

82. Under the shade of colonialism: Mary Kingsley and her *Travels in West Africa*

Ecevit BEKLER¹

APA: Bekler, E. (2023). Under the shade of colonialism: Mary Kingsley and her *Travels in West Africa*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö13), 1335-1346. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1379360.

Abstract

Texts are not independent entities that are detached from their social, ideological, economic and cultural background. They are shaped by their authors who are affected by the discourse of their times. Thus, they make valuable sources in getting more information about social, political, and economic conditions of their periods. Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*, as a part of colonial discourse, reflects the colonial world at the end of the Victorian period, which was rich in literature. This was a period during which British Imperialism reaches at its peak and leads to the saying, "the empire on which the sun never sets". *Travels in West Africa*, as a travel narrative, serves the interests of the colonizing powers by describing the lives of the natives in West Africa and their lands sometimes using wry humour, unlike some other contemporary fictional works that depict a savage and brutal Africa as the dark continent. Michel Foucault's theories regarding discourse and power have been used to understand the ideological formations and power relations in the mentioned travel account in the second half of the nineteenth century. Kingsley's female narrative, with its representation of Africa, echoes the superiority of the white over the black through an embedded ideology in text.

Keywords: Keywords: West Africa, colonial discourse, Mary Kingsley

Sömürgeciliğin gölgesi altında: Mary Kingsley ve *Batı Afrika'da Seyahatler* adlı çalışması

Öz

Metinler sosyal, ideolojik, ekonomik ve kültürel arka planlarından kopuk bağımsız varlıklar değildir. Dönemin söyleminden etkilenen yazarları tarafından şekillendirilirler. Böylece dönemlerinin sosyal, siyasal ve ekonomik koşulları hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmede değerli kaynaklar haline gelmektedirler. Mary Kingsley'in *Batı Afrika'da Seyahatler* adlı çalışması, sömürgeci söylemin bir parçası olarak edebiyat açısından zengin olan Viktorya döneminin sonundaki sömürgeci dünyayı yansıtır. Bu, İngiliz Emperyalizminin doruğa ulaştığı ve "üzerinde güneşin batmadığı imparatorluk" söyleminin olduğu bir dönemdir. Bir seyahat anlatı kitabı olarak *Batı Afrika'da Seyahatler*, Batı Afrika'daki yerlilerin ve onların topraklarındaki yaşamlarını, Batı Afrika'yı vahşi ve acımasız bir kara kıta olarak tasvir eden diğer bazı çağdaş kurgusal eserlerin aksine, bazen alaycı mizah kullanıp anlatarak sömürgeci güçlerin çıkarlarına hizmet eder. Michel Foucault'nun söylem ve güç ile ilgili teorileri, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında yazılmış söz konusu seyahatnamedeki ideolojik oluşumları, iktidar ve güç ilişkilerini anlamak için kullanılmıştır. Kingsley'in kadın yazar olarak

1 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Dicle Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD. (Diyarbakır, Türkiye), ebekler@dicle.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7080-6267 [Araştırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 14.08.2023-kabul tarihi: 23.10.2023; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1379360]

Afrika'yı anlatan bu çalışması, beyaz insanların siyahlara karşı üstünlüğünü metin içerisine konumlandırılmış bir ideoloji olarak yansıtır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Batı Afrika, sömürgeci söylem, Mary Kingsley

1. Introduction

From the beginning of history, travel writing was mainly thought to be masculine genre. Even in the 19th century Victorian period it was not appropriate for women to travel and keep records of their experiences and publish them under their own name since the ideal woman was generally considered to be the angel in the house. Women's place was the domestic sphere and the transition from the private sphere to the public sphere was not easy since in accordance with the gender roles constructed in the society, women were expected to stay home, look after children, do the cleaning and cook when their husbands arrived home. Travel writing, as a literary genre, was under the control of men for a long period.

However, there were some exceptional women who contributed to this genre long before the Victorian era. "[T]he first autobiography in the English language was written by a pilgrim, Margery Kempe (1373–1440), about her journeys throughout Europe and to the Holy Land" (Polk, 2004, p. viii). There were women who wrote about their travel experiences even in the 15th and 16th centuries but since literature was under the domination of men, recorded writing by women occupies only a small place in the literary tradition dominated by patriarchal discourse. Korte (2000, p. 110) states that in the Victorian period British women accompanied their husbands and families throughout the British Empire and they also travelled independently, as explorers, missionaries or simply for pleasure. Mary Kingsley, as a Victorian era woman, succeeded in traveling through the inner parts of West Africa and wrote about her experiences successfully in two books: *Travels in West Africa, Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons* (1897) and *West African Studies* (1899). Her books can be considered an important source regarding relations of power and the discourse of its time.

