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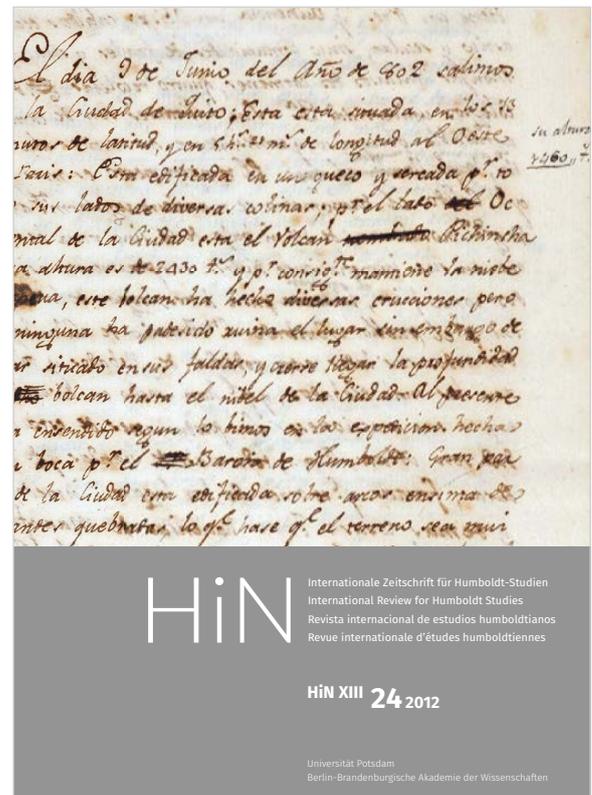
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# Tobias Kraft

## Textual Differences in Alexander von Humboldt's *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*. An editorial commentary on the first volume of the »Humboldt in English« (HiE) book series

### Summary

This study is based on an editorial report, which was presented at the 2009 working conference »Alexander von Humboldt and the Hemisphere« at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN). It demonstrates the textual genesis of Humboldt's writings on Cuba through examples, which were obtained from a detailed text comparison of the three existing »original« versions of Humboldt's *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*. The collation was part of a larger strategy to regain philological ground for the »Humboldt in English« (HiE) project. Since 2007 and funded with grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, and the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the US-German research team behind HiE has been working on new and unabridged translations and critical editions of three of Humboldt's most significant texts from his American oeuvre.<sup>1</sup> The following observations will outline the most important results of this collation effort as a complementary contribution to the recent release of the HiE project's first volume, *The Political Essay on the Island of Cuba* (Chicago University Press 2011), edited by Vera M. Kutzinski and Ottmar Ette.

### Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Studie basiert auf einem Editionsbericht, der 2009 im Rahmen der Konferenz »Alexander von Humboldt and the Hemisphere« an der Vanderbilt

University (Nashville, TN) vorgestellt wurde. Die für diese Publikation weiter entwickelte Untersuchung verdeutlicht die Textgenese von Humboldts *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* auf der Basis eines Textvergleichs zwischen allen drei "Originalquellen" des Texts. Der hier in seinen Ergebnissen vorgestellte Textvergleich ist Teil des Editionsprojektes »Humboldt in English« (HiE), bei dem sich ein US-deutsches Editorenteam seit 2007 zum Ziel gesetzt haben, kritische Neuübersetzungen von drei wichtigen Schriften aus Humboldts »Opus Americanum« anzufertigen (s.a. Fußnote). Der Textvergleich des *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* bildete die Textgrundlage für den ersten Band der HiE-Reihe, den 2011 bei Chicago University Press erschienenen *The Political Essay on the Island of Cuba* (hg. von Vera M. Kutzinski und Ottmar Ette).

### Resumen

El presente artículo se basa en un estudio, que fue presentado en 2009 en la conferencia »Alexander von Humboldt and the Hemisphere« en la Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN). El estudio ejemplifica la génesis textual del *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* a base de una colación de las tres fuentes »originales« del mismo texto. El estudio forma parte del proyecto editorial »Humboldt in English« (HiE), en el cual un equipo de investigadores estadounidenses-alemanes se han propuesto publicar nuevas ediciones críticas con traducciones nuevas de tres obras claves de la obra americana de Humboldt desde 2007 (véase las informaciones en el pie de nota). La colación crea la base textual para el primer volumen de HiE, *The Political Essay on the Island of Cuba* (eds. Vera M. Kutzinski y Ottmar Ette), publicado en 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on HiE, see the project's webpage at <http://site-mason.vanderbilt.edu/site/ld5WVv/hie>

## I. Text Corpus and Publication History

Editorial undertakings involving Alexander von Humboldt have been a challenge already in the Prussian's lifetime. They still are today.

Establishing the text corpus for the HiE edition of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* meant dealing not with one but with *three* different original versions of Humboldt's original text. The first and second versions are included in the three-volume quarto and the thirteen-volume octavo editions of Humboldt's *Relation historique [Personal Narrative]*,<sup>1</sup> in which the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* encompasses chapter 28. A third source of the original text is the free-standing 2-volume edition of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* from 1826, which was also printed in octavo format (see Humboldt 1826a, 1826b). All three texts can be considered authorized versions, given the fact that it was Humboldt who decided their final character and composition, and that they were printed while Humboldt was still alive (fig. 1).

