

THE MOST INTERESTING PLACE:  
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND AMERICAN CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses how nineteenth-century Americans perceived the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean. The project rests upon a detailed examination of American primary school geography textbooks that enjoyed widespread circulation during the century. The lack of an effective education apparatus in the period rendered American students incredibly reliant on their textbooks. These texts reflect the general common knowledge of the region shared by most educated Americans. Additionally, this study draws support from a thorough analysis of travel accounts that were extraordinarily popular during the period. These works offered Americans a chance to explore vicariously the most interesting lands of the Levant.

Nineteenth-century Americans sought to locate their essential place, meaning and mission within a universal system of world processes. Geography authors fulfilled this social need by providing students with a systemized structure of knowledge about the Eastern Mediterranean. This framework enabled students to address the complex realities of the region in a simplified and palatable manner – a process that also used to satisfy various social pressures. This episteme of the Eastern Mediterranean provided the context for Americans to regulate their self-meanings and cultural missions in the nineteenth century. Often, the concepts of this knowledge structure took the form of dichotomies which acted as defining antitheses. Students located themselves within these oppositions which became constructs of Sameness and Otherness. The structured framework of knowledge about the Levant provided the setting in which these processes played out. Thus, the people, places, and practices of the region were marked as aspects of “us” and “them” – of heritage and Otherness.

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

...the Christian who goes animated by the fresh, I may almost say virgin feeling, awakened by the perusal of his Bible, expecting to see in Bethlehem the stable in which our Saviour was born and the manger in which he was cradled, or in Jerusalem the tomb hewn out of the rock wherein his crucified body was buried, will feel another added to the many grievous disappointments of a traveller [*sic*], when he finds these hallowed objects, or at least what are pointed out as these, covered and enclosed with parti-coloured marble, and bedecked with gaudy and inappropriate ornaments, as if intentionally and impiously to destroy all resemblance to the descriptions given in the sacred book.<sup>2</sup>

The walls of the convent contain all that is most interesting in Bethlehem; but outside the walls also are places consecrated in Bible history, and which the pilgrim to Bethlehem, in spite of doubts and confusion, will look upon with exceeding interest. Standing on the high table of ground in front of the convent, one of the monks pointed out the fountain where, when David was thirsting, his young men procured him water; and in the rear of the convent is a beautiful valley, having in the midst of it a ruined village, marking the place where the shepherds were watching their flocks at night when the angel came down and announced to them the birth of the Saviour. The scene was as pastoral as it had been 1800 years before; the sun was going down, the shepherds were gathering their flocks together, and one could almost imagine that, with the approach of evening, they were preparing to receive another visiter [*sic*] from on high. In the distance beyond the valley is a long range of mountains enclosing the Dead Sea, and among them was the wilderness of Engeddi: and the monk pointed out a small opening as leading to the shores of the sea, at the precise spot where Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>3</sup>

Early American travel-writer John Lloyd Stephens made these remarks of his time in Bethlehem visiting the birthplace of Christ. Stephens, whom Scott Trafton deemed, “the most significant and popular American travel writer of the nineteenth century,” was expressing a sense that was—in this case—representative of the wide variety of American visitors to Palestine in the

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this thesis is an adaption the Palestine section of: K. J. (Kensley Johns) Stewart, *A Geography for Beginners* (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph, 1865). The full quotation, as follows, is what originally drew me to this project: “This is the most interesting, as it is also the most important country of the world, in its associations with all that is sacred in religion and venerable in antiquity.” Special thanks and acknowledgement goes to John Ansley, Richard Fogarty of the University at Albany, SUNY, Amy Murrell Taylor now of the University of Kentucky, the staff of the Marist College Archives & Special Collections and University of Pittsburgh Special Collections, and Jonathan Wiedeman.

<sup>2</sup> John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and The Holy Land* (1837. Reprint, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1853), 103.

<sup>3</sup> Stephens, 103.

nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Most, if not all accounts conveyed distain for the ornamented idolatry of Palestine's pilgrim industry run by the Catholic and Orthodox churches. The American Protestants who dominated their nation's culture seemed to enjoy condemning these trappings as "popery," thus fulfilling their iconoclastic theological traditions. This rejection of ritualized worship may have served to unite the diverse and competing American theologies in disassociation, as even most opposing denominations and theologies would have shared in the denunciation of idolatry. Nineteenth-century American travel writers who toured the Levant used this rendering to appeal successfully to a diverse readership. This way, readers of multiple denominations could explore their cultural heritage through these accounts.

Yet, as Stephens's second remark shows, these travelers found what they were looking for in the organic landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. Here they found the destination of their pilgrimages and celebrated their heritage in a comforting reification of their perceived past. Social pressures drove them to set aside their iconoclastic theologies and commit ritualized worship and pilgrimage. Protestant Americans made pilgrimages to the holy city of Jerusalem and its environs – through physical means or vicariously through travel accounts. While they rejected the rituals of the Holy Sepulture, they usually found their "holy grail" in the supposedly untouched natural landscape surrounding them. They projected their cultural knowledge upon that landscape, used it to strengthen their self-definitions, and reveled in its comforting aura. As John Davis observes, "Widely divergent social and spiritual movements turned to the Holy Land—and the events that had taken place there—to find proof, both scriptural and topographical, for specific assertions of dogma and claims of primacy. More directly, however, the Holy Land operated critically in the formation of a variety of discrete American self-

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<sup>4</sup> Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania*, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17.

definitions.”<sup>5</sup> This celebration of cultural heritage helped Americans to locate themselves in a concrete conceptual structure despite what felt like an erratic and ever-changing world.

This process showed that while religious practices cannot merely be reduced to social anxieties, in many cases social pressures can measurably affect how or even why one practices religion. Theology and existential pressures were some examples of the myriad reasons why historical actors acted in the way they did, and thus both—depending on the individual case—are valid contexts in which to describe these actions. This study will lay bare the powerful and often overlooked stimulus of men and women defining their social location through a precise examination of popular nineteenth-century geography schoolbooks. Americans in the nineteenth century sought to grasp the *essential* nature of the world around them and their place within it. They attempted to find a true meaning of each concept they studied and discover the underlying tenants of how the world worked. Geography textbooks provided students with a foundation from which they could contextualize their own meaning and mission. The multiple processes that students used to develop that understanding of self, and the structure which it depended on, had an enormous impact on Americans’ relationship with realities beyond their cultural boundaries.

This project owes a great deal to the work of Edward W. Said, namely his groundbreaking *Orientalism*. The widely-influential Said popularized the idea that the “Orient” has been a constructed western alterity and polemicized against what he considered the objectified treatment of Middle Easterners and their cultures by Western writers. Yet, as powerful and influential his argument is, Said’s conclusions are both methodologically flawed and insufficient to explain American cultural perceptions of the Eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>5</sup> John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 13.

First, Said chose not to deal with American textual sources directly and instead treated any American manifestations of “Orientalism” as primarily derivative from European sources. This denied American writers the agency to contribute to or even affect the body of Western thought. It is true that American intellectual traditions made use of European foundations and early textbooks were largely directly copied or adapted from European predecessors.<sup>6</sup> Yet, this marginalization omitted some unique American experiences that affected their sense of self and difference. Most apparent was Americans’ proximity to American Indians, which may have provided a different outlet for their contextualizing needs. Additionally, American perceptions of the East had tremendous effects in the twentieth century and continue to do so. While Said did examine twentieth-century U.S. foreign policy, he traced its influences solely to European sources. Images of the Middle East were pervasive in early American culture and Said is representative of a field that has left early American perceptions of the East untouched in favor of supposedly more authentic or foundational European ones.

Secondly, *Orientalism* completely ignored the influence of the Bible and Christianity on Western perceptions of Easternness. Basem L. Ra’ad in particular had noted that Said avoids the complications of what Ra’ad describes as “biblical orientalism.”<sup>7</sup> It is certainly true that Said’s work, even his pieces that focus specifically on Palestine, generally ignore the “holy” aspect of the land and, in turn, the assertion of heritage and self-definition that it connoted to Westerners. In fact, this process directly complicates Said’s thesis of the East constructed solely as a Western alterity. While he may have contended that these phenomena were outside the scope of *Orientalism*, Western assertion of heritage was a central aspect of “Orientalism” and correlated to the Othering processes in interesting and significant ways. In particular, American

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Nietz, *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks*. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle and Company, 1966), 108.

<sup>7</sup> Basem L. Ra’ad, “Construction of Sacred topography: the Nineteenth Century and Today,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* vol. 29, no. 2-3 (2007): 252-253.



conceptions of Palestine and Egypt were complex and multifaceted. Said ignored this complexity and the phenomenon of Westerners asserting their heritage in the East, a problem that this project attempts to rectify.

Anouar Majid offered further criticism, accusing Said of methodological insufficiencies, likely due to his ambitious thesis and the empirical limitations of his field. He contended that, "Perhaps Said's literary training allowed him to trespass on academic fields with immunity, but such license remains unconvincing for many nonliterary critics."<sup>8</sup> The criticism of Said highlights the limitations fields such as literary criticism have in providing empirical evidence on these topics. Many authors have also criticized Said's method and source base, and pointed to conceptual holes in his argument. Daniel Martin Varisco has admirably assembled a large collection of criticisms, which seems to suggest that there is more to complain about *Orientalism* than to praise. Said's strict dichotomy between East and West was problematic and his selection of sources was somewhat biased. Perhaps most damning, Varisco deplores, "...Said's ability to persuade so convincingly that even the most innocent-looking Orientalist texts can be reread as generated by a latent political bias of conspiratorial potential."<sup>9</sup> Said's choice of sources seems to have ranged from odd to absurd in many cases and he actively presses the texts to support the overall argument. "As a critic, Said often pays less attention to what an author is saying than to what can be quoted to further his own agenda."<sup>10</sup> While he may have been addressing significant themes in the literature, Said renders *Orientalism* as a clean and unproblematic argument devoid of complications and almost obvious to critical

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<sup>8</sup> Anouar Majid, "The Political Geography of Holiness," *American Literary History* v.21, no.3 (2009), 645. Majid also charges that, "Said was simply too cavalier with his presentations and too selective in his choice of scholars passing for stereotypical Orientalisms for his theory to have its intended and lasting effect," and, "Unfamiliar with the basic methods of historiography and other social science conventions (such as sociology and anthropology) and overlooking canonical references in the field of Orientalism, Said failed to convey the complexity of the authors he criticized and damned." Majid, 642, 643.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2007), 96.

<sup>10</sup> Varisco, 108.

readers of Western canon. This, coupled with his tremendously wide scope, produced flaws in his work.

Nonetheless, Said's articulate polemic has been a valuable resource for driving investigations of the Othering process. Notably, his use of Claude Levi-Strauss's "science of the concrete" was remarkably effective. As he detailed, "...the point Levi-Strauss makes is that the mind requires order, and order is achieved by discriminating and taking note of everything, placing everything of which the mind is aware in a secure refindable place, therefore giving things some role to play in the economy of objects and identities that make up an environment."<sup>11</sup> Said then described how this process fostered a cognitive incentive to structure knowledge, and how that structure was guided by rational logic. Thus, the framework had utilitarian purposes since it could be used to address complex realities in a palatable manner. The result was a useful device that enabled its users to act and make decisions to address complex and varied realities, but also handicapped their understanding of the same realities it attempted to decipher.

Additionally, Said correctly perceived the essentialism in Western thought and diagnosed its unfavorable side-effects. As he argued, "Orientalism ...allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics."<sup>12</sup> Defining central and all-pervasive characteristics from observations served as the foundation of this structured knowledge. This premise of essentialism provided the concrete building blocks that allowed for the construction of conceptual frameworks and thus created an ordered world of unchanging characteristics in which men and women could socially locate themselves and their cultural missions. While the findings of this project contradict, in part, Said's thesis, it remains

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<sup>11</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 53-54.

<sup>12</sup> Said, 42.

true that practices of essentialized structured knowledge typified American cultural perceptions of the Eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth century.

However, the educated public and even scholars misuse the exceedingly flawed yet venerable foundational work of *Orientalism* more often than not. As Varisco states, “Orientalism, post-Said, has no boundaries.”<sup>13</sup> Despite its succinctness, “Orientalism” is not an acceptable label to be thrown about to describe every problematic depiction of Middle Easterners. Using it as a critique is extremely problematic considering the complexities of the West-East relationship and the flaws in Said’s argument as well as the East-West dichotomy itself. The careless application of Said’s polemic to observed phenomena clouds the implications of these misguided representations rather than clarifying them. Deeming Western portrayals of an idolatrous Islam, exotic Asian customs, or stereotypically sensual Arab women, as “Orientalist” is unspecific, vague and hides both causes and effects.

Thus we must banish the casual label of “Orientalist” in academic and popular commentary while promoting new scholarship that builds upon and corrects Said rather than scholarship about the supposed phenomenon of “Orientalism.” Ideally, Said’s argument must be treated as a flawed and outdated foundational work and replaced in the historical canon by superior projects. However, *Orientalism* remains the primary tenant in the still-undeveloped field of intercultural history. Scholars must make new efforts that will build upon *Orientalism* by approaching the topic from the ground-up and focusing on niche examples of the overall West-East relationship to make modest claims that are narrow in scope. Only from this foundation can scholars have effective debates about the West-East relationship, the Othering process and the assertion of heritage. This is the project to which this study seeks to contribute.

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<sup>13</sup> Varisco, 82.

The subject of this work is American cultural views of the Eastern Mediterranean during the nineteenth century. During this period, Americans endeavored to discover a universal system of world processes – the essential nature of how the world worked. Men and women in the early republic sought to find their place, meaning and mission in this theoretical scheme. Pressured to fulfill this need, geography textbooks of the period provided American students with an epistemological structure concerning the Eastern Mediterranean and its inhabitants. From this provision, Americans were able to address the complex, fluid and multifarious reality of the region in a digestible manner. Yet, this structure of knowledge about the Levant was more than just a teaching aid. It provided the context in which students built and located their conceptions of selfhood in what they supposed was a general system of world functions. Nineteenth-century Americans often used foreign lands or people to help define who they were, the meaning of their lives, and what they ought to do.

The sources of these processes were the insecurities and anxieties of nineteenth-century Americans who felt like they lived in an erratic and ever-changing world. However it would be a mistake to think of these authors and students as distressed or fraught individuals constantly questioning their actions. Generally, Americans quickly found support and reassurance and subsequently asserted themselves with great confidence. For example, the anxieties of Southern slaveholders after Nat Turner's Rebellion were transformed into confident action quite swiftly. The South's fear of an abolitionist national majority helped pressure South Carolina's political community to pursue nullification a year after the slave revolt.<sup>14</sup> In that case, South Carolina fell back on an ideology of white supremacy and state sovereignty and acted suddenly and powerfully. Americans insecure about the meaning of their existence and their cultural or ideological missions embraced geography textbooks in a similar fashion.

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1818* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 402.

Authors of geography textbooks provided an epistemology of the Eastern Mediterranean which featured a potent mix of constructed and physical entities, simplified as concepts for memorization and recitation. Generally, these concepts took the form of dichotomies which helped to solidify each definition by mutually reinforcement. Authors described a world that featured an East and West, monotheism and polytheism, civilized and savage peoples. These concepts helped to define one another by acting as antitheses. Students learned that savagery was not civilized and that true civilization featured the absence of savagery. Furthermore, students often located themselves within these dichotomies. Thus, they came to think in categories of Us and Them, of Sameness and Otherness. These concepts were also mutually reinforcing, and authors and students described and studied areas and peoples apart from themselves, in part to help define their own sense of self and mission.

Nineteenth-century Americans acquired a structure of knowledge about the Levant by reading geography textbooks. This framework acted as a conceptual toolkit that enabled them to assign values and judge complex information logically. Students could then address the information now reaching them from faraway places such as the Eastern Mediterranean. They could discuss the events of the day while regulating their self and mission and advocate and debate actions or causes, a process which yielded them access to the public sphere of the early republic. When Americans discussed or were lucky enough to tour the Eastern Mediterranean, they projected their cultural knowledge upon the landscape. Here Americans reveled in the aura of heritage and explored the exoticism of Otherness, processes which reaffirmed their sense of selfhood.

Very generally, nineteenth-century Americans used the lands and people of the East as a defining antithesis which helped them contextualize their sense of self and self-purpose. However, that conclusion is a vast oversimplification because there are also conflicting examples

where Americans looked to the East and found points of identification. In particular, textbook depictions of Palestine and Egypt were multifaceted, as authors reaffirmed their self-understandings both by defining Others and celebrating cultural heritage. Students explored the exoticism of the Levant but also discovered biblical narratives and civilizational origins within these sections and claimed them as part of their own cultural narrative. In fact, nineteenth-century Americans used the structured knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean to complete a number of different objectives driven by a multiple social pressures. Readers managed the facts they learned from geography textbooks to accomplish many different social purposes – more than just exploring exoticism to define themselves. This project details the mechanisms of these interrelated processes.

This study is divided into five distinctive chapters. The first chapter details the study of geography in nineteenth-century America. It discusses the state of formal and informal education and the use and importance of textbooks. The second chapter shows how textbook authors codified the framework of “Civil Geography” and offered it as an objective system of judgment and comparison. The third chapter details the mechanisms of how Americans used the epistemological apparatus to address the individual concepts of the East in their unique context. This chapter is, in turn, broken down to four distinct subsections, each discussing the regions of the Levant as detailed in the textbooks of the era. The first describes Turkey in Europe and the use of despotism as a defining antithesis. The second section addresses Turkey in Asia, particularly Palestine, which—of course—occupied a place disproportionate to its size in most texts. The third subdivision focuses on Arabia and shows how the texts packaged that region as a land frozen in time and a cautionary tale. The final section of this third chapter examines Egypt and how textbook authors managed opposing concepts of identification and alterity. While readers were taught that Egypt was the fertile crossroads of Easternness, schoolbooks also

celebrated the region's place in American cultural tradition. To manage this conflict of heritage and difference authors offered the Coptic Egyptians as a categorically distinct people – a construction that served a number of social anxieties. The fourth chapter discusses a prominent theme in geography textbooks: authors constructed a narrative of cultural development that began in fertile Asia and reached its pinnacle on the shores of the new world. The fifth and final chapter gives two examples of Americans who visited the Eastern Mediterranean and began their careers by presenting their experiences to the public. The cases of Mark Twain and Lowell Thomas provide accessible examples of how nineteenth-century Americans negotiated the episteme of the Eastern Mediterranean with social pressures – how they personally catered the shared knowledge structure of the region to meet their audiences' concerns over self-understanding and social mission. Finally, a short epilogue offers an example of the powerful implications of these processes and the tremendous impact the episteme of the Eastern Mediterranean had on Americans' conceptions of self and self-purpose. These concerns were shared by powerful American statesmen as they shaped relations between nations.

### **Learning Geography in Nineteenth-Century America**

Frankly, education in nineteenth-century America was chaotic. Learning offered Americans of all ages a significant means of advancement but the lack of institutional structure created a boom and bust social environment that likely created as many tragedies as success stories. Advantages such as access to books and willing teachers or personal aptitude or charisma were extremely powerful tools for social advancement in the uncredentialed world of the nineteenth century. However, the lack of certifications or even simple social institutions such as a stable banking system eroded social stability and fortunes in both money and status were easily lost. Afflictions such as death or debt were common and perpetual threats. Men and

woman like Emma Hart Willard and Lowell Thomas took early advantage of educational opportunities and made remarkable accomplishments. Yet, the men and women who suffered in this system often failed to write books or find other means to make their mark historically. One of Thomas's sisters died of pneumonia before reaching the age of two. As usual, history tells the tales of the winners. The lucky few who had the opportunity to become educated learned about the world through geography textbooks.

Whatever the risks, Americans were driven to learn by the promise of social advancement, popular politics, and protestant religion. The education industry—first private, then public—became the primary path to social advancement. Additionally, demand for literacy and concern for world events boomed with the widening of the electorate that began under the Jefferson administration. The Protestant tradition of personal Bible study was often the path to literacy for most Americans. Frequently, young men and woman relied on private libraries or tutoring of the local minister. Protestantism thus retained a significant influence on American education throughout the century.

Learning depended on personal Bible-study and poorly trained teachers. While learning to read and write was the primary goal for most men and women, textbooks produced the content. In this chaotic environment, access to schoolbooks was extremely valuable to Americans young and old. The textbook market in the Early Republic featured widespread demand and few authors capable of providing such texts. Thus, many publishers reprinted popular works and authors plagiarized and copied the formatting or even the content of their peers. The schoolbooks that resulted were remarkably uniform. In fact, the only common educational experience shared by most pupils throughout the nineteenth century would have been their textbooks. All of these factors became institutionalized into the American common school system as the century wore on.



The educational experience of nineteenth-century American children depended on a wide variety of factors such as pupils' race, geographic location and social and economic status. A young Kentuckian growing up in the 1820s would have had a drastically different experience than a postbellum New Englander, who would in turn find the experience of his or her 1820s predecessor very foreign. Some regions lacked any cohesive institutional education apparatus for the majority of the century and even the most progressive areas, notably Massachusetts, were still in the process of formalizing their public education system into the 1840s. In this absence, private citizens stepped into the void—through both private household schools and parental tutoring—and their methods were relatively effective in their limited scope. Yet, the system relied on semi-educated parents and either amateur or temporarily professional teachers who were often only young adults themselves having received little, if any, pedagogical training. The result of this was a severe dependence on any available textbooks and pupils who were often charged only with memorization and recitation.<sup>15</sup> The education structure evolved as time wore on and normal schools sprung up across the nation. Additionally, public schools were implemented in the South during Reconstruction and the end of the century witnessed a boom in high school and college attendance. Nonetheless low professional and accreditation standards persisted into the twentieth century.

Joyce Appleby tells of the haphazard process of education in early America and how it became an industry used for geographical mobility and social advancement for young Americans. The Jeffersonian expansion of the citizenship and a flourishing newspaper industry created a demand for widespread literacy while the Democratic Party's concern with low taxation and limited government overtook Jefferson's own proposal for a publically educated

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<sup>15</sup> Nietz, *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks*, 6.

electorate. Private citizens filled the void as some started household primary schools and young men and women used teaching as a path to escape the lives of their parents. As Appleby states:

With the production of newspapers, journals, and incidental writings running ahead of all other manufacturing ventures in the United States, teaching was the key opportunity for those of the first generation coming of age. District schools and private academies hired thousands of teachers on yearly contracts. Preferring men over women, they frequently got “men” who were but seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds. The pay varied with the district, but was uniformly low, and many teachers had to move from pillar to post during the year as district families rotated the provision of the schoolteacher’s board. Young men and women turned to teaching to support a bid for independence, churning annually through primary schools, where farmers’ children went for a few months for four or five years to learn the fundamentals of reading, writing, and “summing.”<sup>16</sup>

The result of this was a mobile trove of semi-educated and poorly trained youth teaching pupils with haphazard attendance as a means of independence and social advancement. Students were likely to attend school irregularly and learn from many different amateur teachers along the way.

Appleby writes that teaching was an alternative source of income or even “a kind of insurance policy,” throughout the boom and bust economic cycles of early America. Families in dire economic straights often began schools in their own homes for local children and, “Such schools were often preferable to the district ones, and parents, unable to rely on comprehensive state programs for education, gladly took advantage of their neighbors’ skills.”<sup>17</sup> These skills were often rudimentary, as it was not until 1829 that the first popular pedagogical textbook, *Lectures on Schoolkeeping*, was published. Furthermore, the first normal school for the education of teachers began admitting students only after 1839 and lacked a sophisticated

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<sup>16</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans*. (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 103-104.

<sup>17</sup> Appleby, 107.

curriculum until decades later.<sup>18</sup> The result was a grassroots-driven and ad hoc system for receiving young Americans into the public sphere that depended enormously on the system's only constant – popular and widely published textbooks which were often written by these pioneering private educators themselves.

Appleby describes the example of Emma Hart Willard who benefited from the teachings of her father, a Jeffersonian farmer with an appreciation of John Locke.

By the time she was fifteen, Willard had started teaching, conducting classes in her father's house while she continued school herself. At twenty-two, she married a fifty-year-old widower in Middlebury, Vermont, where access to the texts and examinations of Middlebury College opened up a larger scholarly world to her. Then the Troy Common Council voted to raise four thousand dollars for a female academy, Willard saw the promise of a small factory town on the Erie Canal and seized the opportunity to put her ideas into action.<sup>19</sup>

Willard founded the Troy Female Seminary in 1821 and gained notoriety for petitioning the state legislature for aid for girls' schools. She later published textbooks in four different subjects from 1823 to 1854, all of which were published in multiple editions and circulated at least through 1869.<sup>20</sup>

Another driving force behind education in early America was Protestantism. Religious instruction stimulated at-home instruction as personal Bible study created an additional demand for literacy. As Daniel Walker Howe describes:

The American version of Protestantism was a religion of a book, and to practice the religion required being able to read the book. In many a log cabin, parents taught their children by candlelight the rudiments of reading in the only book they had: a Bible from the American Bible Society. In many a frontier community, the Sunday school arrived

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<sup>18</sup> Nietz, *Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Appleby, 106.

<sup>20</sup> John A. Nietz Old Textbook Collection, Hillman Library Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh; Browse by author: "Emma Willard."

well before the more expensive public school, and in the meantime provided children with weekly instruction in literacy.<sup>21</sup>

Across the young nation parents and local ministers taught children to read through the Bible for religious purposes. To facilitate this, groups such as the American Bible Society regularly distributed the holy book to isolated Americans. Bible study was Americans' primary path to communicate in the public sphere – a development which Howe argues had a lasting impact on American culture.<sup>22</sup>

Appleby offers the experience of John Ball as an example of the blend of religious influence with individual secular advancement. Ball was hindered in his attempts to gain schooling because of his father's demand for his labor. He was at first limited to individual study before gaining the help of a local minister. Appleby lists the texts he had access to as "...the Bible, Watts's *Hymns*, Webster's *American Spelling Book*, [Jedidiah] Morse's *Geography*, and Adams's *Arithmetic*..." Yet this study gained Ball access to Dartmouth, a law career and travel throughout the Early Republic.<sup>23</sup>

Religious practices also had a tremendous impact on the slow establishment of institutionalized education. Often Sunday schools reached American youths first, as Howe states, "The churches of the American republic stepped into the breach left by the states. One of their educational initiatives, the Sunday school, provided one day a week instruction in basic literacy for 200,000 American children by 1827. Only after public primary education became more widespread did Sunday schools concentrate exclusively on religious instruction."<sup>24</sup>

Religious education was the vanguard of the spread of literacy in the absence of institutionalized

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<sup>21</sup> Howe, 192, 452; see also: Douglas Alan Jones, "The Tradition of Didacticism in America's Early Reading Textbooks, 1780-1830" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1990), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Howe, 447.

<sup>23</sup> Appleby, 60; Appleby likely means *Geography Made Easy*, by Jedidiah Morse which was published from 1784-1819 and is featured extensively below.

<sup>24</sup> Howe, 449.

education, and similar impulses helped develop the only cohesive educating apparatus in early America. Howe insists that, "New England's township-based system of primary schools was the daughter not of the Enlightenment but of the Reformation; it had been created in colonial times to comply with the precept that all good Christians should be able to read the Bible for themselves."<sup>25</sup> There was little secular/religious disagreement on education in the early republic and the goals of government and clergy melded quite easily. Often enough, Democratic legislators offered subsidies to religious institutions rather than building secular ones.<sup>26</sup>

While the education system was haphazard and unregulated through the first half of the nineteenth century, it was fairly effective at promoting widespread literacy and, combined with apprenticeship, produced America's early class of lawyers, doctors, and clergymen.<sup>27</sup> American literacy exceeded 90 percent of white adults in the first available literary census of 1840, and even the South did not fall too far behind. This figure compared well to European states, matching Scotland and Germany while France and England measured significantly less.<sup>28</sup>

During the 1830s the Whig party adopted the rhetoric of liberal and policymakers began to attempt to establish a public education system as part of their postmillennialist program. The most successful Whig education reformer was Horace Mann, who promoted the "common school" of tax-supported free public schooling administered by the states and held to state standards in curriculum and facilities. The effect of Mann's system in Massachusetts was uniformity, in both education and religion, as Howe describes,

As envisioned by Mann and his successors until long after the Civil War, the common schools embodied a common ideology. The ideology of the American common schools

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 450.

<sup>27</sup> Appleby, 108-118.

<sup>28</sup> Albert Fishlow, "Levels of Nineteenth-Century American Investment in Education," *The Journal of Economic History* 26:4 (1966): 418.

included patriotic virtue, responsible character, and democratic participation, all to be developed through intellectual discipline and the nurture of the moral qualities. It would never have occurred to Mann and his disciples that such an educational program should not include religion, but since they wanted above all to achieve an education common to all, this necessitated a common religious instruction. In the days of more local autonomy, school districts had taught the religion of the local majority. Now, the Massachusetts School Board prescribed that only those doctrines should be taught on which all Protestants agreed.<sup>29</sup>

The result of Mann's institutions were codification of curriculum, advances in teaching and the continuation of Protestant influence—although a centralized amalgamation of Protestant persuasions instead of former localized practices—in the classroom.

Mann's Massachusetts system was slowly adopted by other states, quickly becoming an intense partisan political issue. Democrats' aversion to government institutions created opposition and Mann's advantage in Massachusetts, where residents had long been taxed for education, was difficult to replicate. Yet, even more contentious problems emerged in New York where Irish immigrants, led by Bishop John Hughes, objected to Protestant influence in public schools. When Whig Governor William H. Seward attempted to fund Catholic schools similarly, the state legislature demurred, citing constitutional provisions against state teaching of religion. As Howe observes, "The lesson for the rest of the country was clear: Where public aid to Protestant institutions had been within the bounds of political acceptability, such aid to Catholic institutions was not. When faced with a charge of inconsistency, public authorities would cut off aid to Protestants rather than extend it to include Catholics."<sup>30</sup> Common schools soon became prevalent throughout the North, likely because of urbanization. Despite a contentious American

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<sup>29</sup> Howe, 453.

<sup>30</sup> Howe, 454-455; see also, Mark Groen, "The Whig Party and the Rise of Common Schools, 1837-1854," *American Educational History Journal* 35:2 (2008): 251-260.

religious plurality, Protestantism retained its influence in education as Bible-reading was still maintained in over half of all common schools at the end of the century.<sup>31</sup>

The American education system continued to improve during the second half of the nineteenth century. Publically funded schools reached the South after the Civil War and normal schools continued to spread and improve. However, secondary schooling was still underdeveloped: only 2 percent of Americans over 17 years old had completed high school in 1870.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century high school and college enrollment boomed, yet educational institutions remained in flux through the end of the century, as Rebecca Edwards points out, “In this loosely credentialed world the purpose of a high school education was rather vague, and for most Americans it remained an unaffordable luxury.”<sup>33</sup> Still, the collapse of formal barriers and overall standards led some Americans to move rapidly both socially and spatially.

Lowell Thomas, whose career exemplified this new mobility, grew up in the gold mining boom town of Cripple Creek, Colorado, where as a boy he worked with miners while learning elocution from his father, a frontier doctor and surgeon. After graduating from public Victor High School in 1909 he was able to earn both Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Valparaiso College in two years – a feat he somehow repeated in 1913 at the University of Denver when they questioned his term at Valparaiso. From there he moved on to the Chicago Kent College of Law where he taught while pursuing a law degree. During this period he also produced articles for the Pacific Northwest Railroad company on the wonders of rail travel and worked as a reporter for the Chicago Evening Journal where he gained notoriety for exposing a man attempting to blackmail a number of wealthy Chicago industrialists. In 1915 he received the

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<sup>31</sup> Howe, 455; Passages on Horace Mann and common schools generally derived from Howe, 453-455.

<sup>32</sup> Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 116.

<sup>33</sup> Edwards, 116.

Charlotte Elizabeth Procter Fellowship award to continue his studies at Princeton where he also lectured on oratory and was listed as faculty. A natural speaker who could adeptly manage social situations, Thomas was able to advance from brushing shoulders with frontier miners to illustrious and wealthy industrialists – many of whom wrote him letters of introduction when he left for Europe to cover the First World War.<sup>34</sup>

The American education system in the early 1900s emerged fully institutionalized, with vast pedagogical improvements and the help of professional organizations, and shepherded by the Progressive movement and figures such as John Dewey.<sup>35</sup> Yet, throughout the nineteenth century most American students experienced a lack of institutional uniformity or qualified teachers. Thus, American education was driven by and almost entirely reliant on textbooks. Popular, widely-printed works by authors such as Jedidiah Morse and S. Augustus Mitchell were the only common experience for pupils that crossed social and geographic boundaries. As education scholar and textbook collector John A. Nietz notes, “The teachers in the early days of our country were so meagerly trained and educated that they depended strongly on the textbooks for what to teach and how to teach. Most authorities agree that in the United States the old textbooks in use in any particular school largely constituted the school’s course of study.”<sup>36</sup> While modern teachers have tended to use textbooks as a guide, the poor training and lack of general knowledge of nineteenth-century teachers left them incredibly dependent on these texts.