Michel Foucault, who was one of the leading thinkers and historians of the twentieth century, developed theories that focus on power, knowledge, and social control mechanisms that circulate within a society in a specific time. His works such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge, Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality*, and *Power/Knowledge* have been made use of in order to better analyse and comprehend the colonial discourse in Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*. Thus, the ideology that creates its own subjects within a specific time period makes itself more visible by using Foucault's theories. As a historian, he dwelt on the functions of discipline and punishment systems in different centuries, from medieval times to modern times.

Foucault, analysing the historical developments and changes, believed that discourse and power relations are specific to their period in history. According to Foucault (1978, p. 93), power functions in a complex way. Rather than working from the top to the bottom, it comes from everywhere. Therefore, repressive apparatuses cannot be held responsible for its operation. There is no sole person or sovereign that possesses the power. On the contrary, it is executed by everyone in a complex relationship. It exists when it is put into action, which means that every individual has the potential of contributing to and changing a situation.

2. Analysis of Travels in West Africa

Mary Kingsley was born in London in 1862 (Penguin Books UK, 2022). Her father George Henry Kingsley, a medical doctor, was an explorer who made long journeys to distant lands and recorded his experiences. This must have influenced his daughter, who would follow her father's path in discovering new places with the expectation of writing a book based on her own travels. Since she was not allowed to pursue education during that time, Kingsley developed herself and expanded her knowledge by making use of her father's notes and diaries. It was then that she acquired the spirit of travelling.

In the Victorian period, many girls were home educated, and this was true for Kingsley as well. As a young girl, she made use of "her father's library of natural history, travel narratives, science, and anthropology" (*TWA*², p. xi). It was during this time that she gathered detailed information about travels and exotic places such as Africa. When they moved to Cambridge in 1886, she found herself in "an academic community" (*TWA*, p. xi), which helped her to become more knowledgeable especially on exploring Africa. Kingsley, although home-educated, was affected by many stories that made it a must for her to visit West Africa. Richard Burton, a British explorer, impressed Kingsley with his search of the Nile and his visits to the French Congo, the Gorilla Land, and adventures among the Fang³ people (Wagner, 2004, pp. 17-18).

Between 1870 and 1875, Kingsley's father was in the United States and accompanied General Custer in expeditions made against the Sioux people. He was away at intervals for long periods and Kingsley, like many women of her time, was expected to follow the usual career path determined by the patriarchal order in late Victorian England. It was thanks to her family inheritance that she could finance her travels (*TWA*, p. xvii).

When her father set out for Burma in 1893, Kingsley decided to go to West Africa "to complete what she describes as her father's anthropological studies" (*TWA*, p. xii). She followed the route Freetown (Sierra Leone), Congo Free State via Cape Coast (Ghana) and the Oil Rivers (Nigeria) to Luanda in Angola. She sold her 200-page travelogue titled *The Bights of Benin* to Macmillan after her first visit to Africa (*TWA* xii). Kingsley, in different parts of *Travels in West Africa*, reminds her readers that she was in Africa for scientific purposes. For example, she states that her main aim in going to Congo Français was to get up above the tide line of the Ogowé River⁴ and there collect fishes and that her reason for going into the geographical details was, in her own words: "[N]o region in Africa, certainly no region of equal importance, is so little known in England" (*TWA*, pp. 96, 359). Kingsley considers Africa to be in a state uninfluenced by European ideas and culture during her visit. In another part of the book, she explains the reason for going to West Africa saying that her chief motive was to study the African form of thought (*TWA*, p. 436). Thus, it is clear that she was in Africa for ethnographic and scientific reasons in addition to for its geography.

In 1894, she embarked from Liverpool on her second voyage, this time to Calabar, Nigeria. The following year she visited southern Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and could observe the Fang people in detail. Furthermore, in 1895 she climbed 13,760-foot-high Mount Cameroon, becoming the first white

² Kingsley, Mary. *Travels in West Africa*. Penguin Classics, 2015. Hereafter, the book is referred to as *TWA*.

³ The Fang mainly inhabit the hot, humid, equatorial rain forests of Gabon, making up 80% of the Gabonese population. The Fang are also known for their older practice of cannibalism, which they practiced unashamedly during the 17th centuries and earlier. During the early years of European settlement many resorted to elephant hunting to provide ivory for the traders (Africa Guide, 2022).