4° RH (quart)	8° Essai politique (octave)	8° RH (octave)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vol. III (1825-1831)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vol. I (1826)</li> <li>• Vol. II (1826)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vol. IX (1825)</li> <li>• Vol. XI (1826)</li> <li>• Vol. XII (1826)</li> <li>• Vol. XIII (1831)</li> </ul>

Fig. 1: Comparative chart of the three authorized version of Humboldt's *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*, based on Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 77-81, 119-121, 130. "RH" stands for *Relation historique*.

At first glance, all three editions of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* appear to have a relatively simple publication history. The third volume of the *Relation historique*'s quarto edition (fig. 2a) was published in 1825 (with the final installments sent out as late as 1831, for more detail see ch. 2), followed in 1826 by the two volumes of the *Essai*'s free-standing edition (fig. 2b). In the same year (and mostly on the same dates), the eleventh and twelfth volumes of the octavo edition of the *Relation historique* were published as well (fig. 2c). One might conclude from this that the text evolved in chronological order. But matters are never that simple with Alexander von Humboldt, as Horst Fiedler and Ulrike Leitner showed in their seminal Humboldt bibliography (see Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 120-121).

<sup>1</sup> The quarto edition of Vol. III of the *Relation historique* is Humboldt and Bonpland 1825-31a, the octavo edition of the same text Humboldt and Bonpland 1825-31b. For a discussion of Williams' Humboldt translations see Kutzinski 2009.

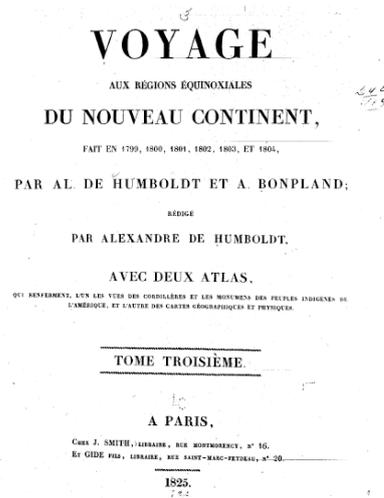


Fig. 2a: Title page of the *Relation historique*'s third volume (quarto, 1825)

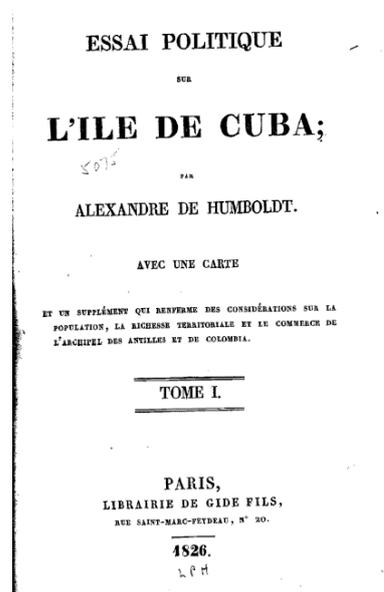


Fig. 2b: Title page of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*'s first volume (octavo, 1826)

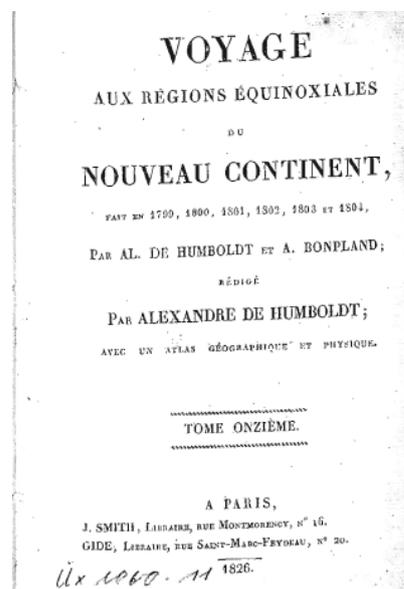


Fig. 2c: Title page of the *Relation historique*'s eleventh volume (octavo, 1826)

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To appreciate better the complexity of the almost simultaneous publication of multiple printed versions of this text, we need to start with the composition history of the free-standing 1826 edition of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*. It is in this – and only in this – edition, that Humboldt presents the *Essai* as a separate monograph. Yet, creating this edition, which clearly boosts the *Essai's* relevance as an extrapolation of his American travelogue, involved far more than extracting chapter 28 of the *Relation historique* and turning it into a separate two-volume study (fig. 3). Instead, Humboldt reassembled different and, at first sight, disparate parts of his broader narrative on the Americas into a new book in a both compressed and more extensive approach (i.e. leaving out the Notes of Ch. 26, while adding to the original *Essai* more than 300 pages of »new« text). While this new composition still focuses on Cuba, it is at the same time embedded in a complex textual structure that discusses Cuba not simply by itself but also intersects the island's figures with comparative data and analyses from Humboldt's research on all of the Americas. Humboldt achieves this by incorporating supplements that, in the free-standing edition, make up three-fourth of the second volume, that is, more than two-fifths of the entire text. The actual *Essai*, which itself was originally located at the end of his unfinished work on the American journey (ch. 28), now stands prior to the chapters 26 and 27 formerly preceding it, thus inverting the travelogue's chronological order. The inversion of the text's previous logic goes hand in hand with a strategy of textual reframing. This »new frame« consists of two parts: While the *Essai politique* is now followed and enhanced with comparative analyses (ch. 26 and 27), the text's opening is »new« (that is, resituated) as well. This opening is Humboldt's "Analyse raisonnée de la carte de l'île de Cuba" [Reasoned Analysis], hereby turning from a formerly subordinate segment of the *Relation historique's* appendix into a prominent prelude. Meant to be read and scrutinized together with the *Essai's* corresponding Cuban map, Humboldt's "geographical memoir" (Edney 2000, 170) now opens the *Essai* as a sort of macro-spatial introduction, starting like he would again in his *Kosmos*, from the large scale.