In the absence of institutionally-mandated uniformity, textbook authors and local printers began standardizing the content of American geography textbooks themselves, based

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<sup>34</sup> Lowell Thomas Papers, James A. Cannavino Library Archives and Special Collections, Marist College, for letters of introduction see Box 499, File 4 & Box 500, File 23.

<sup>35</sup> William J. Reese, “The Origins of Progressive Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 41:1 (2001):21; see also, John A. Nietz, *Old Textbooks* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1961), 2.

<sup>36</sup> Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 1.



on market demand. The lack of copyright laws and their enforcement, as well as the difficulty in transportation, isolated local printers from both competition and accountability. Thus, with the expertise needed to write a textbook a rare commodity and royalty payments even rarer, printers often copied and sold popular works at will. Over time the efforts of Noah Webster and others brought semi-legitimacy to the industry, allowing publishers to make regional agreements and affiliations to push what must have been a dearth of material to meet demand.<sup>37</sup> Even after the spread of railroads in the latter half of the century led to the establishment of large publishing houses, the uniformity among the texts is surprising. An increase in copyright enforcement may have eliminated more blatant piracy, but formatting became even more consistent across books by different authors.

For example, Jedidiah Morse's widely popular *Geography Made Easy* began with "Elements of Geography" and definitions before detailing the solar system, comets and stars. Then, "Natural Geography" included a section on volcanos and earthquakes, after which "inhabitants," forms of government and religions were detailed. The final 308 of 361 pages were dedicated to coverage of specific political states from North and South America to Europe, Asia and finally Africa.<sup>38</sup> The only competing format for the period was the catechetical method, modeled after the influential *New England Primer* that taught students through textual question and answer format.<sup>39</sup> Nathaniel Dwight's *A Short But Comprehensive System of the Geography of the World* typified this method. Its questions ranged from the general, "Q. How great a Proportion of the Earth is covered with Water? A. About three fifths of the whole," to the specific:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy* (New Haven: Maies, Bowen and Dana, 1784) & Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy* (1784. Reprint, Boston: Thomas & Andrews; New York: S. Wood; Philadelphia, M. Carey, 1818).

<sup>39</sup> For more on the influence of the *New England Primer* and catechetical techniques, see D. Jones, 15.

Q. What are the Characteristics of Turks?

A. They are generally well made and handsome when young, but appear old at thirty years of age. The Turks are indolent and superstitious, but commonly temperate. They are heavy, morose, treacherous, furiously passionate, unsocial, and unfriendly to the people of all other nations. The Turks of Asia are however of a better character than those of Europe, and there are not wanting among them men of fair and respectable characters.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, despite the drastically different methods of Morse and Dwight, their overall format remained somewhat similar, as Dwight dedicated a short portion to general terms before sifting through descriptions of political states. The only difference was that he began with Europe and shifted to Asia, Africa and then the Americas. The catechetical method was somewhat common during the early century with Jesse Olney, S. Augustus Mitchell, Roswell Smith and Samuel Griswold Goodrich also using the technique in at least part of their works. Yet, after 1840 its use declined and only one text published after 1860 retained the format.<sup>41</sup>

As the century wore on some educators gradually began to reject the deductive method of Morse in favor of an inductive method that offered pupils the particular before the general. As Emma Hart Willard described, "Instead of commencing the study of maps with the map of the world, which is the most difficult to understand, the pupil here begins, in the most simple manner imaginable, to draw the map of his own town."<sup>42</sup> Jesse Olney was also a proponent of this method. He stated in the preface of *A Practical System of Modern Geography* that, "...on all subjects the learner must make himself master of simple things, before he can understand those which are complex." However, his work follows the same general format as Morse. He begins with geographical definitions and, after some introductory lessons, dedicates the next 225 of a

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<sup>40</sup> Nathaniel Dwight, *A Short But Comprehensive System of the Geography of the World* (1795. Reprint, Albany: Farrand & Green, 1812), 5, 90-91.

<sup>41</sup> Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 222.

<sup>42</sup> in Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 223.

total of 288 pages to descriptions of political states with the addition of Polynesia/Australia as a continent. The only difference in formatting between Olney and Morse was that Olney finished, rather than began with short sections on Astronomy, Physical Geography and the use of globes. The only other major distinction between the two was Olney's section on "Civil Geography," which became a new innovation around 1830.<sup>43</sup> This feature generally consisted of four elements, races of men, states of society, forms of government, and religions, and was a mainstay of textbooks through the end of the century.

The geography textbooks of the second half of the nineteenth century featured differences in appearance but generally adapted the same format used by earlier authors to new stylistic innovations. The most notable change was in size as authors and printers likely found that larger books with more graphics sold better. Morse's *Geography Made Easy* was roughly 4.5 by 7 inches while some of the later books could measure as large as 9 by 12 inches.<sup>44</sup> The type size increased progressively throughout the century, as well as the number of graphics, illustrations and full page maps. Yet, the common format was adapted to fit these alterations. For example, *Harper's School Geography* began with descriptions of the earth, general geographical terms and physical geography before it shifted to Civic Geography (although it is untitled) and dedicated around 100 of its 125 pages to descriptions of political states.

*Harper's* is also an example of another trend during the latter part of the century as corporate branding took hold of the industry. Some authors such as S. G. Goodrich or M.F. Maury were made into brands that lasted after the authors' death. Publishing brands like Harper's or Appleton's also entered the competition and the substitution of "Eminent American

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<sup>43</sup> Jesse Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830); Jesse Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Robinson, Pratt & Co., 1838); Jesse Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851).

<sup>44</sup> Changes in size and appearance detailed more thoroughly in Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 202-206.

Artists” for named authors may have given publishers more freedom when it came to revisions.<sup>45</sup> Joseph Moreau provides an excellent analysis of the role of authors and publishers in the nineteenth-century textbook market. Due to wide demand and the underdeveloped formal education apparatuses of the period, these actors played a powerful role in deciding the content studied in common schools. Moreau details how the evolution of the American education system led to the politicization of the textbook industry and the increased power of state and local officials to affect the content of classes. He states that, “The path from history writer to the ultimate textbook consumer, the grammar school or academy student, was relatively short and direct in 1820. Eighty years later it had become considerably more complex, expensive, and overtly political.”<sup>46</sup> However, in both eras market forces also favored standardized format and uniform content.

A number of texts stand out over the course of the century as particularly popular. Jedidiah Morse first published *Geography Made Easy* in 1784 after his graduation from Yale. He later became a Congregational minister and fathered telegraph inventor and Poughkeepsie resident Samuel F.B. Morse. Due to demand, 20 separate revisions were published, the last in 1819, and it likely remained in circulation throughout most of the early nineteenth century. The next authors to achieve widespread popularity were Jesse Olney and S. G. Goodrich. Olney’s *Practical System of Modern Geography* went through over 80 editions lasting from 1828 to at least 1853. While Goodrich began writing textbooks in his twenties, he took the pen name Peter Parley in order to write as an elderly man addressing young children and “...soon became the

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<sup>45</sup> *Harper’s School Geography* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1876); another example is: M. F. Maury, *Maury’s Revised Elementary Geography* (New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: American Book Company, 1900).

<sup>46</sup> Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 21; for a discussion of market forces in the textbook market: 20-22.

most prolific textbook writer in America,” composing 84 works.<sup>47</sup> *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, first printed around 1829, was repeatedly revised until 1845. Additionally, Goodrich’s *A System of School Geography* went through at least 27 editions from 1831 to 1839.

During the middle of the century, S. Augustus Mitchell conquered the field of geography texts. As education scholar John Nietz notes, “The geographies written by Mitchell apparently had the widest circulation of any appearing in the United States before 1900. The writer’s collection contained 47 different copies under seven different titles.”<sup>48</sup> The last extant edition of his *A System of Modern Geography*, first released in 1839, is dated 1892 and Mitchell’s works appear to be the only smaller, older-style textbook to retain its popularity through the end of the century. Two more books penned in the 1850s, *Primary Geography* and *First Lessons in Geography for Young Children*, were revised and republished as late as 1895 and 1889, respectively. Postbellum America witnessed a handful of authors becoming popular using a large format with more graphics, although none seem to have reached the prominence of Mitchell. Arnold Guyot, Sarah S. Cornell, James Monteith, M. F. Maury and *Harper’s* all wrote primary school textbooks that continued to be revised and republished at least a decade after their first releases.

This study examines 50 geography textbooks targeted at primary school children and published between 1784 and 1913. All works examined were published in multiple editions and were in use during the nineteenth century in primary schools throughout the United States. In the most popular cases, the examination of multiple editions shows how the teaching of the subject changed over time. Contemporaries considered geography a beginning subject sufficient for young children to learn and a building block towards other subjects, such as world history, that were generally considered secondary school subjects – a concept Jedidiah Morse attributes

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<sup>47</sup> Nietz, *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks*, 241.

<sup>48</sup> Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 229.

to none other than John Locke.<sup>49</sup> Due to the limited percentages of Americans who completed secondary school during the nineteenth century, the present study is limited to geography textbooks written for and used in primary schools in an attempt to cover the largest possible swath through early literate American society. Few Americans during this period were able to advance into higher or even secondary education, so limiting the survey to primary school texts helps to avoid giving the study a biased skew by examining works that the broadest number of literate Americans were likely to have used. Focusing on more advanced texts risks a disproportional concentration on abnormally-educated or elite students. Early educators viewed geography as a prerequisite subject – one needed in order for pupils to undertake more advanced and more detailed studies of the foreign world. Hence the subject’s place in nineteenth-century American pedagogy as a building block subject, taught with the “three Rs” in primary schools across the maturing republic. As *Harper’s School Geography* stated, it was, “...an essential element in education. It is second in importance only to reading, writing and rudimentary arithmetic.”<sup>50</sup> Before young Americans read, wrote, discussed and argued about the world outside their nation they studied geography through textbooks.

### **Establishing Episteme**

“...the interest of various lands is intellectual. We like them for what they are to us, rather than for what they are in themselves.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 1-2; Jedidiah Morse, *Elements of Geography*, (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews; Worcester: I. Thomas; New York: S. Campbell; Philadelphia: M. Carey; Baltimore: Thomas, Andrews and Butler, 1796), iv-v.

<sup>50</sup> *Harper’s School Geography*, (Publishers’ Advertisement).

<sup>51</sup> George William Curtis, *The Howadji in Syria*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1852), 82.

Nineteenth-century Americans acquired from their geography education a useful, pervasive, and seemingly authoritative conceptual structure which enabled them to comprehend the Eastern Mediterranean. This epistemological framework allowed Americans to assign values to complex and fluid concepts in order to judge them logically against one another and construct rational, essentialized and monolithic conclusions that were intellectually gratifying and existentially comforting. While major aspects of this knowledge structure were imagined, others were tangible and completely valid. This framework enabled intellectually capable Americans with little formal education to embrace the world beyond the reach of direct observation and communication. Without their elaborate intellectual edifice it would be difficult if not impossible for New Englanders, Westerners or Southerners to comprehend the dynamic, fluid and multifarious nature of the Levant or its inhabitants. It is entirely understandable that these irregularly-educated Americans, who relied on handfuls of written and often outdated accounts would have difficulty fully grasping the realities of the region in a more effective fashion. Admitting this shortcoming, however, would have undermined the legitimacy of the supposedly universal tenants of the republican project. To nineteenth-century Americans, for the truths to be self-evident they must apply worldwide. Hence, citizens of the early republic used an array of intellectual tools to aid in their endeavors of cultural comparison and existential examination – a conceptual structure with implied language, generalized and often constructed elements, and objectified facts. This was the episteme, the nature of American cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth century.

Geography textbooks were the primary medium for the transference of this system. As Cynthia Koch has shown, schoolbooks have long been a conduit for the socialization of young

minds and, "...a means of imparting culture."<sup>52</sup> In fact, she states that "...education and acculturation [were] virtually interchangeable."<sup>53</sup> Her study of morality in early nineteenth-century schoolbooks concluded that these texts played a fundamentally important role in establishing a distinct American identity. As she asserted, "Americans looked to their educators—and their schoolbooks—to foment the social revolution that would define a distinctive civilization for their new nation."<sup>54</sup> It is clear that young Americans in the Early Republic learned quite a bit about themselves by studying their school textbooks. Geography texts in particular helped them to locate themselves and their cultural mission within the entire spectrum of world peoples. To undertake this process, American students required an organizational structure of essential truths against which to judge themselves.

By the 1820s, geography authors developed and codified a set of tools to help them convey the complex divergences among political states. "Civil Geography" was made up of the classifications of government, religion, race and state of society (level of civilization), and became a vital aspect of American cultural knowledge. The system allowed authors to collect, highlight and even quantify complex variations between states. The 1830 edition of Jesse Olney's *A Practical System of Modern Geography* even included a helpful chart that allowed students to essentialize quickly intricate realities of foreign states:

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<sup>52</sup> Cynthia Marie Koch, "The Virtuous Curriculum: Schoolbooks and American Culture, 1785-1830" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991), 3; Douglas A. Jones also comments on the subject: D. Jones, 11-12.

<sup>53</sup> Koch, 603.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 2.



**Figure 1. Jesse Olney's Table of Civil Geography:** For governments, A.M. is Absolute Monarchy, L.M. is Limited Monarchy, R. is Republican, V. is Viceroys or Governors, I.C. is Independent Chiefs; For Religions, P. is Protestant, C. is Catholic, G. is Greek, M. is "Mahometan," H. is Pagan or Heathen; for states of society, E. is Enlightened, C. is Civilized, H.C. is Half-civilized, S. is Savage or Barbarous.<sup>55</sup>

| AMERICA.             |       |           |      |          |
|----------------------|-------|-----------|------|----------|
| Country.             | Gov.  | Religion  | Civ. | Race.    |
| Indians              | I. C. | H.        | S.   | American |
| British America      | V.    | P. and C. | E.   | European |
| United States        | R.    | P.        | E.   | European |
| Mexico               | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Guatemala            | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Colombia             | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Peru                 | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Bolivia              | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Chili                | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| United Provinces     | R.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Brazil               | L. M. | C.        | C.   | European |
| Guiana               | V.    | C.        | C.   | European |
| Amazonia             | I. C. | H.        | S.   | American |
| Patagonia            | I. C. | H.        | S.   | American |
| EUROPE.              |       |           |      |          |
| Great Britain        | L. M. | P.        | E.   | European |
| France               | L. M. | C.        | E.   | European |
| Spain                | L. M. | C.        | E.   | European |
| Portugal             | L. M. | C.        | C.   | European |
| Netherlands          | L. M. | P.        | E.   | European |
| Wirtemberg           | L. M. | P. and C. | E.   | European |
| Hanover              | L. M. | P. and C. | E.   | European |
| Saxony               | L. M. | P. and C. | E.   | European |
| Bavaria,             | L. M. | P. and C. | E.   | European |
| Norway & Sweden      | L. M. | P.        | E.   | European |
| Naples               | L. M. | C.        | E.   | European |
| States of th. Church | H.*   | C.        | E.   | European |
| Russia               | A. M. | G.        | E.   | European |
| Prussia              | A. M. | P.        | E.   | European |
| Denmark              | L. M. | P.        | E.   | European |
| Austria              | L. M. | C.        | E.   | European |
| Turkey               | A. M. | M.        | C.   | European |
| Sardinia             | L. M. | C.        | E.   | European |
| Switzerland          | R.    | P. and C. | E.   | European |

To Olney, the Levant generally consisted of half-civilized Islamic absolute monarchies, the exception being Arabia which, although "Mahometan," was a savage state governed by independent chiefs.

Writing before the codification of "Civil Geography," Morse's *Geography Made Easy* cited President John Adams when it stated that, "There are but *three* kinds of simple forms of government, Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy."<sup>56</sup> Part of the knowledge structure sorted

<sup>55</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 256-257.

<sup>56</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 45.

states by their type of government, summarizing the physical apparatuses that ruled the land under control. While the material nature of the subject (as opposed to the imagined or constructed nature of other criteria) allowed the text to be generally uniform, in some cases the language authors used to describe governments differed over time. Since the authors were discussing the same physical reality, one would imagine that all descriptions would be nearly identical, but on occasion the social context in which each author was writing in affected his observations.

To Adams's three forms Morse clarified "Aristocracy," giving the example of pre-1797 Venice, and "Patriarchal" government, "...in which the chief magistrate, so far as related to government, sustained the authority of a *father* over his people. This form of government is said to have existed in China for a long succession of years." Additionally, he advanced a new term into the epistemological canon, "Constitution," or, "The fundamental laws of a state or country, which secure the rights of its inhabitants, and regulate the conduct of its rulers..."<sup>57</sup> Dwight, also writing before the distinction of "Civil Geography" describes seven types of governments in his introduction and uniquely broadens the definition of "Republic":

Q. What is a Republic?

A. It is either an aristocracy, democracy, or a mixture of both.

Q. What is an Aristocracy?

A. It is a government vested in the hands of nobles, as in Genoa and Venice.

Q. What is a Democracy?

A. It is a government which is vested in the hands of persons who are elected by the people for their representatives, as in France [during the late revolution, and previous to the election of a First Consul or Emperor.]

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<sup>57</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 45-46.

Q. What is an Aristocratical Democracy?

A. It is a government composed of both an aristocracy and a democracy, as in the case in some of the Cantons in Switzerland.

Q. Is there any such government as an Oligarchy?

A. Yes, Holland is governed by such an [*sic*] one, and it consists in a small number of nobles, who hold the government of the country. But this is one type of aristocracy.<sup>58</sup>

This expanded and relativized interpretation of republicanism is likely due to the context in which Dwight originally composed these questions. The 1790s saw fierce partisan debates over the meaning of republicanism and the nature of the constitution. Dwight likely was attempting to encompass these debated meanings while asserting his own partisan viewpoint. While he discussed the distinction of “Aristocratical Democracy” in the context of the Swiss Cantons, to his readers this meant the Federalists whom Jeffersonians accused of tainting democracy by promoting an American gentry.

By the 1830s these specific debates no longer held as much sway in American discourse, and both Olney and Mitchell helped to formulate and distinctly label “Civil Geography.” Both authors offered three types of governments, “Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy,” yet by Olney’s 1851 edition aristocracy was removed. Both authors also differentiated “Absolute” and “Limited” monarchy, while the more simplistic *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* made that distinction by observing that, “If the government is very harsh it is called a *despotism*.”<sup>59</sup> Authors negatively defined Despotism itself as an antithesis to “democracy.” Ottoman Turkey often exemplified “despotism,” as in Olney’s text which asked, “Q. What is an Absolute Monarchy. A. It is a government in which the *will* of the monarch is the *law*; as in Turkey and

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<sup>58</sup> Dwight, 6; It is important to note that the bracketed text concerning Napoleon was added in a revision as it is absent from the 1805 edition yet included by 1812.

<sup>59</sup> S. G. Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* (c.1892. Reprint. New York: Huntington and Savage, 1845), 160 (emphasis in original).

Persia.”<sup>60</sup> Timothy Marr has observed this relationship in his examination of images of Islam in early American culture. He argues that,

The world of Islam was geographically removed from political struggles in North America; nevertheless, it played a significant role in early national thought and culture because orientalist constructions of tyranny and despotism formed an integral part of the process of reinventing republicanism. To establish their new nation firmly on democratic grounds, worldly Americans had to demonstrate their distance from, and superiority over, the despotic excesses of the old world.<sup>61</sup>

While the Turkish Sultan, of course, had no personal power to affect the establishment of the young American republic, his existence played a significant role in the formation of American democracy because of Americans’ structured cultural knowledge and its effect on self-understanding. Marr contends that Islam, particularly the example of the Turkish sultan, was “pressed into domestic service” as a means to define republicanism in early America. Unsure of the meaning and usage of their republicanism, Americans used the example of the Sublime Porte to construct America’s antithesis, thus helping to build a consensus of what republicanism was not. Thus, as Marr states, “Islamicism [his term meaning Islamic orientalist discourse] thus constituted an important *cultural resource* that new nationals adapted and developed to dramatize more fully the forceful viability of democratic government and the desire of many to influence the political regeneration of corrupt systems of global power.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, republicanism was the antithesis of corruption and tyranny, and was thus reaffirmed as both effective and just, which in turn gave justice to its spread and expansion.

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<sup>60</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 254 (emphasis in original).

<sup>61</sup> Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of Early American Islamicism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>62</sup> Marr, 21, 1 (emphasis added).

The geography texts of the latter half of the century limited the number of governments sanctioned as civilized nations to two—Democracy and Monarchy—and used the distinction to construct a narrative of progression between the old world and the new. As Arnold Guyot's *The Earth and Its Inhabitants* states, "The civilized nations of the earth have two very different forms of government, – the *Republican* government, or *Democracy*, in most of the countries in the New World and the *Monarchy* in those of the Old."<sup>63</sup> *Harper's School Geography* also prints this simplification, stating matter-of-factly that, "Nearly all the governments of the New World are republican," as well as, "Nearly all the governments of the Old World are monarchical."<sup>64</sup> Another interesting development of this era was the addition of the rationale of government promoted by the Progressive Movement to the taxonomy of government. The 1893 edition of M. F. Maury's text contends that, "All people require government of some sort, otherwise the strong will oppress the weak."<sup>65</sup> These are further examples that the social context in which the authors wrote affected the knowledge structure.

What was offered as an objective survey of governmental types is nothing of the sort. In truth, authors embedded their own understanding of self within the interpretive framework. Learning about the governments of the world became an existentially comforting and ideology-confirming exercise. Here, young Americans were reassured of who they were, as Guyot wrote, "In a Democracy, the *people govern themselves*, making their own laws, and choosing their rulers according to a *constitution*, or a plan of government, which controls all. The country so governed is called a *Republic*. The United States is the most perfect example of a Republic."<sup>66</sup> Here the wonders of their government (which students are also invited to participate in) are

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<sup>63</sup> Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 95 (emphasis in original).

<sup>64</sup> *Harper's School Geography*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> M. F. Maury, *Manuel of Geography* (1870. Reprint, New York; New Orleans: University Publishing Company, 1893), 17.

<sup>66</sup> Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 95 (emphasis in original).

reaffirmed, cloaked as an objective statement by surrounding the description with that of other governments. The 1851 edition of Olney's text went a step further by inviting the student to participate in the process by asking, "Which is the best form of government for any nation?" and answering, "That which is best adopted to the peculiar condition, wants and circumstances of the people."<sup>67</sup> Olney omitted labeling the finest government "Republicanism," which led the students themselves to make the connection – which a teacher, even a poor one, would confirm if necessary.

This dichotomy between the Old World and the New was consistently in the minds of American statesmen and had a very real and direct impact on nineteenth-century foreign policy. As Jay Sexton has detailed, American statesmen in the 1820s were quite concerned about the reactionary monarchies of Europe. Austria, Russia, Prussia and later France joined together in 1820 to issue the Troppau Circular which indicated their right to intervene in foreign nations to combat revolutionary threats. While these "Holy Allies" had no intention of sending armies to reconquer the Americas for monarchy, American statesmen perceived the paper as a direct threat to both their republican project and the just legitimacy of republics worldwide. These fears rose even further when, in 1823, France intervened in Spain to restore the crown of Ferdinand VII. The correspondence of Jefferson and James Madison showed how their framework of cultural knowledge premised their rational judgments. In 1823 both Madison and Jefferson favored enlisting the power of the British Empire, itself concerned at the power of the continental allies, to protect republicanism worldwide. Madison's views bordered on ridiculous, as he wrote:

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<sup>67</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 52.

With the British power & navy combined with our own we have nothing to fear from the rest of the nations and in the great struggle of the Epoch between liberty and despotism, we owe it to ourselves to sustain the former in this hemisphere at least. I have even suggested an invitation to the B. Gov. to join in applying this 'small effort for so much good' to the French invasion of Spain & make Greece and object of some such favorable attention.<sup>68</sup>

The categorical premise of a worldwide split between just republics and corrupt monarchies led these statesmen to perceive threats where there were none and to support fledgling "republics" without scrutiny. Here Madison's knowledge structure led him to expect a threat from continental Europe. He sought to enlist British help not only to combat reactionary monarchies, but to aid the Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Empire.

The power of "despotism" within the episteme was used to further domestic as well as international American goals. During the early 1830s, John C. Calhoun developed the concept of nullification to allow states to exempt themselves from Federal legislation without going as far as secession. Calhoun first outlined the concept in the anonymous *South Carolina Exposition* and subsequently in the publicly authored *Fort Hill Address*. As Daniel Walker Howe argues, "Calhoun now wrote as a political theorist proposing state rights as a check on what would otherwise be the 'unlimited and despotic' power of the national majority."<sup>69</sup> To Calhoun, "despotism" was the antithesis of state sovereignty and, specifically, the national tariff a "despotic" legislation because it conflicted with the will of many South Carolinians. This example further shows the utility of Americans' structure of essentialized knowledge. The esteemed

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<sup>68</sup> Madison to Jefferson, November 1, 1823, in *Writings of James Monroe vol. 6*, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898-1903), 395-396; discussed with context in Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 49-52.

<sup>69</sup> Howe, 397-399; quoting: Calhoun to Frederick W. Symmes, July 26, 1831, in *The Papers of John C. Calhoun IX*, ed. Clyde Wilson and Edwin Hemphill (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 438.

statesman was able to use a concept consistent with the context of universal geography and employ it to further his physically unrelated domestic goals

The second aspect of “Civil Geography” was to qualify the essential nature of each state’s established religion. Generally, all of the texts conveyed the same structure of cultural knowledge concerning religion, with most authors adding a unique element. Most established the premise that, as Olney wrote, “The four prevailing religions of the world, are Christian, Mahometan, Jewish, and Pagan, or Heathen.”<sup>70</sup> Olney continued by defining Christians as those who follow Jesus Christ and believe that He is their Savior. Christians are then subdivided into Catholics, Greeks and Protestants, and the latter further divided among “Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists Baptists, Methodists and Friends.” The other categories are listed with only a single qualifying aspect, as “Mahometans,” “believe in Mahomet, an imposter of Arabia...,” Jews, “believe in the Old Testament and reject the New and expect a savior yet to come,” and Pagans, “who believe in false gods, and worship idols, beasts reptiles, &c.”<sup>71</sup> All of the authors appear to be in agreement on this framework, save a few modifications. Jedidiah Morse, for instance, adds a fifth religion to the scheme as, “All such as assert the sufficiency, universality, and absolute perfection of *natural religion*, with a view to discredit and discard all extraordinary *revelation*, as useless and needless, are called Deists.”<sup>72</sup> The only other truly unique classificatory contribution was from Mitchell’s widely-used *A System of Modern Geography*, which added a distinction within “Mahomedans, or Musselmans,” by dividing them, “Into two sects: the sect of Ali, and the sect of Omar.”<sup>73</sup> The structure only began to change by

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<sup>70</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 255.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>72</sup> J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 62-63 (emphasis in original); Roswell Smith also discussed Deists: R. Smith, 81-83.

<sup>73</sup> S. Augustus Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography* (1839. Reprint, Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1847), 47.



the 1893 edition of M. F. Maury's *Manual of Geography* which featured the addition of "Buddhism," "Brahmanism," and even "The Guebres or Parsees" into the scheme.<sup>74</sup>

The general structural uniformity of the taxonomy of religion made it an easily-used, if somewhat ineffective, tool for examining the complex beliefs of both foreign and domestic peoples. This exercise, again, necessarily included the authors' and readers' own understandings of self. The process confirmed religious legitimacy, deemed some peoples as religious deviants, and accommodated a typically 'different' people into their inclusive religious narrative. First, comparative discussion of religion—which inevitably acknowledges the presence of alternative beliefs—includes the danger of undermining the universalism of readers' own religious views, as Roswell Smith's catechetical discussion reveals:

Q. What is Religion, in a general sense?  
582. Any system of faith and worship.  
Q. What do you mean by 'faith' and 'worship'?  
583. Faith signifies confidence in, and worship, great reverence for, some being.  
Q. What is the word *religion* derived from?  
584. *Religio*, (Latin) signifying oath or obligation, because it imposes obligations on its professors.

And on a following page:

Q. What is the number of Pagans in the world?  
611. About 620 millions.  
Q. What is the number of Christians?  
612. About 280 millions.  
Q. What is the number of Mohammedans?  
613. About 97 millions.  
Q. What is the number of Jews?  
614. About three millions.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> M. F. Maury, *Manual of Geography*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> R. Smith, 80-81, 83.

The broadening of “faith” and “worship” to include what most nineteenth-century Americans considered false religions necessitated authors substitute “some being” for “one true being,” thus recognizing the existence of alternative beliefs. The quantification of religious belief revealed to American students that only a minority of the world followed the one true religion. Thus, a number of authors reaffirmed the legitimacy of religious belief in general and the unmistakable superiority and inevitable spread of Protestantism. For example, Adams’s text calculated the number of Christians as 225 million out of the world’s 700 million population and then directly proceeded to extensively detail the successes of missionary and Bible societies:

A most wonderful system of measures is now in operation to extend the blessings of Christianity, by means of Bible and Missionary Societies, to all parts of the world. The success is already such as to prove highly animating to the hearts of Christians. The inhabitants of the *Sandwich*, and of the *Society* islands, have already renounced their idols. Missionaries are received with great affection by the Indians in America, by the Negroes in Africa; also, in Hindostan, Australasia, and in many other parts of the world.<sup>76</sup>

Adams continued to fix the concept of Protestantism’s preordained expansion in American cultural knowledge by detailing the distribution of Bibles by various societies around the world. Others such as Mitchell and Olney’s 1851 edition reaffirmed the legitimacy of religious belief in itself by insisting that all nations, even “savages,” have some sort of established religious creed.<sup>77</sup> Yet, the most reassuring passages read by young students would have been those detailing the missionary movements around the world and the addition to the episteme that, “...enough has been done to justify the conclusion, that the Christian nations have it in their power to diffuse their religious and their civil institutions over the whole earth.”<sup>78</sup> Mitchell also asserts the superiority of the American religious self in his contribution to the cultural

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<sup>76</sup> Adams, 98-99.

<sup>77</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 52; S. Augustus Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 46.

<sup>78</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 285.

knowledge structure. After he summarized that supremacy, he invited the students to participate in the process by asking, “What nations are superior in knowledge and power to all others? What will cause their religion to be spread over the greater part of the earth?”<sup>79</sup> Statements such as these invited students to assert their own understanding of self into the conceptual structure.

The fixation of Paganism in the episteme as a deviant falsehood also confirmed the validity of iconoclastic Protestantism. Goodrich’s *A System of School Geography* offered two “classes” of religion to do just that. This innovation established “polytheism” and “monotheism” as distinct epistemological entities. Here monotheism was divided into the three known religions of Judaism, “Mohametanism” and Christianity while polytheism was defined as a peripheral Otherness most often deemed “superstition.” As Goodrich describes:

In general, it may be remarked, that all these various schemes are characterized by the grossest absurdity in their doctrines and ceremonies. The practical morality of them all is of the lowest and coarsest kind, and there effect is uniformly to debase the mind and corrupt the heart. No elevating and purifying principle pervades them, and their only use seems to be that of furnishing knavish and designing priests with the means of deceiving and ruling their deluded followers.<sup>80</sup>

He mentions no specifics. No principle pervades them at all – they have no common aspect and instead take the form of a miscellany of deviancy in the taxonomy of religion. As Jedidiah Morse concludes, “The Pagans inhabit all other parts of the globe, which are not inhabited by Christians, Jews, Deists, or Mahometans.”<sup>81</sup>

Another interesting process in the classification system of religion is the accommodation of Judaism into Americans’ inclusive religious narratives. Judaism’s prominence in the Bible

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<sup>79</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 285.

<sup>81</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 48.

elevated it to a central location in the knowledge structure as a formerly inclusive and only recently deviant modality. As Morse's *Geography Made Easy* describes, "The Jews are the seed of Abraham, or the descendants of the chosen people of God, who formerly inhabited Judea, but are now dispersed, and have become a *proverb*, in fulfillment of scripture prophecies, in almost every nation under heaven. They adhere to the Old Testament scripture but reject the New."<sup>82</sup> Here American students learned, in support of their own Bible-study, that Judaism was formerly an identifiable part of the American self that remained part of that heritage. Only Jews' rejection of the New Testament defines them as deviant in Americans' structured cultural knowledge of religion.