⁴ Ogooué River, also spelled Ogowé, stream of west-central Africa, flowing in Gabon for almost its entire course (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022).

woman to reach its peak. On her return to England, she met the novelist Rudyard Kipling, who would describe Kingsley as “the bravest woman of all my knowledge” (*TWA*, p. xii; Wagner, 2004, p. 7).

Although Kingsley was not a poor woman when her parents were alive, she had to finance herself after the death of her parents. Korte states that Kingsley financed her journey by collecting biological samples for the British Museum (2000, p. 111). Her bravery allowed her to achieve a number of remarkable accomplishments. Alison Blunt accredits Kingsley with being “the first European to cross from the Ogowé to the Rembwé by the route she followed” (Hällén, 2011, p. 65). She made careful observations and had unforgettable experiences, which she recorded in details. “She packed two diaries—one for scientific and geographical information, the other to serve as a personal journal” (Wagner, 2004, p. 3). Kingsley, like the other women of her time, was naturally affected by the social, political, and cultural conditions in which she lived.

In a society, gender roles are constructed starting from the early years of the childhood. The Victorian period was a period in which women were confined to the domestic sphere and were expected to perform tasks that were deemed appropriate for them by the patriarchal discourse. It was due to the discourse of the nineteenth century that men were regarded superior compared to women. The social control of women made them conform to the traditional rules. It was through the discipline imposed by men that they were made obedient. “[D]iscipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies” (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). It is the disciplinary power that controls women and this has been continuing for centuries. Women’s rights in Victorian era were not equal to those of men. Traditional roles required women not to transgress the boundaries set for women. “[T]hey were placed on a pedestal and worshiped. Coventry Patmore’s long poem in praise of his wife, *The Angel in the House* (1854–62), was widely admired and became a best-seller” (Nassaar, 2004, p. 95). Serving one’s husband as a housewife was seen as a virtuous act. However, there were women like Mary Kingsley who wanted to defy the established roles. Foucault (1978, p. 95) argues that “where there is power, there is resistance...”, implying that power relations are inseparable from resistance. Power is subverted to be used for its own ends. Othering produced by power relations and resistance against it is a part of web-like system where power is exercised.

Kingsley was born at a time when the rights granted to women were restricted. The potential of women was ignored and the public sphere was owned and controlled by men. “Mary Kingsley had been born and raised in a context where the number of female voters had been reduced by the Reform Act of 1832” (*TWA*, p. xvi). Women had not gained their voting rights even with the Reform Acts of the nineteenth century that aimed at eliminating inequalities of representation especially for men. “[O]n the 10th January 1918 the House of Lords gave approval for women over the age of thirty to have the right to vote” (Brain, 2022). Confinement of the women by men and the control of individuals is carried out through surveillance and discipline. In the nineteenth century this can be seen through religion, using army, and capitalism. Women are deprived of power and they are “forced to remain ignorant” (Foucault, 1978, p. 99) in the male-dominated society.

As a courageous white woman, Kingsley had many adventures in West Africa and she traded with the local populations as well. “Though Europeans had been settling and trading in West Africa since as far back as the 1490s, there had been hardly any women among them. European traders in Africa were male...” (*TWA*, p. xv). Foucault claims that the foci of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain types of behaviour (1978, p. 96). In a way Kingsley defied the constructed gender roles by traveling alone as a

woman to Africa, which contrasted with the ideological framework of the time. Nevertheless, she was shaped both by the colonial and patriarchal discourse of her time even if she seems to subvert the established order of the hegemonic discourses. There are different instances that show Kingsley's inclination for the gender roles. While Agnes, in a proud manner, tells Kingsley that she does his reverence's washing, Kingsley uses the sentence, "Vanity, thy name is Woman!" (TWA, p. 430). Rather than seeing a moral and ethical dimension in the religious service, Agnes is proud of how well she washes the priest's garment. Kingsley almost seems to deplore the washerwoman's total acceptance of her limited role, and the lack of education that has led to this total acceptance.

Kingsley has already accepted the norms and Victorian feminine decorum. Referring to some native languages that lack linguistic gender, she complains about being called 'Sir' by some local people. She expresses that she is a most lady-like old person, she never even wears a masculine collar and tie, and "as for encasing the more earthward extremities of [her] anatomy in... [she] would rather perish on a public scaffold" (TWA, p. 509).