Hence, the transformed text has four key elements: (1) the "Analyse raisonnée," in which Humboldt shows the extent and accuracy of his measurements of the Cuban land mass, and in which he also points to his collecting and reassembling large amounts of data from other scientists and scholars in Europe and in the Americas; (2) the actual *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* itself, which encompasses volume 1 and the beginning of vol-

ume 2; (3) the "Supplément," which can be divided into two parts—one that provides a comparison for Humboldt's data and analyses on Cuba by comparing national economic, geographical, and statistical data on South America and the Caribbean, with a special focus

<i>Essai politique</i> - elements -	8 <sup>e</sup> <i>Essai politique</i> (Octave)	<i>Rel. Historique</i> - elements -	4 <sup>e</sup> RH (Quart)	8 <sup>e</sup> RH (Octave)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse raisonnée</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. I, VII-XLVI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. III, 3<sup>rd</sup> b. 580-592</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. XII, 1<sup>2</sup>-38<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essai</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. I, 1-364</li> <li>Vol. II, 5-92</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chap. 28 (w/ „Notes“)</li> <li>Chap. 28</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. III, 2<sup>nd</sup> b. 345-469</li> <li>Vol. III, 2<sup>nd</sup> b. 469-501</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. XIII, 2-45</li> <li>Vol. XI, 176-Vol. XII, 125</li> <li>Vol. XII, 125-212</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplément (Venezuela)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. II, 93-376</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chap. 26 (w/o „Notes“)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. III, 1<sup>st</sup> b. 56-154</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. IX, 136-419</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplément (Tableau de la population ...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. II, 377-408</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chap. 27</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. III, 1<sup>st</sup> b. 330-344</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vol. XI, 142-175</li> </ul>

Fig. 3: Comparative chart of the *Essai's* textual components and its corresponding editorial distribution in all of the three (in the case of the "Analyse raisonnée": four) original versions, based on Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 118, 130

on Venezuela; the second part, entitled "Tableau de la population considérée d'après la différence de race, de langue et de culte," discusses population according to race, language, and religious beliefs. These "population tableaux" include statistical data on all of the Americas with a special focus on the Caribbean.

With all this in mind, the compository autonomy of the self-standing *Essai politique* can be seen as an indication of Humboldt's attempt not only to republish his Cuban studies as separate books but to reorganize his monograph on the island as less of a nation text than one might think at first glance. Instead, the reassembling of the (already in itself comparative) Cuban text with his travelogue on Venezuela and his socio-economic analysis of the Caribbean riparian territories can be understood in terms of a geographical and political rethinking of Cuba as an integral part of a Circumcaribbean space in emergence. Thus, the Humboldtian text on Cuba evolves out of its travelogue origins into a generically hybrid composition, resembling a spatially complex configuration that the Humboldt scholarship has coined with the term *transareal* (see Ette 2007, 146).

**II. Publication dates and text distribution**

As was common in nineteenth-century publishing houses, Humboldt's books were typically first distributed as *fascicles*, which were separately published installments. Readers were often regular subscribers to certain titles of a publishing house, assuring with their subscription that they would not miss out on any of these fascicles,

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especially when they were interested in voluminous works like the ones Humboldt wrote. Naturally, not all editorial projects were finished quickly. Some facsicles appeared weeks, months, and even years apart, and only at the end of a sometimes painfully long process of collecting separate pieces of one work were readers able to have the complete item bound as a book. In Humboldt's case, readers had to be particularly patient. Not only did he never finish his *Personal Narrative*; he also took his time—17 years—to publish the existing parts. The three facsicles of volume III appeared over a period of six years: the first in June 1825, the second in October 1826, and the third in March 1831 (see Fiedler and Leitner, 70-81, 118-21, 130-31). And while the two volumes of the *Essai's* free standing edition were published simultaneously in October 1826 as well (next to the corresponding volumes XI and XII of the *Personal Narrative's* octavo edition), its including components spread out over *four* rather than two volumes of that same octavo edition, which itself has its final volume published as late as September 1831 (see for more – and hopefully less confusing – detail fig. 4).

(largely based on Fiedler and Leitner 77-81, 118-121, 130), three conclusions can be drawn:

(1) the free-standing *Essai* was published on the same day as the octavo *Relation historique*, that is, on October 28, 1826 and about three weeks after the quarto edition of the *Relation historique* (October 4, 1826). The main text of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* thus has not one but two definitive, that is, last authorized versions.