The innovative codification of race was perhaps the most potent aspect of the structure of Americans' cultural knowledge. Racial differences were discussed as early as Jedidiah Morse's *Geography Made Easy*, yet became fully developed later and emerged as a unified classification system by around 1830. The identical descriptions of racial characteristics across texts were even more notable considering the constructed nature of race. The other aspects of the epistemology of Civil Geography had physical facets that were objectively valid. For example, when textbook authors deemed the Turkish government to be despotic they were commenting on the actual administration system of the Ottoman Empire. When the same authors detailed the round cheeks and pointed chin of the Mongol race, they had preconceived a distinctive difference based on skin color and applied later observations to that framework. Thus the uniformity in the authors' texts reveals how persuasive these constructive myths were throughout American society. Variations of skin color were premised as a taxonomical difference, thus, any supplemental observations—including both physical attributes and cultural traits—became defined by and seen as derived from that preconceived difference. A mostly

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<sup>82</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 47; Also: R. Smith, 82; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 48; & Mitchell, *New Primary Geography* (1855. Reprint, Philadelphia: E. H. Butler & Co., 1866), 15.

unrelated intellectual framework, namely that of animal breeding (and later more sophisticated biology), was implemented to explain the causal relationships between these imagined differences. Therefore, American students learned that, “The color of the Malays varies from olive-yellow to black. They are fond of the sea, and given to piracy.”<sup>83</sup> In doing so, students learned that these attributes and behaviors were caused by inherent biological factors unique only to the “Malay” of the Pacific islands – a permanent and unbridgeable divide between them and any other race.

Like the knowledge structures of government and religion, the taxonomy of race was used by the authors of geography textbooks as a tool which allowed authors to collect, illuminate and even quantify the complex variations between states and present them to students in a palatable, systematized manner. Therefore, authors could divide the world among the five “...grand varieties of the human species.”<sup>84</sup> These distinctions were based on the premise that they were physical, biological differences, and population counts were often mentioned in the section. Sarah S. Cornell even breaks down the population numbers by race, deciding that 420 million Caucasians, 460 million Mongolians, 10 million Americans, 70 million Negroes, and 40 million Malays resided on earth in 1855.<sup>85</sup> Smith even included a section detailing the repopulation rate of the earth, including the death rate and needed birth rate. He even asked, “Q. How many have probably died, while I have been reading two or three questions in this book, or in the space of one minute? 581. More than fifty persons.”<sup>86</sup> Authors presented racial distinctions in this biological context, having more to do with reproduction than anything. Other than Jedidiah Morse, who labels six, geography authors designated five

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<sup>83</sup> Maury, *Manual of Geography*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 252.

<sup>85</sup> S. S. Cornell, *Intermediate Geography* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1855), 4.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, 80.

individual races of men: Caucasian or European; Asiatic, Tartar or Mongol; American; Malay; and African or Negro. Texts deemed these white, yellow, red, brown and black races respectively. Europeans were from the Caucus region and made up Europe, North Africa and Western Asia. Authors assigned the east and north of the Ganges to the Mongols of whom, "...the best specimens are in China and Japan."<sup>87</sup> This classification was also said to hold Finns, Magyars, Laplanders and North American "Esquimaux". The Americans originally populated North and South America and the Malays were said to inhabit the Malacca, Australasia and Polynesia while texts confined the Negroes to Africa. Mitchell also noted that, "A large number of this race are found in both North and South America, where they are chiefly in a state of slavery."<sup>88</sup> By 1893, Americans viewed African-Americans at least slightly differently, as Maury finds it necessary to add that, of the black race, "Its descendants in America are civilized."<sup>89</sup> The texts are generally silent on the Eastern Mediterranean, though it is nominally considered European or white. Goodrich and Olney do specifically mention that Arabs, Turks—and in Olney's case Egyptians—are white, yet by Maury's 1893 edition Turks are Mongolian or yellow.<sup>90</sup>

Authors informed students that they were members of the Caucasian or white race – comfortingly the most prominent and superior of the races. Each text presented Europeans as the first race, with the yellow Asiatic race always second. While there was a disagreement on the order of the final three races, the natural primacy of the white race was never called into question. Some authors cited evidence for this distinction. Goodrich posited biological proof, offering that, "Not only is the countenance more beautiful, but the intellectual and moral

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<sup>87</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 41.

<sup>89</sup> Maury, *Manuel of Geography*, 16.

<sup>90</sup> S. G. Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 284; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 253; Maury, *Manuel of Geography*, 16.

endowments of this race are of a higher character.”<sup>91</sup> Added to this were the consequential observations made by Mitchell who proclaimed the nobility of the European based on his excellence in “the arts” and learning. He contended that Caucasians established the most powerful nations, most valuable institutions and most important inventions.<sup>92</sup> Both Mitchell and Olney incorporated readers into the imagined white community. Mitchell asks:

Which is the most noble of the five races of men?  
In what does it excel all others?  
What does it include?  
What has originated with the people of this race?  
To which of the races of men do the greater part of the people of the United States belong?  
To which race do you belong?<sup>93</sup>

Here Mitchell invited pupils to proclaim their participation in the racial episteme. This comforting reaffirmation of superiority and confirmation of mission could have dangerous justifying effects.

Geography authors taught American students that the causes of racial distinctions were still somewhat unidentified but likely environmental in nature. Smith admitted “our” ignorance as he explained that the races arose from, “565. To difference in climate, food, dress, mode of life, and partly to causes which we do not well understand.”<sup>94</sup> Mitchell’s description of the matter so closely resembled Smiths that it very well may have been plagiarized, as he answered that, “It is probably owing to a difference in climate, food, and mode of life, and no doubt partly causes which we do not understand.”<sup>95</sup> This shows the difficulty authors had in finding an

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<sup>91</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 285.

<sup>92</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 41; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 253.

<sup>94</sup> R. Smith, 78.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 40.

environmental cause for a set of imagined distinctions. Yet this problem did not stop Olney from offering a more elaborate explanation, as he argued that,

Climate, or the temperature of the air, is the principle cause of the different complexion, and the external form of the varieties of the human race, which when extremely warm or cold, produces in process of time, a dark, – and when temperate, a fair complexion. Difference of education, food, clothing, modes of life, and particular customs may be assigned as other causes.<sup>96</sup>

Notice his distinction of the “external form,” as the authors presented race as if it were a permanent, organic and internal distinction. Olney was more confident in his conclusion derived from this erroneous premise. Slavery and the racial status of African Americans seemed to have been too controversial for nineteenth-century textbooks since authors chose not to include any discussions of domestic racial issues. However, that most of the geography authors offered environmental causes of racial difference reveals that they were likely quite abolitionist-minded. Those supporting slaveholding in nineteenth-century America would have contended that race was an unquestionably intrinsic characteristic. Abolitionists used the same knowledge structure as slaveholders, yet directed it to serve an opposing purpose. They also learned the taxonomy of race though geography texts and their polemics used the same qualifiers, or even the same logic, as their opposition to argue for abolition. It was likely that most of the public slavery discourse in the nineteenth century, which supposedly addressed objective truths, took place almost entirely within the episteme.

The taxonomy of race merged quite well with Protestant narratives of creation. In fact, large parts of the Book of Genesis itself are devoted to genealogy and the peoples that resulted from these lines of reproduction. Cultural knowledge of race itself was likely influenced by its

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<sup>96</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 253.



example. Mitchell describes how even these natural and permanent distinctions have a common origin – one derived from the Bible. He taught that man was God’s most perfect creation in His own image and that all men were descended from Adam and Eve, even, as Olney expresses, “...the delicate European and the swarthy Ethiopian are brothers, descended from the same ancestor.”<sup>97</sup> Yet, it seems that by mid-century this scriptural explanation of racial origins was being called into question. Smith’s causal explanation for racial difference seems to have been in defense of this narrative:

Q. Who were the first inhabitants on this earth?

559. Adam and Eve.

Q. Where did they first live?

560. In the garden of Eden, called Paradise.

Q. Where was that?

561. It is supposed to have been in the S. W. part of Asia, near the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

Q. Where did Adam’s posterity, or descendants, settle?

562. They spread as they increased over the whole face of the earth.

Q. What has this wide dispersion, or scattering, of the human race, given rise to?

563. The formation of various associations, such as tribes, nations, &c., for their common protection.

Q. What has led to *the unscriptural assertion, that Adam is not the father of all living*?

564. The differences in the human family, with respect to color, stature, features, language, &c.<sup>98</sup>

It seems that this central location of scripture in geography textbooks eroded over the course of the nineteenth century since none of the texts published in the latter half of the century offer Adam specifically as the origin of man. Guyot’s 1870 edition does give a relativized secular account of the same narrative, as he imparted, “The home of our first parents, from whom all mankind are descended, is believed to have been in the western part of Asia (Armenia), in the region in which the three continents are joined together. Spreading from this central point, their

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<sup>97</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 40; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 253.

<sup>98</sup> R. Smith, 78 (emphasis added).

descendants, after ages had passed, filled the continents, forming in each a separate race.”<sup>99</sup> His contribution shows how dependent the epistemological framework was on this account, as it required an origin story nearly identical to the biblical tale even after the latter’s disappearance from the narrative. During the early part of the nineteenth century the codification of race fused so well with scriptural narratives that they helped to reinforce each other. Over the course of the nineteenth century, this scriptural interpretation seems to have fallen under criticism. This may have arisen from new, contending ideas such as Darwinism, yet the more likely cause was the growth and spread of new communication technologies, which heightened awareness of America’s expanding religious plurality. Despite how it may have fared under scrutiny, the debate alone could have made the issue controversial. Therefore, postwar geography textbooks substituted secularized accounts of racial origins that relativized and mimicked their scriptural predecessors.

By the 1830s another systematic development emerged to help Americans address the complex distinctions among foreign societies in a simplified and digestible manner. “States of Society” or, “Levels of Civilization” was a hierarchy of “nations” developed as a tool to meet this goal. Thus, the epistemological structure that Americans learned through geography textbooks was made more powerful and more useful because of this innovation.

The authors produced a schematic which enabled students to essentialize complex social distinctions quickly into a single hierarchy. This in turn permitted them, or even enticed them, to draw logical and monolithic cross-cultural comparisons which were existentially comforting – confirming their sense of self and mission. The most detailed and complex model was offered by S. Augustus Mitchell, whose work remained popular in seven different decades.

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<sup>99</sup> Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 94.

He divided humanity into five distinct stages of society which can be illustrated in a simple chart.

[see Appendix]

Mitchell also listed where each nation was located in his design.<sup>100</sup> Other authors offered a more simplified model than Mitchell, generally identifying three or four stages of society. The three stages that Goodrich and Guyot offer are “Savage,” “Barbarous” or “Half-Civilized” and “Civilized,” while Olney, Smith, and Cornell detail a four-tiered system of “Savage,” Half-Civilized,” “Civilized,” and “Enlightened.” *Harper’s School Geography* returns to Mitchell’s five-level structure and specifically offers “the Bedouin Arabs,” as an example of “Barbarians.”<sup>101</sup> Generally, the qualification for half-civilization over barbarian-hood was organized agriculture and/or written language. The entrance to civilization required sufficient knowledge of “the arts and sciences” – generally industrialization. The enlightened nations were commonly those that, “have carried the arts and sciences to a high degree of perfection, and are distinguished for their industry, intelligence, ingenuity and enterprise.”<sup>102</sup> Authors made additional consequential observations upon the established framework of difference, such as Goodrich’s claim that, “Savages are those nations who are destitute of the art of writing, and whose vague and unsteady ideas are attached only to objects which strike their senses.”<sup>103</sup> Also, authors who essentialized the state of savagery often evoked cannibalism as a mark of difference. As *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* states, “They have many rude and cruel customs, and many of them eat human flesh, and are called cannibals.”<sup>104</sup> Mitchell agreed with Goodrich’s

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<sup>100</sup> Derived from: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 42-43; Mitchell categorized nations as follows: **Savage:** Australia, New Guinea, American Indians, People of Kamtschatka; **Barbarous:** Tartary, Arabia, Central Africa, Abyssinia; **Half-Civilized:** China, Japan, Burmah, Siam, Turkey, Persia; **Civilized:** Russia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Mexico; **Enlightened:** United States, Great Britain, France, Switzerland and “some of the German States.”

<sup>101</sup> *Harper’s School Geography*, 18.

<sup>102</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 254.

<sup>103</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 287.

<sup>104</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 159.

characterization, describing savages as, “...bloodthirsty and revengeful, [they] often eat the flesh of enemies they take in war, and treat their women as slaves.”<sup>105</sup> Here Mitchell details another identifying factor used to construct differentiations between groups. The social treatment of women as a separate, distinct, class worthy of veneration was objectified as a sign of enlightenment. Othered, lower societies, “treat[ed] their woman like slaves, buying and selling them at pleasure.” It was only in enlightened nations, “that the female sex [were] fully elevated to their proper station in society, as equals with, and companions for the male sex.”<sup>106</sup> Use of this qualifying factor reaffirmed the status of American society as ideal, and thus justified its spread.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, geography authors developed this taxonomy of “Civil Geography” as a tool to classify the complex variations among foreign societies and construct a concise and systematized contribution to American cultural knowledge. Authors essentialized governments and religion and modified the constructions of race and states of societies to lay out a useful knowledge structure of foreign lands. This epistemological framework welcomed students to make unhelpful—while wholly rational—comparative conclusions driven by social pressures. Additionally, “Civil Geography” (more so than elsewhere) helped to embed Americans’ understanding of self within that framework. In some cases authors invited students to participate directly in the process, as when Olney asks, “To which state of society do you belong? Why?”<sup>107</sup> This existentially comforting and mission-confirming practice firmly established divisions of peoples in a rational scheme in which Americans were inherently superior to others.

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<sup>105</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 42.

<sup>106</sup> R. Smith, 85.

<sup>107</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 254.

## Engaging the East

By far the largest section of nineteenth-century geography textbooks was dedicated to a broad survey of the states of the world. In most cases this aspect made up roughly three-fourths of each book. Here texts employed the supposedly universal classifications they learned to make sense of specific attributes of foreign lands. To reflect the texts' emphasis on surveying states or regions, a large portion of this work is devoted to a study of how nineteenth-century Americans used their epistemological framework to perceive and discuss the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean and their inhabitants. To textbook authors and learners young and old, these places served as a canvas upon which they sketched a number of interrelated processes. The underlying essentialism of their perspective allowed them to create a useful and dynamic knowledge structure—an ontology in the Computer Science interpretation—which could incorporate their observations. The conceptual framework that they created allowed Americans to make universal comparisons which were molded by their insecurities and anxieties. This process was primarily driven by their pursuit of essential universal truth and their search for the context in which they could define their social location, which confirmed their understanding of self and mission. This also reinforced Americans' constructed categories of self and Other in the epistemology of the Eastern Mediterranean that often led to the development of interrelated hierarchies that overlaid and solidified the essentialized framework – making it more and more rigid and inflexible. The result of these interwoven processes was a concrete knowledge structure with a permanence that only increased its utility.

To study these complex and interrelated processes, we examine how nineteenth-century Americans taught, learned and discussed the many individual epistemological qualifiers of the Eastern Mediterranean—the concepts they learned about the region—in their own unique context. This is necessary because as we shall see, nineteenth-century authors and

students used these individual concepts in erratic, sometimes contradictory, yet most always logical, ways unique to the related social pressures. For example, to many Americans the lack of roads conveyed Otherness in Egypt, while it might have communicated a much different message about Palestine. Therein lies the necessity of discussing these uses within their unique context rather than summarizing the processes on a large scale. The rules of the game were changed often as Americans shaped systematic cultural knowledge by employing it to combat a number of sometimes conflicting social anxieties.

The survey that follows is very far from complete. Americans knew and discussed so many individual concepts related to Egypt alone that it could provide scholars a seemingly endless field of inquiry. Nineteenth-century geography textbooks divided what we now consider the Eastern Mediterranean into four distinct regions: Turkey in Europe, Turkey in Asia, Arabia, and Egypt. Turkey in Europe included most of the Balkans and Turkish Asia consisted of modern-day Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan – sometimes divided into Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine in the texts. For Turkey in Asia, Palestine occupied a space in American cultural knowledge disproportionate to its size, usually dwarfing its geographically larger neighbors in the texts. Therefore, the section on Turkey in Asia continues that somewhat lopsided mentality and is dedicated mostly to Palestine. This chapter consists of four subsections that detail Americans' structural knowledge of each region. The first concerns Turkey in Europe, and is quite brief. The next three, detailing Palestine, Arabia and Egypt respectively are somewhat longer, since their depiction was much more complex. This survey shows how American authors and students used their general epistemological framework to engage with specific, existing lands of the Eastern Mediterranean.

## Addressing Alterity

As students absorbed the detailed epistemological framework of nations listed in each textbook, the first Eastern Mediterranean state they would likely have come across in most works was Turkey in Europe. To nineteenth-century Americans, Turkey connoted concepts of radical alterity, since Turkish despotism was constructed as an antithesis to American republicanism – whatever the latter meant. The poor administration was deemed responsible for the infertility of the land and the overall state of destitution and misery, which inversely confirmed the enlightened republican mission of the United States. Americans knew the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean from the classical texts which described the region as a civilized and fruitful center. The capital of Constantinople bridged these two images in the minds of American students and authors. Textbooks portrayed the city as a grand monument of the Old World from afar, yet a dirty and gloomy mess open closer examination. Having fumbled this greatness, Ottoman Turkey was a popular conceptual foil for statesmen of the early republic. All parties in the vicious discussions over the nature of the republican project in the early nineteenth century agreed on one thing: what they had built was very far removed from the autocracy of the Old World, personified by the Turkish Sultan.

The primary concept nineteenth-century Americans associated with Ottoman Turkey was despotism. As Daniel Adams puts it, “The government is despotic. The emperor is styled Sultan or Grand Seignior.”<sup>108</sup> Goodrich elaborates somewhat, stating, “The government is despotic. The sovereign is called sultan, or grand seignor [*sic*]; his will alone is the law of the land, and he disposes of the lives and property of his subjects at pleasure. This power is

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<sup>108</sup> Daniel Adams, *Geography, or A Description of the World* (1818. Reprint, Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1832), 68.

sometimes exercised with atrocious cruelty.”<sup>109</sup> Marking the Turkish government as cruel and oppressive had the beneficial effect of building confidence in America’s developing republican mission. This use of despotism again supports the argument made by Marr that the Sublime Porte was often used as a descriptive antithesis in early America. J. E. Worcester emphasized the extreme position on the opposing side of the spectrum, writing, “The Turkish government is one of the most despotic in the world.”<sup>110</sup> Mitchell and Smith mentioned how the Sultan was sometimes considered God on earth, yet most texts simply pronounced Turkey an absolute despotism.<sup>111</sup>

The attribution of despotism served an additional purpose in Americans’ understanding of Turkey – to explain why a land formerly celebrated for its fertility in the classical texts would then be destitute. The cause of infertility was twofold: the low racial character of the Turks and their ineffective government. Just about every popular geography text of the nineteenth century employed this narrative. As Jedidiah Morse observed, “The soil, although unimproved, through the indolence of the Turks, is luxuriant beyond description.” Goodrich’s most popular work seconded that observation almost exactly. The passages resemble each other so much that it was likely that the younger author wrote with a copy of *Geography Made Easy* readily at hand.<sup>112</sup> Mitchell shifted from racial causes to an administrative basis by arguing that, “In soil and climate it is highly favoured; and under a liberal government would doubtless become one of the most flourishing countries of Europe.”<sup>113</sup> *Harper’s School Geography* called Turkey’s natural agricultural advantages “unsurpassed” and Adams, Olney and Smith all mentioned poor

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<sup>109</sup> S. G. Goodrich, *A System of School Geography* (1831. Reprint, New York: F. J. Huntington & Co, 1839), 152.

<sup>110</sup> J. E. Worcester, *Elements of Geography* (1819. Reprint, Boston: Phillips & Sampson, 1846), 159.

<sup>111</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 273; Roswell Smith, *Geography on the Productive System* (1835. Reprint, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1857), 254.

<sup>112</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 158; S. G. Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 151.

<sup>113</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 275.



efforts at cultivation.<sup>114</sup> Worcester summarized the narrative nicely as he wrote, “The countries included in this empire comprise most of those parts of the world which were most celebrated in ancient history and which were, most celebrated in ancient history and which were, in ancient times, the seats of civilization, leaning and the arts; but they are now, owing to the despotism and bad policy of the Turks, comparatively desolate and miserable.”<sup>115</sup> Authors saw a nation’s domestic production as a universal standard which Turkey did not meet due to racial indolence and the poor administrative policies that inevitably came from despotism. Each author made his or her own contribution to this narrative, which was a mainstay of American cultural knowledge.

Geography texts also often devoted significant space to discussing another common qualifier of Turkishness: the dual images of its capital, Constantinople. Each work described the city’s magnificent appearance from afar which “disappoints expectation” upon closer inspection. Jedidiah’s son Sidney Morse wrote in his own work how,

Constantinople, the capital, built on seven hills, on the Bosphorus, which here forms a fine harbor, appears magnificently at a little distance, the gilded domes and elegant minarets of its 300 mosques rising everywhere from the bosom of beautiful groves; but on entering, as in other Turkish cities, you find the streets narrow, crooked, and ill-paved, and the houses low and gloomy.<sup>116</sup>

The narrow crooked streets were a common observation about Eastern cities. Others described how the wooden city was prone to fire, the uncleanness of the inhabitants, or how

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<sup>114</sup> *Harper’s School Geography*, 96; Adams, 68; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 184; R. Smith, 254.

<sup>115</sup> Worcester, 157.

<sup>116</sup> Disappointing: Worcester, 159; Sidney Morse, *A System of School Geography for the Use of Schools* (1822. Reprint, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), 57.

Constantinople was often visited by plague.<sup>117</sup> Yet, dual images of a glorious skyline of beautiful mosques and the grungy streets paved with filth were most prevalent.<sup>118</sup>

Many authors also offered discussion points about and potent images of Ottoman Turkey that each contributed to the overall taxonomical character of difference. These points covered a number of essentialized characteristics and practices found in the Turkish Empire. Some of the earlier texts observed that Greece was included in the empire and recalled the glorious past, now squandered. As Olney describes, “Turkey in Europe embraces ancient Greece and is celebrated for its numerous remains of antiquity. It was once the seat of liberty, learning, and the arts, but is now sunk to the lowest state of ignorance and slavery.”<sup>119</sup> Here again the narrative of the Turks’ despoiling tendencies reappeared. Adams detailed the vast number of Greek temples and palaces that dotted the Turkish landscape and Jedidiah Morse recalled that the adventures of Xerxes, Augustus and Mark Anthony [*sic*] unfolded here.<sup>120</sup> Some of the later texts, including a revision in Olney, almost casually added that Greece had won her hard-fought battle for independence.<sup>121</sup> More authors discussed the poor racial character of the Turks—with “indolent” being the most common qualifier—and their origins from the Independent Tartary of Central Asia. Intellectually connected with these racial views was the idea that the Turks were a foreign ruling minority—at least in European Turkey—and that the Sublime Porte was keeping native Europeans in a state of misery.<sup>122</sup> Other defining, and often contradicting, details were

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<sup>117</sup> Wooden, Fires: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 152; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 273; R. Smith, 255, Cornell, 65, S. Morse, 57; Uncleanliness: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 158; Dwight, 87; Plague: Adams, 254; S. Morse, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Dual Images: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 158-159; Adams, 254; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 152; Worcester, 159; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 275; S. Morse, 57; Cornell, 65.

<sup>119</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 184; see also: J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 130.

<sup>120</sup> Adams, 265; J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 159.

<sup>121</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 184-185; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 273; S. Morse, 57.

<sup>122</sup> Poor racial character: <sup>122</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 185; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Mitchell, *A System of Modern*

the Islamic prohibition of alcohol, the abuse of alcohol, the warlike tendencies of the Ottomans, legitimized polygamy, attempted industrial improvements, overall decline of the state, toleration of Jews and Christians and, in reverse, the treatment of Christians with contempt.<sup>123</sup> Also, a number of defining images also were embedded in the knowledge structure of Turkey. Students were informed that Turks wore loose, flowing clothing, produced carpets, were swarthy with shaved heads, sat cross-legged, smoked pipes, used opium, took elaborate baths, and had harems, while women were veiled in the street.<sup>124</sup> These were the qualifying details of the episteme which allowed students to make the monolithic cross-cultural judgments that so intrigued and comforted them.

Each of these images and concepts positioned Ottoman Turkey as a defining antithesis of the Early Republic. American authors and students were confident that if their vision of republicanism was implemented instead of despotic policies, the young nation would not squander its resources and potential for greatness. These Americans used the taxonomy of Turkey to locate themselves and their cultural mission with that essentialized universal spectrum. Social pressures pushed them to construct a simple hierarchy of government that situated republicanism at its peak. The existential comfort and confirmation this process

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*Geography*, 273; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*; R. Smith, 254; From Tartary: Adams, 255; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Worcester, 159; R. Smith, 254; S. Morse, 57; Ruling minority: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274, 275; Cornell, 60; *Harper's*, 96.

<sup>123</sup> Alcohol: Adams, 255; Alcohol abuse: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 273; Warlike: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 160; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Polygamy: Adams, 255; S. Morse, 57; Improvements: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274; Decline: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 273; S. Morse, 57; Toleration: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 160; R. Smith, 254; Contempt: S. Morse, 57.

<sup>124</sup> Dress: Adams, 255; S. Morse, 57; Carpets: Adams, 254; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 151; *Harper's*, 96; Shaved Heads: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Cross-legged: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274; S. Morse, 57; James Monteith, *Manual of Geography* (New York: A. S. Barnes & H. Burr, 1853), 123; Smoke pipes: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274; Opium: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 153; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274; R. Smith, 255; Baths: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 158; Adams, 255; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 274; Harem: Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 116; Veil: Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 74.

provided gave Americans the confidence to assert their dynamic and changing vision during their everyday lives.

### **The Most Interesting Place**

Turkey's Asian provinces contributed a much more complex and detailed set of ideas to Americans' structure of cultural knowledge. This framework had to accommodate the Old and New Testaments as well as a rough history of the Crusades and knowledge of ancient empires such as the Assyrians, Phoenicians and Romans. Each city or landmark included a set of ideas that were very familiar to American readers. Textbook authors assembled these concepts and identifiers into a useful and adaptable conceptual structure through which Americans comprehended the region. Repetition in language shows that authors conveyed *concepts* that came attached to distinct qualifiers. To American students Palestine displayed many of the most pervasive and most potent of these identifying ideas. Their origin in scripture and gave them a unique effect on American self-understanding. Here authors projected biblical narratives onto the tangible landscape of Palestine. Both authors and readers explored the epistemological structure and basked in celebration of their heritage, reaffirming their sense of self and self-purpose.

"Turkey in Asia," more than any other land, conveyed a unique and powerful set of ideas in American culture. As Olney told his students, "Turkey is the most interesting point of Asia. It includes within its limits, most of the places recorded in the Holy Scriptures. It comprises the Holy Land, the ancient residents of the Jews; Syria, Asia Minor, Armenia, and Mesopotamia."<sup>125</sup> Generally, texts considered Turkey in Asia to include Asia Minor, or Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia. Later works sometimes added Kurdistan and many

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<sup>125</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 197.

distinguished Palestine as a separate entity within Syria although it owned no such distinction in the Ottoman administration until late in the century. In fact, authors consciously avoided local names and instead applied familiar terms regardless of their suitability. Goodrich's *A System of School Geography* listed Asia Minor, Syria including Palestine, Armenia and Mesopotamia as the regions of Asiatic Turkey. He stated that, "There are various modern names given to these countries, but those by which they are best known are the preceding."<sup>126</sup> Sidney Morse also admitted to his ignorance of local names, and described how, "The country is now divided into pachalics, which take their names from the principle cities, as Alep'po, Acre, &c., but it is interesting to us chiefly under its ancient names, viz., Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Armenia, and Mesopotamia."<sup>127</sup> American geography authors imparted their own organizational classifications to the Eastern Mediterranean.

American geography textbooks featured a complex conceptual framework made up of scripture, ancient history, Crusader tales, and some local knowledge focused mostly on trade and commerce. Worcester told that, "Turkey in Asia comprehends several fine countries, which were of great celebrity in ancient history, both sacred and profane, and were the scenes of most of the events recorded in the scriptures."<sup>128</sup> Olney's 1851 revision described the land as witnessing, "...the most astonishing events recorded in history."<sup>129</sup> The intellectual structure comprised a number of topics, mostly unrelated, that authors applied to the tangible plane of the landscape. For example, Sidney Morse noted,

1. Turkey in Asia has been the seat of more famous cities and empires than any other country.

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<sup>126</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 226.

<sup>127</sup> S. Morse, 60.

<sup>128</sup> Worcester, 166; see also: R. Smith, 260-261; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282.

<sup>129</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 227.

2. Here were Babylon, Nineveh, Damascus, Bagdad, and Jerusalem, each, at some period, the most splendid city in the world.

3. Here were Bal'bec and Palmyra, Tyre and Si'don, the cities of the Philis'tines, and the monarchies of Per'gamos, Pon'tus, and Armenia.<sup>130</sup>

To American readers, each of these landmarks conveyed a set of ideas—a concrete set of concepts—that, no matter their accuracy or truth, could be judged by students as natural and inherent attributes.

Overall, Asiatic Turkey connoted a set of narratives as a whole. Students learned that, “The air is naturally delightful,” and “generally very pure and healthy,” yet often overrun by the plague.<sup>131</sup> The landscape was most often described as “diversified” and most texts detailed the natural fertility of the soil.<sup>132</sup> This was usually coupled with a narrative that was applied to the Ottoman Empire as a whole: the Turk’s poor efforts at agriculture. The repetition in language is the most notable:

“At present, agriculture is deplorably neglected.” [1823]

“Agriculture is much neglected.” [1830]

“...from the indolence of the inhabitants, a great portion of it is a mere wilderness.” [1839]

“...under the arbitrary exactions of despotic governors cultivation is neglected.” [1845]

“Agriculture receives but little attention.” [1855]

“From the indolence of the inhabitants, a great part of the country is a mere wilderness.” [1857]<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> S. Morse, 60.

<sup>131</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 199; Dwight, 90.

<sup>132</sup> Adams, 257; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 198; Soil: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 199; Dwight, 90; Adams, 257; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 198.

<sup>133</sup> Adams, 257; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 198; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 226; S. Morse, 60; Cornell, 70; R. Smith, 261.

These authors did not attempt to investigate the effectiveness of Turkish agricultural techniques and their use across the “diversified” landscape. Instead, they solidified and reaffirmed that attachment of the concept of “agricultural neglect” to the idea of “Turkey in Asia.” The wide swath of American society that read these textbooks would have embraced this connection, and, with the help of the rest of the epistemological structure, would have been able to reach broad, unnuanced, and monolithic conclusions that were existentially comforting and confirmed American practices. Thus, Americans were able to discern that the Turkish administration was ineffective and each mention of that narrative distanced that situation from their own.

This narrative was modified and put into use in other parts of the epistemology of Turkey in Asia – namely the architectural remains of ancient greatness that dotted the landscape. After all, “Turkey in Asia comprises the countries so well known in history...” As Dwight detailed, “It contains many antiquities of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and several other nations. A great number of the ancient cities of Asia are still standing, but almost in ruins and exhibit the most striking monuments of antiquity in the world.”<sup>134</sup> Yet, the most noted aspect of these familiar names is their absence, as Smith told his students, “Many celebrated cities of antiquity, whose foundations are now scarcely to be traced, had their seat in this country; among which were Ninevah, Babylon, Troy, Palmyra, Balbec, Antioch, and Tyre.”<sup>135</sup> Here, the narrative of Turkish neglect was used to explain how the ancient sites of greatness were no more. Olney’s 1851 edition makes this connection directly, as he wrote, “It was once the seat of the renowned empires and kingdoms of Assyria, Babylonia, Armenia, Lydia, Syria, and Judea; and here once stood the celebrated and flourishing cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Troy, Balbec, Antioch and Tyre. But ignorance, superstition and barbarism, now cover the land, and few traces

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<sup>134</sup> Dwight, 92.