Although some women who travelled in different parts of the world preferred cross-dressing in order to disguise themselves so that they could not have problems, Kingsley insisted on wearing female clothes. She was not afraid of revealing her female identity. "Kingsley even suggests that her life was saved by wearing a skirt when she fell into a pit filled with elephant tusks" (Korte, 2000, p. 118). Furthermore, she approves the gender roles of her time and considers hunting to be an activity for men. She is habitually kind to animals and does not think it is ladylike to shoot things with a gun (TWA, p. 551).

It seems she has already accepted the potential of women and sees the same situation with many African women. Based on her observations among African tribes, she considers the situation regarding the position and power of the women in the society as "notably deficient in real reverence for authority" (TWA, p. 532). Kingsley's approach and submissiveness to gender inequality is confirmed as she states that "for men are undoubtedly more gifted in foresight than our sex" (TWA, p. 533).

Travels in West Africa was written at the peak of British colonialism and as a literary text it reflects the colonial mentality although it was written by a female traveller and writer. Works of literature were written at a particular time to address the interests of people. In this regard, it can be said that *Travels in West Africa* had the purpose of giving detailed information about people(s) living in West Africa in order to lead more Europeans (especially British) to explore the depth of Africa and gain more advantages for the colonizers. Although there are subversions against colonization, they are contained since cultural values of the colonizers in the travelogue are elevated to the level of superiority over the culture of the native people. That the Africans are subdued is an outcome of colonial hegemony and power relations.

In order to justify colonialization, colonial powers claimed that they would curtail slavery in Africa. "While the transatlantic slave trade had at length ceased in 1866, the internal slave trade continued apace, domestic slavery was commonplace..." (TWA, p. xxi). The problem of colonization was thus effectively a problem of the control of labour and the moral justification of that control (p. xxii). New markets in Africa meant new economic resources coveted by the European powers. When Kingsley started her travels in West Africa, the continent had already been shared by the European powers.

From November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885, 14 nations gathered in Berlin to decide how best to carve up the African continent. The attendees included most of the European nations (except Switzerland) and the United States, but five powers essentially ran the meeting and most heavily

influenced its outcome: France, Germany, England, Portugal, and an entity labelled “the International Association of the Congo,” which was essentially acting on behalf of the Belgian king, Leopold II. (Wagner, 2004, p. 27)

The colonizers, believing that they were superior in all aspects to the indigenous populations living in Africa, did not feel the need of negotiating with them. They were ready to suppress any uprising that might occur. The Africans themselves could not stand against the more modern weapons owned by the colonizers.

There are times when Kingsley seems to subvert the colonial discourse. Describing the Africans as creatures that love cruelty and blood for their own sake, she states that one should observe African culture first hand and thus understand that they are far from being the brutal fiends they are often painted. The Africans have slavery, the lash, and death in place of modern institutions such as lunatic asylums, prisons, workhouses, hospitals, etc. (*TWA*, p. 506). Institutions have had different functions regarding dealing with the subjects vary from period to period. Foucault (1988) dwells on the history of madness in his book titled *Madness and Civilization* stating that the approach to mental illness and the criteria used to define a person as mad changed from period to period: “We leave it to medical archaeology to determine whether or not a man was sick, criminal, or insane who was admitted to the hospital for ‘derangement of morals,’...” (pp. 65-66). Kingsley is in fact comparing the conditions in Africa and Europe and she implies that those in Europe are just a product of industrialization. In another case, she mentions that she has seen many Portuguese being cruel to Africans (*TWA*, p. 58). However, Kingsley’s approach does not remove herself from seeing herself and her culture superior over the Africans and their culture.

Kingsley narrates a story, probably a modified parable, that was created by the Jesuit Fathers earlier and preached by them, which made the Cabindas believe in its truth. However, the story was purposefully created by the colonizers in order to realize the religious and political dreams of the white men by convincing the black men and converting them in the end. The story goes as follows:

God made at first all black – He always does in the African story – and then He went across a great river and called men to follow Him, and the wisest and the bravest and the best plunged into the great river and crossed it; and the water washed them white, so they are the ancestors of the white men. (*TWA*, p. 438)

Foucault (1995, p. 194) believes that subjects are constructed through power, which functions differently in different periods: “[Power] produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth”. It is through power that the standards of truth are determined and normalization occurs within intricate power relations. For Foucault, the discourse of a specific time creates its own truth and the truth is the outcome of knowledge whose norms are defined by power. Therefore, the modified parable above serves the interests of the colonizers.

