From Natural History to Orientalism, The Russell Brothers on the Cusp of Empire

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FROM NATURAL HISTORY TO ORIENTALISM:
THE RUSSELL BROTHERS ON THE CUSP OF EMPIRE

a thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

FROM NATURAL HISTORY TO ORIENTALISM:
THE RUSSELL BROTHERS ON THE CUSP OF EMPIRE

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The British physicians Dr. Alexander Russell M.D., FRS (c.1715 - 1768) and Dr. Patrick Russell M.D., FRS (1726/7 - 1805), both British Levant Company servants, wrote and published two editions in 1756 and 1794, respectively. These brothers resided in Aleppo, Syria, when it was a provincial capital of the Ottoman Empire and recorded their observations and empirical observations in a literary work that would later become the two editions of The Natural History of Aleppo. These editions are vital references for modern scholars concerned with Ottoman Syria, Levantine commercial activity and European presence, and the city of Aleppo. However, these very scholars ignore the significant fact that these two editions were written by two different individuals at two different points in history. Thus, this MA thesis aims to investigate the two editions and illustrate how the variations in these publications were the result of both coexisting and correlated processes that culminated in an eighteenth-century phenomenon of the transformation of British global presence from a commercial power to a modern empire.

Various socio-economic, political, and cultural changes related to the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and the growth of Western, especially British, global hegemony, resulted in a particular attitude towards what became constructed as the “Orient”. This thesis examines the ways in which the interrelated processes of the
rise of modern scientific disciplines, the quest for order, the emergence of the culture of collecting, and the new emphasis on the value of “useful knowledge” rendered the “Orient” a place to be ordered and studied, hence, to be controlled. The eighteenth century witnessed several decisive events that facilitated this phenomenon; with Britain’s victory in the Seven Years’ War (1756 – 1763), particularly at the Battle of Plassey (1757), Britain deviated from its previous position as a commercial power and emerged victorious as an imperial empire.

The project attempts to demonstrate how the Russell Brothers’ book on Aleppo represents a movement from the fascination with natural history, that is, the topography and botany of Aleppo (Alexander Russell’s edition), to an attempt at a comprehensive study of a people, language, and culture (Patrick Russell’s edition). The change in focus and tenor found in Patrick’s edition represents a shift from natural history to ethnographic, a shift that is essentially Orientalist. Though the book is about the relatively marginal city of Aleppo, the shift between the two editions reflects not only the change of the character of British global dominance, which was, after the 1857 Indian Mutiny, officially colonial, but also the very national identity of Britain. This thesis, then, is a study of how Aleppo was conceived and reconceived through the prism of the change of British relationship to India from a commercial entanglement to imperial domination.

The variations between the two editions, then, were a result of changing circumstances and consequent shifting attitudes. I not only attempt to illustrate Britain’s transformation from a mercantile and commercial power to a colonial and imperial empire, but also how the variations of the Russell brothers’ two editions, from a
collection of observations to a scientific contribution to a body of specialized knowledge, were the direct results of the two authors’ transformations from the botanist to the orientalist.
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1600: Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to the Merchants of London granting them monopoly over trade in India, establishing the English East India Company
1623: William Shakespeare publishes Macbeth, with its reference to Aleppo.
1612: The Mughals grant Britain rights to trade and establish factories in India.
1683: The English East India Company establishes a trading post in Vizagapatam, India
1690: John Locke publishes *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690)
1712: First English translation of Arabian Nights published in Britain; Thomas Newcomen invents the steam engine
1715: Alexander Russell is born
1724: Gabriel Fahrenheit invents the thermometer
1726/7: Patrick Russell is born
1740: War ignites over the succession of the Austrian crown. Alexander is hired to be the physician for the Levant Company at Aleppo
1743: Alexander begins writing his edition during his residency in Aleppo
1747: yerliyye Janissaries v. ashraf in Aleppo
1748: The War of Austrian Succession comes to an end
1750: Patrick joins his brother in Aleppo
1753: Patrick is hired by the Levant Company to succeed his brother as physician at Aleppo
1755: Samuel Johnson publishes the first English dictionary
1756: The Seven Years War begins; Alexander publishes his edition of *The Natural History*; Vizagapatam is now exclusively under the control of Britain.
1757: The Battle of Plassey, led by Robert Clive, results in Britain’s victory over the French and their Indian allies
1763: A peace settlement is reached at the Treaty of Hubertusburg ending the Seven Years War; The British East India Company becomes the political agent of the British empire in India
1768: Alexander dies
1771: Patrick returns to London after his residency and begins writing the second edition of *The Natural History*
1775: Conflict between Britain and her North American colonies ignites into the American Revolutionary War
1782: Patrick accompanies his younger brother, appointed administrator of Vizapatam, to India
1783: The North American colonies effectively gain their Independence
1786: John Fitch invents the Steamboat
1789: Patrick returns to London, where he spends his final years writing several books based on his experiences at Aleppo and in India
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INTRODUCTION

Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century

I. The Tale of the Botanist and the Orientalist

In 1740, Dr. Alexander Russell, M.D., FRS (c.1715 – 1768) shortly after his graduation from Medical School at Edinburgh, departed from the shores of his home in London, risked the Barbary Corsairs of the Mediterranean, landed on its eastern coast, traveled eighty miles into the Levant, and finally arrived at his destination: an ancient commercial entrepôt suffering from a plague. He was hired by an international trading conglomerate, known as the British Levant Company, stationed at Aleppo, in Syria, to be the company’s primary physician. His main purpose, besides tending to other British members of the Company, was to investigate the causes of and treatment for the plague scourging the local population – Aleppine locals and European residents alike. In his thirteen years there, he meticulously recorded, starting in 1743, weather patterns by season and month, atmospheric temperatures, along with the symptoms of the disease and the various medical treatments. He was also a naturalist and, more specifically, a botanist, a scientists fascinated with the physiological and structural classification of plants. He recorded and organized the botany of Aleppo and the surrounding region in rudimentary taxonomies. The two professions – that of doctor and botanist – go hand in hand: the plague at Aleppo was a natural threat to the commercial activity of the Levant Company, which would hire an empirical scientist, Alexander, to order and control this threat. Controlling the world consisted of ordering the world and Alexander’s accounts of the plague would better inform European merchants and residents of how to detect
symptoms of the plague, how to avoid it, when it was most present, and the best medical treatments for it.

After his return to his home in London in 1753, Alexander began the process of preparing his work for publication, which was to be “an account of the epidemic diseases at Aleppo, particularly of the Plague, which raged three years in that city during his residence.”1 However, at the recommendation of his close friend John Fothergill (1712 – 1780), a renowned English physician and botanist who he met at university, he wrote an additional section about the city, its inhabitants and their customs and manners. His publication eventually consisted of two parts: the first, was composed of the description of Aleppo and the locals, including the botany, organized in his taxonomies, of the city and the surrounded region; the second part consisted of his research conducted while in the service of the Company at Aleppo, which includes weather patterns and their correlation to symptoms and treatment. The culmination of his writing was published in 1756 titled, The Natural History of Aleppo. Alexander’s publication, written in the Natural Scientific tradition, was “met with an indulgent reception”2 among contemporary Englishmen and intellectuals, including John Pinkerton (1758 – 1826), who praised the book as “one of the most complete pictures of

1 Alexander Russell, The Natural History of Aleppo and Parts Adjacent, Containing a Description of the City, and the Principle Natural Productions in its Neighbourhood; Together with An Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases; particularly of the Plague, with the Methods used by the Europeans for their Preservation (London: 1756), p. v.
Eastern manners extant.”¹ Although Alexander made several other contributions to the Royal and Medical Societies, The Natural History was Alexander’s only major publication.² Alexander lived out his life as the physician head of St. Thomas Hospital in London, a position he held from his election to that post in 1759 until his death of putrid fever in 1768.

Three years after Alexander’s death, Dr. Patrick Russell, M.D., FRS (1726/7 – 1805) who had succeeded his older brother as the Company physician at Aleppo in 1753, started the revision process of The Natural History upon his arrival home in London. Patrick joined his brother at Aleppo in 1750, before receiving his M.D. at Edinburgh, and resided there until he was no longer in the service of the Levant Company in 1771. While in Aleppo, he also complied information for his own work, which would be published in 1791 titled, A Treatise of the Plague, a historical and medical account of the disease at Aleppo, which became one of Patrick’s most famous publications.³ However, he took on the task of revising the texts as the fulfillment of a brother’s dying wish and continued to work on what would become the second edition of The Natural History until its publication in 1794, during which he accompanied his

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² See Appendix for a list of Alexander Russell’s publications.

