

Design Rationale

The narratives of travel writers who visited the Cape Colony during the eighteenth and nineteenth century combine elements of adventure and drama with more serious scientific motives. Most of these writers were scientists involved in describing and classifying the species of the natural world, and it is this undercurrent which I attempted to highlight through my design.

Scientists of this period assigned plants, animals, and human beings to categories which were absolute, and I showed this by choosing a very restricted color pallet of mostly white, black, and grey. I included a scarlet red color, not only for its popularity in period portraits, but for its association with the British Empire as well. For the majority of text, including navigation, I used a very basic sans font which signifies a scientific exactness and simplicity. For headings I chose palatino linotype, a classic font which represents the authority with which these travelers wrote.

The home page background image is a painting of the first permanent Dutch settlement at the cape, which I grayscaled and made transparent in order to fit the theme. The large palatino heading and rich portrait of Sir Joseph Banks (a major financier and a traveler himself) make this page somewhat inviting. The second page, by contrast, is much more reflective of the typological nature of exploration. The background image shows a species chart, the portrait of Carl Linnaeus is much more formal and dry than that of Joseph Banks, and sans font dominates.

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The Cape Voyages Archive



Many of the most substantial accounts of colonial South Africa are drawn from travel narratives: books written by visitors to the Cape which were popular with audiences in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. While these narratives attracted readers with exoticism, adventure, and humor, they were also deeply concerned with ethnography and biological classification.

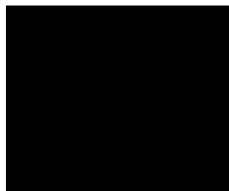
CAROLI LINNÆI

When Carol Linnaeus published *Systema Naturae* in 1735, he revolutionized the field of biology. In a frenzied race to bring order to life on the planet, Linnaeus and his apostles scooured the globe for new species.



Scientists and the Cape

Many of the travel writers who visited the Cape were botanists by profession. Anders Sparrman and C.P. Thunberg were both students of Carl Linnaeus. Francis Masson and William Burchell were botanists as well. Classification was their specialty, and they tended to ascribe traits to the racial and cultural groups they encountered.



Hex: 000000
R:0 G:0 B:0



Hex: 731606
R:115 G:22 B:6



Hex: 4b4b4b
R:75 G:75 B:75



Palatino Linotype for Headings

Sans for Text