Kingsley does not portray a dark and brutal Africa as Joseph Conrad did. Kingsley’s views are often ridiculously colonial. That is, her acceptance of the colonial viewpoint leads to ridiculous statements about Africa. Her tone is soft, reflecting the feminine softness. However, she assumes an authoritative tone. She praises the existence of colonial powers in Africa and expresses her gratitude to the colonial representatives from countries such as France, Germany, Britain, and Spain (*TWA*, p. 15). She remembers Bonny’s maxim “Be afraid of an African if you can’t help it, but never show it anyhow” (*TWA*, p. 128), which shows the prejudices and peremptory categories already formed by the Western world.

In different parts of the book Kingsley, sometimes humorously, stresses the illiteracy of the Africans and mentions unskilled natives: “Now it is an ingrained characteristic of the uneducated negro, that he cannot keep on a neat and complete garment of any kind” (*TWA*, p. 39). Talking about the abundance of fish on the West African Bank, she says the native cook very rarely knows how to cook them (*TWA*, p. 46). Moreover, Kingsley does not mind mentioning some black men as “lazy” while on board *Lafayette* as she listens to the sound of the waves (*TWA*, p. 391). Foucault (1995, p. 199) mentions binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal) that the authorities use to control individuals. Similarly, it seems binary oppositions “white and black”, “civilized and savage”, and “hardworking and lazy” are at work in this travelogue.

Knowledge is power. Foucault (1995, p. 27) states that “power produces knowledge”. Power and knowledge are interrelated. The relationship between them is so strong that one cannot exist without the other. It is power that determines the norms through knowledge in a society, and these norms shape the subjects with specific modes of thoughts and behaviours.

The concept of ideology by the French philosopher Louis Althusser (1984, p. 7) is explained as follows: “[T]he school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches ‘know-how’, but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its ‘practice’”. He further mentions Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and “Repressive State Apparatuses”. With Repressive State Apparatuses, Althusser refers to the administration, the army, the court, the prisons, etc. ISAs, on the other hand, mean apparatuses such as religion, family, trade unions, cultural institutions, etc. (pp. 16-17). The colonizers use both ISAs and the Repressive State Apparatuses to control the natives. Considering Kingsley’s expected mass of readers in Britain, it should not be a surprise for her to address people of the same ideology. Her following words regarding controlling and disciplining the natives support the thesis of this study: “Now and again that very hard-working little vessel, the gunboat stationed at Libreville, goes up river to see whether the natives are behaving properly, or to point out their errors to them” (*TWA*, p. 355).

Kingsley mentions two persons whom she thought were effective in West Africa during colonization. Du Chaillu, the French-American explorer and anthropologist, is “the inaugurator of geographical knowledge” in the region according to her (*TWA*, p. 374). It was Du Chaillu who first made the Western world aware of many African peoples, their cultures, and the existence of animals such as gorillas. The other one is de Brazza, an Italian-born French explorer, who followed a strategy that aimed at convincing the Africans so that they could easily accept the Western colonization. Kingsley clearly expresses her admiration for him: “[H]e attains power over their natives, and retains it, welding the districts into a whole, making the flag of his country respected and feared therein, he is a very great man indeed” (*TWA*, p. 360). De Brazza asks Ngampey, a clan chief, to make a choice “between the cartridge and the flag” he sent him. He adds that one will be the sign of a war without mercy, the other a symbol of a peace as profitable to the black as to the colonizers. He then plants the French flag as a symbol of friendship and protection (*TWA*, pp. 366-367). Foucault’s concept “carceral network” (1995, p. 298) explains how individuals are manipulated in a community through disciplinary mechanisms.

Language has an important function in getting people to perceive the world. Since language and culture are inseparable, teaching of the English language was one of the main aims of British colonizers. Language has the power of instilling the ideology of the dominant culture into the minds of the colonized. Kingsley finds the administrator of the Ogowé amiable and charming because he speaks English with her (*TWA*, p. 158). In another instance, she mentions a decree by the French government

which requires teaching of French to children in territories under the French domination. Kingsley favours the English language over French and other European languages claiming that the Africans pick up English sooner than any foreign language (*TWA*, p. 215).