(2) The “Venezuelan” part of the free-standing edition's “Supplément” can be considered definitive, since it was published on October 28, 1826, more than a year after its corresponding parts of Vol. III of the quarto and Vol. IX of the octavo *Relation historique* had appeared. The same can be said for the second part of the “Supplément,” only that it was published simultaneously with Vol. XI of the octavo *Relation historique*. Once again, we are dealing with two last authorized versions of (supposedly) the same text.

(3) The “Analyse raisonnée” was first published in 1826 both in the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* and in the octavo *Relation historique*, and twice more in 1831, on March 19 in the quarto and on July 9 in the octavo editions. In this case, then, there are a total of *four* texts to compare, with a five-year gap between the first and the second two versions. The three conclusions lead to the realization that for an accurate textual comparison, we could not disregard any of the existing editions or assumed duplicates.

<i>Essai politique</i> - elements -	8° <i>Essai politique</i> (Octave)	<i>Rel. Historique</i> - elements -	4° RH (Quart)	8° RH (Octave)
• Analyse raisonnée	• Vol. I 10/28/1826	• Additions	• Vol. III, 3 <sup>rd</sup> b. 03/19/1831	• Vol. XII 10/28/1826
• Essai	• Vol. I 10/28/1826 • Vol. II 10/28/1826	• Chap. 28 (w/ „Notes“) • Chap. 28	• Vol. III, 2 <sup>nd</sup> b. 10/04/1826 • Vol. III, 2 <sup>nd</sup> b. 10/04/1826	• Vol. XIII 07/09/1831 • Vol. XI-XII 10/28/1826
• Supplément (Venezuela)	• Vol. II 10/28/1826	• Chap. 26 (w/o „Notes“)	• Vol. III, 1 <sup>st</sup> b. 06/27/1825	• Vol. XII 10/28/1826
• Supplément (Tableau de la population ...)	• Vol. II 10/28/1826	• Chap. 27	• Vol. III, 1 <sup>st</sup> b. 06/27/1825	• Vol. IX 10/22/1825
				• Vol. XI 10/28/1826

Fig. 4: Comparative chart of the *Essai's* textual components and its corresponding publication dates in all of the three (in the case of the “Analyse raisonnée”: four) original versions, thus combining figures 1 and 3, based on Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 77-81, 119-121, 130.

**III. Textual genesis and text comparison**

Only once the true chronological order of all existing versions and their corresponding segments had been established could the actual text comparison begin. By comparing the different versions of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* and its constituent elements—line by line and page by page—, every single variation, based on the free-standing edition, could be evaluated for its relevance for our editing and translating process. These variations allowed us to establish when Humboldt (or the editor/typesetter) made changes to specific parts of the text. Following the information shown in fig. 4

Given the complex textual genesis, we decided to undertake a detailed and complete comparison of all of the existing French textual segments. To make the text comparison transparent for future readers, we created a digital facsimile of our French base text (that is, the free-standing 1826 edition), which shows all textual variations that we detected in the different works (see fig. 5 as example). Readers can follow the textual genesis of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* in a complex PDF-file that blends in all textual variations and editorial comments without interfering with Humboldt's text itself. In each instance, the reader can decide whether to look at the original text with or without its variations by blending them in and out with a simple mouse click. The PDF-file renders visible the “interwovenness” of Humboldt's *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* as a continuous *work in progress*. As a supplement to this article, the Pdf-files of both volumes are presented here

