still in press. I am grateful as well to the anonymous reviewers of Cambridge University Press for their very helpful comments. Nemata Blyden, Timothy Parsons, and Richard Price also read various chapters in the draft, providing astute comments and suggestions. Ian Broinowski supplied valuable information about the later career of his ancestor Major William Gray in Tasmania. Padraic Scanlan generously shared some of his research in the Sierra Leone archives and guided me to other useful sources. I got helpful advice and assistance from Ed Armston-Steret, David Lambert, Christop Marx, Douglas Peers, Jake Richards, and David Silverman. And though I never met him, I want to express my gratitude to the late Bruce Mouser, whose annotated edition of Captain Thomas Campbell's expedition journal was indispensable in writing this book. The maps were made by Bill Nelson.

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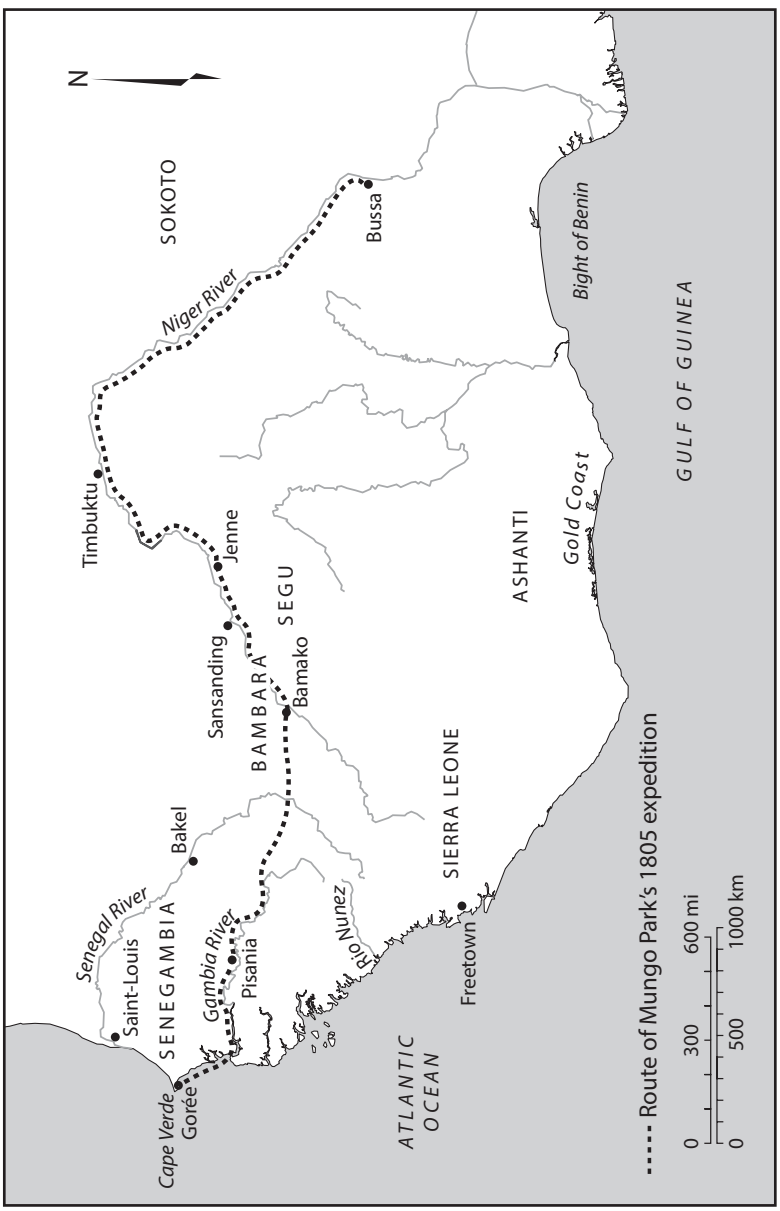
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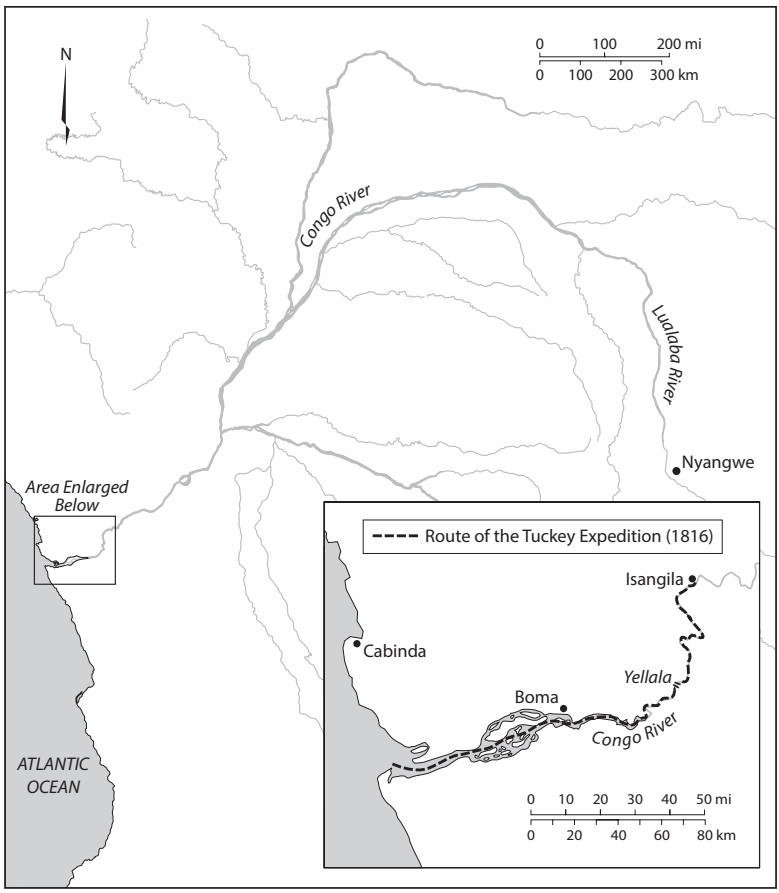
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Map 1 Route of Mungo Park's 1805 Expedition