Although she favours her native language English over other European languages, when it comes to the African natives, they are othered by Kingsley, who keeps the side of the French, another colonial power in Africa. When she travels aboard the Lafayette towards Alondo, children spit at her and shout 'Frenchy no good' in English and broken Spanish. Kingsley, who has chosen to be under the protection of the French flag above Njole, feels the need of protecting it from insult. She further says: "Moreover, the blood of the Vikings that is in me gets up on its own account at such treatment, and I make up my mind to suitably correct those children" (*TWA*, p. 396).

The word choice by Kingsley to refer to the natives is not very different from that of the colonizers. She is sometimes naming the natives "pagan" (*TWA*, p. 253). Although she sometimes uses a humorous language while describing the cannibalism of the natives, she mentions that it is not advisable to play with them or attempt to eradicate the Africans since "one white alone with no troops to back him means a clean finish". She suggests overcoming such obstacles without shedding blood and thus keeping the self-respect, which is the mainspring of the Western power in West Africa (*TWA*, p. 336).

Mapping of the locations and geographical sites in Africa takes an important place according to Kingsley. She has used the names of places as they have been published, and with help from Mr R. B. N. Walker, she forms a list of these names spelt in conformity with the native pronunciation. She further appends them in footnotes in her travelogue for future travellers (*TWA*, p. 359). Colonizers add alternative names from their own native languages such as English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese for the native language words, thus eliminating cultural values imbedded in geographical names.

Kingsley is aware of the difficulties in transportation and travel in Africa so she supports the construction of railways and the use of steamers to travel long distances by rivers, which is a sign of Western civilization. According to her, the partition of the Congo Free State among the powers in Africa is a requirement for the creation of this infrastructure (*TWA*, p. 368). Kingsley, thinking from the perspective of the colonizers, states that when the railway route from Congo Français to Lake Chad is completed, the richness of the country will be drained thanks to line of markets that will be formed. This trade-route will be really important for northcentral African commerce in ivory and for the trade of other African products (*TWA*, p. 374).

Regarding how the African peoples carry out trade, Kingsley gives information about how different tribes in West Africa exchange their goods. She mentions that native coinage equivalent is rare in West Africa and gives the example of the Fans, who use a native-made coin made of imitation axe-heads (*TWA*, p. 68). Instead of using coins Kingsley bartered goods with the local people. "[S]he outfitted herself as a trader. She returned to the Congo, and in a wooden canoe she plied the tributaries of the Congo River, trading goods with the natives and collecting fish for the British Museum" (Polk, 2004, p. xii). Since trading takes an important place in African life, Africans come to schools to learn ways of White men and language to be able to trade with them (*TWA*, p. 215). "[O]rder, high prices and European commodities dominate the coastal areas, but are replaced by disorder, low prices and African 'trade stuff in the interior" (Hallén, 2011, p. 98).

Mentioning the bush traders who are called black traders as well, Kingsley stresses how the black traders are treated differently just because of their colour. Since they travel in the depth of the forests, their chance of getting murdered is bigger but “the white governmental powers cannot revenge their death, in the way they would the death of a white man” (*TWA*, p. 321). Any trade carried out according to the usual practices of Europeans is more acceptable. The public ivory trade among the Fan is more welcome since it is “in accordance with European ideas of a legitimate trade” (*TWA*, p. 332). Similarly, taxation in the European way is more appropriate for Kingsley even if she must then recommend to her German friends that colonial authorities intervene to introduce an income tax into Cameroon and thus remove the local custom (*TWA*, p. 524).

Kingsley even makes a comparison between the colonies belonging to different states in Africa (*TWA*, p. 166). The territories she passes through belong to different colonizing countries. She thinks it would be interesting to compare the English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish governmental systems with each other since they have good and bad points (*TWA*, p. 554). Colonial discourse seems to be a natural phenomenon for Kingsley.

Of course, Kingsley got help for her exploration of Africa from different people. Colonial authorities, missionaries, government representatives, and traders provided her with necessary information about West Africa. She praises the missionary works in Africa (*TWA*, p. 224). Throughout the travelogue, she mentions various groups of missionaries and their tasks in Africa. The Wesleyan Mission, for example, is the largest and most influential Protestant mission on the West Coast of Africa and Kingsley is happy to announce that. She says that they are adding a technical department to its scholastic and religious departments, and the Basel Mission⁵ has given technical instruction to the natives. Since Africa is deficient in mechanical knowledge, such religious groups have more work to do (*TWA*, p. 37). The religious ambitions of the missionaries in Africa are blended with the political ones since they serve as pioneers in realization of colonial dreams of their countries.