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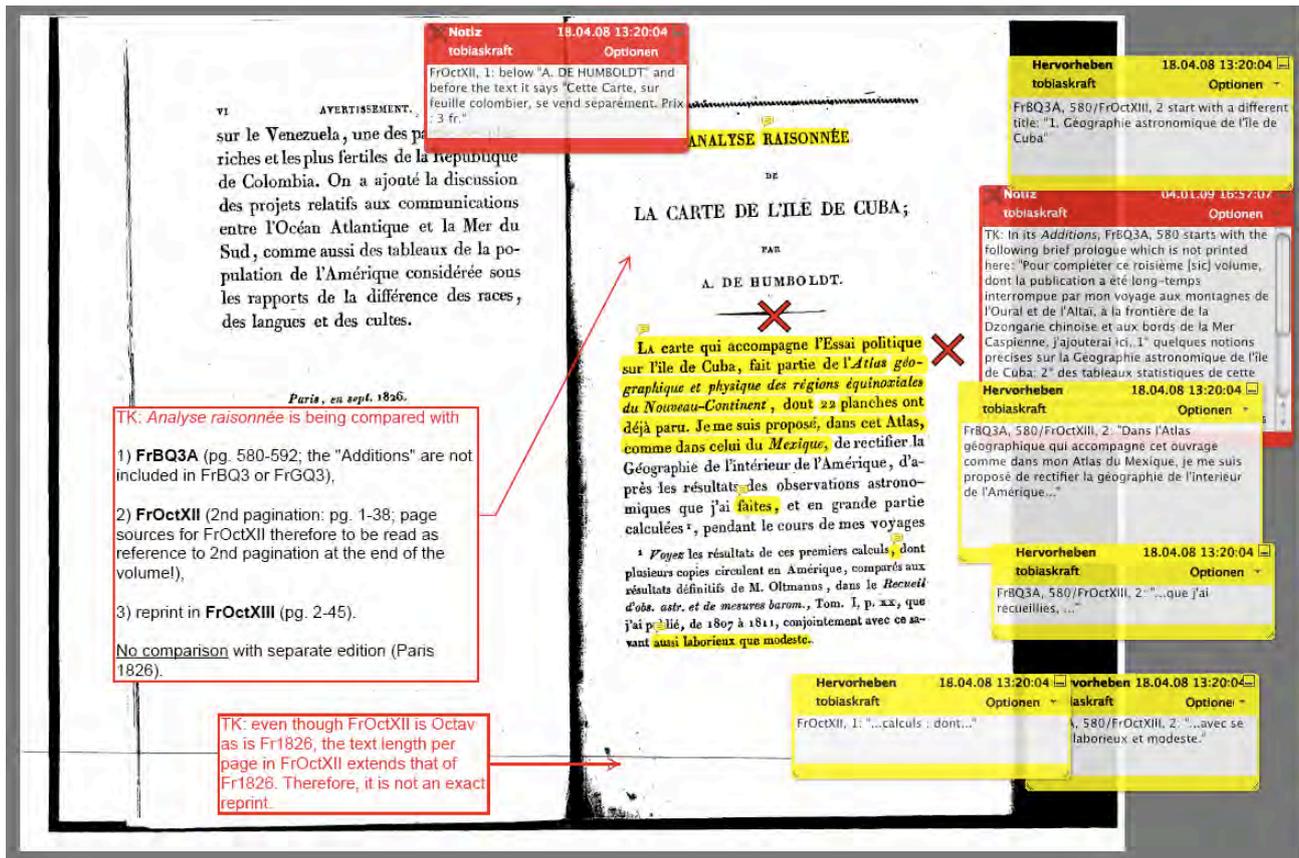


Fig. 5: Example page of the multi-layered PDF-file generated as research result of the HIE text comparison effort

for the first time [for download links see the HTML version of this article at [www.hin-online.de](http://www.hin-online.de)].<sup>2</sup>

While Horst Fiedler's and Ulrike Leitner's excellent bibliography notes that the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* was published simultaneously in the free-standing edition and in the two corresponding volumes of the octavo *Relation historique*, the two texts are not identical (see ch. 4 for a detailed analysis). In some cases, we even found small variations between the free-standing edition on the one hand and the two editions of the *Relation historique* on the other. Sometimes, all three sources vary. In the case of the four authorized versions of the "Reasoned Analysis", both definitive sources from 1831 often contain the same variations when compared with the two 1826 versions of the free-standing *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* and Vol. XII of the octavo *Relation historique*. But when compared with each other,

they differ in too many ways to be proclaimed identical texts. The numerous unique variations in Vol. XIII of the octavo *Relation historique* suggest that this version was probably prepared separately and not just an instance of recycling a printing plate from the Vol. XII edition that had been published five years before.

The following table will try to outline these findings, which have been gathered for the "Reasoned Analysis" and for the actual *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* (thus, not for the "Supplément", starting at p. 93 of the *Essai*'s second volume). The checkmarks ("X") indicate that the difference indicated in the left column occurs in this source, whereas checkmarks with a punctuation mark indicate variations even within the textual differences. The table lists all textual differences that can be found in the PDF-file except minor orthographical changes like variations in text layout (changing text size and line height in the quarto volume), upper/lower case writing (Géographe/géographe, etc.), different spellings (hidrográfico/hydrográfico; existait/existait, etc.), or missing accentuation (Bogotá/Bogota, etc.) and punctuation (different position or lack of commas). Unless they are actually false, neither are the differences in cross-referencing (i.e. when Humboldt cites himself in the *Relation historique*, either referring to the quarto or the octavo source respectively) mentioned. Exceptions are made

<sup>2</sup> Due to an internal working protocol, the PDF file uses different abbreviations for the sources compared than does this article. „FrBQ3A“ and „FrGQ3“ both refer to the *Relation historique*'s third volume quarto format (4° RH in figures 1, 3, and 4), while „FrOctIX“, „FrOctX“, „FrOctXI“, „FrOctXII“, „FrOctXIII“ refer to the respective volumes of the *Relation historique*'s octavo format edition (8° RH in figures 1, 3, and 4). „Fr1826“ refers to the free-standing edition of the *Essai politique*, which – of course – is the actual text underlying the commentary.

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when these minor variations actually do indicate an active (and not accidental) editing process.

Even though mainly not included in this list, all the minor variations are indicated in the two files.