<sup>135</sup> R. Smith, 261.

remain of its former civilization except ruins.”<sup>136</sup> The Eastern Mediterranean is in no sense a competing ideology of success, but is instead an antithesis, a cautionary tale of greatness squandered. Other authors repeated this distinction through the end of the century with perhaps the clearest articulation taken from *Harper’s School Geography* which stated that, “Turkey was for centuries one of the richest regions of the world. The arbitrary and oppressive nature of government has long since reduced it to utter poverty and degradation. Provinces once flourishing and densely populated are now dry and solitary wastes.”<sup>137</sup> This usage rendered any potential ideological competitors impotent, and comfortingly heralded the rise of the United States over the despotism of the East.

The most “celebrated” and “important” part of Asiatic Turkey was the southern part of Syria, often, but not always, identified by geography textbooks as Palestine. This land had a number of important and widely-known packaged characteristics, yet two in particular were distinguished for their primacy – it was, “...the country of the Israelites, and the birth-place of the Christian religion.”<sup>138</sup> Mimicking biblical typology, Palestine was first the land of the ancient Jews and second the land of Christ’s ministry. Jedidiah Morse, Olney, Goodrich, Worcester and Smith refer to the area as “Judea” and *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* deems the country the “Land of Canaan.”<sup>139</sup> Here again it is useful to examine the repetition in language:

“It comprehends the ancient country of the Jews, now called Palestine, or the Holy Land.” [1823]

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<sup>136</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 228.

<sup>137</sup> *Harper’s School Geography*, 109; see also: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 227; Maury, 113; Dwight, 93.

<sup>138</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282.

<sup>139</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 199; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 228; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 227; Worcester, 168; R. Smith, 262; Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 142-143.



“It is the most celebrated country in the world; and remarkable for being the scene of most of the events recorded in the sacred scriptures.” [1847]

“Palestine, or the Holy Land is one of the most celebrated countries in the world. It was the residence of the ancient Jews, and the scene of most of the events recorded in the Scriptures.” [1851]

“The Jews formerly inhabited that portion of Syria, called Palestine, with Jerusalem for their capital...” [1857]

“Palestine, or the Holy Land, is the country in which most of the events took place which are recorded in the Bible. [1866]<sup>140</sup>

The authors are conveying concepts quite familiar to American students. Yet, in associating these essentialized attributes with Turkey in Asia, authors projected them on to the physical landscape. Arnold Guyot’s textbooks detailed “*The Promised Land*” in the southwest of Syria between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. He stated that this land, also labeled “*Palestine*, and also the *Holy Land*,” was where Moses led his people to from Egypt and where, “the Jews became a great and powerful nation.”<sup>141</sup> In his contribution, Guyot attached the Book of Exodus and parts of the Old Testament to the material land of the modern Levant, conveying them to his students in a useful and palatable fashion that was consistent with their wider framework of cultural knowledge.

Jerusalem itself bore its own package of properties. Students were reminded that it was once the seat of the great kingdoms of David and Solomon, and yet is in decline, as Adams summarizes, “*Jerusalem is now an inconsiderable place*. The inhabitants are about 30,000, who

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<sup>140</sup> Adams, 70; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 229; R. Smith, 261; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81.

<sup>141</sup> Arnold Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants* (1866. Reprint, New York: Charles Scribner & Company, 1870), 66 [emphasis in original].

subsist chiefly by the charity of pious pilgrims.”<sup>142</sup> Authors carried over the decline narrative, but this time offered a specific causal event – the campaign of Titus:

...Jerusalem the capital [of Palestine], which was taken, pillaged, burnt, and entirely razed to the ground by Titus the Roman General, under Domitian, in the year 70, and *is now a very inconsiderable place*, and only famous for what it has been; for Jesus Christ preached the Christian religion there, and was crucified by the Jews upon mount Calvary.<sup>143</sup>

The writings of Josephus introduced the Jewish-Roman wars to Western culture and textbook authors melded those events to the taxonomy of Turkey in Asia. Students could then use this structured knowledge rationally, yet ineffectively to explain the condition of the city. Here again the narrative of neglect was pressed into service as a way to repair the discrepancy between the Jerusalem of the Bible and the despoiled Jerusalem of the present.

Geography texts frequently discussed the city’s dependency upon its seasonal visitors. Mitchell’s *A System of Modern Geography* observed that Jerusalem, “*is now a gloomy, mean town*, owning its chief support to the veneration in which it is held by Christians, Jews, and Mahomedans, which still procures it the visits of many pious pilgrims.”<sup>144</sup> Goodrich’s earlier *A System of School Geography* gave a similar account:

Jerusalem, the famed capital of the Jewish nation, and so long the object of contention between the Christian and Mahometan powers, *is now a mean town*, in a sterile district, subsisting only by that veneration in which it is held by Jews, Christians, and Mahometans, and which still procures it the visit of many pious pilgrims.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Adams, 259 [emphasis added]; on Kingdom of David and Solomon: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 198; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283.

<sup>143</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 200 [emphasis added].

<sup>144</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283 [emphasis added].

<sup>145</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 228 [emphasis added].

Geography texts portrayed Jerusalem as a failing city dependent on its throngs of pilgrims – an industry on which American travelers would often remark. Also, Jerusalem as a contested city was a concept that also conveyed images of the Crusades. The major pilgrimage spots were also directly factored in to the conceptual framework of the “Holy city,” (*sic*) namely the location of the Temple of Solomon, “built of the cedar of Lebanon,” and the Church of the Holy Sepulture which was either, “the tomb of our Savior,” or the site, “the monks pretend comprises the scene of the crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection of Christ.”<sup>146</sup> The debate over the legitimacy of the sepulture would be another issue which would draw substantial attention from travelers. The Mosque of Omar was also a defining aspect of the city, drawing mention from Goodrich, Worcester, Sidney Morse and Roswell Smith.<sup>147</sup>

A number of additional landmarks in Syria and Palestine occupied a major role in American cultural knowledge, including Mount Lebanon, Bethlehem and Nazareth. As Olney described, “Mount Lebanon, as in ancient times, rears its snow-crowned summit, and its sides are covered with majestic cedars.”<sup>148</sup> The biblical Mount Lebanon and the package of ideas it implied were attached to its tangible incarnation overlooking the Mediterranean with its rather sparse cedars. Bethlehem was, “noted for being the birth-place of our Savior,” by Olney, Goodrich, Mitchell, and Guyot while others mentioned Nazareth as, “the place of his residence,” which Mitchell deemed, “...next to Jerusalem, the most holy place in Palestine.”<sup>149</sup> The

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<sup>146</sup> S. Morse, 60; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 198; Worcester, 168; S. Morse, 60; see also, Temple of Solomon: Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142-143; S. Morse, 60; R. Smith, 262; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66; Holy Sepulture: R. Smith, 262.

<sup>147</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142-143; Worcester, 168; S. Morse, 60; R. Smith, 262.

<sup>148</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 228; see also: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283; S. Morse, 60; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> Bethlehem: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 200; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 229; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142-143; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*,

Palestinian cities of Jaffa (mentioned once as Joppa), Gaza, and Acre were also accounted for, as well as the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee (also called Genesareth and Tiberias).<sup>150</sup>

Mitchell's popular *A System of Modern Geography* also detailed, "Pisgah, for the view it gave Moses of the Promised Land; Tabor, for the transfiguration of Christ; and the Mount of Olives, for being the scene of the ascension of the Savior to heaven," even though two of the three mountains had (and have) no definitive known location.<sup>151</sup> Textbooks also gave the Dead Sea a prominent role, one that usually came accompanied by the sinful cities that fell to God's wrath in Genesis. As Adams recounts, "The Asphaltes, or Dead Sea, in Syria, is a lake about 50 miles in length, on the borders of the ancient Canaan, and is supposed to occupy the ancient site of Sodom and Gomorrah. No fish can live in its waters."<sup>152</sup> All these landmarks were ordered to convey the depth of American cultural knowledge of Palestine in a digestible manner that allowed readers, to project their cultural knowledge upon the landscape and celebrate their heritage through it.

Nineteenth-century geography texts also described the modern metropolises of Aleppo, Damascus and Smyrna. For these cities, authors focused almost exclusively on commerce and trade. As Adams described, "Aleppo is the principle city in Asiatic Turkey. It is the centre of Syrian commerce. ...It contains manufactures of cotton and silk, and about 250,000 inhabitants."<sup>153</sup> Olney and Smith also focused on Aleppo's trade and Goodrich, Worcester,

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66. Nazareth: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 229; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283; see also: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 200; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142-143; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66.

<sup>150</sup> S. Morse, 60; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 229; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142-143; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66.

<sup>151</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 283.

<sup>152</sup> Adams, 70; see also: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 200; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 66; Worcester, 167.

<sup>153</sup> Adams, 258.

Mitchell and Sidney Morse all mentioned it as a regional center.<sup>154</sup> Damascus was also noted for its regional trade, but also came attached with two defining characteristics. First, as Adams wrote, it “was once famous for its manufacture of sword blades, which could not be broken, though bent in the most violent manner.”<sup>155</sup> The manufacture of Damascus steel was an identifying characteristic of the city – even though it was no longer crafted there. Goodrich, Sidney Morse and Roswell Smith all mention the swords or sabres.<sup>156</sup> The other common defining aspect of Damascus was its reputation as the oldest city in the world, as Mitchell designated, “Damascus, the capital of Syria, is one of the oldest places in the world; and is known to have existed in the days of Abraham.”<sup>157</sup> These three qualifying attributes: its sword blades, its antiquity, and its commerce, were the only characteristics of Damascus listed in popular nineteenth-century American geography textbooks. Subsequently, Smyrna was essentialized as the major port-of-trade of the Eastern Mediterranean. Here the repetition in the author’s language is most striking:

“Smyrna is the principle city of Asia Minor, and the third in Asiatic Turkey. It is the chief mart of the Levant trade...” [1823]

“*Smyr’na*, on the west coast of Asia Minor, is the chief emporium of the Levant, or eastern coasts of the Mediterranean.” [1845]

“Smyrna, on a gulf of the same name, is the chief emporium of Asiatic Turkey.” [1847]

“Smyrna is a large and populous city, and is the chief emporium of Asiatic Turkey.” [1851]

“Smyrna, situated at the head of the Gulf of Smyrna, is the chief commercial emporium of Western Asia.” [1855]

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<sup>154</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 228; R. Smith, 261; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 227; Worcester, 167; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282; S. Morse, 60.

<sup>155</sup> Adams, 258.

<sup>156</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 227; S. Morse, 60; R. Smith, 262.

<sup>157</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282; see also: *Harper’s School Geography*, 109.

“Smyrna, on the west coast of Asia Minor, is the largest city and most important commercial port of Asiatic Turkey.” [1870]

“...Smyrna, the chief commercial city of Western Asia, noted for its exportation of figs and other dried fruits.” [1876]<sup>158</sup>

Apparently, Smyrna was known to nineteenth-century Americans as the chief emporium of the Levant. Whether these authors plagiarized each other or not, they contributed that conceptual notion to the taxonomy of Turkey in Asia so that students would not require nuanced reports to draw logical and far-reaching conclusions about the region and its inhabitants.

A number of ruins also received quite a bit of attention from geography textbooks – most notably Tyre, Sidon, Baalbek and Palmyra. Both Tyre and Sidon were qualified as ancient Phoenician ruins regardless of their varied histories. The cities, “distinguished by their grandeur and opulence,” and qualified from their proficiency at commerce, were in the nineteenth century renowned for the narratives they implied and marked by their ruins.<sup>159</sup> Tyre was described as a mere rock visited by fisherman, but any local anonymity failed to dampen the interest of American travelers who flocked to its shore.<sup>160</sup> Baalbek also retained a significant piece of the conceptual structure. Adams deemed the size of its well-preserved Roman ruins “magnificent” and its architecture, “noble.”<sup>161</sup> A number of authors discussed the landmark, notably Goodrich who erroneously located it 40 miles southwest of Damascus.<sup>162</sup> Another notable niche of the taxonomy of Turkey in Asia was occupied by Palmyra. Students learned that

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<sup>158</sup> Adams, 259; S. Morse, 60; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 228; Cornell, 70; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67; *Harper's School Geography*, 109; see also: Adams, 70; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 141; Worcester, 167.

<sup>159</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 228.

<sup>160</sup> Adams, 259; see also: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 200; Dwight, 92; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 197; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81; R. Smith, 261.

<sup>161</sup> Adams, 259.

<sup>162</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 229; see also: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 197; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 142; Worcester, 167; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282; R. Smith, 261.

the city was built by Solomon as Tadmor, and was, “once a splendid city of Syria.”<sup>163</sup> Palmyra became a splendid opportunity for the reaffirmation of the decline narrative, as Goodrich details, “It was at that time the capital of an extensive kingdom; but, from a number of causes, this once fertile country is changed into barren deserts; and Palmyra, then the emporium of the eastern world, is now the abode of wild Arabs, who either reside among the ruins, or in miserable huts which they have erected near them.”<sup>164</sup> In American geography texts, Palmyra too, was a victim of the indolence and despotism of the Turkish Empire. These landmarks, as well as many others, became concrete conceptual identifiers which Americans required to perceive the region.

### **The Land of the Past**

The next regional distinction delineated by geography textbooks was Arabia – the peripheral landscape stuck in the past. Students learned that Arabia consisted of the outlying regions of the Eastern Mediterranean where the fertile coasts and valleys gave way to stone and desert. Here was a land with exotic produce and swarthy nomads who roamed the deserts living like the figures in the Book of Genesis. Out of this bygone Otherness arose a pretender to the Christian path to salvation which spread by force, yet its corrupt heart had inherently undermined it. Nineteenth-century Americans explored their conceptual arraignment of Arabia much like one views a museum exhibit – examining the world as it used to be. To them, Arabia was a cautionary tale, one that showed Americans how far they had come since Genesis, and served as a warning against falsehood and exploitation.

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<sup>163</sup> R. Smith, 262.

<sup>164</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 229; see also: Adams, 259; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 197, 198; Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 141; Worcester, 167; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 282.

Arabia was divided spatially into three sections to embrace the diversity of the Levantine periphery. These divisions were Arabia Petrea, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, or respectively, Stony Arabia, Desert Arabia and Happy Arabia. Worcester recalls that these regions were divided by, "The ancients...", with Arabia Petrea assigned that epithet due to, "...the number of granite rocks which are scattered over it."<sup>165</sup> It comprised the outlying regions of Palestine/Syria and Egypt, occupying a noncontiguous space that included the Sinai Peninsula as well as the east bank of the Jordan. As Adams summarizes, Arabia Petrea was, "...that part bordering on Egypt and Syria, [that] presents a rugged surface of granite stones."<sup>166</sup> Stony Arabia was defined substantially by scripture. It straddled the Red Sea, where Goodrich reminds us, "...that it was this sea whose waters were divided at the command of the prophet, to give a safe passage for the Jewish nation in their flight from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army."<sup>167</sup> Arabia Petrea was the Wilderness of the Exodus story as Dwight affirmed that, "In Arabia the children of Israel encamped in the wilderness forty years, after they came out of Egypt."<sup>168</sup> Here Moses and his followers were nomads in the desert undergoing punishment for their sins. According to these texts, Stony Arabia was also the location of the mountains of Sinai and Horeb, "...which are summits of the same range, are situated between the two north branches of the Red Sea, and are memorable for events recorded in the Bible."<sup>169</sup> Textbooks also defined Arabia Petrea by scriptural accounts of the east bank for the Jordan and the temples "discovered" at Petra in 1812. As Goodrich summarized, "Arabia Petraea was originally inhabited by the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, who gave it the name of Edom. After them it was possessed by the

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<sup>165</sup> Worcester, 169; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 222.

<sup>166</sup> Adams, 264.

<sup>167</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 221.

<sup>168</sup> Dwight, 111.

<sup>169</sup> Worcester, 170; see also: Dwight, 110; Adams, 72; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 222; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81 (Sinai only).



Midianites, and the Ishmaelites, descendants of Abraham.”<sup>170</sup> Here geography authors grafted scriptural narratives onto the landscape of the Levant, a relationship that by midcentury became focused on the city of Petra. As Mitchell detailed, “Petra, situated northward of the Red sea, is remarkable for its temples, tombs, &c., cut out of the solid rick. It was the capital of Edom more than 2500 years ago, and was a celebrated city. Its ancient renown, and singular remains, cause it to be often visited.”<sup>171</sup> The impressive remains made up a significant share of the Arabia taxonomy and many travelers wished to match the accomplishments of those such as John Lloyd Stephens and visit what to them was a reification of cultural knowledge.<sup>172</sup>

Lacking biblical connotations, the other Arabian divisions had a smaller epistemological footprint. Arabia Deserta was the most sparsely covered by the texts and only garnered descriptions of the most common image of Arabia itself: infertile desert marked only by sparse oases. As Olney detailed, “Arabia consists chiefly of immense deserts, interspersed with fertile spots like islands. It has no large rivers or lakes, and in many places is destitute of water.”<sup>173</sup> Daniel Adams and Roswell Smith use similar language in describing these “islands” of luxuriance among the sands.<sup>174</sup> Desert Arabia was also qualified by the “poisonous” and perhaps fatal winds that endangered unsuspecting travelers.<sup>175</sup> Students learned from Smith’s *Geography on the Productive System*, that, “The climate, in the low and sandy plains, is excessively hot and subject to a terrible wind called the Simoon, or Samiel, which often causes suffocation and instant death.”<sup>176</sup> This tantalizing danger was often used by travelers as a literary device in their

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<sup>170</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 222.

<sup>171</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 285; see also: S. Morse, 61.

<sup>172</sup> John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and The Holy Land* 1837. (Reprint, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1853).

<sup>173</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196.

<sup>174</sup> Adams, 264 & R. Smith, 265.

<sup>175</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 222.

<sup>176</sup> R. Smith, 265; see also: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; Maury, 112.

published accounts. The southernmost division was Arabia Felix, described by Adams as, “...the southern angle, bordering on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, called also by the inhabitants Yemen, is agreeably diversified, and generally of a fertile appearance.”<sup>177</sup> Also deemed “Happy Arabia,” this was the “most fertile” land of the exotic Arabian produce that reached foreign shores.<sup>178</sup> As Jedidiah Smith’s *Geography Made Easy* taught: “But the southern part, deservingly called the Happy, although the air is hot and unwholesome, is blessed with an excellent, and in general a very fertile soil, producing balm of Gilead, manna, myrrh, cassia, aloes, frankincense, spikenard and other valuable gums; - cinnamon, pepper, oranges, lemons, &c. Hence comes the common saying, ‘All the sweets of Arabia,’ when you would say anything has a very fine smell.”<sup>179</sup> Goodrich notes the region, “...abounds in fragrant spices and rich perfumes...” and many others revel in its coffee production which Adams stated, “...is esteemed the best in the world.”<sup>180</sup> In fact, apart from Mecca and Medina, the city which most defined Arabia in American cultural knowledge was Mocha, where, Guyot offered, “...the best coffee in the world was obtained.”<sup>181</sup> Arabia Felix was defined as the land where the exotic productions of the region were produced. These three divisions were concepts—the three implications of “Arabia”—fused onto the landscape of the Middle East to form the epistemology of Arabia. This process is more evident here because of the Americans’ limited knowledge of the physical topography of the Arabian Peninsula during the nineteenth century. Arabia Petrea, including the

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<sup>177</sup> Adams, 264; see also: Dwight, 110; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 221-222; Worcester, 169; R. Smith, 265.

<sup>178</sup> Worcester, 169.

<sup>179</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 197.

<sup>180</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223; Adams, 264; for produce, see also: Dwight, 110; Adams, 72; Olney *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 225; Worcester, 170; S. Morse, 60; R. Smith, 265; Cornell, 78; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81; Maury, 112.

<sup>181</sup> Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67; see also: Adams, 265; Olney *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 225; Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 144; Worcester, 171; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 285; R. Smith, 265; *Harper’s School Geography*, 109.

Sinai peninsula, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix can only be roughly located in the physical region. To nineteenth-century Americans, Arabia was the periphery of other Levantine divisions, and they imagined its topography to fit its three epistemological modalities.

American cultural knowledge of Arabian productions—in addition to the exotic perfumes, coffee and spices of Happy Arabia—focuses significantly on its fauna. The first animal that helped define Arabia in geography texts was its horses. Students learned that, “Arabia produces fine horses,” which, “are noted for their beauty and fleetness.”<sup>182</sup> The Arabian horse was romanticized as being the grandest and noblest of its kind. This essentialism was one of the most pervasive aspects of the episteme and many authors like Daniel Adams mentioned that, “Arabian horses are much esteemed.”<sup>183</sup> Olney went further, detailing how these beasts were, “celebrated for beauty, swiftness, hardiness and docility.”<sup>184</sup> The next common epistemological image of Arabia was the camel, as exemplified by Goodrich:

But the most useful animal to the Arabs is the camel, which is peculiarly adapted to the soil and climate. Formed by nature, beyond any other quadruped, to endure the extremities of heat and thirst, and to support life at little expense, it holds its steady course, day after day, over the sandy wilderness, submitting patiently to its burden, and contenting itself with occasionally browsing the prickly half-withered plants growing by the wayside. It is also constituted that it is able to go without drinking for six or eight days. This animal will easily carry 800 pounds burden upon its back, without its being ever taken off during the longest journeys. It kneels down to rest, and in due time rises again with its load.<sup>185</sup>

Unlike the beasts native to American soil, geography authors described how the exotic camel can perform extraordinary feats. Goodrich repeated the same qualities listed by Adams, who

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<sup>182</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81 & Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67.

<sup>183</sup> Adams, 72.

<sup>184</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; see also: Dwight, 110; Adams, 264; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223-224; Worcester, 170; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 285; S. Morse, 61; R. Smith, 263-264; Maury, 112.

<sup>185</sup> Goodrich, *A System of Modern Geography*, 224.

added, “These animals are amazingly fitted by Providence for traversing the dry and parched deserts of this country... It is by means of caravans of these animals, that goods and passengers are conveyed from the shores of the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, and the cities of Syria, which would otherwise be destitute of all mutual communication.”<sup>186</sup> Thus images of trains of these “ship[s] of the desert” that made up the “great caravan trade across the continent,” were proliferated as an epistemological qualifier of Arabia.<sup>187</sup>

American geography textbooks primarily perceived the inhabitants of Arabia much like everywhere else – through the utilitarian lens of race. Here observations made of Arabian populations have been molded unto the conceptual structure and made concrete – and thus geography texts offer these observations as natural, perpetual and inherent biological characteristics. Jedidiah Morse offered that, “The Arabians, like most of the Asiatics, are of a middling stature, thin and of a swarthy complexion, with black hair and black eyes.”<sup>188</sup> Dwight seconded Morse’s exact notions, and added that, “They are lively and martial in action, excellent horsemen, and good marksman.”<sup>189</sup> Physical descriptions became qualifying biological characteristics, thus, students could logically measure things like “stature” and weigh the sizes of “Arabians” against that of other races. Dwight’s contribution fleshed out the knowledge structure, adding talents and abilities again based on the premise of biological difference. Therefore, geography authors invited students to rationally structure these natural and inherited aptitudes. Adams, again used “middling stature” and “swarthy complexion,” while Worcester substituted “brown” for “swarthy” and supplemented that, “They have a grave and

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<sup>186</sup> Adams, 264; see also: Dwight, 110; Adams, 72; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; R. Smith, 263-264; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81.

<sup>187</sup> Worcester, 171 & Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67; see also: S. Morse, 61.

<sup>188</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 198.

<sup>189</sup> Dwight, 110-111.

melancholy air.”<sup>190</sup> Smith repeated Worcester’s language, adding that, “They seldom laugh or weep, but preserve a grave and melancholy air, which aided by their long beards, gives them a singularly bold and commanding appearance.”<sup>191</sup> Thus, the racial contribution to the episteme was expanded to deny Arabians normal human bodily functions and limit their range of emotions.

The most pervasive racial attribute of Arabians was thievery. Jedidiah Morse deemed them “addicted to thievery,” and told students a story from 1750 when, “...a body of 50,000 Arabians, attacked a Caravan of merchants and pilgrim, returning from Mecca, killed 60,000 persons, and plundered them of every thing valuable, though escorted by a Turkish army.”<sup>192</sup> While other authors steered away from exaggerated anecdotes, they augmented Morse’s attribution. Dwight stated that, “The word *Arab* signifies robber, and they answer perfectly to the name.”<sup>193</sup> This observation also went through the same epistemological process to become a natural and inherited biological attribute which defined Arabs themselves, as Olney detailed, “Those on the coast are *pirates*; those in the interior are *robbers*.”<sup>194</sup> This construction could also have been self-reinforcing, as the weak or ambivalent governmental administration allowed robbery and in some cases had institutionalized it as the justice arm of a tribute system. Thus, travelers would have likely have heard of such instances if not experienced them themselves and the racial construction would have been easily reaffirmed. With these descriptive confines “Arabians” were more easily fitted to their own niche in the structure of cultural knowledge,

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<sup>190</sup> Adams, 265 & Worcester, 171.

<sup>191</sup> R. Smith, 264.

<sup>192</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 198.

<sup>193</sup> Dwight, 111 [emphasis in original]

<sup>194</sup> <sup>194</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196 [emphasis in original]; see also: Adams, 265; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 143-144; S. Morse, 60; R. Smith, 264.

and students were able to make overly-simplistic, ineffective comparative conclusions based on social pressures.

The racial condition of the Arabs was also linked to the Book of Genesis by way of Ishmael. Students read in *Geography Made Easy*, that, “The Arabs are descended from Ishmael, of whose posterity it was foretold, that they should be invincible, and *have their hands against every man and every man’s hand against them.*”<sup>195</sup> Here authors continued biblical lines of inheritance to the present day by assigning the Arabs to the lineage of Ishmael, the first son born to Abraham by way of Hagar in Genesis. Both Hagar and Ishmael were expelled from Abraham’s house and God promised that Ishmael’s descendants would form a great nation. The assertion that Arabs were this nation was a tradition in western thought that has been traced back at least to the first century.<sup>196</sup> Goodrich and others repeated this claim, thus solidifying its place in the episteme, as he stated, “This celebrated people are supposed to be the descendants of Ishmael, and their character in all ages seems to have been a remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy of the angel recorded in Genesis...”<sup>197</sup> He continues on to repeat the same passage as Jedidiah Morse, a reference that conveys images of warfare or conflict, and supplements the epistemological assertion that Arabs were natural and inherent robbers or thieves. More generally, the convergence of biblical narratives and the racial condition of Arabs served two purposes: the conflation of Bedouin nomads with the patriarchs of the Old Testament and the embracement of a competing ideology to Christian salvation.

Jedidiah’s son Sidney Morse repeated the connection of Ishmael with the racial constructions of Arabs in his midcentury revision, yet he added a new element that emphasized

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<sup>195</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 198 [emphasis in original]

<sup>196</sup> John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>197</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223; see also, Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 143; Worcester, 171; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81.

the assertion that Arabia was, and still is, the Wilderness of the Bible. He offered that, “The Arabs are sons of Ishmael, and the whole life and manners of the patriarchs, as described in Genesis, may be seen at this day in the tent of the Arabian Sheik.”<sup>198</sup> According to American geography texts, the people of Arabia were nomads drifting through the Wilderness, as Dwight depicted, “They live a wandering life, and plunder all those who come in their way.”<sup>199</sup> As the century wore on a distinction was made between the inhabitants that had reaffirmed this observation and those who had challenged it. In supplementing the racial characterization of Arabs, Goodrich’s 1830s text stated that, “Those that reside near the sea, for the most part, live in cities, towns and villages, and apply themselves to trade and cultivate in the arts and sciences; but the inland inhabitants have no settled habitations, move about with their flocks and herds, from place to place, in search of water and pasture, and, during their stay in any particular place, they live in tents. They subsist on the milk of their camels and flocks, and on plunder.”<sup>200</sup> A structural division appeared between the inhabitants who fulfilled biblical images and those who confronted them, and the epistemology of Arabia was adapted to codify the distinction as biologically inherited and thus sustain the myth.<sup>201</sup> This new distinctive identity in American cultural knowledge was the Bedouin, as Varisco tells us, is an Anglicized version of the French pronunciation of the Arabic word for “desert-dweller” or *badawi*.<sup>202</sup> Although Goodrich’s *A System of School Geography* omitted the term in his racial characterizations, he deemed that

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<sup>198</sup> S. Morse, 60.

<sup>199</sup> Dwight, 111.

<sup>200</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223.

<sup>201</sup> Forgive my essentialism, but this argument is a simplification of what was likely a number of cultural images and social pressures – only part of which stemmed from the Bible. Other factors such as images from *One Thousand and One Nights* must also be considered for a more complete discussion of Bedouin construction. This is omitted for source limitations and cogency. Generally, Americans in the nineteenth century were more likely to be influenced by biblical images than *Arabian Nights* – a force that may have reached America through European intellectual thought and mediums such as Edward W. Lane’s English translation which are outside the scope of this work. For more on Lane see: Jennifer Schacker-Mill, “Otherness and Otherworldliness: Edward W. Lane’s Ethnographic Treatment of The Arabian Nights,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, 113:448 (Spring 2000), 164-184.

<sup>202</sup> Varisco, 72.

Arabian horses where, “chiefly bred by the Bedouins or wandering Arabs of the deserts.”<sup>203</sup> Also, his *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* detailed that “Some of [the Arabs] are called Bedouin.”<sup>204</sup> By midcentury the Bedouin were an entrenched inherent aspect of American cultural knowledge and Sarah S. Cornell taught that, “There are two classes of Arabs, the dwellers in the towns, and the inhabitants of the deserts; the latter are called Bedouins.”<sup>205</sup>

The Bedouin were the *genuine* Arabs, living as they did in biblical times, unpolluted by typical Eastern depravities of despotism and “Mahometism.” Students learned from Worcester that, “The genuine Arabs of the desert, who are styled *Bedoins’, Bedoweens, or Bedouin’ Arabs*, dwell in tents, lead a wandering life, and are much addicted to robbery; yet they are distinguished for their hospitality to those who confide in their friendship and honor.”<sup>206</sup> Geography authors melded images of the scriptural patriarchs in the wilderness unto these inherent pastoralists of Arabia. Roswell Smith observed that, “The Arabs live, however, amicably in tribes, in *patriarchal simplicity*, being exceedingly hospitable to those who confide in their friendship and honor, treating with great kindness their slaves and dependents, and are free from the vices of drunkenness and gaming.”<sup>207</sup> These pure Bedouin of the desert were constructed as the descendants of Ishmael who was cast off in the desert. Their inherent abilities of robbery and plunder led them to “*have their hands against every man and every man’s hand against them.*”<sup>208</sup> Arabia was a land “...noted for the unchanging character of its people,” as the wanderers of the desert were frozen in time – museum exhibits of the Book of

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<sup>203</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 224.

<sup>204</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 143.

<sup>205</sup> Cornell, 78; see also: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 284-285; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67; *Harper’s School Geography*, 109; Maury, 112.

<sup>206</sup> Worcester, 171 [emphasis in original].

<sup>207</sup> R. Smith, 265 [emphasis added].

<sup>208</sup> Book of Genesis, 16:12, also: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 198; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223.



Genesis.<sup>209</sup> They spoke “a corrupt dialect of the ancient Arabic,” which, “...ranks among the classic languages of the East...,” and exemplified the lives of the patriarchs wandering in the wilderness.<sup>210</sup>

While the epistemological framework featured in nineteenth century geography texts primarily made use of race to qualify Arabia, Islam also occupied a significant part of that structure. Yet, although some text detailed the rise and spread of Islam, most only discussed the religion through the cities of Mecca and Medina which were listed, respectively as the birthplace and tomb of Muhammad. Some texts, however, closely detail the holy cities of the Hejaz, the story of the hijra and of Islam’s spread throughout the greater Middle East. The textbooks that contributed the rise of Islam to the epistemology of Arabia used their description to quarantine, delegitimize, and inherently undermine Muhammad and his doctrines.

First, Islam was quarantined, a familiar process to Levantine travelers, by isolating the Bedouin from its domain. American students, as detailed above, learned to identify themselves with these nomads and understood parts of themselves through that cultural image. Thus, geography authors minimized Islam’s hold over them. Dwight stated that the nomadic Arabs, “...when rich, dress in the Mahometan manner...” which conveyed artificiality.<sup>211</sup> Goodrich was more explicit, and suggested that, “They profess Mahometanism, but pay little attention to their religion.”<sup>212</sup> Thus, geography texts contained the image of the patriarchal Bedouin from the corruption of Islam.

Many textbooks discussed Islam in their depiction of Arabia’s major cities – Mecca and Medina. Most just listed their qualifiers as the birthplace and tomb of Muhammad, but some

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<sup>209</sup> S. Morse, 60.

<sup>210</sup> Dwight, 111 & S. Morse, 61.