While some missionary schools provide the native students only with religious and scholastic education, the others add technical instructions as well to their curriculum. Kingsley mentions that the Mission Évangélique does not undertake technical instruction. While the boys get religious and scholastic education, the girls get additional instruction from the mission ladies in sewing, washing, and ironing (*TWA*, p. 216). Foucault (1980, p. 3) states that the ideology of the dominant class determines what is ‘right’ or ‘not right’. “All of the governments support mission schools by grants” (*TWA*, p. 216). According to Foucault (1995, p. 170), the chief function of the disciplinary power is to “train”. “Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise”. The purpose of the colonizers is simply to transform the natives so that they become colonial subjects that act for the interest of the whites.

Agnes, as a local person who helps Kingsley, is happy with the missionary groups. She tells Kingsley that the local priest and friar Père and Frère teach the children to read French, and if a child is skilled, he is transferred to Gaboon (Gabon) to gain more skills in technical schools in connection with the headquarters of the Mission. Agnes herself speaks French grammatically and Coast English as well (*TWA*, p. 429), which makes it easier for her to be accepted by the colonizers.

⁵ A Protestant Missionary Society founded in 1815 in Basel, Switzerland. The society maintained missionary areas from Western Africa to China (University of Basel Institute for European Global Studies, 2022).

Kingsley mentions missionaries she encounters in different parts of the book, which shows that they expanded their activities throughout many territories. The missionaries are there to convert the heathen natives to Christianity, claiming that the natives' religion is primitive. Once Kingsley comes across an African convert to Christianity from the Basel Mission who can speak English well and read the Bible. The missionary helps them for accommodation by providing Kingsley and her companion with a hut that is divided into two chambers, one in which the children who attend the mission-school stay and one the abode of the teacher (*TWA*, p. 562). Kingsley shows how the children of the natives are educated and civilized from the colonial perspective. She is against using traditional methods that aim at changing the natives by simply saying: "Now you must civilise, and come to school, and leave off all those awful goings-on of yours, and settle down quietly" (*TWA*, p. 410). Instead, she suggests combining technical instruction in the mission teaching to Africans and thus instilling the ideas of discipline into the African mind. For her, this will prevent the degradation of Africa.

The means of control of the behaviours and life style of women were used by the colonizers during their colonization period. Schools, churches, hospitals, and prisons were used to operate the control mechanism in order to get African individuals to behave in specific forms in accordance with western norms. "Disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse..." (Foucault, 1972, p. 224). The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a prison model to control individuals, was used by Foucault to explain how individuals are controlled in their social life. Similarly, the Africans are in a position of being observed and controlled by "the white" who draw the boundaries of Africans' lives in religion, education, and daily economic activity.

Kingsley, who is regarded as a leading explorer of the Victorian period, conveys her experiences for those who would like to visit the continent. She is accompanied by Africans, whom she neither detests nor fears. She observes the language of the natives as well. She warns the philologist who visits the Fan to beware of regarding any word beyond two syllables in length as being of native origin. What Kingsley observes is not only the attitudes, customs, or religion of the black tribes. She describes the natural beauty of West Africa as well. Furthermore, she wanted to contribute to science by collecting insects, plants, and fish for the British Museum. She came across gorillas by travelling into the inner parts of West Africa. Kingsley, in her book, gives lively descriptions about the nature in West Africa. Kingsley's descriptions of Africa are indeed fascinating, especially when compared with the depiction of Africa in the works of Conrad.

One of Kingsley's friends warned her about Africa and advised her to go to Scotland instead when Kingsley expressed her intention to travel there (*TWA*, p. 11). However, as a determined woman, she ignored such suggestions and made preparations for her travel. She is bewitched by the natural beauty. In fact, it is a kind of charm blended with horror in the background. She describes spending the night out in the forests of Central Africa as follows: "It is like being shut up in a library whose books you cannot read, all the while tormented, terrified, and bored. And if you do fall under its spell, it takes all the colour out of other kinds of living" (*TWA*, p. 112). However, she stresses that when one knows the more of the West Coast of Africa, the more one realizes its dangers (*TWA*, p. 95). She mentions "the charming situation of being up a river" but "surrounded by rapacious savages" (*TWA*, p. 354). It seems Kingsley feels a powerful attraction to Africa but remains under the influence of the colonial mindset. She wants to serve as an intermediary between the black Africans and the European whites when she says the more she knows of the West Coast Africans, the more she likes them. Furthermore, she asserts that she considers them fool for their power of believing in things and feels the same for her fellow-countrymen when they believe in something that she cannot quite swallow (*TWA*, p. 507). It is as if she is drawing a

distinctive line between the naive and pure mind of the African, who may easily believe in stories told by the white, and the processed mind of the European, who easily believes in the savagery of the Africans.