#	Text elements	Sources			
		8° <i>Essai politique</i>	4° RH	8° RH	
	<b>Analyse raisonné</b>	<b>Vol. I (10/28/1826)</b>	<b>3rd batch (03/19/1831)</b>	<b>Vol. XII (10/28/1826)</b>	<b>Vol. XIII (07/09/1831)</b>
1	Different title (VII)		X		X
2	Added prologue (VII)		X'		X''
3	Emended conjunctive locution (VII)		X		X
4	Words added (VIII)		X		X
5	Word missing (X)		X		X
6	Different measurement unit (X)		X'		X''
7	Handling of footnote (X)		X'	X''	X'''
8	Plural instead of singular (XI)				X
9	Minor corrections (XVIII-XIX)		X		X
10	False cross reference (XXIV)		X	X	X'
11	Different word (XXVI)				X
12	Different cross reference (XXVIII)				X
13	Word changed (XXIX)				X
14	Word added (XXIX)				X
15	Word changed (XXX)		X		X
16	Word missing (XXXI)				X
17	Arabic instead of Roman number (XXXI)				X
18	Word instead of number (XXXII)				X
19	Personal name variation (XXXII)				X
20	Different measurement unit (XXXII)		X		X
21	Toponymic variation (XXXIII)				X
22	Paragraph missing (XXXVI)		X		X
23	Word missing (XL)				X
24	Large section added (XLVI)		X		X
	<b>Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba</b>	<b>Vol. I (10/28/1826)</b>	<b>2nd batch (10/04/1826)</b>	<b>Vol. XI-XII (10/28/1826)</b>	
25	Removed subtitles (1)	X			
26	Emended grammar (13)	X		X	
27	Emended punctuation (18)	X			
28	Different text layout (36-44)	X		X	
29	Longer footnote (37)		X	X	
30	Different ratio (42)		X		
31	Different personal name (49)		X		
32	Comma missing (51)		X	X	
33	Print error (53)	X			

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#	Text elements	Sources		
		8° <i>Essai politique</i>	4° RH	8° RH
34	Word misspelt (63)			X
35	Comma missing (63)		X	X
36	Emended grammar (69)	X		X
37	Redundant word (89)			X
38	Preposition added (99)	X		X
39	Simplified name for location (103)		X	
40	Emended punctuation (104)		X	X
41	Different measurement (105)		X	
42	Different measurement (108)		X	
43	Different toponym (112)		X	
44	Different date (year) (167)		X	
45	Different ratio (167)		X	
46	Cross-reference not adapted to the 8° edition (178)	X		X
47	Source reference missing (191)	X		X
48	Different amount (201)		X	
49	Different amount (221)		X	
50	Different amount (222)		X	
51	Different sentence (224)		X	
52	Different amount (238)		X	
53	Different amount (302)		X	
54	Words emended (323)		X	
55	Different reference source (327)		X	
56	Different text layout (241-245)	X		X
57	Emended noun (343)		X	X
58	Emended grammar (343)		X	
59	Different verb (351)		X	
	<b>Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba</b>	<b>Vol. II (10/28/1826)</b>	<b>2nd batch (10/04/1826)</b>	<b>Vol. XII (10/28/1826)</b>
60	Footnote missing (11)	X		X
61	Different year (81)		X	

#### IV. Conclusions to be drawn from the table and its findings

The textual comparison has allowed us to determine variations on a case-by-case basis and, at the same time, to cross-check variations with each other.

Looking at the first section of this table, we can see that in case of the "Analyse raisonné" most differences to the core text occur in the two 1831 versions of the manuscript (4° RH and 8° RH/Vol. XIII), while there are only two instances – records 7 and 10 –, in which the two apparently identical sources of 1826 (8° *Essai politique* and

8° RH/Vol. XII) differ from each other. Since there are 16 instances, in which 8° RH/Vol. XIII differs from its master copy in 4° RH, we can – unsurprisingly – deduce that 8° RH/Vol. XIII represents the latest stage of the "Reasoned Analysis'" textual genesis. One of these instances (record 12) may serve as an example.

While listing anchorage points in Cuba, the first of two footnotes on the page (Humboldt 1826a, XXVIII) provides a cross-reference to another section of the *Re-*

lation historique containing further data. Falsely, the internal reference is made to 4° RH (fig. 6). This contradicts the general advice given to the reader at the »actual« beginning of the *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba*, namely that all internal references to the *Relation historique* are to the octavo edition (Humboldt 1826a, 1).<sup>3</sup> The false reference is repeated in the simultaneously published 8° RH/Vol. XII, most likely a leftover from 4° RH that was not correctly revised when the octavo printing plates were prepared. Interestingly, there is one source – 8° RH/Vol. XIII – that does refer correctly to 8° RH/Vol. XI. Only in this, the last of the three octavo sources of the “Reasoned Analysis”, did Humboldt, the editor, or the typesetter get it right, which might indicate that Vol. XIII is not just the last edition to be printed but also the last one to be revised.

• Intertextual Reference

falsely to the quart  
(Essai, 4°RH, 8°RH-XII)  
instead of the octave  
edition (8°RH-XIII)

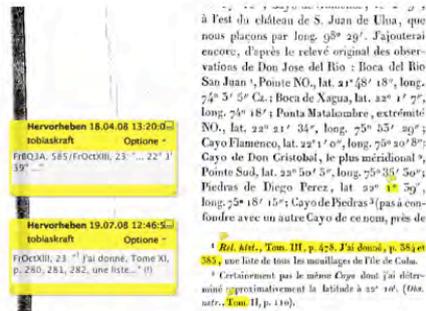


Fig. 6: Humboldt 1826a, XXVIII: Intertextual References (clipping from the text comparison PDF-file)

