

II. *A memoir on the geography of the north-eastern part of Asia, and on the question whether Asia and America are contiguous, or are separated by the sea. By Captain James Burney, F. R. S.*

Read December 11, 1817.

A BELIEF has prevailed for nearly a century, that the separation of America and Asia has been demonstrated by an actual navigation performed; and it is distinctly so admitted in the charts. It is proposed to show in this memoir, in the first place, that there does not exist satisfactory proof of such a separation; and secondly, that from peculiarities which have been observed, there is cause to suppose the fact to be otherwise; that is to say, that Asia and America are contiguous, and parts of one and the same continent. This is not an opinion newly formed, but one which many years ago was impressed on other persons as well as on myself, by circumstances witnessed when in the sea to the north of Bering's Strait with Captain Cook, in his last voyage.

America, from its first discovery by the people of Europe, was regarded by them as a land wholly distinct from their own native continent, till the failure of many attempts to discover a northern passage to India at length suggested the possibility that the Old and New World (as they were then called) formed but one continent. The solution of this problem, so far as regards a north-eastern navigation to India, has been more naturally the business of the Russians

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