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Query concerning Locke's Blurred Writing in BL Add MS 5415 G/4 "Map of Charles town, 1662"

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Abstract:

This query concerns the nature of John Locke's handwriting in a particular British Library manuscript. Sometime around 1671, Locke copied a chart of the Cape Fear River, Carolina: Add MS 5415 G/4 "Map of Charles Town, 1662." Therein, Locke's script is blurred—why?

Keywords: John Locke, Carolina, BL Add MS 5415 G/4, blurred script

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The three catalogue entries concerning John Locke's two Carolina charts require interpolation. The entry for his small-scale Carolina chart held at The National Archives, Kew begins at "TNA PRO 30/24/48/80 Transferred to MPI 1/11" leading to description "Map of the south eastern part of North America and part of South America from Yucatan to Chesapeake Bay, showing place names, shoals, rocks, mountains, degrees of latitude, and 'the great lake' (Lake Erie). . . . A dotted line across the map at about 29°N shows the southern limit of what was to become Carolina. . . . An MS note on the dorse reads 'Map of Carolina 71' ascribed to John Locke." That entry cannot be divorced from an entry following within that series at The National Archive nor from a British Library catalogue entry. Kew's second entry is "TNA PRO 30/24/48/82 Sir P Colleton to John Locke. Map of Carolina, with memoranda by Locke of authors, writers, and travellers. 1671." His large-scale Carolina chart is located at BL Add MS 5415 G/4 "Map of Charles Town, 1662."

PRO 30/24/48/80 is reasonably well what the entry describes: a small-scale Gulf of Mexico shore chart. While Carolina is included, this chart is neither of nor devoted to that land. While PRO 30/24/48/82 contains no map, its residuary part is a memorandum in Locke's hand and pertinent to Carolina "discovery." Having once fallen to fragments, PRO 30/24/48/82 is now set altogether through extensive conservation. The British Library item, Add MS 5415 G/4, relates to the memorandum within PRO 30/24/48/82. BL Add MS 5415 G/4 is best described by its head words, in John Locke's hand: "Discovery, made by William Hilton of Charles towne In New England, Marriner, from Cape Hatterash Lat: 35:30´ to the west of Cape Roman in Lat: 32.30´, In the year 1662, And layd Down in the forme as you see by Nicholas Shapley of the town aforesaid, November 1662" (punctuation added). Hilton surveyed Cape Fear River with much of Carolina's shores, and Shapley subsequently produced a proto-type large-scale river and shore chart. Beyond catalogue entries, reconciling BL Add MS 5414 G/4 with PRO 30/24/48/82's inherent ambiguity has yet to be concluded. Although the uncertain provenance of BL Add MS 5415 G/4 lies within the Sloane manuscripts, its origin clearly cannot be divorced from the Shaftesbury Papers.

However, all of Locke's script on BL Add MS 5415 G/4 is odd and most apparent in his head words. Locke wrote on what seems to be ordinary paper in deep toned oak-gall ink. The inscription is blurred, with an echo or shadow throughout. This blurring is of the type that comes from a "wet-duplication process," still in use in the mid-twentieth century but which had come into existence in the seventeenth. This blurring can also be similarised to ink writing on tracing-paper. None of this blurring is apparent within the rest of the Shaftesbury Papers at Kew.

- Can anyone throw further light on BL Add MS 5415 G/4's blurred script?
- Is this blurring just an odd example of Locke's writing, or possibly exemplifies some early duplication process?
- Could this particular blurring be due to his ink, paper, writing pedestal, or even the ambient air of his writing area?
- Are there other examples of Locke's blurred script?

The actual words of BL Add MS 5415 G/4's heading sends two different messages. Although the chart's descent from Hilton might have been otherwise deduced, its descent from Shapley not so. Silently, Locke wore greater numeracy than Samuel Pepys. That heading's co-ordinate data is shorthand, saving Locke the exact labour of marrying charted hydrography to conventional linear latitude; he then only sketched in a highly unorthodox square grid graticule—reproduced in John Carter Brown Library Blathwayt 19. That diagonal shorthand device may be unique; however, his numeracy ties in with that other part of PRO 30/24/48/82 regarding John Ogilby's ambition. A larger article on seventeenth century Cape Fear River cartography should appear this summer in *The Portolan*, the journal of the Washington Map Society.

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