<sup>211</sup> Dwight, 111.

<sup>212</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223.

such as Dwight's *A Short but Comprehensive System of the Geography of the World* divulged further:

The mosques, or Mahometan houses of prayer, form the principle curiosities of Arabia. The one at Mecca, where Mahomet was born, is the most magnificent of any in the Mahometan countries. It is very large, its roof is covered with gold, it has an hundred gates over each of which is a window. (*sic*) In the inside it is hung with tapestry, and ornamented with elegant gildings; and it is visited by vast numbers of pilgrims every year. At Medina, whither Mahomet fled from Mecca, is another very magnificent mosque. In it there are three hundred silver lamps constantly burning. In this Mosque is the coffin of Mahomet, covered with a cloth of gold.<sup>213</sup>

His depiction of the holy cities is one of magnificence and awe at the spectacle. Adams's *Geography, or a Description of the World* offered a similar portrayal, and added that, "...being holy ground which no infidel is permitted to approach, little is known of these places with certainty."<sup>214</sup> Mecca's exotic prohibition against Westerners was, other than it having been the native land of Mohammed, what defined the city epistemologically and was often used as a literary device by travel writers. Overall, geography texts portrayed Mecca as a city in decline – one that needed the support of, "...pilgrims who resort tither every year."<sup>215</sup> To geography authors, part of this industry was commercial, as "The pilgrims come from motives of religion and commerce," as, "Traders from various Mohammedan countries meet at Mecca and exchange their commodities."<sup>216</sup> In general, contributors to the epistemology of Arabia qualified

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<sup>213</sup> Dwight, 111.

<sup>214</sup> Adams, 264.

<sup>215</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 285; similar language was used by Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; see also: Adams, 264.

<sup>216</sup> Maury, 112; see also: *Harper's School Geography*, 109.

two aspects of the holy cities, the forbidden spectacle of the hajj, and its place as the birthplace of, "...the famous imposter Mahomet."<sup>217</sup>

Nineteenth century American geography texts also made strong efforts to delegitimize Islam as a competing path to salvation. Authors pronounced Muhammad as an impostor and detailed his tale of deceit. Jedidiah Morse offered the most detailed account:

He was of low parentage, illiterate and poor. He was employed as a factor by one of his uncles; in which capacity he traveled through Palestine, Syria and Egypt. He afterwards married Cadiga, a rich merchant's widow. By this mean he was furnished with wealth sufficient to effect his purposes. A religious reformation was what he intended to bring about; it was necessary therefore; since religion was concerned, that his purposes should be sanctified by divinity. To effect this, he pretended that the epileptic fits, to which he was subject, were trances; during which God Almighty was pleased to instruct him in his will and which he was commanded to publish, not only by persuasion but by force. That the will of God (as it was called) might be universally known, Mahomet (with the assistance of a learned Sergian Monk) composed what is called the Alcoran, which is the same to the Mahometans as the Bible is to us. The inhabitants of Mecca, being well acquainted with Mahomet, were fully convinced of the deceit, and entered into a design to cut him off, but Mahomet, getting notice of their intention, fled to Medina, 622 years before Christ: this is called the Hegira or Flight, from whence the Mahometans compute their time. He died 629 [*sic*], having propagated his doctrines through Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Persia, leaving two branches of his race, both esteemed divine by their subjects.<sup>218</sup>

Apart from egregious factual errors such as locating the events in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the narrative was consciously structured to delegitimize Muhammad as a self-seeking opportunist who used duplicity and deception to construct a religious empire in his name. Here, genuine biographical knowledge, like Muhammad's marriage to a rich widow, was attached to the framework of fraudulence and therefore became evidence of his deceit. Thus, the Hijra (an Islamic trial narrative) became confirmation of the Prophet's deviance and the people of Mecca

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<sup>217</sup> R. Smith, 265; for more on Mecca and Medina, see also: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 224-225; Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 114; Worcester, 171; S. Morse, 61; Cornell, 78; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 81; Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 67.

<sup>218</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 198-199.

(idolaters in the Islamic description) figures of empathy. Goodrich delivered a more concise version of Muhammad's dishonesty: "Mahomet was born in the year 571. At the age of 40, he pretended to be a prophet from God, and declared that he was commissioned to reveal a new religion to mankind. At first he had little success, and at one time was obliged to fly for safety. But at length he obtained some followers, and made war upon those who refused to receive him as the prophet of God."<sup>219</sup> Goodrich reaffirms Morse's contribution of Muhammad's duplicity to the epistemology of Arabia, reaffirming the decadent opportunism at the core of Islam. Thus, nineteenth century American students learned comforting lessons that delegitimized a possible competitor to the Christian path to salvation. Despite the pervasiveness of this process, geography texts needed to account for the rapid spread of this decadent doctrine. Therefore, they premised that violence was the necessary cause for the spread of, "...the famous impostor, Mahomet."<sup>220</sup> During his lifetime, "Success attended his arms....," yet it the responsibility for Islam's expansion did not lie with him but by, "...several successive reigns... filled by men of superior talents."<sup>221</sup> As Goodrich detailed, "Under the name of the Saracens, they became formidable to the most powerful kingdoms of Europe. Carrying the sword in one hand, and the Koran in the other, they offered no choice, but death or submission to its doctrines. Propagated in this way, and sustained by the energy of several Saracen sultans, Mahometanism was established throughout a great part of Asia, and a considerable part of Africa and Europe."<sup>222</sup> Thus, students learned that Islam was merely the occasion for the rise of the Saracens, rather than its cause, and its doctrines were an instrument of their government as those who professed faith in God and his Prophet submitted to the rule of the Saracens. The epistemological dependency of Islam's propagation on violence and the inherent martial skill of

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<sup>219</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 224.

<sup>220</sup> R. Smith, 265.

<sup>221</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 224.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

the Saracens delegitimized Islam as the divine will of God and eliminated, or at least shrouded, any fears of its inexorable expansion.

American cultural knowledge also showed students that Islam's state of learning and governance inherently undermined it. While the Saracen dominion was supported by its proto-enlightened state of learning, the decay of that society and the ignorance of modern Arabia rendered it impotent. As Olney detailed, they "...were distinguished for learning and science, but at present they are so illiterate that but few can be found who are able either to read or write."<sup>223</sup> Adams elaborated by stating that, "In former ages the Arabians were famous for their learning, and skill in the liberal arts. At present there are few nations where the people are more universally ignorant, although they are not wholly destitute of colleges, academies, and schools."<sup>224</sup> Yet, according to geography authors, it was not just lack of education that doomed Arabia, it was their government, which Dwight taught that, "It is governed by Imans or Imams, who are petty princes, and who act both as priests and kings."<sup>225</sup> The textbooks detailed how, not only was the Arabian administrative structure deficient, but their bylaws were also inherently invalid. Students learned from Adams that, "The inland country is under the government of many petty princes, styled shieks [*sic*], They have no other laws than those found in the Koran, and the comments upon it."<sup>226</sup> Institutional dependence upon the deceitful doctrines of the "great impostor" necessarily rendered their government inept. Thus, because of Goodrich's description of the Arabians' submission to the Turks, their retreat into to the desert seemed preordained – which further undermined the vitality of the Islamic antagonism.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 196; see also: R. Smith, 264, who uses similar language.

<sup>224</sup> Adams, 265.

<sup>225</sup> Dwight, 111.

<sup>226</sup> Adams, 265.

<sup>227</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 223.

Nineteenth-century geography texts described Arabia as a peripheral landscape of the past. Its residents were frozen in time and remained exemplary examples of the biblical patriarchs. To these authors, Arabia was the miscellaneous wilderness of the Levant that surrounded Egypt, Syrian and Palestine, and Mesopotamia – where fertility ended and desert began. This land produced exotic spices, perfumes and fruits as well as the romanticized Arabian horse and the unique camel. From this peripheral land of Ishmael's exile arose a potential competitor to Christianity that was quarantined, delegitimized and undermined by authors. Arabia was part museum exhibit of a bygone era, part exotic escapism, and part cautionary tale. From the epistemology of Arabia, students were enabled, and even invited, to make overly-simplistic, universal comparisons driven by social pressures or existential anxieties. Thus, nineteenth-century Americans could conclude that Arabs were inherently inferior, their fate determined, and their religion preordained to wilt before the just extension of the enlightened ideas and/or sanctity of Christ's good news.

### **Ancient Grandeur**

Egypt also occupied a substantial portion of nineteenth-century American cultural knowledge. According to geography textbooks, the Nile valley was the fertile heart of the East littered with the remnants of its former magnificence. The hot, desert climate was quenched by the river's yearly flood and travelers witnessed exotic animals and dirty cities with narrow streets – typical images of the East. The Nile valley, however, was also posited by authors as the epicenter of ancient humanity and the physical remains of this past were celebrated as pioneering works of civilization. Also, Egypt, like much of the Eastern Mediterranean, was defined by its place in the Bible, and the Exodus story was evoked as a familiar qualifier. These epistemological indicators originated in narratives that were central to American self-

understanding. To rectify this conflict of heritage and difference, the racial essentialism of geography authors allowed them to assert the Copts as the subservient descendants of the Egyptians of antiquity. Additionally, like many Eastern lands, Authors deemed Egypt in decline because of poor governance and a lesser state of learning which clarified the perceived historical transition from heritage to Otherness. The epistemological framework that assigned Otherness invited students to conclude that the presence of British imperialism in Egypt was both just and beneficial to the inhabitants. Throughout, the authors discussion of the exotic manners and customs of the East—the land of opium pipes, harems and cross-legged swarthy natives—helped to negatively define the American self.

Geography authors described Egypt as an arid desert landscape, “naturally barren,” as, “The Valley of the Nile is a rainless region. Except in the Delta, rain rarely falls, and a cloud is seldom seen.”<sup>228</sup> Adams added that, “The whole quantity of rain that falls in a year at Cairo could not be reckoned equivalent to a shower of an hour’s duration...”<sup>229</sup> The climate was described as being “very hot and unwholesome,” which many texts offered as the cause of plague, as Roswell Smith stated, “The summers are hot and unhealthy, the country being subject to terrible ravages from the plague...”<sup>230</sup> Goodrich even argued that the Nile valley was the origin of the dreaded disease, offering that, “The plague is also generated here, and spreads its ravages into various other countries.”<sup>231</sup> Worcester also contributed another entry to the episteme by mentioning that the people of Egypt were often afflicted with “*ophthalmia*,” a type of eye inflammation. Images of poor Egyptian children with swollen eyes were common in

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<sup>228</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313; Maury, 117.

<sup>229</sup> Adams, 290; see also: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210; Worcester, 199; R. Smith, 290.

<sup>230</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204; R. Smith, 290; for hot climate, see also: Adams, 290; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210; Worcester, 199.

<sup>231</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210; see also: Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 129.

nineteenth-century America and were more thoroughly detailed in travel accounts.<sup>232</sup> Goodrich also described another common Egypt qualifier, “The simoon, a terrible wind, sometimes comes from the desert, and, on account of its heat and dryness, threatens the extinction of animal life.”<sup>233</sup> The sudden sand-carrying gusts of hot wind were regularly used by travel writers as a literary device to promote danger and difference.<sup>234</sup>

Yet, while texts detailed the land’s pestilent air they also provided a savior, the Nile River. According to Dwight, “In April and May the air is hot and unhealthy, but when the Nile overflows its banks, it purifies the air.”<sup>235</sup> The yearly flood of the great river was a central defining fact of Egypt in geography texts. Worcester explained how, “This river annually passes its banks, and overspreads the alluvial land bordering upon it like a sea, carrying with its waters a fertilizing mud...”<sup>236</sup> This nourishing of the valley was elsewhere described as, “...a fattening slime...” and despite the arid climate, “...the soil seldom suffers from want of moisture.”<sup>237</sup> Authors labeled the flood as, “...the great vilifying principle of Egypt...,” which, “...renders Egypt one of the most fertile regions on the globe.”<sup>238</sup> The valley was divided near Cairo into Upper and Lower Egypt – the southern valley and the northern delta. As Goodrich detailed, “In Upper Egypt the land is watered from the Nile, by artificial streams distributed over its surface.”<sup>239</sup> In comparison, Maury observed how, “Late in July the descending flood reaches Lower Egypt, and the river gradually rises until the country becomes a vast inland sea.”<sup>240</sup> Yet, almost a half-century earlier Adams warned against exaggerated accounts of the flooding, as he explained,

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<sup>232</sup> Worcester, 199 [emphasis in original]; for one travel account example, see: Stephens, 51.

<sup>233</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210; see also, Worcester, 199.

<sup>234</sup> For one example, see: William Cullen Bryant, *Letters from the East* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son., 1869), 120-123.

<sup>235</sup> Dwight, 117.

<sup>236</sup> Worcester, 199.

<sup>237</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226.

<sup>238</sup> Adams, 290; Maury, 117.

<sup>239</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210.

<sup>240</sup> Maury, 117.



“...it is an error to suppose that the whole of Egypt is converted into a sea, with villages and trees emerging from its waves, according to some poetical descriptions. This is indeed true of the parts of the Delta nearest to the sea; but to other districts the water is led by canals, from which it is raised by machines to fertilize the fields.”<sup>241</sup> These irrigation systems were another defining feature of Egypt in geography texts, which state, in great contrast to other Eastern regions, that “Agriculture is diligently pursued...”<sup>242</sup> While other regions are deemed derelict by their inhabitants’ neglect for farming, Egypt is applauded for its agricultural prowess. As Worcester detailed, “The lands which are inundated are celebrated for their fertility, are cultivated with great ease, and produce corn and rice in equal perfection.”<sup>243</sup>

Yet, it is notable that unlike Turkey—where authors’ essentialism allowed them to consider agricultural ineptitude an effect of racial inferiority—Egypt’s plentiful production was seen as the result of natural environmental advantages and never from the aptitude of its people. Mitchell observed that Egypt, “...owes all of its fertility to the annual overflowing of the Nile, and to the fertile mud left on the land by its waters.”<sup>244</sup> This causal inconsistency is the result of existential social pressures and some of the adverse epistemological effects of racism. In the absence of Americans’ imagined (but no less real) perception of difference in modern Egypt, a land that made full use of its agricultural potential through the use of innovative technology would likely have garnered the sympathy of readers. Authors could have constructed a narrative of diligent and productive industry which would have been celebrated in nineteenth-century American culture. Yet, the racial essentialism of the epistemology of Egypt necessitated the fixation of these illustrious qualities on the Egyptian inhabitants as inherent, natural talents. Therefore, the Egyptian race would inescapably be imagined as diligent and industrious –

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<sup>241</sup> Adams, 290.

<sup>242</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313.

<sup>243</sup> Worcester, 199.

<sup>244</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313.

qualities Americans imagined for themselves. Thus, the racist perception of natural difference between Americans and modern Egyptians made the assignment of these abilities to Egyptians unlikely, if not impossible – which rendered the commemoration of Egyptian’s agricultural successes an ambivalent process that demanded so much exaltation of the Nile and its inherent fertility. Thus, to avoid the uncomfortable effects of Egypt’s agricultural successes, American geography authors emphasized the natural luxuriance of the Nile River.

Other physical epistemological descriptors of Egypt included its cities, its filth and its fauna. Its capital was most notable, as Morse detailed, “Grand Cairo is the capital, only of the most populous cities in the world, and a place of great trade and riches.”<sup>245</sup> Cairo was portrayed as the commercial hub of the East, which Roswell Smith deemed, “...the most superb and commercial city in Africa.”<sup>246</sup> Geography texts knew it to be a regional market that “carries on an extensive trade with the interior of the continent, and with Asia, by means of caravans.”<sup>247</sup> Grand Cairo was a crossroads of exotic goods and spices rarely seen on American shores. As Adams imparted,

Caravans visit it from countries lying to the south and west, which bring slaves, gold dust, ivory, gums, and drugs. Yemen sends it coffee and frankincense. It has communications with Tunis and Tripoli, with Syria and Constantinople, and with the different trading countries of Europe. Various manufactures are also carried on within its walls. Its population has been estimated at 300,000; but visitations of the plague frequently thin its numbers.<sup>248</sup>

The city on the Nile was the intersection of Otherness, where the bizarre and mysterious from throughout the East was available to Americans – both those who visited and those who

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<sup>245</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204.

<sup>246</sup> R. Smith, 290.

<sup>247</sup> Worcester, 200.

<sup>248</sup> Adams, 291; see also: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Cornell, 83; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 86; Maury, 117.

depended on the epistemology of Egypt to locate themselves universally. Yet, while this hub of the East was useful, peculiar, and fascinating, it also exemplified many of the undesirable features Americans essentialized as Eastern. Adams mentioned above, plague was a common qualifier of Cairo, as shown by Dwight's description of the city: "It is a dirty residence, and often infected by the plague. Its streets are narrow, and it contains about 50,000 inhabitants."<sup>249</sup> Narrow, filthy streets were a common epistemological indicator of eastern cities of which Cairo was paramount. Despite its, "...simple style of architecture with an air of grandeur and magnificence," Goodrich remarks that, "The streets are narrow, unpaved, and gloomy, the houses having the appearance of so many prisons."<sup>250</sup> These conditions were associated with another common qualifier of Eastern cities, as the lack of pavement prevented the use of wheeled transport. As Mitchell remarked, "The streets are very narrow; dogs are numerous; and camels and asses are used, instead of wheeled carriages, for carrying burdens."<sup>251</sup> Egypt's dependency on pack animals was well-noted and the camel was only one of a number of bizarre animals geography texts associated with the Nile. Jedidiah Morse warns of "...the subtle voracious crocodiles which inhabit its shores," and Dwight observed that, "...there are the hippopotamus, tyger, hyena, antelope, ape, ichneumon, camelion, and crocodile" (*sic*).<sup>252</sup> These accounts situated Egypt as epistemologically distinct from the familiar fauna of America and carried an enthralling element of danger, as Adams added that, "...lizards and vipers of various sorts abound in different parts of the country."<sup>253</sup> These depictions further rendered Egypt as a peculiar and fascinating exotic Other.

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<sup>249</sup> Dwight, 118.

<sup>250</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 211; see also: Worcester, 200.

<sup>251</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 314.

<sup>252</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204; Dwight, 117.

<sup>253</sup> Adams, 291.

However, Egypt's location in the episteme was multifaceted – the land was more than just an imagined American alterity. Here, assertions of difference were juxtaposed with lamentations of Egypt's lost greatness. Furthermore, these narratives of ancient grandeur originated from accounts that helped to define American's understanding of self. In studying these remnants of Egypt's past, students celebrated this heritage and mourned its loss. The city that most connected Egypt with its great past was Alexandria. As Olney recalled, "Alexandria was built by Alexander the Great 331 B.C., and for a long time was the seat of learning, commerce and magnificence. It is greatly decayed, and abounds in the ruins of its ancient grandeur."<sup>254</sup> Students learned that, "Alexandria was one of the most celebrated cities of ancient times, and long the seat of the arts and sciences," however the city was, "now greatly reduced, and is little remarkable except for the ruins of its former splendor."<sup>255</sup> The ancient ruins that surrounded Alexandria occupied a significant portion of American cultural knowledge— notable, Pompey's Pillar, Cleopatra's Needles, the early catacombs and the Library of Alexandria. Goodrich dedicated his account of the city to detailing these monuments:

Alexandria in Lower Egypt, is built on a low sandy strip of land, formed by the sea. Its ancient glory is still attested by the extensive ruins by which it is surrounded. It is divided into the old and new town; the latter is much the most extensive. An immense accumulation of ruins, mostly buried in the sand, Pompey's pillar, Cleopatra's needles, the cisterns, the catacombs, and columns, some entire, and some broken, scattered here and there, are the sad remains of this once rich and splendid city. Pompey's pillar is a very remarkable monument, 95 feet high. Cleopatra's needles are two obelisks, one thrown down and the other standing; 58 1-2 feet long, and seven feet broad, on each side, at the base. They are comprised of a single block of granite, covered with hieroglyphics. The catacombs are very extraordinary monuments. They begin at the extremity of the old city, and extend a considerable distance along the coast, forming what was anciently called the *City of the Dead*. They consist of grottos cut in rocks: each

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<sup>254</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226.

<sup>255</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 314; R. Smith, 291.

one that has been opened has been found to contain three coffins. The population of Alexandria is supposed to be 30,000.<sup>256</sup>

Alexandria was littered with the remains of early civilization. The city of Alexander the Great was the heart of Egypt when it was the core of ancient humanity. As Worcester described, Egypt, “...preceded all other countries in civilization, and in improvement of the arts, [and] has long been styled the Cradle of Learning; and still contains numerous monuments of its early magnificence and refinement.”<sup>257</sup> One of the most potent symbols for Egypt’s pioneering of learning was its library. Olney stated that, “The Library of Alexandria surpassed all others in the ancient world. It was founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus, 284 years B.C. and contained 700,000 manuscript volumes.”<sup>258</sup> Smith added that this center of knowledge, “...attracted scholars from all countries.”<sup>259</sup> To geography texts, Egypt was truly the center of the ancient world, as Mitchell reminded students that, “It was from Egypt that Greece learned art and civilization,” and Maury detailed how, “More than 3,000 years ago the Egyptians were a highly civilized people. The ruins of their temples and pyramids are unrivalled for grandeur; while the paintings on the walls of their tombs, as bright to-day as when executed by the artist, show that they had made wonderful progress in the arts of life.”<sup>260</sup> Geography authors credited the ancient Egyptians for being the pioneers of the civilized life. The evidence they offered for this was the Nile valley’s impressive monuments of antiquity – the temples at Thebes and Luxor, the sphinx and, of course, the most pervasive image of Egypt, the pyramids at Giza.

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<sup>256</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 211.; see also, Pompey’s Pillar: Adams, 291; Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Worcester, 200; R. Smith, 291; Cleopatra’s Needles: Adams, 291; Worcester, 200; R. Smith, 291; Obelisks: Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 312; R. Smith, 289; Catacombs: Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 136; R. Smith, 289, 291; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 314.

<sup>257</sup> Worcester, 198.

<sup>258</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 227.

<sup>259</sup> R. Smith, 292.

<sup>260</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 86; Maury, 117.

As Jedidiah Morse observed, “Egypt is famous for its pyramids, those stupendous works of folly.”<sup>261</sup> The pyramid was perhaps the most iconic Egyptian image in nineteenth-century American cultural knowledge. Students learned from Worcester that, “The *pyramids*, which were accounted by the ancients one of the seven wonders of the world, are the most remarkable monuments of ancient art that now exist, and are alike famous for their size and antiquity.”<sup>262</sup> Yet, despite their looming presence in American culture, these “astonishing monuments of human labor,”<sup>263</sup> fail to occupy more than a quick mention in geography texts. In fact, they were more defined in the epistemology of Egypt by their mystery than anything else. Olney and Worcester agreed that, “*When, by whom, and for what purpose*, they were erected, is entirely unknown,” as “History furnishes no authentic information respecting the time or the object of their erection.”<sup>264</sup> The pyramids were one of the great mysteries of the East, yet, unlike modern Easterners this mysticism commanded the respect of geography authors who understood themselves as the inheritors of civilization as was founded on the Nile – of which the pyramids were evidence.

Although the biggest, the pyramids shared the episteme with a number of other “remarkable antiquities.”<sup>265</sup> Olney observed that, “Near one of the pyramids, is the celebrated Sphynx, [*sic*] a statue of a huge monster, cut out of a solid rock. It has the face of a virgin, and body of a lion, and is 125 feet in length.”<sup>266</sup> Thebes and Luxor also occupied significant portions of the nineteenth-century America’s cultural knowledge of Egypt, and were also the only pervasive qualifiers south of Cairo. As Mitchell detailed, “At Thebes, in Upper Egypt, are remains

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<sup>261</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204.

<sup>262</sup> Worcester, 200 [emphasis in original]; see also: Dwight, 118; Adams, 292; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 312; R. Smith, 289; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 85.

<sup>263</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210.

<sup>264</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 227 [emphasis in original]; Worcester, 200.

<sup>265</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 210.

<sup>266</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 227; see also: Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 85.

which fill the beholder with astonishment. Almost the whole extent of 8 miles along the river is covered with magnificent portals, decorated with sculpture, forests of columns, and long avenues of colossal statues.”<sup>267</sup> Goodrich added that, “The temple of Luxor probably surpasses in beauty and splendor all the other ruins of Egypt.” These remains were evidence of Egypt’s pioneering civilization, first in what geography authors understood as a line of development that rose to completion in themselves.

To these textbooks not only was Nile valley a forefather of the enlightened state, but it retained a quite significant place in the Bible. Egypt was epistemologically defined by two biblical narratives – the story of Joseph and the Exodus. Students learned from *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* that, “The history of Egypt is very interesting. You have read of Joseph, in the Bible. You remembered that he lived in Egypt about 3550 years ago, when it was a great and flourishing country. Thus you see that the history of Egypt goes far back into antiquity.”<sup>268</sup> Here Goodrich detailed the familiar biblical tale and attached it unto the physical landscape of Egypt. Adams’s work reinforces this tangibility as he taught that, “*Joseph’s Well* is a great curiosity. It is 270 feet deep, through a solid rock, with circular steps to the bottom.”<sup>269</sup> Students could then picture the well itself and imagine the correlated biblical images.

Epistemologically, Egypt was also the land of the Exodus – one of the most action-packed scriptural narratives. As Jedidiah Morse contributed,

Here Pharaoh exhibited those scenes of cruelty, tyranny and oppression towards the Israelites in the course of 400 years bondage to the Egyptians. Here too Moses was born, and was preserved in the little ark, among the flags on the banks of the Nile. Here, through the instrumentality of this great man, the Egyptians were afflicted with any grievous calamities, which induced them at last to let Israel go. Here Moses with his rod divided the Red sea, and Israel passed it on dry land; which the Egyptians attempting to

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<sup>267</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 314; see also: Worcester, 200.

<sup>268</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 135.

<sup>269</sup> Adams, 291; see also: J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204-205; Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 85.

do, were overwhelmed by the returning of the waters. To this scene, succeeded the Israelites memorable 40 years march through the deserts of Arabia, before they reached the land of Canaan.<sup>270</sup>

Here again biblical narrative was located among the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Furthermore, unlike other aspects of the epistemology of Egypt, the source of these narratives was central to American self-understanding. With the essentialism in American cultural knowledge, students were able to make monolithic and ineffective universal comparisons driven by social pressures. One example of this was detailed by Scott Trafton, who explained how African Americans constructed two competing imaginings of Egypt. The first was of a land of slaves eventually freed; the second was a great African Civilization – the first of all mankind.<sup>271</sup> Both of these imaginings made contradicting uses of different epistemological Egyptian qualifiers. Geography authors struggled to bridge this divide between Egypt as alterity and Egypt as a civilizational foundation. *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners* exemplified this inconsistency:

Pharaoh, you remember, was king of Egypt, and was cruel to the people of Israel. He was sorely punished, however, and his armies were swallowed up in the Red Sea. Long before the rest of the world had made much progress in civilization or the arts, there were many learned men in Egypt. Such was their knowledge that, in those ancient days, two or three thousand years ago, those who wished to get wisdom and learning used to go from Greece, and various parts of Europe and Asia, to study under the Egyptian teachers.

What a change has taken place! The people of Egypt are now poor, ignorant and degraded; while other parts of the world are happy and enlightened.<sup>272</sup>

Geography texts maintained this epistemological contradiction between Egypt as a pioneer of the “arts and sciences” and Egypt as the degraded Other throughout the nineteenth century.

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<sup>270</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 205.

<sup>271</sup> Trafton, 225-262.

<sup>272</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 135-136.



Authors, however, soon found that the essentialism of the epistemology of Egypt allowed them to complicate American cultural knowledge in order to conform it to social pressures.

Geography texts' epistemological discussion of the Nile's inhabitants mitigated the effects of inconsistencies within cultural knowledge of Egypt. Early texts simplified the land's racial makeup, yet as the century wore on, American cultural knowledge of the Nile's inhabitants became more sophisticated in order to manage the contradiction between perceived racial difference of modern Egyptians and Americans' identification with the builders of the pyramids. By the 1830s, Egypt was notable in American cultural knowledge for having the most racial diversity in the Eastern Mediterranean, as, "The inhabitants are Copts, Arabs, Turks, Mamelukes, and some Jews."<sup>273</sup> Each of these epistemological designations necessitated their own unique and defining characteristics inherited from their predecessors.

Dwight simplified his description of Egypt's racial makeup, which laid bare the essentialism of the knowledge structure. His catechetical style alluded to Edward Lane, asking, "Q. What are the Manners and Customs of the Egyptians?" He then answered, "A. Those of the Turks in Egypt are the same as in Turkey; those of the Arabs like those in Arabia, and those of the Egyptians are partly copied from both, and partly original being peculiar to themselves."<sup>274</sup> The absurd redundancy of that statement showed the underlying dependency of American cultural knowledge of the Levant on essentialized groups of people. Early in the century, these accounts were simplified assertions of racial inferiority such as Dwight's observation that, "They are all ill made and have swarthy complexions."<sup>275</sup> Jedidiah Morse added that, "The Egyptians are generally reckoned an ill-looking, slovenly, indolent, cunning, treacherous, cowardly and

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<sup>273</sup> Adams, 291.

<sup>274</sup> Dwight, 117.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 117.

cruel set of people, much degenerated from their ancestors.”<sup>276</sup> Here Morse used racism to establish difference between the Egyptians of the antiquity and of the present. He contended that the modern people of the Nile had not inherited the beneficial natural attributes of their ancestors – such as if a breed of horse or dog is not maintained and their defining features erode.

By the 1830s a new technique was innovated to repair the discrepancy between the perceived difference of modern Egyptians and the identification with their supposed ancestors. Textbook authors expanded the epistemology of Egypt to include a more sophisticated account of race. Students then imagined the Copts as racially distinct from Islamic Egyptians and postulated them as the true offspring of the pyramid-builders. As Olney described, “The inhabitants consist of Copts, Arabs, Turks, and Jews. The Copts are the most numerous class, and are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians. They are active, ingenious, and well skilled in business.”<sup>277</sup> Thus, the racial descriptions of Egypt in geography textbooks became a narrative of Arab-Egyptian rule over genuine Coptic Egyptians. Since the defining epistemological aspect of the Copts was their construction of the impressive ruins of early Egyptian civilization, they were postulated by textbook authors as geniuses and were qualified in the knowledge structure by their ingenuity and business acumen. Thus, Goodrich described how, “The present inhabitants of Egypt are Copts and Arabs, Turks and Jews. The former are the original inhabitants of the country, profess Christianity, and, being the only persons who can read or write, transact the business.”<sup>278</sup> Thus, the Coptic community was the epistemologically superior group and students we invited to draw the unhelpful conclusion that Coptic Egyptians were the best-qualified to

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<sup>276</sup> Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 204.

<sup>277</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226.

<sup>278</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 212; see also: Adams, 291-292; Worcester, 199; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313; R. Smith, 290.

interact with Westerners. While Olney taught students that the Copts were “the most numerous,” later Mitchell and Smith contented that the Arabs were the majority – perhaps tempting readers to construct a narrative of their subjugation.<sup>279</sup>

Other essentialized groups included Turks and Jews which authors postulated resided in the cities of the Nile.<sup>280</sup> Adams elaborated, detailing that, “The Jews devote themselves to commerce and manufactures,” and the Turks, “...claim to be the dominant nation, but have no influence.”<sup>281</sup> Mitchell added that the cities also contained a few Europeans, “...chiefly in the service of the government.”<sup>282</sup> The Copts were not the only group constructed to fit Americans’ social images, as the Bedouin of Egypt, as in Arabia, were distinguished from Arabs and postulated as the genuine and romanticized Ishmaelites – subsisting on pastoralism and their affinity to thievery. As Goodrich detailed,

The Arabs are of two classes; first, the husbandmen and artisans; and second, the Bedouins or Arabs of the desert, who live in rocks, or sequestered places, where water can be obtained: they sometimes unite in tribes, and live in low, smokey tents, which they shift from the desert to the banks of the river, and back again, as suits their convenience. These people are in general robbers, and are terrible to travellers [*sic*] and peaceful husbandmen.<sup>283</sup>

Other texts added that these nomads comprised a considerable portion of the Arabs and that they have, “...no home but the deserts.”<sup>284</sup> The last distinct Nile people were the Mamluks, the former ruling class wiped out by Muhammad Ali in 1811 that occupied a somewhat more obscure place in the epistemology of Egypt specific only to Egypt. Adams taught readers that,

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<sup>279</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313; R. Smith, 290.

<sup>280</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 212; Worcester, 199; Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313.

<sup>281</sup> Adams, 292.

<sup>282</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313.