Against this, record 10 is an interesting and presumably suggestive case. The variation can be found in a footnote, which provides an internal cross-reference to Vol. III of the *Relation historique* (= 4° RH) and correctly says “p. 365” in our reference text (Humboldt 1826a, XXIV, footnote 3). The same text instances in 4° RH as well as in 8° RH/Vol. XII specify “p. 635”, apparently a typesetter’s mistake. In 8° RH/Vol. XIII, the entire footnote had been emended without further changes to the text. Since the apparently identical sources of 8° *Essai politique* and 8° RH/Vol. XII differ here, in as much as the former corrects an error of the latter, we can assume that this text was indeed overlooked again by Humboldt (since this is a case of correcting a false internal reference related to the text’s coherence, not a correction of grammar, punctuation or spelling, which of course could have been done by the typesetter). Record 7 also supports the argument that the 8° edition of the *Essai politique* was overlooked and emended, even though in this case the correction only affects an added footnote

<sup>3</sup> The advice must have appealed to most readers, since they regularly would have an easier access to the more economic pocket-size than to the larger quarto edition of Humboldt’s work.

number, which, of course, was most likely a typesetter’s intervention.

Perhaps the most important result can be deduced from the second part of this table, namely results 25-61. They show that the text body of the actual “Essai politique” (referring not to the entire work, but to the text segment with this title) did experience further revisions in 1826, more specifically between October 10 (when the 2nd batch of 4° RH/Vol. III had been delivered) and October 28 (when the plates for 8° *Essai politique* and 8° RH/Vol. XI-XII had been printed and its copies delivered) and that we can actually presume a two-step textual genesis: 4°RH > 8° RH/Vol. XI-XII > 8° *Essai politique*.

STEP 1

A total of 24 records sustain the argument that both octavo editions were not simple reprints of the earlier quarto text and prove the assumption by Fiedler and Leitner, that “damit gerechnet werden [muß], dass noch weitere Abweichungen bei einzelnen Bänden existieren” [despite lack of proof textual variations between the quarto and octavo edition most likely exist] (Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 79). The nature of these variations, which in most cases are emen-

dations, is rather broad: Some correct errors in syntax, grammar (26, 36, 38), numbers (30, 41, 42, 44-45, 48-50, 52-53, 61), and source references (55); some copyedit names of people and places (31, 39, 43), polish style (54) or slightly alter the meaning (59). In some cases, even new errors are produced (46, 47, 58).

Two instances – record 43 and 51 – may serve as an example to show that these corrections can be accounted to Humboldt himself.

Record 43 says “Punta de Judas” (Humboldt 1826a, 112), whereas 4° RH reads “Indas” (fig. 7). This is clearly an original reading mistake by the typesetter of the 4° RH, since “Punta de Judas” is a place on the north-northeast of the Cuban coastal line.<sup>4</sup> Yet only Humboldt would have known this to be an error and probably advised his printing house (at this stage Smith and Gide

<sup>4</sup> This minor mistake shows that even though the octavo volumes had been revised and most likely reached a broader audience in sales, the quarto edition was still considered the main reference for translations, since it was copied in Vol. VI of the first German translation from 1832, which reads “Indas” as well.

## • Place names

„Punta de Judas“ (Essai, 8°RH) vs. „Punta de Indas“ (4°RH)

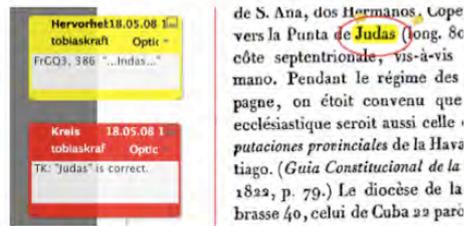


Fig. 7: Humboldt 1826a, 112: „Punta de Judas“ (clipping from the text comparison PDF-file)

files, see Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 67, 77-79) to correct the galley proofs.

The second example (record 51) is somewhat more challenging. Discussing at length alternatives to sugarcane production, Humboldt writes about the decreasing number of beet sugar mills in France (fig. 8). Their number had been reduced considerably since 1812, but they still provided more than half a million kilogram of molasses, the important sugar syrup:

Ces 200 fabriques sont aujourd'hui réduites à un nombre beaucoup plus petit que dirigées avec intelligence, et donnent encore plus d'un demi-million de kilog. (Humboldt 1826a, 224)

## • Measurements

Essai/8°RH “Ces 200 fabriques sont aujourd'hui réduites à un nombre beaucoup plus petit que dirigées avec intelligence, et donnent encore plus d'un demi-million de kilog.”

4°RH “Ces 200 fabriques sont aujourd'hui réduites à 15 ou 20 qui, dirigées avec intelligence, donnent un produit de 300,000 kilog.”