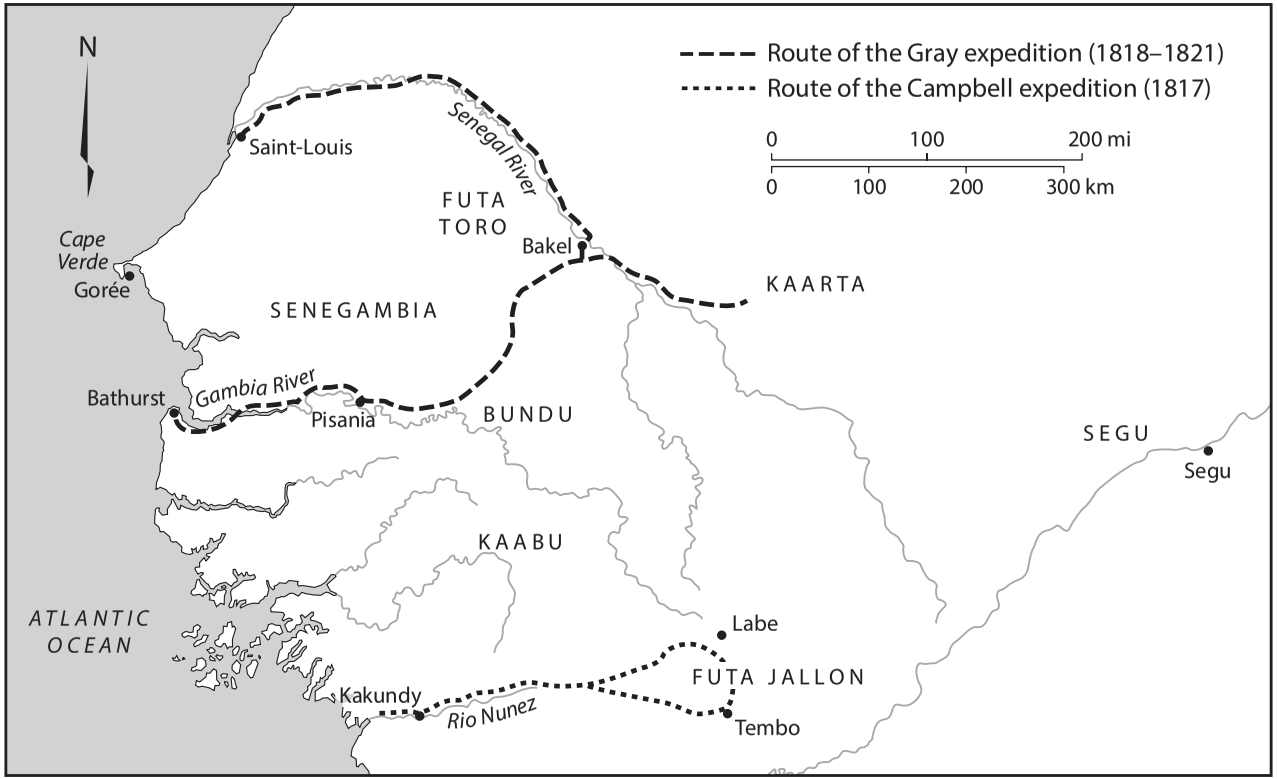
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Map 2 Route of Tuckey's Congo Expedition (1816)

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Map 3 Routes of the Niger Expeditions of Campbell (1817) and Gray (1818–1821)

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