<sup>283</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 212; see also: Dwight, 117 (nomads); Adams, 292.

<sup>284</sup> Dwight, 117; Adams, 292.

“The Mamelukes are military slaves, children of christian [sic] parents, and for the most part, natives of Georgia, Circassia, and Mingrelia, countries situated at the foot of Mount Caucasus. They are brought up to the use of arms, and possess the sole publick force.”<sup>285</sup> Goodrich provided a more up-to-date account, adding that, “The Mamelukes were formerly the ruling people,” and despite “...their very martial appearance... These soldiers have been expelled from the country.”<sup>286</sup> Like other peoples of the epistemology of Egypt, the Mamluks were defined by their attached knowledge, and thus were qualified as the archetypal soldier.

Nineteenth-century American cultural knowledge of Egypt enveloped two primary facets: Egypt as an early precursor of enlightened civilization and biblical setting, and Egypt as a decrepit eastern crossroads of exoticism and inferiority. An additional way geography authors rectified this contradiction was to postulate an overarching narrative of decline of Egypt from its past of ancient grandeur to the degenerative state of its present. The reasons for this decline were ignorance, lack of commerce and manufacturing and, of course, despotic government. To geography texts, Egypt had lost its reputation as the center of learning when the Saracens burned the Library of Alexandria in the year 640.<sup>287</sup> According to these textbooks, in modern Egypt ignorance was widespread. As Adams detailed, “The education of youth extends no further than the Arabic language, writing and accounts...”<sup>288</sup> Dwight added that, “They know arithmetic, writing and keeping accounts, but are generally ignorant of other sciences.”<sup>289</sup> Furthermore, students learned that, unlike the United States, Egypt made little effort at

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<sup>285</sup> Adams, 292.

<sup>286</sup> Goodrich, *A System of Modern Geography*, 212.

<sup>287</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 227 & R. Smith, 292.

<sup>288</sup> Adams, 292.

<sup>289</sup> Dwight, 118.

manufacturing. “Manufacturers [were] in a low state,” with, “...little attention paid to them.”<sup>290</sup> Additionally, textbooks detailed how Egyptians had failed to live up to their commercial potential given to them by their advantageous environment. While Dwight’s work mentioned that there was some commerce in the Nile valley, Adams advanced Egypt’s valuable commercial situation – suggesting significant untapped potential that was not being met.<sup>291</sup> Only with Maury’s 1893 text was this potential fulfilled with the construction of the Suez Canal, which “...forms a short and important route for commerce between Europe and Asia.”<sup>292</sup> Students learned that European importations such as the canal offered the potential of reviving Egypt. However, the despotic policies of its government risked any effectiveness of these implements and made any real improvements due to the policies of Muhammad Ali in doubt.

The administration of Egypt in the early nineteenth century was in a state of fluctuation, and some textbook authors were unable or unwilling to dedicate resources to keep their works up to date. Jedidiah Morse merely mentioned that Egypt was governed by a Basha appointed from Constantinople. Dwight went into more detail, describing how, “It is a union of several states under the protection of the grand Seignior. He appoints the pasha and 24 beys, who are under the pasha, but are absolute in their own dominions, so that the government is despotic.”<sup>293</sup> By around 1820 the entries continued to be out of date. Adams describes how a “Basha” is sent from Constantinople to collect tribute, but it is the “Mamelukes,” the ruling class that elect the 25 Beys that hold power in Egypt.<sup>294</sup> During the 1830s the works of S.G. Goodrich first recognized the rise of Muhammad Ali, detailing how, “The present pasha, Mohammed Ali, has rendered himself nearly independent of the Sultan, and governs the

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<sup>290</sup> Dwight, 118 & Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 226.

<sup>291</sup> Dwight, 188 & Adams, 291.

<sup>292</sup> Maury, 117.

<sup>293</sup> Dwight, 118.

<sup>294</sup> Dwight, 292.

country with great vigour and ability; introducing into it many European arts and improvements.”<sup>295</sup> Worcester, perhaps writing late enough to witness Muhammad Ali’s Syrian campaign, went as far to state that the Pasha had “...renounced allegiance to the sultan.”<sup>296</sup> The reform or modernization policies of Muhammad Ali were also contributed to American cultural knowledge. Goodrich, as above, was hopeful that the Pasha could improve Egypt, as *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* taught that, “The present governor of Egypt is a wise prince, and he has introduced many of the arts of Europe into his country.”<sup>297</sup> Yet, while Goodrich seems to have been open to the possibility of Egyptian development, this conception of progress was essentialized and enveloped into the epistemological framework. Thus, the only path to improvement was through Western strategies. For example Mitchell offered hope for the revival of Alexandria, as he described, “After being for ages in a state of decay, it is at length reviving. It is now the chief sea-port and naval station of Egypt: vessels of nearly every European nation are to be found in its harbor; and steam-boats run to all the principle ports and islands in the Mediterranean.”<sup>298</sup> In Americans’ structured cultural knowledge, it is the presence of European flags and technology that marks a state’s improvement.

While geography texts discussed Muhammad Ali’s European-marked reform effort, his epistemologically despotic administration doomed them to failure. Roswell Smith described how, “By improvements in agriculture and the diffusion of learning and civilization, Mehemet Ali, the late ruler, greatly improved the condition of his people.” Smith continues to detail how the Pasha adapted an education system, “which deserves high praise,” where students are placed into three tiers, “primary,” “preparatory,” and “special” – a format that, although Smith does not explicitly state so, reflects the primary-secondary-higher model implemented in the

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<sup>295</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 212.

<sup>296</sup> Worcester, 199.

<sup>297</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 129.

<sup>298</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 314.

United States. Yet, the text continued to undermine these efforts by emphasizing the despotic elements of the Pasha's rule, stating that, "He enacted, however as proprietor of the soil, the most exorbitant rents or taxes, and compelled his subjects to serve in the army or navy, at his pleasure."<sup>299</sup> Mitchell agreed that Muhammad Ali's despotic policies undermined his reform efforts and stated that, "...the Pasha has rendered himself independent, and is introducing into Egypt the arts, learning, and civilization of Europe. The people are however, greatly oppressed; they are frequently torn from their families, and compelled to serve in the armies or fleets of their despotic order."<sup>300</sup> What held Egypt back from any efforts at reviving its ancient grandeur was essentialized Eastern despotism.

Geography authors showed disappointment at the fate of Egypt. Adams decried how, "...Egypt has lost much of its relative importance: many of its former cities, overwhelmed by despotism and ignorance, are laid level with the dust, and their former celebrity is now chiefly known by their magnificent ruins."<sup>301</sup> Students learned that a land with great potential, defined by its ruins, had succumbed to desolation, defined by its alterity. Goodrich stated that, "We should also discover that oppression, misery, distrust, and discord, hold possession of a country so well fitted to become the abode of happiness and prosperity."<sup>302</sup> Americans viewing the Levant through their structure of cultural knowledge were perturbed to see this land of past magnificence, with its natural fertility and advantageous location ignored and oppressed by despotic power and degenerated races.

Americans perceived Egypt—as well as the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean—through a framework of essentialized cultural knowledge they learned from geography textbooks. Like

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<sup>299</sup> R. Smith, 289-290, it should be noted that Smith wrote this in the 1857 edition, about seven years before the North began drafting soldiers during the Civil War.

<sup>300</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 313.

<sup>301</sup> Adams, 289.

<sup>302</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 209.

the others, the epistemology of Egypt consisted of a mixture of both imagined and physically valid aspects. Social pressures molded this conceptual structure to existentially comfort students and confirm American missions. Again, students were able to construct overly-simplistic and ineffective comparative conclusions because of the utility of the epistemology of Egypt. By the twilight of the nineteenth century, the 1893 edition of Matthew Fontaine Maury's *Manual of Geography* described Egypt's government as a constitutional monarchy that paid tribute to the Sultan of Turkey. Yet, after 1882 the "Khedive" was subjected to the British government under an informal protectorate. Maury applauded the improvements that resulted, observing that, "Egypt is the most enterprising country of Africa. Western civilization is largely adopted. The discipline of the army is European. The steamboat, the railway, the post-office, and telegraph have been introduced."<sup>303</sup> American cultural knowledge invited students to conclude that Britain's influence in Egypt was not only just, but beneficial to the nation and its inhabitants.

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<sup>303</sup> Maury, 117.



Figure 2. Egyptian Laborers during Gen. Edmund Allenby's World War I campaign.<sup>304</sup>



American entrepreneur Lowell Thomas returned from the Eastern Mediterranean in 1918 after following the efforts of his emerging nation and its allies during the First World War. Finding the brutal war in Europe distasteful to his target audiences, he shifted his attention to the Eastern Mediterranean where he followed General Edmund Allenby's campaign into Palestine and Syria. His resulting travelogue opened at the Century Theater in New York on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1919 before moving on to Madison Square Garden shortly thereafter. While the performance gave audiences essentialized accounts of all Eastern peoples, Thomas saved his worst depictions for the Egyptians. As one of Harry Chase's brilliant photographs appeared he boomed, "You will notice running along beside these men, task-masters with whips. Like the

<sup>304</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5"x8" Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.2.1267.56.

average army mule – if he doesn't get a few lashes a day he feels neglected. The men carrying the whips were their own fellow Egyptians, and very few were ever disappointed by sundown."<sup>305</sup> The ever-eloquent Thomas constructed Egyptians as natural laborers, epistemologically defined by toil. He continued by articulating to his audiences how,

Allenby used over a hundred thousand of these Egyptian labourers in the campaign. These chaps have been famous as burden bearers ever since the time when their ancestors built the Pyramids. But Allenby could only get them to work for about six months, because at the end of that time, at a shilling a day, they had more money than they had ever seen before in their lives so they would insist on resigning and would return to their little farms along the Nile to spend the rest of their lives smoking their hubbly-bubbly pipes and beating their wives.<sup>306</sup>

Audience members, supported by the epistemological framework they learned from geography textbooks, were invited to conclude that these racially degenerated Egyptians needed and benefited from Allenby and the British.

Some have postulated that uniform education serves or aids the imperial apparatus of Western states. However, throughout most of the nineteenth century the United States had little to no formal imperial apparatus outside of North America and the lack of state department presence in the Levant was often bemoaned by American travelers.<sup>307</sup> Therefore, in light of this evidence of the nature of American cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth century, we can now perceive that, at least in this instance, it is more valid to reverse the causal relationship. It was not an imperial apparatus that drove American education to assert the superiority of the American enterprise, but the social needs of its people. Thus, it

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<sup>305</sup> Lowell Thomas, "With Allenby in Palestine," 14; *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia*, Original Script, circa 1919, Series 1.25.2.2, Box 501, Folder 4, Lowell Thomas Papers, James A. Cannavino Library, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>307</sup> For example: Stephens, 8.

more valid to suggest that any imperial apparatus that resulted in the Eastern Mediterranean would be created to serve the social wishes of the American people.

### ***In Saecula Saeculorum***

“Arab signifies in the original, solitude or desert. And this is the oldest and most estimable of lands” –

“This sand?” inquired the Pacha.

“No; but this East which has mothered us all, sending out of its apparently sterile womb race after race whose wildness has been tamed into wisdom, and whose genius, early fed with grandeur and simplicity on the luxuriant shores of this river, and in the solitude of the wilderness, has ripened into the Art and Literature and Religion which has made us, and which we cherish.”<sup>308</sup>

These remarks were made by George William Curtis during his mid-century excursion through the Levant and published by Harper & Brothers in 1852. His *The Howadji in Syria* along with his earlier *Nile Notes of a Howadji* were popular and widely-read travel accounts published early in Curtis’s career. He later became a leading American liberal and editor of *Harper’s Weekly*. His name appeared on William Blackstone’s proto-Zionist petition in 1891 that requested President Benjamin Harrison work with Czarist Russia to promote the creation of a Jewish colony in Palestine.

To nineteenth-century Americans such as Curtis, Asia was the origin-point in their narrative of human existence. As Goodrich wrote, “The history of Asia is exceedingly interesting.”<sup>309</sup> Educated men and women throughout the young nation used their structured knowledge to trace their cultural genealogies back through Europe, Rome and Greece to the scriptures which they recognized as narrating the Asian landscape. Many of the depictions of Eastern nations in geography texts were generalized and assigned to the continent as a whole.

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<sup>308</sup> Curtis, 49-50.

<sup>309</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 150.

Thus, Asia was a diverse and fertile land with immense development potential and full of exotic produce which accentuated its distinction from the West. Yet, it was out of this lush alterity that humanity arose – where the Creator first sent Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden. Asia was where God flooded humanity and where Noah’s descendants were foiled in their efforts at Babel and spread throughout the land. It was this East that was first to agriculture and where the first great cities and empires were consolidated. However, while the West developed the “arts and sciences” that advanced civilization, Asia stagnated, its races degenerated, and it remained an ancient land where nomads roamed the landscape as patriarchs in the wilderness. Out of this benighted branch of humanity arose a false religion which took advantage of Eastern weakness to build and expand an empire of lies and deceit, which encouraged odd and disadvantageous customs and the unjust and regressive scourge of despotism. Therefore, authors and students favored the imperial efforts of powers such as Britain. Any thought by Americans that the spread of development was not just and beneficial to all threatened to undermine it as a universal truth.

Asia was diverse. Jedidiah Morse eloquently detailed how, “This immense tract of country stretches into all climates, from the frozen wilds of Siberia, where the hardy inhabitants, clothed in fur, are drawn in sledges over the snow; to the sultry regions of India and Siam, where, seated on the huge elephants, the people shelter themselves from the scorching sun by the spreading umbrella.”<sup>310</sup> Asia was a broad canvas—a “vast county”—which allowed it to be epistemologically adaptable.<sup>311</sup> As we shall see, both its fertility and its desert play prominent roles in Americans’ cultural narrative. As Worcester stressed, “The *climate* embraces every

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<sup>310</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 188.

<sup>311</sup> J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 131.

variety...," which allowed it to serve multiple, even conflicting, purposes for geography authors in their assertion of Asia as the mislaid original home of man.<sup>312</sup>

Geography authors detailed how Asia was naturally luscious as its earth organically spawned exotic productions unfamiliar to the West. Its inherent fertility allowed it to support the large Eastern masses who enjoyed such production without the more advanced toil of Western farmers. *Elements of Geography* taught students that, "Asia is, however, esteemed the most fruitful and the richest part of the globe, and it contains more inhabitants than all of the other divisions," all notions supported by Roswell Smith in similar language.<sup>313</sup> Textbooks detailed this exotic production, further accentuating the divide between Asian and American shores. Olney highlighted how, "Asia excels all other parts of the globe in the deliciousness of its fruits; the fragrantcy [*sic*] of its plants, spices and gums; the salubrity [*sic*] of its drugs; the quantity, variety and beauty of its gems; the richness of its metals; and the fineness of its silks and cottons."<sup>314</sup> His 1851 revision elaborated this point, labeling the continent, "The mineral kingdom."<sup>315</sup> Worcester's contribution added tea, coffee, rice bamboo, diamonds and precious stones and also that, "Asia is particularly distinguished for certain animals as the *elephant*, *camel*, *rhinoceros*, and *tiger*. The elephant is trained to various kinds of service; and the camel is very important to the Asiatics in performing the most arduous journeys."<sup>316</sup> The emphasis showed that—like discussions of unaccustomed produce—the author is conveying concepts that are epistemologically assigned to the premised difference of Asia and thus the perception of difference is self-reinforcing to students. Roswell Smith also teaches students the exact same

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<sup>312</sup> Worcester, 163 [emphasis in original]; see also: Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 266; James Monteith, *Introduction to the Manual of Geography* (1857. Reprint, Philadelphia: Sower, Barnes & Co., 1859), 49; Maury, 105.

<sup>313</sup> Worcester, 163 & R. Smith, 258; see also: Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 277.

<sup>314</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, Hartford: D. F. Robinson & Co., 1830), 192.

<sup>315</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 223-224.

<sup>316</sup> Worcester, 162 [emphasis in original].

four concepts of exotic animals to her students.<sup>317</sup> S. Augustus Mitchell adds that, “Gold and diamonds are found; pearl fisheries abound,” and that, “The ourang-outang, or man-monkey, is also found.”<sup>318</sup> Students, upon learning the inherent dissimilarity of Asia, advance deeper in the knowledge structure to learn more particular concepts that help define Asia – thus reinforcing the premised distinction. The popular late-century *Harper’s School Geography* perhaps goes further than other texts in its descriptions of Asia’s exotic produce. Its contribution adds the tapir, buffalo, arctic fox, pangolin or ant-eater, zebra, camel, poisonous serpents, crocodile as well as “other serpents” to Asia’s fauna, and aloe, ebony, sandal-wood, bananas, dates, figs, olives, tamarind, cocoa, nutmegs, sugar, hemp, flax, rice, and opium to its flora.<sup>319</sup> The level of sheer detail is still quite insufficient to understand the tangible productions of Asia – not only in scope but in method. Knowing that Asia contains arctic foxes, orangutans, figs and opium did not help students to comprehend Asia, instead, it imparted to them a framework of cultural knowledge that enabled them to draw rational yet monolithic, logical yet ineffective, comparative conclusions.

In nineteenth-century American culture, however, Asia was not only a land of exotic productions. Another primary epistemological concept was Asia as the setting of the Bible and, relatedly, the point of origin for humanity. Adams summarized this concept particularly well, stating that,

Asia is particularly entitled to our admiration, not merely on account of the fertility of its soil, the deliciousness of its fruits, the fragrantcy [*sic*] of its plants, spices, and gums, the beauty and the variety of its gems, the richness of its metals, and the fineness of its cottons and silks, in all which it greatly exceeds Europe; but also, as being the immediate scene of man's creation, and a country which the adorable Messiah vouchsafed to honour with his birth, residence and expiatory sufferings. It was in Asia, according to the

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<sup>317</sup> R. Smith, 258-259.

<sup>318</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 78.

<sup>319</sup> *Harper’s School Geography*, 104.

sacred records, the all-wise Creator planted the garden of Eden, and formed our first parents out of the dust of the ground; here, subsequent to the destroying deluge, he accepted the grateful sacrifice of Noah; and by confounding the languages at Babel, facilitated the planting of nations. It was in Asia, God established his once beloved people the Jews, and gave them the lively oracles of truth; here Jesus Christ performed the wondrous work of our redemption; and here the christian [sic] faith was miraculously propagated, and sealed with the blood of unnumbered martyrs. Edifices also were veered, empires were founded, and the worship of the Most High was celebrated in this division of the globe, while Europe, Africa and America were uninhabited and unexplored.<sup>320</sup>

God first placed man in Asia. There humanity lived before the flood and there they were foiled in their attempt to build the Tower of Babel and from there they were spread throughout the land. Almost every textbook that devoted a section to Asia as a whole—which was a vast majority—delivered a similar, if not replicated, passage detailing how Asia was the familiar setting of the Book of Genesis. Jedidiah Morse stated in similar language that, “This is the principal [sic] quarter of the globe; for in Asia the All Wise Creator planted the garden of Eden, in which Adam and Eve were formed, from whom the whole human race have derived their existence. Asia became again the nursery of the world after the deluge, whence the descendants of Noah dispersed their various colonies into all the other parts of the globe.”<sup>321</sup> Not only was Asia the setting of the creation of mankind and the world in which he resides, it was also the location of the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. As Mitchell detailed, “It was also the birth-place of our savior, the scene of his miracles and death, and the field on which the apostles first published salvation to man.”<sup>322</sup> Students learned that the events of the Bible happened in Asia, as scriptural narratives were grafted on to the physical landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. Additionally, as an important part of Americans’ self-understanding was embedded in the epistemology of Asia, students were taught to locate themselves and their

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<sup>320</sup> Adams, 256-257.

<sup>321</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 190.

<sup>322</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 276.

heritage though the Asia modality. Roswell Smith taught that, “The most remarkable transactions recorded in the Bible occurred in Asia. Here, our first parents were created; here lived Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets; here the human race were [sic] preserved from the deluge.”<sup>323</sup> Protestant typology invited Americans to see themselves as descendants of these patriarchal parents – an idea that was reinforced with the epistemological situation of racial development. Thus, students understood Asia as the landscape of their ancestors. The Genesis narrative, the ministry of Jesus, and the assertion of that heritage was one of the the most pervasive aspects of American cultural knowledge through the first half of the nineteenth century, appearing in each of the most popular works.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century there was no separation of God and education in America. Geography texts were thoroughly and uncontroversially saturated in basic Christian beliefs. *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* stated in a lesson titled, “Who Made Things” that “Continents, islands, mountains, and hills, are *made by God*; so also are the lakes and rivers, and the great sea, or ocean.”<sup>324</sup> Epistemologically, everything fundamentally originated from God and Asia was his first canvas – as Mitchell offered, “Its history begins with the Creation.”<sup>325</sup> Textbook authors described how God planted the Garden of Eden in Asia and crafted Adam and Eve from the soil. As Goodrich narrated, “Here he told them they might live in peace and happiness, if they would serve and obey him. But, unhappily, they chose to disobey him, and accordingly they were driven out of their beautiful garden, and obliged to support themselves by the labor of their hands.”<sup>326</sup> The first humans were driven from God’s paradise and became so wicked that the creator sent a flood which killed all of his creations save for Noah and his ark. Roswell Smith even offered evidence of the flood, detailing how, “Sea shells,

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<sup>323</sup> R. Smith, 258.

<sup>324</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 17 [emphasis in original].

<sup>325</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 78.

<sup>326</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 151.



and other marine substances are found in every explored part of the world, on the loftiest mountains of Europe, and the still loftier Andes of South America.”<sup>327</sup> In learning geography, students were reassured of the tangible validity of scriptural narratives and their residual effects of on the contemporary landscape and its people.

The epistemology of Asia propagated by geography authors was a significant influence on the construction of, and the situation of, race in the framework of American cultural knowledge. As Worcester stated, “Asia is remarkable for being the quarter of the world in which the human race were first planted.”<sup>328</sup> Humanity, in all its racial forms, was spread throughout the world from that singular stem placed in Asia, “...the cradle of the human race.”<sup>329</sup> As Goodrich detailed, “The world was soon peopled again by the descendants of Noah. Some of them went into various parts of Asia, some went into Europe, and some into Africa. At what time the first inhabitants of America came into it we cannot tell.”<sup>330</sup> Racial distinctions based on partial and ineffective observations were placed upon the epistemological depiction of the narrative of the Tower of Babel and its aftermath. When the sons of Noah ceased to understand one another, they spread throughout the earth and founded the three main races of Asia, Europe and Africa. As Monteith detailed in then-outdated catechetical style:

- Q. For what is Asia remarkable?
- A. It is the division of the earth that was first inhabited.
- Q. Who were the first persons on Earth?
- A. Adam and Eve, who were placed in the Garden of Eden.
- Q. At what time was the Deluge?
- A. Nearly seventeen centuries after the creation of man.
- Q. What then became of all living beings?
- A. All living creatures died, except those that went with Noah into the Ark.

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<sup>327</sup> R. Smith, 90.

<sup>328</sup> Worcester, 162.

<sup>329</sup> Mitchell, *First Lessons in Geography for Young Children* (1859. Reprint, New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: American Book Company, 1885), 60.

<sup>330</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners*, 151.

Q. How long after the Deluge did the people live at one place?  
 A. During one hundred years after the Deluge.  
 Q. What then took place?  
 A. The descendants of the three sons of Noah separated from each other, and settled in different countries.  
 Q. Who were the sons of Noah?  
 A. Shem, Ham, and Japheth.  
 Q. Where did the descendants of Shem settle?  
 A. In Asia.  
 Q. Where did the descendants of Ham settle?  
 A. In Africa.  
 Q. Where did the descendants of Japheth settle?  
 A. In Europe.  
 Q. Who are the American Indians supposed to be?  
 A. Descendants of the Asiatic, who crossed Behring's Strait to America.<sup>331</sup>

Students learned that the offspring of Japheth, Shem, and Ham became the races of Caucasia, Mongolia, and Africa respectively. The connection between scripture and biological racism was quite clean and the amalgamation would likely have reinforced the validity of both.

While the creation narrative and biological racism merged seamlessly in the American cultural knowledge structure, an important change occurred in the latter half of the century that drove the Genesis narrative from geography textbooks. Originally, the narrative of divine-driven creation as expressed in the Bible was the most pervasive aspect of the epistemology of Asia in geography texts. It was featured in one form or another in all of the major geography texts from *Geography Made Easy* through mid-century, and was maintained in the popular works of S. Augustus Mitchell whose *A System of Modern Geography*, *New Primary Geography*, and *First Lessons in Geography for Young Children* were revised as late as 1892, 1895 and 1889 respectively, and were likely circulated into the twentieth century. However, in newer texts written in the latter decades of the century, the presence of the Genesis narrative became sparse and it is difficult to find works originally written after 1860 that documented creation, Noah, Babel or even Jesus Christ. The reason for the removal of this influence in American

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<sup>331</sup> Monteith, *Manual of Geography*, 130-131.

cultural knowledge was likely twofold. First, competing theories such as Darwinism may have cast criticism on the Book of Genesis and raised doubts of its inherent authority. Just rendering a subject in doubt would likely have stirred controversy and hastened its removal from textbooks, even if the scriptural narrative was still considered a legitimate epistemological modality by most. An even more effective stimulus for this change may have been the increasing institutional religious plurality in nineteenth-century America as immigrants, such as the Irish, became enveloped into Catholicism and may have challenged the social consensus. Most importantly, the middle of the nineteenth century witnessed technological advances in transportation and communication which heightened Americans' awareness of their religious plurality. In fact, when one accounts for the grassroots revivalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a better case could be made for the decline of true theological multiplicities in America. However, as the century wore on, the denominational survivors of the Second Great Awakening became further institutionalized, leading figures may have become more representational, sectarian publications would have likely increased, and relatively closed communities may have been opened. Overall, Americans were becoming increasingly aware of their religious plurality which may also have shined doubt upon singular origin narratives, and was likely an important factor why the Book of Genesis was written out of geography texts. Subsequently, the sectionalization of America in the nineteenth century may have played a role. More conservative regions could have held on to the social narrative while progressive areas challenged the status quo. However, this was more likely to explain the maintenance of works such as Mitchell's that retained its market for revisions well after its format became outdated. Some regions would have likely sustained the use of these texts while others drove a market for new works. It is also notable that textbooks written in the latter half of the century were less likely to dedicate a section strictly to Asia where observations were generalized into a

monolithic alterity. Thus, “Orientalism” it was described may have been on the wane in America a century before Edward Said.

Yet, despite the causal vacuum created by this absence, the epistemological structure was mostly maintained. The residual narratives such as the development of race and civilization were continued. Thus, authors adopted a somewhat *laissez faire* approach to human origin and attempted to circumvent its importance in American narratives of cultural development. For example, Guyot offered a secularized origin for the world’s races while still maintaining the structure left by the narrative of Noah’s three sons. He taught students how, “The three connected continents of the Old World, Europe, Asia, and Africa, have each a separate race. In Europe is the *white* race. In Asia, the *yellow* or Mongolian race, with eyes set obliquely; straight, black, and very thin hair; and very little beard. In Africa is the *black woolly-haired* race, with thick lips and broad, flat noses; and the lower part of the face projecting beyond the upper portion.”<sup>332</sup> While Guyot avoids mentioning Noah, Babel or the flood, he continues to use the same epistemological framework for his causal explanation of racial development. Even in the absence of the Genesis narrative, Asia continued to be the epistemological origin-point of American culture.

Additional secular narratives of development were featured alongside the story of Genesis in geography textbooks in the first half of the century and were similarly maintained after the banishment of Babel from later texts. Goodrich opened his section dedicated to Asia by offering that, “Asia is distinguished as that quarter of the globe where civilization and the arts had their rise.” Only subsequently does he situate Asia as where “...the first human pair had their residence...,” where the events of the Old Testament were located, where “...the great monarchies of antiquity had their rise and fall...,” and where David, Solomon, Jesus Christ and

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<sup>332</sup> Guyot, *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 94.

the apostles resided.<sup>333</sup> The Book of Genesis was only one epistemological component in the long, singular, line of human progress that continued *in saecula saeculorum*. Asia was the inauguration of this development, where humanity began farming – the first step in the predictable line from savagery to civilization. As Adams emphasized, “The Asiatic countries were the first in the world which enjoyed the advantages of cultivation.”<sup>334</sup> The landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean was the land of the first great cities and the first powerful empires that resulted. Asia itself was defined as, “...the seat of some of the most powerful empires of ancient times...” It was these states that innovated the earliest civilized practices. Students learned from Olney that Asia, “...successfully flourished some of the greatest and most powerful empires that the world has ever seen...,” and that, “This favored portion of the globe was also foremost in civilization, arts, science and commerce.” He emphasized that it was Asia that provided the foundation for the advances of other lands, stating that, “Indeed, edifices were reared, cities built, and empires founded, while Europe, Africa and America were uninhabited and unexplored.”<sup>335</sup> Here the narrative of geography texts emphasized the singular organization of civilizational development and asserted Asia as its sole founder, as other continents were rendered empty of human inhabitants. Individual empires were places upon this singular developmental framework as waves of a slowly, but surely, advancing tide that was further stimulated by each modality. Jedidiah Morse’s *Elements of Geography* detailed how, “The first great empire in the world was the *Babylonian* or *Assyrian*, in Asia...” This was improved upon by “...*Ninus*, who built Ninevah,” which was subsequently conquered by Cyrus, who began the empire of Medes. This state progressed into the empire of the Persians who were thus vanquished by Alexander the Great who established the great Greek empire. Alexander

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<sup>333</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 264.

<sup>334</sup> Adams, 258.

<sup>335</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 223.

bequeathed this to his three generals, including Ptolemy in Egypt. The known world was successively conquered by the Romans who eventually fell to the Goths and Vandals as well as other barbarians of the East.<sup>336</sup> Worcester added the Israelites to this stable of early powers, each of which occupied a significant role in American cultural knowledge.<sup>337</sup>

Somewhere along this line of development, the point of identity shifted away from the East towards Athens and Rome, yet the location of that point is muddled. However, the point where Asia was lost was exceedingly clear. Geography authors were certain that the imposter Muhammad and the rise of the Saracens doomed Asia to barbarism. As *Geography Made Easy* detailed,

This vast tract of land was, in the earliest ages, governed by the Assyrians, Medes, Persians and Greeks. Upon the extinction of these empires, the Romans carried their arms even beyond the Ganges, till at length the Mahometans, or, as they are usually called, Saracens, spread their devastations over this continent, destroying all its ancient splendor, and rendering the most populous and fertile spots of Asia, wild and uncultivated deserts.<sup>338</sup>

The rise of Islam served an important taxonomical purpose in nineteenth-century American geography texts as the point of disruption between East and West – where Asia’s civilizational prowess was amputated by “Mahometanism” and re-rendered as a civilizational alterity. Asia thus stagnated in its development because of Muhammad’s deceit and poor practices. As Olney detailed, “the human mind for centuries, seems to have remained stationary in Asia. Ancient forms are preserved most rigidly, and no advances are, apparently, made in the arts and sciences.”<sup>339</sup> Mitchell added that, “The institutions, manners and customs of the people are the

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<sup>336</sup> J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 55-56 [emphasis in original].

<sup>337</sup> Worcester, 162.

<sup>338</sup> J. Morse, *Geography Made Easy*, 190; see also: J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 131.

<sup>339</sup> Olney, *A Practical System of Modern Geography* (1828. Reprint, New York: Pratt, Woodford & Co., 1851), 224.

same at the present as in the earlier times; and no advance appears to have been made for a long period in the arts, sciences, or learning.”<sup>340</sup> While Europe and the West built upon Asia’s civilizational foundations, the East was stunted by Islam. Here race returns to the narrative as the biological weaknesses of Eastern inhabitants accentuated its deterioration, as authors rationally determined that Asiatics exemplified the great scourge of progress – idleness. Students learned from Worcester that, “They are less active and enterprising; more effeminate in their character and habits; more remarkable for a warm imagination, for a figurative style of writing, and for the use of hyperbolic language.”<sup>341</sup> Thus, the Asiatics retained the patriarchal way of life detailed in the Old Testament wanderings of the Israelites. Goodrich described how, “A wandering and patriarchal life is clearly pointed out by nature to many Asiatic nations.” Worcester added that, “...the patriarchal form is in use.”<sup>342</sup> Race returned to the narrative as a cause of the Eastern decline. As Goodrich detailed, “In some other parts of Asia, the uniform fertility of the soil, and constant mildness of the climate, by recompensing too rapidly the most trifling labor, have stifled almost in its birth the energy of the human mind, which requires to be stimulated by want and obstacles. Both these modes of living are productive of a mental and bodily inactivity, which becomes hereditary, and appears to stamp the races of Asia with a general inferiority in point of energy and courage.”<sup>343</sup> Here the environmental advantages fostered idleness among the Asiatic which, in conference with theories of biological racism, became an inherited attribute and thus an inherent cause of Asiatic stagnicity.