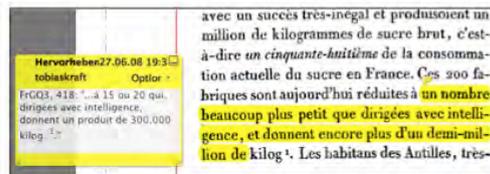


Fig. 8: Humboldt 1826a, 224: Measurements (clipping from the text comparison PDF-file)

The quarto edition, published 24 days earlier, however, proves more detailed on this count:

Ces 200 fabriques sont aujourd'hui réduites à **15 ou 20 qui, dirigées avec intelligence, donnent un produit de 300,000 kilog.** (Humboldt 1825-31a, 148; emphasis added)

Humboldt, then, had earlier specified the reduced number as 15 to 20 and spoke of a molasses production of 300,000 kg, so that, curiously, the numbers in the earlier

version of the text are more precise. Moreover, the later version leaves the subordinate clause “que dirigées avec intelligence” without closure, introducing an unnecessary “et” [and]. Even though this difference is not fundamental, the question remains: Why does Humboldt choose to be less precise in the revised text and to create a sentence with a

rather awkward logic? A lengthy quotation from Mr. de Beaujeu some 200 pages later sheds light on the matter:

Il n'existe en France, pas à ma connoissance, en 1826, plus de 50 fabriques de sucre de betteraves qui peuvent fabriquer au plus 500,000 kil. de sucre brut de diverses qualités [...]. On a toujours compté qu'en 1812, il existoit 200 fabriques qui devoient fournir un million de kilogrammes de sucre brut [...].” (Humboldt 1826b, 75).

With this sentence in mind, we can understand the earlier sentence (Humboldt 1826a, 224) and its imprecise data as a vaguely remembered and imprecisely redacted

anticipation of the much more extensive and transparent reflection on the state of sugar beet production in France. Apparently, the sentence had been revised by Humboldt, since the number provided (“donnent encore plus d'un demi-million de kilog”) is actually closer to Beaujeu's account than the – only at first sight more precise – numbers given in 4° RH (“donnent un produit de 300,000

kilog”). Moreover, by noting that Mr. de Beaujeu had presented this “mémoire très-intéressant” (Humboldt 1826b, 73) to the French Academy of Sciences in August 1826, Humboldt pointed not only to the accountability of his own scientific practice and to the scholarly-scientific networks in which it was embedded. His remark also shows that he was working on the manuscript until the very last moment, updating and including the most recent information. He took into account that both the quarto edition of the *Relation historique* and the octavo editions of both the *Relation historique* and the *Es-*

## Textual Differences in Alexander von Humboldt's *Essai politique sur l'île de Cuba* (Tobias Kraft)

*sai politique sur l'île de Cuba* were published only two months after Beaujeu's *Mémoire*, in October of 1826.

### STEP 2

There is also proof for a (small) step in the textual genesis of the text body between 8° RH/Vol. XI-XII and 8° *Essai politique*. A total of 11 records support this argument. The nature of these variations is, again, rather broad, yet all concern changes, which mark differences between both octavo sources, presumably printed from the same plates.<sup>5</sup> While the removal of the *Relation historique's* subtitles at the beginning of the chapter – record 25 – is obvious due to the different nature of the stand-alone text, the other records show signs of continued textual editing. Some change (27) or correct errors in punctuation (32, 35), copyedit spelling (34) or duplicates (37); some shorten text (29, 60). In some cases – again –, new errors are produced (33, 40, 57). Whether these final emendations were actually performed by Humboldt is hard to say. Hence, to declare step 2 a matter of author-related textual genesis is speculative, while there is sufficient proof to consider step 1 to be an active participation in the copyediting of the text by its author.

While the project's second critical edition, *Views of the Cordilleras and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* (Chicago University Press, forthcoming in 2012), did not require a textual comparison, HiE is currently undertaking a complex and – hopefully for Humboldtian scholarship – fruitful comparison of the textual bases for the third volume in its book series, Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*. The two existing original releases of this multivolume text – the first in 1808-1811, the second in 1825-27 (Fiedler and Leitner 2000, 183-192) – represent two distinguishable steps of a textual genesis which has not been yet fully examined, despite important findings by Hanno Beck (Beck 1991, 538-541). Katharina Einert (Universität Potsdam), the member of the HiE team mainly responsible for these comparisons, has already identified important textual differences that will be incorporated both in the final HiE edition of the *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* and in further research publications by the HiE editorial team.

## V. HiE – a work in progress project

The text comparison method laid out in this article was meant to demonstrate one aspect of the HiE project's scope in critically reediting some of Alexander von Humboldt's major works on the Americas. The first volume, Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Island of Cuba*, is already available (Humboldt 2011). The textual ground for its new translation was established by meticulous text comparison of all corresponding original sources and has been recorded in a complex multi-layered PDF file, which renders all text transformations visible in one document. Thanks to HiN, this document (2 files) is made available as a complementary part of this article for the first time.

<sup>5</sup> Fiedler and Leitner (119-21) argue that the typesetting of both sources is identical and conclude that the same printing plates must have been used. While this claim is true for most pages, there still are enough emendations in 8° *Essai politique* to declare this text the last one in line. Besides, there are small variations in the text layout between 8° RH/Vol. XII and 8° *Essai politique* in two occasions, which actually show the use of (partially) different printing plates. In the first case, this is due to a footnote, which was shortened in 8° *Essai politique* (see record 29) and therefore changed the text layout, until the typesetter was able to even out the difference eight pages later (pages 36-44, see record 28). In the second case, it is due to the change of volumes from 8° RH/Vol. XI to 8° RH/Vol. XII in midtext (pages 241-245, see record 55).

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