Kingsley, who was heard by many people for her willingness to travel to West Africa, was warned not to travel to that continent, but she made her own decision and courageously travelled from the coasts of the continent into the interior. She did not hesitate to meet the natives who were considered savages by many white people. She thought she could build a relationship and communicate with them. Kingsley did not stop visiting Africa even after writing two books, *Travels in West Africa* and *West African Studies*. She made a third and final visit to Africa, during which she enlisted as a volunteer nurse during the Boer War but developed typhoid fever and died on 3 June 1900. Her body was carried out to sea on a warship and she was buried at sea as she had requested (TWA, p. xxi; YourDictionary, 2022).

3. Conclusion

Kingsley was a woman who risked her life in the name of exploring a continent with many dangers. She did not mind the Fan who were still considered dangerous for killing outsiders, the crocodiles, the venomous snakes that could bite her, the epidemic diseases that were common because of unhygienic conditions, and the other dangers. She devoted herself to exploration. Although she did not clearly support the colonial missions, she could not keep herself from admiring and morally supporting the colonial activities ranging from the missionary tasks to governmental ruling of the continent that included trade and economic exploitation of the natives. As a woman, she travelled to some of the interior parts of Africa that were not visited by the Europeans before, but she managed to do that under the shade of colonialism, the typical discourse of her time.

Considering the achievements accomplished by Kingsley, it can be said that she instilled in the mind of women that they could remove the boundaries that were set in front of them and Kingsley herself did that by overcoming first the boundaries in her mind and then the physical boundaries in Africa. She became a role model for women by contributing to the success of her own gender.

However, Kingsley could not escape the ideological constructs of her era, and her courageous travels in the dangerous forests of Africa seem to be conducted in the name of British colonial power. Although she seems to subvert the patriarchal discourse by traveling alone as a woman and defying the role of submissive women, she does not make any remarks that sound feminist. She yields to the ideology of her time regarding the gender roles. This study reveals that Mary Kingsley's portrayal of herself is contradictory, and in it, she displays no autonomy from or transcendence of either colonialism or traditional gender roles. Interestingly enough, her book contributed to colonialism by elevating it and it seems she was not aware of her being a subject like millions of people within the web of power relations.

References

- Africa Guide (2022). *Fang People*, Available at: <www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/fang.htm> (Accessed 18 Sept. 2022)
- Althusser, L. (1984). *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Brain, J. (2022). *Votes for Women-Historic UK*, Available at: <www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Votes-For-Women> (Accessed 18 Sept. 2022)
- Encyclopedia Britannica (2022). *Ogooué River*, Available at: <www.britannica.com/place/Ogooué-River> (Accessed 18 Sept. 2022)

- Foucault, M. (1972). *Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*. Translated by Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Vol. I, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-79*, (Ed. Colin Gordon). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in The Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, New York: Vintage Books.
- Hällén, N. (2011). *Travelling Objects: Modernity and Materiality in British Colonial Travel Literature about Africa*. Umeå: Dept. of Language Studies, Umeå U.
- Kingsley, M. (2015). *Travels in West Africa*. Penguin Classics.
- Korte, B. (2000). *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. Trans. Catherine Matthias. Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Penguin Books UK (2022). *Mary Kingsley*, Available at: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/authors/14719/mary-kingsley> (Accessed 28 Apr. 2022)
- Nassaar, C. S. (2004). Introduction to the Victorians: A Major Authors Anthology. In H. Bloom (Ed.), *The Victorian Novel* (pp.91-103). Chelsea House.
- Polk, M. (2004). "Introduction." Introduction. *Mary Kingsley: Explorer of the Congo*. By Heather Lehr Wagner. Philadelphia: Chelsea House.
- University of Basel Institute for European Global Studies (2022). *The Basel Mission*, Available at: europa.unibas.ch/en/research/global-history-of-europe/the-basel-mission (Accessed 18 Sept. 2022)
- Wagner, H. L. (2004). *Mary Kingsley: Explorer of the Congo*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House.
- YourDictionary (2022). *Mary Kingsley*, Available at: biography.com/mary-kingsley (Accessed 18 Sept. 2022)