Another epistemological theme was also used to explain Asia’s deterioration, as the despotic practices derived from their patriarchal way of living also hindered any development.

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<sup>340</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 227; see also: Maury, 105 (he points to Asia’s lack of improvements in its navies despite its advantageous natural position).

<sup>341</sup> Worcester, 164.

<sup>342</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 267 & Worcester, 164, 165.

<sup>343</sup> Goodrich, *A System of School Geography*, 267.

Students learned from Goodrich that, “The unlimited authority of a father of a family among these people, necessarily becomes the pattern for government, and despotic systems are consequentially adopted.”<sup>344</sup> Therefore, an additional cause of Asia’s lack of civilizational improvements was its poor governance, where, “The people are oppressed by their rulers...”<sup>345</sup> Mitchell also detailed how these poor governing practices traumatized the land, stating that, “...their administration is frequently arbitrary and tyrannical. Robbery is often practiced as a regular trade, even by chiefs and princes, and as a calling that they consider honorable and honest.”<sup>346</sup> Overall poor governmental practices essentialized as despotism were offered by geography text as a causal explanation of Asia’s deterioration. Jedidiah Morse offered the contemporary empires of Russia, Germany, Turkey, Mongolia and China as the progenies of the early empires of the East. He then described the result of the civilizational progress that Asia was denied because of Islam, racial inferiority, and despotism, observing how, “A number of separate states, having governors, constitutions, and laws of their own; confederated under one general government, with an elective head, is called a Republic. Such is the government of the United States of America, and of Switzerland in Europe. France is also called a Republic, but its government is at present unsettled; as is that also of the Republic of Holland.”<sup>347</sup> The result of the development narrative and the decline of Asia was the codification of epistemological difference that was reinforced by subsequential observations.

A number of observations of contemporary Asia were made in nineteenth-century American geography texts. These epistemological contributions reaffirmed the distinction between West and East, civility and alterity. According to geography texts, the results of Asia’s

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>345</sup> Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*.

<sup>346</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 227; for more on despotism, see also: J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 132; Worcester, 164; Mitchell, *First Lessons in Geography*, 61; *Harper’s School Geography*, 106.

<sup>347</sup> J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 56.



stagnation narrative were odd dress and exotic customs, polygamy and poor treatment of women, superstition and idolatry. Monteith detailed their manners and customs, describing the dress of Asiatic men as, “Long Robes for the body, Turbans for the head, and Sandals for the feet.” He continues to detail the obedience of Chinese children—fearful of punishment that apparently included beheading—and the custom of wrapping girls’ feet.<sup>348</sup> Mitchell adds that Asiatic women were treated as slaves, denied the ability to read and write and were required to be veiled.<sup>349</sup> Worcester also dedicates an extensive section to the exotic customs of Asia’s inhabitants. He supported Mitchell’s claims and added that, “Most of the Oriental nations make no use of *chairs*, but sit cross-legged upon their heels, on the ground or floor; and, in the houses of the wealthy, on carpets or sofas.” He continued detail how they live mostly in tents, eat on the floor without the use of knives or forks, have an industry of laminations for funerals and practice polygamy and arraigned marriages.<sup>350</sup>

Perhaps Asia’s most commonly commented on custom was their practice of deviant religion. As Jedidiah Morse detailed, “...Turkey, Arabia, Persia, and part of Tartary and India, profess Mahometanism. The other parts of Tartary, India, China, Japan, and the other Asiatic Islands, are generally *heathens* and *idolaters*.”<sup>351</sup> This distinction was maintained by most texts, which described a nearer land of false religion, and a farther land of paganism as well as the overall presence of superstition. *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners* informed students of Muhammad’s deceit and the delegitimizing violence that marked its spread.<sup>352</sup> Worcester’s text matched Goodrich, and added that, “...far the greater part of the Asiatics adhere to *Paganism*, which here exists in various forms, as *Bramanism*, and *Buddhism*, including the religion of *Fo* and

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<sup>348</sup> Monteith, *Manual of Geography*, 132; see also: Monteith, *Introduction to the Manual of Geography*, 49.

<sup>349</sup> Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, 277.

<sup>350</sup> Worcester, 165-166 [emphasis in original].

<sup>351</sup> J. Morse, *Elements of Geography*, 132-133 [emphasis in original].

<sup>352</sup> Goodrich, *Peter Parley’s Geography for Beginners*, 152-153.

*Shamanism*, or the worship of the *Grand Lama*.”<sup>353</sup> Overall, the Muslims, pagans, heathens and idolaters were mired by their superstition, which may be used to explain their disregard for Christianity. As Goodrich observed, “The most remarkable feature in the moral condition of Asia is presented by its superstitions,” as, “...a lying prophet and juggling priests stretch their dark dominion over the millions that inhabit it.”<sup>354</sup> These observations reaffirmed Asia’s epistemological distinction as the West’s alterity – helping to define Asia as the Other. These differences confirmed the Asian narrative of stagnation by postulating its results. In this process geography texts reaffirmed the civilization development narrative in itself.

The epistemological framework of nineteenth-century American cultural knowledge enabled, or even invited students to construct logical, yet overly-simplistic and ineffective universal comparisons that were often driven by social pressures. One of the major examples of this was the inference that the American republic was the best and most recent manifestation a long line of progress that began with the Book of Genesis. Geography authors used the epistemology of Asia to construct a narrative of cultural development that postulated American society as the pinnacle of civilizational development. Additionally, American self-understandings were embedded within that knowledge structure as students found them themselves and their perceived heritage within it and were reassured to know that they enjoyed the peak of human progress. Geography students learned that their race was inherently superior, their state of society was the most advanced, their religion yielded divine truth and their government was the most just. Textbooks taught that their culture emerged from the fertile landscape of Asia, that their predecessors first developed agriculture and slowly but surely made the societal improvements that eventually resulted in the peak of civilization on the shores of the New

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<sup>353</sup> Worcester, 164 [emphasis in original].

<sup>354</sup> Goodrich, *A System of Modern Geography*, 267; see also: Mitchell, *New Primary Geography*, 78; Monteith, *Manual of Geography*, 133; Mitchell, *First Lessons in Geography*, 61; Maury, 105.

World. Asia, however, was resigned to a different fate. As Mitchell detailed, “Asia formerly contained some of the largest and most powerful empires than have ever existed,” and yet, “Most of the Asiatic governments have now come into subjection to various European powers.”<sup>355</sup> Students learned that the land where their civilization was birthed had stagnated since the rise of the imposter Muhammad and the Saracen conquests. Finally, students were reassured that the land of exotic productions, degenerated races, unproductive customs and poor governance was finally being brought into civilization at last.

### **Entertaining the Masses: Satire and Travelogue**

The epistemology of the Eastern Mediterranean was so entrenched in the minds of nineteenth century Americans that they often projected their cultural knowledge upon the physical landscape regardless of its fit. They would apply what they learned reading geography textbooks to later discussion of the Levant. This allowed them to revile in their imagined heritage and/or explore the exoticism of Otherness whenever they thought of, discussed, or toured the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean. These processes proved to be a financial boon to many authors in the nineteenth century. The literary genre of Holy Land travel accounts reached its peak during the 1850s and continued its popularity through the end of the century. Authors used themes of Otherness and escapism that were proven popular with earlier genres such as the Barbary captive narratives earlier in the century. Accounts from the Eastern Mediterranean helped make men such as Edward Robinson, Bayard Taylor and William Cullen Bryant household names during the period – it seemed that touring the East was a surefire way to start a successful literary career. Abraham Lincoln expressed his wish to make the journey

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<sup>355</sup> Mitchell, *First Lessons in Geography*, 61.

and Ulysses S. Grant spent extensive time in the Levant during his post-Presidency world tour.<sup>356</sup> Travel accounts of the Levant in the nineteenth century lined bookshelves virtually everywhere – many proved so popular that they continue to be published today.

Two of the most influential presentations of the Eastern Mediterranean were begun by two obscure Americans looking to get in on the success of accounts from the East. Mark Twain set off on a rich man's cruise to document tourists exploring the lands they read about in books. Lowell Thomas journeyed at the request of the U.S. government to popularize America's role in the First World War. Both men convinced newspapers to publish excerpts during the journey. Both presentations were extremely successful, such that it likely surpassed both travelers' wildest dreams. Furthermore, each presentation was notably unique in ways that would help it retain its influence far longer than the accounts of other travelers.

On the first of June, 1867, the steamship *Quaker City* departed New York for a sightseeing excursion through the Old World. The relatively luxurious trip was designed to "...take a royal holiday beyond the broad ocean, in many a strange clime and in many a land renowned in history!"<sup>357</sup> Organized by part of the constituents of Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Church, it was advertised as the voyage of a lifetime for wealthy Americans.<sup>358</sup> Hilton Obenzinger effectively described it as an excursion of the "...industrial elite as they sought to reassert their Old World cultural legacy after the Civil War in their own extended Grand Tour."<sup>359</sup> In the Eastern Mediterranean the trip's itinerary included stops at Constantinople, Troy, Lydia, Smyrna, and Ephesus in Asia Minor; Beirut and Jaffa, where ample time was given for guests to

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<sup>356</sup> Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 41-42, 54-56.

<sup>357</sup> Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or, The New Pilgrims' Progress* (Hartford: The American Publishing Company, 1869).

<sup>358</sup> Vogel, 44.

<sup>359</sup> Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), ix.

journey inland, reaching Damascus, Galilee, Capernaum, Samaria, Tiberius, the Jordan, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. From there the trip would reach Alexandria where travelers could reach Cairo, Pompey's Pillar, Cleopatra's Needle, the Catacombs, ancient Memphis and the Pyramids.<sup>360</sup> With few variations, the trip would visit the assigned locations of most Americans' regional cultural knowledge taxonomy.

One of the *Quaker City* passengers was a budding newspaper writer named Samuel Clemens who was contracted by papers in New York and San Francisco to produce a number of pieces from the trip under his pen name, Mark Twain. These articles would subsequently be published in 1869 as *The Innocents Abroad, or A New Pilgrims' Progress* which as Twain famously wrote, "sold right along just like the Bible."<sup>361</sup> With the help of subscription sales, *Innocents* was "a great commercial success," selling seven thousand copies a month through 1870 and launched the career of perhaps the most iconic American author.<sup>362</sup>

In many cases, Twain's account is much like that of his predecessors such as John Lloyd Stephens, George William Curtis, William Cullen Bryant, and Bayard Taylor. Each literary tourist projected their cultural knowledge upon the landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. In his travels Twain noted popular and well-known concepts such as Baalbek and the cities of modern-day Lebanon, which were defined by, "...those enterprising Phoenicians of ancient times we read so much about."<sup>363</sup> Many of these cultural landmarks came from the Bible, which Twain told us was used as a guidebook by his fellow travelers.<sup>364</sup> Readers were notified when Twain

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<sup>360</sup> Twain, 21-22.

<sup>361</sup> Obenzinger, x.

<sup>362</sup> Obenzinger, x; Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 56; Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865-1941* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto; Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2011), 30.

<sup>363</sup> Twain, 446-447, 435.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 24, 431.

crossed the brook where David found the stone that he used to slay Goliath, and when his party reached the Holy City of Jerusalem which was ground zero for cultural qualifiers:

We dismounted and looked, without speaking a dozen sentences, across the wide intervening valley for an hour or more; and noted those prominent features of the city that pictures make familiar to all men from their school days till their death. We could recognize the Tower of Hippicus, the Mosque of Omar, the Damascus Gate, the Mount of Olives, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Tower of David, and the Garden of Gethsemane—and dating from these landmarks could tell very nearly the localities of many others we were not able to distinguish.<sup>365</sup>

Each one of these landmarks was a familiar reference to the framework of American cultural knowledge. The most prominent, the Church of the Holy Sepulture, was commonly a scene of ridicule by iconoclastic Protestant travelers. However, although Twain scorns the “clap-trap side-shows” of the pilgrimage sites as much as his peers, he found the Mount of Calvary to be the authentic location of the crucifixion. The satirist looked upon the site in verification of his cultural heritage, as it drew “...far more absorbing interest than I had ever felt in anything earthly before.”<sup>366</sup> Each of these epistemological modalities relayed a body of unspoken information which was shared between author and readers and resulted in an accommodating process of shared identification, thus reaffirming each member’s understanding of self.

Twain’s account also reaffirmed the epistemological narrative of cultural development that was disseminated through geography textbooks. The landscape of *Innocents* was the land of ancient grandeur, which gave birth to civilization:

We were glad to have seen the land which was the mother of civilization—which taught Greece her letters, and through Greece Rome, and through Rome the world; the land which could have humanized and civilized the hapless children of Israel, but allowed them to depart out of her borders little better than savages. We were glad to have seen

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 556.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 573, 571.

that land which had an enlightened religion with future eternal rewards and punishment in it, while even Israel's religion contained no promise of a hereafter. We were glad to have seen that land which had glass three thousand years before England had it, and could paint upon it as none of us can paint now; that land which knew, three thousand years ago, well nigh all of medicine and surgery which science has discovered lately; which had all those curious surgical instruments which science has invented recently; which had in high excellence a thousand luxuries and necessities of an advanced civilization which we have gradually contrived and accumulated in modern times and claimed as things that were new under the sun; that had paper untold centuries before we dreamt of it—and waterfalls before our women thought of them; that had a perfect system of common schools so long before we boasted of our achievements in that direction that it seems forever and forever ago; that so embalmed the dead that flesh was made almost immortal—which we can not do; that built temples which mock at destroying time and smile grimly upon our lauded little prodigies of architecture; that old land that knew all which we know now, perchance, and more; that walked in the broad highway of civilization in the gray dawn of creation, ages and ages before we were born...<sup>367</sup>

Here the Eastern Mediterranean was where the “arts and sciences” of civilization were first formed, where the first cities and the ancient empires grew, and from where language and technology spread to the West. Yet, the land depicted by Twain had stagnated and was frozen in time. As he wrote,

Here, you feel all the time just as if you were living about the year 1200 before Christ—or back to the patriarchs—or forward to the New Era. The scenery of the Bible is about you—the customs of the patriarchs are around you—the same people, in the same flowing robes, and in sandals, cross your path—the same long trains of stately camels go and come—the same impressive religious solemnity and silence rest upon the desert and the mountains that were upon them in the remote ages of antiquity, and behold, intruding upon a scene like this, comes this fantastic mob of green-spectacled Yanks, with their flapping elbows and bobbing umbrellas! It is Daniel in the lion's den with a green cotton umbrella under his arm, all over again.<sup>368</sup>

The Bedouin were the patriarchs of the Bible and Twain and his readers explored these peoples as accurate exhibits of the early civilized past. Nazareth was, “precisely as Jesus left it,” their guide appeared as “King Solomon-in-all-his-glory,” and—alluding to Joseph of the Book of

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 633-634.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 467.

Genesis—the shepherds they wandered across, “...would sell their younger brothers if they had a chance.”<sup>369</sup> Twain’s account reaffirmed readers’ conception of contemporary Eastern peoples as biblical figures frozen in time.

Subsequently, Twain’s Levant had forgotten its civility and continued on as a cautionary example of idleness. *Innocents* showed readers that the Eastern Mediterranean was a land in decline – a mere relic of its former greatness. The landscape was a mausoleum of grandeur and prosperity filled with tainted races, cities of filth and poor governance which rendered any efforts at improvement hopeless. As Twain detailed, “Where prosperity has reigned, and fallen; where glory has flamed, and gone out; where beauty has dwelt, and passed away; where gladness was, and sorrow is; where the pomp of life has been, and silence and death brood in its high places, there this reptile makes his home, and mocks at human vanity.”<sup>370</sup> Twain’s East was full of “degraded Turks and Arabs,” that, “would take [him] for a king in disguise” if he used soap to bathe.<sup>371</sup> Smyrna was “...just like any other Oriental city,” as, “its streets are crooked,” and,

...every where there is dirt, every where there are fleas, every where there are lean, broken-hearted dogs; every alley is thronged with people; wherever you look, your eye rests upon a wild masquerade of extravagant costumes; the workshops are all open to the streets, and the workmen visible; all manner of sounds assail the ear, and over them all rings out the muezzin's cry from some tall minaret, calling the faithful vagabonds to prayer; and superior to the call to prayer, the noises in the streets, the interest of the costumes—superior to every thing, and claiming the bulk of attention first, last, and all the time—is a combination of Mohammedan stench, to which the smell of even a Chinese quarter would be as pleasant as the roasting odors of the fatted calf to the nostrils of the returning Prodigal. Such is Oriental luxury—such is Oriental splendor! We read about it all our days, but we comprehend it not until we see it.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 537, 517, 481; see also: 445, 488.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 488-489; see also: 423.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 463, 434.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 406-407.



Twain repeatedly reaffirmed the epistemological qualifier of the filthy Eastern cities with narrow streets. At Jaffa he "...rode again down narrow streets and among swarms of animated rags." Damascus was "so crooked and cramped and dirty," and "The narrow streets swarmed like a hive with men and women in strange Oriental costumes."<sup>373</sup> On top of their degraded biology and filthy cities, Twain's Easterners suffered under the tyrannical despotism that was so prevalent in the epistemology of the Eastern Mediterranean. As he detailed,

If ever an oppressed race existed, it is this one we see fettered around us under the inhuman tyranny of the Ottoman Empire. I wish Europe would let Russia annihilate Turkey a little—not much, but enough to make it difficult to find the place again without a divining-rod or a diving-bell. The Syrians are very poor, and yet they are ground down by a system of taxation that would drive any other nation frantic. Last year their taxes were heavy enough, in all conscience—but this year they have been increased by the addition of taxes that were forgiven them in times of famine in former years. On top of this the Government has levied a tax of one-tenth of the whole proceeds of the land. This is only half the story. The Pacha of a Pachalic does not trouble himself with appointing tax-collectors. He figures up what all these taxes ought to amount to in a certain district. Then he farms the collection out. He calls the rich men together, the highest bidder gets the speculation, pays the Pacha on the spot, and then sells out to smaller fry, who sell in turn to a piratical horde of still smaller fry. These latter compel the peasant to bring his little trifle of grain to the village, at his own cost. It must be weighed, the various taxes set apart, and the remainder returned to the producer. But the collector delays this duty day after day, while the producer's family are perishing for bread; at last the poor wretch, who can not but understand the game, says, "Take a quarter—take half—take two-thirds if you will, and let me go!" It is a most outrageous state of things.<sup>374</sup>

Twain described oppressive conditions that helped, in juxtaposition, to reaffirm the just nature of American republicanism. These despotic practices helped to explain the stagnicity and decline of the Eastern Mediterranean and epistemologically bandage the contradiction between the celebration of its ancient grandeur and the demeaning of its degraded state. However, this effort had additional consequences. The depiction of the despoiled East and enlightened West

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 605, 456, 460; see also: 503.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 443-444.

was existentially comforting and confirmed the American mission, and yet this rendering of American exceptionalism implied a just duty for that mission to those in need of it. As Twain continued, “These people are naturally good-hearted and intelligent, and with education and liberty, would be a happy and contented race. They often appeal to the stranger to know if the great world will not some day come to their relief and save them.”<sup>375</sup> Elsewhere he implied that he expected a drastic change in the Levant, describing how, “The Moslems watch the Golden Gate with a jealous eye, and an anxious one, for they have an honored tradition that when it falls, Islamism will fall, and with it the Ottoman Empire. It did not grieve me any to notice that the old gate was getting a little shaky.”<sup>376</sup> To Twain and likely many of his readers, the extension of republican civility to the Eastern Mediterranean was expected and perhaps inevitable. If the Levant ever awoke from its slumber it would surely look towards the peak of the civilization it had founded.

In reaffirming the epistemological structure Twain was typical of his predecessors. They too conveyed familiar qualifying concepts to their readers and reaffirmed the narrative of cultural development that deemed the Eastern Mediterranean as the cradle of civilization that had festered and was in decline. However, there was an extraordinary part of *Innocents* that was unique in its genre. The ever-perceptive satirist—unlike his popular contemporaries—noticed how his fellow authors and travelers projected their cultural knowledge upon the landscape of the Levant. Twain remarked how the landscape was different from the one he had been taught and that he would annoyingly have to re-learn the characteristics of Palestine. He decried the lies of his fellow authors who offered mostly gross exaggerations and, at one point, even highlighted the East’s contradictory place in the American cultural development narratives.

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 444.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 584.

One epistemological theme he criticized was the romanticization of the Arabian horse, as he stated,

I hope that in future I may be spared any more sentimental praises of the Arab's idolatry of his horse. In boyhood I longed to be an Arab of the desert and have a beautiful mare, and call her Selim or Benjamin or Mohammed, and feed her with my own hands, and let her come into the tent, and teach her to caress me and look fondly upon me with her great tender eyes; and I wished that a stranger might come at such a time and offer me a hundred thousand dollars for her, so that I could do like the other Arabs—hesitate, yearn for the money, but overcome by my love for my mare, at last say, "Part with thee, my beautiful one! Never with my life! Away, tempter, I scorn thy gold!" and then bound into the saddle and speed over the desert like the wind!

But I recall those aspirations. If these Arabs be like the other Arabs, their love for their beautiful mares is a fraud. These of my acquaintance have no love for their horses, no sentiment of pity for them, and no knowledge of how to treat them or care for them. The Syrian saddle-blanket is a quilted mattress [*sic*] two or three inches thick. It is never removed from the horse, day or night. It gets full of dirt and hair, and becomes soaked with sweat. It is bound to breed sores. These pirates never think of washing a horse's back. They do not shelter the horses in the tents, either; they must stay out and take the weather as it comes. Look at poor cropped and dilapidated "Baalbec," and weep for the sentiment that has been wasted upon the Selims of romance!<sup>377</sup>

Here Twain decried the quixotic depiction of the grand Arabian horse that surpassed all others.

Instead, he protests, Arab bandits abuse and mishandle their mounts who therefor become decrepit and miserable. Yet, to test and challenge the epistemological framework is a usual process as travelers or other authorities make their own contribution to the body of cultural knowledge. But Twain goes much further than is typical and sets his sights upon the genre in its entirety.

*Innocent's* condemnation of William C. Prime's *Tent Life in the Holy Land* is well documented. Twain took the popular mid-century travel account to task, chastening "Grimes" for his overly-emotional descriptions of weeping and his inhuman depiction of the land's inhabitants. That satirist famously wrote how, "He went through this peaceful land with one

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 477.

hand forever on his revolver, and the other on his pocket-handkerchief. Always, when he was not on the point of crying over a holy place, he was on the point of killing an Arab.”<sup>378</sup> However Twain condemns not only Prime but the genre of holy land travel accounts as a whole, as *Tent Life* “...is a representative book—the representative of a *class* of Palestine books—and a criticism upon it will serve for a criticism upon them all.”<sup>379</sup> *Innocents* targeted not only Prime, but an assortment of very popular works that drew the interest of nineteenth-century Americans.

Most apparent is Twain’s denunciation of the exaggerations of his predecessors in the Eastern Mediterranean. He described his disappointment in sighting the landmarks he learned of in his youth as the Sea of Galilee, the River Jordan and the Dead Sea all failed to meet the expectations drawn from the body of American cultural knowledge. Others have noted his unfavorable comparisons of the Jordan to New York’s Broadway and the Sea of Galilee to Lake Tahoe.<sup>380</sup> However, Twain’s rebuke of his predecessors went well beyond a mere amendment of their measurements – he rejected some of the intellectual structure which he was taught as a child. As he stated, “One gets large impressions in boyhood, sometimes, which he has to fight against all his life.”<sup>381</sup> *Innocents* was exceptional among Levantine travel accounts in that it recognized the underlying cultural taxonomy that fueled travelers’ perceptions of the region.

At points in the narrative Twain confronted his fellow travelers’ process of projection. He was astounded by their comments that remarked how the young girls in Nazareth had “Madonna-like beauty” and grace and insists on their comeliness, homeliness and boisterousness. Again Prime was the culprit as Twain then gives a passage which taught how the

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<sup>378</sup> Twain, 532; see also: Twain, 508-509; 534.

<sup>379</sup> Twain, 536 [emphasis in original].

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 596-597; 507; see also: 495; 594.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 486.

Jewish girls of Nazareth resembled the beauty of Madonna.<sup>382</sup> Twain argued that the perceptions of travelers were driven by the contributions of authors like Prime:

Our pilgrims have brought their verdicts with them. They have shown it in their conversation ever since we left Beirout. I can almost tell, in set phrase, what they will say when they see Tabor, Nazareth, Jericho and Jerusalem—because I have the books they will "smouch" their ideas from. These authors write pictures and frame rhapsodies, and lesser men follow and see with the author's eyes instead of their own, and speak with his tongue. What the pilgrims said at Cesarea Philippi surprised me with its wisdom. I found it afterwards in Robinson. What they said when Genessaret burst upon their vision, charmed me with its grace. I find it in Mr. Thompson's "Land and the Book." They have spoken often, in happily worded language which never varied, of how they mean to lay their weary heads upon a stone at Bethel, as Jacob did, and close their dim eyes, and dream, perchance, of angels descending out of heaven on a ladder. It was very pretty. But I have recognized the weary head and the dim eyes, finally. They borrowed the idea—and the words—and the construction—and the punctuation—from Grimes. The pilgrims will tell of Palestine, when they get home, not as it appeared to them, but as it appeared to Thompson and Robinson and Grimes—with the tints varied to suit each pilgrim's creed.<sup>383</sup>

The satirist correctly and uniquely perceived that travelers projected cultural knowledge offered to them by writers such as Prime onto the landscape they journeyed through. Twain's frustrations with that process can be seen in his description of Jaffa – which was non-existent. Instead, he offers the disclaimer: "[For description of Jaffa, see Universal Gazetteer]." He reassured that, "If the reader will call at the circulating library and mention my name, he will be furnished with books which will afford him the fullest information concerning Jaffa." Twain, in jest, suggests that those interested look to these uniform recantings of cultural knowledge since that was precisely what they were seeking.

At one point, the satirist even grasps the contradiction embedded within the American narrative of cultural development. He criticizes this inconsistency in Charles's W. Eloit's depiction of the landscape of Galilee where he details the grand beauty of the scene before

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 530-531.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 511-512; see also: 495-496.

decrying its present degradation. As Twain observed, “This is not an ingenious picture. It is the worst I ever saw. It describes in elaborate detail what it terms a ‘terrestrial paradise,’ and closes with the startling information that this paradise is ‘a scene of *desolation and misery*.’”<sup>384</sup> Twain questions how a land could be the epitome of beauty and yet a scene of ruin. However, here he condemns the same contradiction that he uses elsewhere in his own account.

Twain saw how these cultural images affected the accounts of others and considered them useless. He artfully conveyed that understanding to his readers in unrelated context. In touring the Sea of Galilee he remarked that, “There are plenty of fish in the water, but we have no outside aids in this pilgrimage but ‘Tent Life in the Holy Land,’ ‘The Land and the Book,’ and other literature of like description – no fishing tackle.” Here Twain sarcastically relays the futility and inadequacy of his predecessors. In discussing others’ exaggerations of Palestine’s fountains he wrote that, “If all the poetry and nonsense that have been discharged upon the fountains and the bland scenery of this region were collected in a book, it would make a most valuable volume to burn.” Twain wanted to exorcise these cultural reaffirmations and offer an account pure of cultural context. As he wrote in his original preface, *Innocents* “...has a purpose, which is, to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who travelled [*sic*] in those countries before him.”<sup>385</sup> Twain tried to offer readers an account devoid of taxonomical indicators—to him the “lies” of Prime and others—a goal in which he failed to meet. In order to attempt this mission, the satirist attempted to forget his acquired cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean. As he wrote, “I can see easily enough that if I wish to profit by this tour and come into a correct understanding of the matters of interest connected with it, I must studiously and faithfully

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 510 [emphasis in original].

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., v.

unlearn a great many things I have somehow absorbed concerning Palestine.”<sup>386</sup> Twain suggested that, in order to truly detail the reality of his observations, he would have to disregard—instead of recall—the epistemological framework he learned in his youth.

In *Innocents* the author fails to meet his lofty goal. In fact, his account is quite similar to that of Bryant, Curtis, Stephens and Taylor as he failed to forget the “lies” of his youth and projected the epistemological framework of American cultural knowledge upon the landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. Twain used the landscape to assert the Otherness of the East, proclaim the superiority of his society, and reaffirm the cultural development narrative that juxtaposed the Levant, stuck in the past with the civilized and modernizing America. However, Twain’s account is unique in that it perceives and discusses the process his predecessors and contemporaries underwent when they perceived the landmarks of the Eastern Mediterranean. He used the landscape to showcase the travelers’ disappointment and hence satirize their projection of cultural knowledge upon the landscape.

The commercial success of *Innocents* launched Twain’s career that established him as one of the best-known and widely read American writers. Yet, Twain was far from the only one to use American cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean to attain notoriety. During a period of increased social mobility in the early twentieth century, Lowell Thomas used similar methods to fuel his own career. Thomas had reached Alaska during his travels writing for the Pacific Northwest Railroad Company. He returned in the summer of 1915 to photograph and film what he described as the last American frontier and produced a travelogue lecture that combined film, still images, and narration that informed and entertained audiences with anecdotes from the edge of civilization. A performance in Washington, D.C. impressed the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane who then contracted Thomas for a series of campaigns

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 485.

on domestic tourism during the First World War. With the U.S. entrance into the war in 1917, Thomas was asked to instead provide a lecture from Europe that would rally Americans to the war effort. He garnered funding from a number of Chicago businessmen such as Edgar A. Bancroft. Many of these men were grateful for Thomas's exposing of a blackmailer when he wrote for the Chicago *Evening Journal*. Additionally, he coerced a number of newspapers to accredit him as a war correspondent, although they refrained from any commitment to publish.

**Figure 3. Lowell Thomas rides a camel with a caravan in "Wadi Arabia."<sup>387</sup>**



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<sup>387</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5"x8" Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.1.1262.5.



In August of 1917 he married Frances Ryan and left for Europe with his wife and cameraman Harry Chase. Touring first in England than Italy, Thomas found the bloody war of attrition in the trenches lacking in perfunctory appeal for American audiences. When he heard of General Allenby's campaign in Palestine he jumped at the opportunity and sped off to Egypt where he stalwartly lobbied the British War Office to allow him to tail the British advance. It was February 1918 in Jerusalem where Thomas met T. E. Lawrence and followed him into the desert for over a week. In Palestine Thomas witnessed the latter stage of the campaign of 1918 that featured the capture of northern Palestine, Damascus and the taking of Aleppo. After the armistice Thomas sent Chase back to America to prepare the material as he traveled to Germany to observe the postwar revolution where he was wounded by gunfire in the Spartacus Uprising of January 1919.

Thomas returned to America where he completed his travelogue and gave his first performance at the Century Theater in New York on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1919. His popular performances soon moved to Madison Square Garden where he impressed early Jewish Zionist leaders Jacob Schiff and Nathan Straus, as well as British theater promoter Percy Burton. Thomas's travelogue charged \$2 a ticket and ran for five successful weeks in New York, followed by a short run in Ocean City, New Jersey. Burton offered to bring the performance to London, but Thomas declined because of a planned US tour and instead took an offer to take his show to the Methodist Centenary Celebration in Columbus, Ohio. The effort was a financial failure as the men he negotiated with in New York only had limited communication with the organizers in Columbus. Thomas wrote to his Chicago investors to explain the loss of \$10,000, detailing how he was forced because of inadequate facilities to give an amateur performance and how the organizers had sold "season ticket" buttons which guaranteed them free admission. Despite drawing over three thousand spectators a day by Thomas's estimation, the show took in a mere

\$44.<sup>388</sup> After the Columbus debacle, a fairly distressed Thomas was still able to obtain an agreement with Burton – this time with a written contract. In New York and Columbus Thomas gauged the popularity of what was originally a series of travelogues also concerning the Italian Front and the German Revolution. By July he had combined the most popular two – creating “With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia,” a two-part travelogue with a ten minute intermission in between to mimic theater performances. In a much later interview, Thomas described how the Palestine and Arabia shows drew the most in New York, remarking that, “I presume, partly because of the religious angle—Palestine—and partly because the public hadn’t heard anything at all about the Eastern Campaigns. All that seemed strange, far away and exotic.”<sup>389</sup> “With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia” preyed upon audiences’ conceptions of difference and confirmed their framework of cultural knowledge by conveying existentially comforting essentialisms.

Thomas’s travelogue was an entertaining and explanatory tale full of delightful anecdotes which mimicked the reality of the region and which was viewed by audiences who expected to be amazed as well as informed. The performances were a technological marvel at the time that combined hand-colored lantern slides, film strips and lighting all matched to Thomas’s lecture by his innovative photographer Harry Chase. Thomas may have been the first to directly score music to match his performances as the films of the era were dependent upon the theater musician. Audiences also likely got their first taste of aerial photography as Thomas displayed motion pictures of the pyramids from above while joking how the unsteadiness was due to the pilot’s hangover from the night before. For certain, it was a presentation that audiences had ever seen before.

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<sup>388</sup> Lowell Thomas, “Special Report to the Officers, Board of Directors and Stockholders of Thomas Travelogues, Inc.” June 30, 1919; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.4.1, Box 502, Folder 9.

<sup>389</sup> Lowell Thomas, “Lowell Thomas Remembers the Allenby and Lawrence Show (transcript),” undated; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.6, Box 505, Folder 7.

The lectures reiterated the taxonomy that formed Americans' cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean. The performances featured a concrete conceptual structure that treated constructed modalities as tangible and immovable entities. A major example of this is Thomas's depiction of ethnicity, where epistemological modalities are prescribed upon the framework of genetics. The result of this is the premise that people belong in firm social categories that are treated as tangible, concrete and inherited genetically. For example, a group of Jewish children were juxtaposed against a group of Armenian children – each group defined primarily by their ethnicity. Thomas depicted the people of the Middle East using this structure, and thus, his descriptions became generalizations that built upon this categorical premise and entire populations were therefore prescribed certain attributes. Thus, all Bedouin squatted, Australians and New Zealanders were all individualists and the colonized Egyptians were natural laborers that need to be strictly disciplined.<sup>390</sup> Most notably, Thomas presented the travelogue in two distinct parts: Palestine (the land of Americans' cultural past) and Arabia (the land of the Other) – the land of the Bible and the land of Arabian Nights.

Thomas depicted Palestine as the land of Americans' cultural past – the setting of important cultural narratives from which Americans defined themselves. The performance was full of social identifications that could be physically or tangibly absurd. Here Palestine was the land of the events of the Old Testament, of Jesus and the apostles, and of the medieval Crusades – identifications that were reinforced and perpetuated by Thomas in his many references to these events. Thomas often asked audiences to “recall” these people and events from their ontological memories as they tour their corresponding locations. For example, Gaza is the land of Samson and Delilah, an overlooking mountain was where Moses viewed the

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<sup>390</sup> Lowell Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 11, 7, 14; *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia*, Original Script, circa 1919; Lowell Thomas Papers Series 1.25.2.2, Box 501, Folder 4.

promised land, and the Jaff-Jerusalem road is where “the Apostles walked many times,” and where “the crusaders marched.”<sup>391</sup>

**Figure 4. Thomas (right) stood in the footsteps of Moses when viewed the Promised Land from Mount Pisgah.**<sup>392</sup>



The “Holy City” of Jerusalem was the central landmark of Americans’ perceived cultural heritage. As Thomas declared, “...this city more than Athens and more than Rome has taught the nations civic justice, and has given its name to that ideal city in Heaven – The New Jerusalem,

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<sup>391</sup> Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 13, 12, 20.

<sup>392</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5”x8” Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.2.1266.51.

the City of God.”<sup>393</sup> The city was a principal epistemological modality through which Americans’ perceived their cultural past, their understanding of present self, and their idealized future. Spectators were reminded of correlating events from that cultural past, as Thomas spoke, “...it was here, you will recall, that the flower of Christian chivalry, the Knights Templar, and the Knights of St. John were defeated by the vast hoard under Saladin.”<sup>394</sup> Thomas used these epistemological qualifiers to invite his audiences to take part in their perceived narratives of cultural development. After he described how Allenby’s army took Jerusalem, he proclaimed that, “...at last the dream of civilized peoples for the past thousand years had come true and the Holy Land had been freed!”<sup>395</sup> The travelogue helped accommodate audiences into a community that proclaimed its cultural origins in Palestine. The landscape itself was portrayed as a central part of American cultural genealogy. Audiences learned about America’s cultural past and Thomas’s presentation of Palestine was an existentially-comforting celebration of that heritage.

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>394</sup> Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 21; see also: 18.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 26.



Figure 5. A British soldier stands on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. A local girl sits in the foreground.<sup>396</sup>



Thomas, like Twain and other nineteenth-century travel writers, found the conditions in the Levant to be disparaging. The focal point of this notion was the starving beggar children in the “Holy City.” Harry Chase took a number of photographs of these skinny children swaddled in rags and many were displayed in Thomas’s travelogue. The children were used by Thomas to criticize the governing practices of the Turks. In this case, the criticism was valid as the Turks had commandeered significant food supplies from Palestine and neglected the health of its

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<sup>396</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5”x8” Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.2.1268.24.

residents. Diseases such as Typhus were prevalent.<sup>397</sup> Thomas conveyed the poor health of Jerusalem's children to his audiences:



**Figure 6. Lowell Thomas holding a starving child in Jerusalem.**

(Photograph by Harry Chase, 5"x8" Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.2.1266.143.)

On arriving in Jerusalem we found hundreds of children on the streets who were starving. This was one little girl who was so weak that she couldn't walk. The Turks took very poor care of these children and the old Mohammeden and Jewish civilians so you can imagine what kind of a time these poor people had during the war. But one of the first things that Allenby's men did was to pick these children up off the streets, take them to the hospitals, give them baths, clean clothes, three meals a day and send them to school.

Standing around the knees of Bishop McInnes are

a crowd of the same beggar children we saw a few moments ago dressed in rags. There was one little fellow, not this particular one, but another who had never been in a bed before in his life. The first night as seen as the nurse left the room he immediately got up went over in the corner, squatted down and slept there squatting all night. It took them several weeks to break him of the habit.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Eran Dolev & Louis Lillywhite, *Allenby's Military Medicine: Life and Death World War I Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 102.

<sup>398</sup> Thomas, "With Allenby in Palestine," 30.

The desolate conditions of Jerusalem, juxtaposed with the superior state of society of the West, implied a just mission of expanding American society to aid those in need. The last child described by Thomas inherently was taken to squatting like his natural brethren of the desert. It took caring Westerners weeks to break him of this benighted habit and restore him to civility. Thomas's travelogue made use of the concrete ontological structure of cultural knowledge of the Levant. Within this inflexible framework, to accept the exotic practices of the local inhabitants was to undermine the universal legitimacy and superiority of its defined alterity – American society. Instead, Thomas's presentation took a different route, detailing how, "After the capture of Jerusalem the first civilian relief organization to reach the Holy Land was the American Red Cross. ...Near the Damascus Gate they established a soup kitchen where hundreds of Mohammedan women came every day."<sup>399</sup> Thus, audiences were comforted to know that their country was doing its part to aid the Other in need – reaffirming the legitimacy of that just mission.

The second half of the performance, "With Lawrence in Arabia," was distinct from its predecessor. After a ten minute intermission Thomas invited the audience back into the theater, to "join this camel caravan and journey off to the mysterious land of the Arabian Nights."<sup>400</sup> His depiction of Arabia was that of the social Other – a land of exotic peoples and practices. It was a far off and unknown land, as Thomas boomed, "Very little is known about its interior. We have better maps of the North and South Polar regions than we have of the interior of Arabia. Only a few intrepid travellers [*sic*] have attempted to explore it."<sup>401</sup> Audiences explored the "Arabia" of American cultural knowledge, where the exotic manners and customs that reigned were completely foreign to American society. Elsewhere, Thomas details the Arab village of Khan

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>401</sup> Thomas, "With Lawrence in Arabia," 7; *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia*, Original Script, circa 1919; Lowell Thomas Papers Series 1.25.2.2, Box 501, Folder 4.



Yunis, where, “Before the war very few people visited this town because the inhabitants has a quaint little habit of welcoming visitors by shooting at them from behind palm trees.”<sup>402</sup> By relating the odd practices of Arabia, Thomas attempted to shock and awe the audience – a reassuring process that helped attendees to define their own social location.

The presentation also reaffirmed narratives of cultural development by classifying the inhabitants of Arabia as the stagnated relatives of American cultural ancestors. Audiences learned that, “According to tradition these nomads of Arabia are the descendants of Abraham through his son Ishmael and they have changed very little in the past four thousand years since the time of Abraham.”<sup>403</sup> Contrary to the others that developed civilized society, these people were frozen in time and, in many cases, inherently lacked the capacities to engage with the improvements of the early twentieth century. Thomas informed his audiences that, “One day the Arabs shot down a German plane with their rifles, and when it landed in the desert they ran out and clipped off its wings so that it wouldn’t fly away!”<sup>404</sup> The Arabs of “With Lawrence in Arabia” were childlike and obsessed with small trinkets through which they distinguished rank among themselves. Thomas pronounced that, “These people are much like children, and they are very fond of wrist watches, revolvers and field glasses, so whenever Lawrence would start on an expedition across the desert he would always take two or three camels loaded down with such things to give away as presents.”<sup>405</sup> Audiences were told how these men were uncontrollable wild men who were somehow tamed by the daring Lawrence who had to supervise their use of weapons:

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<sup>402</sup> Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 15.

<sup>403</sup> Thomas, “With Lawrence in Arabia,” 12.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 17, 18.

Every single one of these men regarded himself as a general so you can imagine what kind of a time Lawrence had in Arabia. He gave each man in his army from 50 to 100 rounds of ammunition every day, and they always shot it off whether they were fighting or not. When these men would go into battle they would simply take off their headdress, wrap it about their waists and charge in bald-headed with Lawrence leading them.<sup>406</sup>

Thomas repeatedly relayed his surprise to his spectators that the patchwork army was disciplined – enough even to attack “in regular formation!” It was for this impossible mission, to build an army out of the feuding nomadic Bedouin, that Lawrence was celebrated. Thomas admonished that, “I don’t know of a more hopeless task.”<sup>407</sup>

**Figure 7. Five Bedouin of Emir Faisal’s troops on horseback.<sup>408</sup>**



<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 10, 2.

<sup>408</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5"x8" Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.1.1264.3.

Thomas's travelogue needed a hero and he found one in T. E. Lawrence. A relatively obscure figure after the war, the performances in London drew him immediate fame. Audiences were taught that he was somewhat of an enigma: Lawrence of Arabia was an enlightened poet and archaeologist who abraded with military command yet became master of the desert people and led them to free their land from the harsh yoke of the Turks. As Thomas majestically articulated, "...in spite of all these obstacles this blue-eyed poet of Gaelic ancestry succeeded in accomplishing what no caliph and no sultan had been able to do in over a thousand years. He wiped out the century old blood feuds and built up an army and drove the Turks from Holy Arabia. The Arabs in order to show their appreciation made Lawrence a member of their royal house – a Prince of Mecca, and honorary descendant of the Prophet Mohammed."<sup>409</sup> Thomas's Lawrence of Arabia was a somewhat exaggerated figure, a uniquely brilliant officer who was responsible, with the assistance of Emir Faisal, for the grand successes of the Arab Campaign.

The travelogue also portrayed the land as that of the Arabian Nights, an experience that titillated Western audiences and fulfilled escapist fantasies. Audiences leaned of Auda Abu Tayi, a figure Thomas portrayed as the personification of *One Thousand and One Nights*. As he detailed, "Lawrence's chief lieutenant in Arabia was the old Bedo in the centre of this group. His name is Auda Abu Tayi. He is the fiercest, wittiest and most hospitable old pirate in the Arabian Desert – and the biggest liar east of Suez. He has the reputation of having killed 87 men in hand-to-hand personal combat."<sup>410</sup> Yet the most preeminent example of mysterious fantasizing was Lawrence himself. Following the example of others such as Richard Burton and Bayard Taylor, Lawrence dressed "in the robes of an Oriental Pontentate," in absolute fulfillment of this

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 11.

escapism.<sup>411</sup> The blonde, blue-eyed Bedouin was a medium through which audiences imagined what it was like to explore this land of Arabia where none of the normal social rules apply.

Figure 8. T. E. Lawrence in “Arab costume” on a prayer rug in the desert.<sup>412</sup>



While attendees enjoyed this escape into the mysterious and exotic land, the performance made efforts to comfortingly confirm civilized society as superior. Audiences were also reassured by learning that Westerners innately became leaders in Arabia, as General Allenby was termed, “a conqueror and a prophet.”<sup>413</sup> Lawrence was appointed “the Uncrowned

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>412</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5”x8” Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.1.1262.25.

<sup>413</sup> Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 6.

King of Arabia,” and was the “virtual ruler of the desert.” His role in the Arabian campaign was given precedent over that of the Arab leader Emir Faisal, despite the Lieutenant’s role as a mere liaison and advisor. Thomas also imparted that, “...these Bedouin regarded him as a sort of supernatural being – someone sent down from Heaven to free them from the Turks.”<sup>414</sup> The haggard condition of the Arabs exhibited to audiences that these enlightened men must aid their benighted alterity. This becomes a supreme moral justification for the American and British mission in the First World War, as well as the “liberation of the Holy Land and the war in the land of the Arabian Nights.”<sup>415</sup>

Percy Burton made Thomas’s performances in London a social event. Formal attire was required for audiences who wished to see how Allenby conquered the Holy Land and to anoint a new national hero.<sup>416</sup> The travelogues opened in the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden during the theater offseason. Thomas later conveyed his surprise at the contractual guarantees given to him by Burton and told how the impresario got cold feet soon before the show’s opening and traded half his stake for stock in a new play. Nonetheless, “With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia” was a massive success that surpassed even Burton’s greatest expectations. The run in London was extended multiple times, with performances at Philharmonic Hall, Queen’s Hall and even the capacious Royal Albert Hall. It was claimed that, for the first time anyone could remember, the opera season was delayed for the extension of an offseason performance.<sup>417</sup> Thomas’s performances quickly became a social sensation and its attendees included countless notables from the London social scene, including Queen Mary, the Prince of Wales, Prime Minister David Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Georges

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<sup>414</sup> Thomas, “With Lawrence in Arabia,” 1, 9, 10.

<sup>415</sup> Thomas, “With Allenby in Palestine,” 1.

<sup>416</sup> Lowell Thomas Remembers the Allenby and Lawrence Show (transcript), undated; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.6, Box 505, Folder 7.

<sup>417</sup> Untitled promotional brochures, circa 1929; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.5.3, Box 504, Folder 5.

Clemenceau, Winston Churchill, Sir Johnson Forbes-Robertson, Bernard Shaw, Madame Nellie Melba, Luisa Tetrazzini, Israel Zangwill and the Bishop of Durham. A private performance in Scotland for King George V was canceled only because of a railroad strike. While in London the Thomases brushed shoulders with influential newspapermen John Jacob Astor and Lord Riddell and were neighbors of Rudyard Kipling and Ian Hay. Overall, Thomas estimated that over one million attended the travelogue's 1919-1920 London run, coming from all over the British Empire.<sup>418</sup>

A girl born on a ranch in Hot Springs, South Dakota, Frances Ryan Thomas found herself hosting the most dignified European celebrities. In an interview she remarked on the Royal families of England and Spain and compared the manners of Lloyd George with that of Churchill and Prince Edward. She also declared Greek revolutionary Eleftherios Venizelos, "a nice old gentleman" and Lord Allenby as "the most beautiful man I have ever seen..."<sup>419</sup> Percy Burton wrote of Thomas's immediate success, "He is the first American since Mark Twain to have undertaken a speaking tour of such ambitious proportions, but his success was far greater even than that of his illustrious fellow-countryman."<sup>420</sup> Thomas's influence certainly reached the center of elite British society. David Lloyd George even offered a blurb that was used on advertisements for later performances in Canada, claiming that the travelogue, "taught me more than a year at Oxford."<sup>421</sup> "With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia" was sweeping London while the state of the modern Middle East was in flux. Thomas's opening in August 1919 was merely months after Lloyd George and Clemenceau had met privately to

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<sup>418</sup> Lowell Thomas Remembers the Allenby and Lawrence Show (transcript), undated; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.6, Box 505, Folder 7.

<sup>419</sup> Press releases Book "B": "Mrs. Lowell Thomas Impressions of World Celebrities," circa 1919-1920; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.5.1, Box 502, Folder 34.

<sup>420</sup> United States: Tremont Temple, Boston: "Percy Burton," April 1924; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.5.1, Box 502, Folder 32.

<sup>421</sup> The Carnegie-Thomas Travelogues: Canada brochure, circa 1920; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.5.2, Box 503, Folder 8.



discuss alterations to the Sykes-Picot agreement before the opening of the Versailles Peace Conference. Up until the premier at Covent Garden the figureheads were intensely at odds over the British sustenance of Faisal's government in Syria – in what had been agreed on as a French protectorate. Lloyd George withdrew British support for Faisal, who was featured regularly by Thomas, in September of that year. The status of the Middle East was finalized at the San Remo Conference of April 1920, roughly two months after Thomas took his show home to America.<sup>422</sup>

**Figure 9. Bedouin on horseback, this image was often used to advertise Thomas's performances.**<sup>423</sup>



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<sup>422</sup> Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston; New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 79-82.

<sup>423</sup> Photograph by Harry Chase, 5"x8" Glass Plate Negative, reprinted with permission from Marist College Archives and Special Collections 2.1.1.2.1.1.1263.12.

In the spring of 1920 The Thomases returned to the United States, where Lowell performed at the theaters that refused to return his deposit after the canceled U.S. tour. Successful runs in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. drew a similar effect as in London. As Thomas detailed, "Everybody in Congress came; also the members of the President's cabinet, including men who had played a part in making it all possible in the first place, men like Secretary of War Newton D. Baker."<sup>424</sup> The Prime Minister of Australia invited him to tour Australia and New Zealand during the summer of 1920. Thomas claimed his travelogue grossed over a million dollars in that first year. He stated that, "...I was the first to do a 'platform' tour of the world after Mark Twain and as far as I know there hasn't been one since."<sup>425</sup> On his return journey the Thomases returned through Malaya, Burma and India where Lowell and Harry Chase gathered new material for an additional travelogue that would become "Through Romantic India," a more modest success. Thomas would eventually establish a decades-long career contingent on Americans' fascination with escapism and alterity. He followed attempts at pioneer air travel around the world in the 1920s before settling down in Pawling, New York as a CBS and NBC radio broadcaster and the voice of Fox Movietone News. "Lowell Thomas and the News" broadcasted for 46 years and often featured excerpts from Thomas on his worldwide travels to peculiar places ranging from Tahiti to the South Pole. In 1949 he was invited "Out of this World" to Lhasa in Tibet where he became the first Westerner to film the Dalai Lama and the last visitor before the invasion of Communist China soon after. In the 1950s he produced the "High Adventure with Lowell Thomas" television series where he traveled to exotic places such as New Guinea, the Congo and the Australian Outback. Despite his adventurous forays abroad, Thomas remained firmly entrenched in the social mainstream of American culture. He counted

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<sup>424</sup> Lowell Thomas Remembers the Allenby and Lawrence Show (transcript), undated; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.6, Box 505, Folder 7.

<sup>425</sup> Lowell Thomas Remembers the Allenby and Lawrence Show (transcript), undated; Lowell Thomas Papers, Series 1.25.2.6, Box 505, Folder 7.



Herbert Hoover, Thomas Dewey and Richard Nixon among his friends and maintained membership in many exclusive elite organizations such as the Bohemian Club, the Century Club and the Explorers Club. A man entrenched in modern America's inner circle, Lowell Thomas crafted a long and wildly successful career out of American's defining fascination with Otherness.

The examples of Mark Twain and Lowell Thomas provide more accessible examples of how nineteenth-century Americans negotiated their knowledge structures with social pressures. These biographical cases are helpful to better comprehend the mechanisms of these interrelated relationships. Like most of his peers, Twain took Americans' cultural knowledge of the region that they learned from the study of geography, and projected it onto the physical landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean. He reaffirmed the popular narrative of cultural development that offered the Levant as the birthplace of civilization. In his depiction the local inhabitants were frozen in time and the land was in decline due to that ever-present scourge, idleness. To him, the Levant was a land of filthy cities and despotic rule, thus Twain favored the spread of republican civility. Yet, *Innocents* was unique in one very powerful way: it perceived and discussed the projection of the ontology of the Eastern Mediterranean onto its tangible sibling. Twain confronted the process in the works of his peers and once even questioned the contradiction of seeing greatness and despondency at the same time. Twain wrote that he attempted to forget his pre-learned cultural knowledge. Although *Innocents* deserves the distinction of criticizing the ubiquitous methods of its peers, Twain himself used the landscape to promote Otherness and heritage – thus perpetuating the processes.

Thomas's performances were technological marvels that delighted audiences by showing them images from their communal past they had never seen before. "With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia" reaffirmed the ontology of the Eastern Mediterranean by

providing a simplified juxtaposition of heritage and difference in a two-part performance.

Thomas asked his readers “to recall” the events of Americans’ cultural knowledge – how the landscape of the present matched biblical landmarks. Here Palestine was an exhibit of American self-past: the land of the Hebrews, Apostles and crusaders. Thomas offered Allenby’s capture of the Holy City as the natural recoupment of the ancient birthplace of civility – the expected endpoint of the cultural development narrative. When audiences returned from the intermission they were enthralled with a tale of escapism alongside an enlightened poet who donned a peculiar costume and led a band of childlike Arabs to victory. Thomas reminded his audiences how these Ishmaelites maintained the practices of the patriarchs – providing them with a reification of the Book of Genesis. These passionate wanderers were shepherded by the talents of Lawrence who personified their chance to improve their haggard condition by welcoming the flags of the West.

## **Conclusion**

Lowell Thomas was born in a small house in Woodington, Ohio in 1892 to Harry G. and Harriet Thomas – both schoolteachers at the time. Soon after his father moved the family to Cincinnati, where the elder Thomas began medical school, and subsequently to Kirkman, Iowa, to practice medicine. According to his memoir, young Lowell’s first memories were in Kirkman: A Tornado and the circus parading through. “The circus doesn’t stop in Kirkman – we’re too small,” Thomas remembered. “It [was] passing through on the way to Harlan, the county seat, and Harlan is ten miles away, so far, and over such a bad road, that the only time we ever went

there the buggy got bogged in mud and the horses reared and my father said never again.”<sup>426</sup>

Thomas remembers the little town being quite isolated:

The railroad whistle floats on the summer night, calling, I lie in bed fighting sleep. Everything is still but that whistle, and then the rush of the train as it shoots through the junction. Another day, sitting in the buggy with my father, I watch as the train plunges by, all black roar and billowing smoke. When it has passed and my father clucks the horses forward I ask how far the train goes, weather it goes all the way to Harlan, and he says yes, and beyond that.<sup>427</sup>

It was in that little town in Iowa where Lowell first attended school at the age of five. In 1899 a seven year old Thomas used *Barnes's Elementary Geography* in school – a corporatized version of James Monteith's texts from the American Book Company and a second edition. Thomas signed his name in the front cover—it took two attempts—and doodled an odd creature that may have been a parody of his teacher. The young boy from the isolated small town became a famous world traveler, reaching more places that he could have ever learned about in school. Thomas kept his textbook throughout his entire life and it resided in his library when he died in 1981 at the age of 89. The text is the only schoolbook that remained with his personal papers and one of the few extant items that date from before 1930, around the time Thomas finally moved to his permanent residence in Pawling, New York.

Page 78 of Thomas's copy of *Barnes's Elementary Geography* began the Asia section and featured a large illustration of exotic Asian produce such as poppy, clove, tea, teak, and campmor. Lesson Four began with an anecdote: “1. Two boys went with their father on a voyage to Asia. Before starting from their home in Chicago, their father asked them to point toward Asia: one pointed toward the east, and the other, toward the west, – and both were

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<sup>426</sup> Lowell Thomas, *Good Evening Everybody: From Cripple Creek to Samarkand* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976), 22-23.

<sup>427</sup> Thomas, 23.

right!”<sup>428</sup> This was perhaps a common exercise for young geography students. Thomas and his peers, connected only by print, learned that Asia lied on the far side of the globe from the United States. The boys in the text did voyage to Asia travelling west from San Francisco. In Asia readers learned that Japan and China “contain six times as many inhabitants as the United States,” and that, “People were gathering the leaves of the tea-plant, which were afterward dried and sent in boxes to other countries.” Thomas learned that, in China people apparently fish with large birds, and that the highest mountains were the “Himalay’a” and beyond was the “high plateau of Thibet (*tib’et*).”<sup>429</sup> Persia and Arabia primarily conveyed notions of dry climates and hot deserts. The text also described how man’s ancestors, Adam and Eve, lived in Asia in the Garden of Eden, as “The exact situation of this place is not known, but it is probable that it was among the beautiful valleys between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in Turkey-in-Asia.”<sup>430</sup>

Lesson Five provides more description and the brief section on Asia teaches students two concepts that epitomized American cultural knowledge of the Eastern Mediterranean. Here Thomas learned that:

**Arabia** was, in former years, renowned for its literature, men of learning and libraries. One of the queens of Sheba, in Arabia, became famous from her visit to King Solomon. More than 1,200 years ago, Mohammed, a religious fanatic, declared himself a prophet. Every year, thousands of Mohammedans from all parts of Africa and Asia make long pilgrimages to Mecca, the birth-place of Mohammed. They are numerous in India, Arabia, Turkey, and Africa.<sup>431</sup>

It was this juxtaposition of heritage and Otherness that typified nineteenth-century Americans’ understanding of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Levant of the past was a land of Americans’

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<sup>428</sup> James Monteith, *Barnes’s Elementary Geography* (1885; Reprint, New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: American Book Company, 1896), 78.

<sup>429</sup> Monteith, *Elementary Geography*, 79.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

common heritage, the birthplace of both civilization and religion, yet the Levant of the present was an exotic and debilitated landscape inhabited by a deviant Other. These ideas of past Levant and present Levant were defined primarily by these qualities of included and excluded and thus, every related concept or idea bore the impact of, sameness, otherness, or a garbled mess that conveyed a general uneasiness. To accommodate these competing ideas Americans and their geography texts often offered a narrative of cultural development from genesis in the Eastern Mediterranean to greatest and most improved society on the shores of North America.

Sometimes this narrative of cultural development implied a continuation and spread of progress that could often be seen as a return of civilization to the Levant. However, it is important to note that the primary purpose of Americans' knowledge structure, and cultural narrative that resulted, was not to demean the Eastern "peoples," render them inferior, or be the first step of an inevitable rise of American hegemony. In fact, it was pragmatic.

In nineteenth-century America, geography was a method of fostering the development of these conceptual frameworks in children. As the preface of Thomas's copy of *Barnes's Elementary Geography* stated, "The method adopted in this little book leads the young learner to look at things around him in such a way as to learn something about them and from them; thus developing his reasoning powers, by this individual effort."<sup>432</sup> These systems of rationality enabled young students to address each individual observation, the larger whole of the world, and also to regulate themselves and their functions relative to new experiences. And while existential confidence is a powerful force in its own right, the generalization and profiling necessary for these systems were—to a degree—useful and self-confirming.

We must remember that to nineteenth-century Americans, the world was a fixed—not a relative or plural—abstraction and each piece of knowledge could be built upon another, like

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid., [preface].

concrete, and eventually “flesh out” or complete a significant understanding of how the singular world worked. The ideal goal was a structure, based on valid blocks of knowledge, which encompassed the world and its entirety. The intellectual models that resulted were *useful* for regulating new and unexpected experiences as Americans considered these knowledge blocks to be *essentially* true. Often these concepts could be confirmed in aggregate even though, by the letter, they were invalid, or even absurd. Making judgments based upon skin color, place of birth, religion, or other generalization could be useful even if the physical correlation was erroneous. Additionally, these structures allowed nineteenth-century Americans to locate themselves and their purpose or mission relative to both their peers and Others. This discussing, defining, and fixating faraway lands into taxonomies of knowledge was a process that irrefutably involved oneself and one’s self-purpose.

## **Epilogue**

The potent processes described in this work made a tremendous impact on how the American state conducted itself in international affairs. Nineteenth-century American foreign policy was defined primarily by the Monroe Doctrine and its corollaries. The ambiguous wording of President James Monroe’s 1823 message to Congress left a powerful mark but an unclear purpose. In his synthesis of nineteenth century American diplomatic history, Jay Sexton has argued that the source of the Doctrine was not Monroe, but the numerous statesmen who interpreted and defined its meaning and use through the end of the century. Sexton’s thesis builds upon the work of the eminent William Appleman Williams who summarized American foreign policy as “imperial anticolonialism” – and further detailed how, in practice, these ideas were in no way conflicting. The establishment of hegemony over North America and influence over South America was the means in which nineteenth-century American statesmen used to

combat the colonial power of the British Empire in the Western Hemisphere. As Sexton detailed, “The framers of the 1823 message, as well as later proponents of the Monroe Doctrine concluded that only by controlling the entire Western Hemisphere—and, consequently, the new states of Latin America—would the United States be able to survive, develop, and ultimately replace the empires of the Old World.”<sup>433</sup> He further detailed how this strategy was formulated to address early American anxieties of disintegration and colonization by European powers due to vulnerabilities from within and abroad.

Yet, while centrifugal forces remained potent until the end of the Civil War, advances in transportation and communication throughout the century generally nullified any possibilities of disintegration. Sexton also stressed that the United States emerged in a relatively welcoming geopolitical environment, far from the brunt of imperial endeavors in Africa and Asia. In fact, he argued that, “What is most remarkable about the nineteenth-century conception of threat is the gap between perception and reality.”<sup>434</sup> It appears that in many cases the decisions of American statesmen were driven by their own cultural insecurities rather than global realities.

Nineteenth-century Americans viewed the world through the prism of their own structure of cultural knowledge that gave them a useful yet inherently flawed framework for addressing the world abroad. This ontology was made up of concepts that were often packaged with additional implicit knowledge. This foundation was made of reified imaginings as well as valid information that were both meticulously collected and studied – all of which was offered as the essential nature of world processes. Concepts came packaged with these essential meanings which were weighted and judged accordingly. Sexton notes that the statesmen he discussed “presupposed” geopolitical competition between the negatively reinforcing concepts

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<sup>433</sup> Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 10.

<sup>434</sup> Sexton, 11.

of republic and monarchy.<sup>435</sup> Americans were thus able to draw broad, monolithic cross-cultural conclusions premised on the essentialized knowledge of the ontology. These inferences were treated as truth until challenged by similarly-derived arguments which perpetuated the use or even the necessity of epistemologically structured knowledge in American culture.

The example of the Monroe Doctrine offered by Sexton shows how this useful method for engaging the world abroad became ineffective – giving American statesmen inadequate cultural knowledge of international affairs upon which they premised their policies.<sup>436</sup> The supposition that “republics” and “monarchies” are incompatible antitheses helped to define the American cultural mission and its citizens’ understanding of self (one must remember that these concerns were much closer to home). However, that same conclusion led statesmen to expect Newton-like oppositional forces despite plentiful evidence to the contrary. Sexton has showed how American statesmen saw the ghost of direct British hostility to their south. The decision-makers did not suffer from illogical or irrational thought—nor did they act on erroneous or insufficient observations. Instead, they used a useful conceptual system with ineffective results. This demonstrates the diverse effects of the ontology of knowledge used by nineteenth-century Americans in their conception of the lands beyond their cultural boundaries.

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>436</sup> However, it must be noted that politically, both Monroe’s 1823 statement to Congress and the “Monroe Doctrine” enacted throughout the century were quite effective.



## APPENDIX

Figure 10. Table derived from S. Augustus Mitchell's "States of Society."

|                    | Half-  |           |           |           |             |
|--------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
|                    | Savage | Barbarous | Civilized | Civilized | Enlightened |
| Agriculture        |        | X         | X         | X         | X           |
| Pastoralism        |        | X         | X         | X         | X           |
| Limited Reading    |        | X         | X         | X         | X           |
| Written Language   |        |           | X         | X         | X           |
| Some Law           |        |           | X         | X         | X           |
| Some Trade         |        |           | X         | X         | X           |
| Religion           |        |           | X         | X         | X           |
| Law                |        |           |           | X         | X           |
| Commerce           |        |           |           | X         | X           |
| Manufacturing      |        |           |           | X         | X           |
| Treatment of Women |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Intelligence       |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Enterprise         |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Industry           |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Arts & Sciences    |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Public Works       |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Institutions       |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Transportation     |        |           |           |           | X           |
| Education          |        |           |           |           | X           |

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