³ Patrick Russell, A Treatise of the Plague: Containing an Historical Journal, and Medical Account of the Plague at Aleppo in the years 1760, 1761, 1762 (London, 1791).
younger brother Claud, appointed administrator of Vizagapatam, an English trading port in the Carnatic, for the British East India Company, arriving in India in 1782.¹

Patrick originally traveled to India to tend to his brother’s failing health, but shortly after his arrival, his presence in India and his status as highly knowledgeable quickly provided new opportunities for him and he was appointed botanist and naturalist to the British East India Company, succeeding Johann Gerhard König (1728 – 1785), with whom he was close friends with, in 1785.² During his seven-year residency, Patrick continued to work on the revision for The Natural History, focusing exclusively on his research, rarely intermingling with the native population and residents has he had in Aleppo. He did correspond regularly with other scholars, including Sir Joseph Banks (1743 – 1820), an English naturalist and botanist and one of the “paradigmatic figures of the Industrial Enlightenment,” Dr. John Hunter (1728 – 1793), a Scottish surgeon, and William Hunter (1718 – 1783), a Scottish anatomist and physician.³ He communicated regularly with these individuals, along with König, and relied on their

¹ Vizagapatam, a coastal city located on the Carnatic strip in East India between Madras and Calcutta on the Bay of Bengal, became host to the English East India Company in 1683 and by 1756, the year of Alexander’s publication, the territory was exclusively under British control, although the Dutch East India Company and Portugal were very interested in a trade monopoly at this port, ultimately failing due to Britain rising to be a more powerful country. The craftsmen of Vizagapatam created western-style furniture pieces in the traditional Indian Ivory, fusing indigenous techniques with Western aesthetics, that was increasingly popular in eighteenth-century English society. The decoration was essentially Mughal, but adapted to western styles. Refer to Amin Jaffar, Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe: 1500 – 1800 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004), especially p. 260.

² Johann Gerhard König was a German botanist, physician, and private pupil of Carl Linnaeus. He worked in India from 1773 until his death, first as a naturalist for the Nawab of Arcot and then for the British East India Company. See Maurits H. Van Den Boogert, “Patrick Russell and the Republic of Letters in Aleppo” in Alastair Hamilton, ed., The Republic of Letters and the Levant (Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 227-228.

³ Joel Mokyr, The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 52. Also refer to
assistance during his revision of The Natural History. 1 Patrick’s was originally interested in the ordering and collection of specimens of India’s botany, but broadened his study to include fishes and snakes. He spent the last few years in India investigating antidotes for poisonous snakebites. 2 The culmination of his work on snakebites and their antidotes, titled An Account of the Indian Serpents collected on the Coast of Coromandel was published after he returned to London in 1789. 3 He spent his final fifteen years of his life writing and publishing several books based on his experiences at Aleppo and in India, including The Natural History. 4

Patrick’s edition was a greatly expanded version of his brother’s original, consisting of two volumes. The first volume was devoted to the description of the city and its inhabitants, including chapters on topics such as topographical descriptions, gardens, inhabitants, the Turkish harem, and government. In the second volume, Patrick first continued a more detailed discussion of the inhabitants in Aleppo, careful to distinguish between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish natives and European residents and merchants. The last part of the second volume focused on the natural history, – quadrupeds, birds, fishes, insects, reptiles, plants – antiques, weather, the plague and

1 For example, Patrick asked William Hunter to proofread the medical portion of his revised The Natural History. Refer to Boogert, “Republic of Letters,” p. 227.
2 Boogert, Republic of Letters, p. 228.
3 Patrick Russell, An Account of the Indian Serpents collected on the Coast of Coromandel, (London: George Nicol, 1794). One of the snakes Patrick describes in this work is still known today as vipera russelli (Russell’s viper) and is often regarded as a herpetologist, not a botanist or naturalists, who has made many important medical contributions towards the study snakebites and their antidotes. See B.J. Hawgood, “The Life and Viper of Dr. Patrick Russell, M.D. F.R.S (1727-1805): Physician and Naturalist” in Toxicon, vol. 32 (Elsevier Ltd., 1994), pp. 1295-304.
other diseases in general. Together, the two versions, referenced often as a single composition, remain the “only full reference to Aleppo and the surroundings in the eighteenth century,” \(^1\) describing the city, its nature, its topography and ethnography. Among the texts are engravings of people, nature, and a cartographical plan of the city. Although Aleppo had been described by other scholars, such as Leonhard Rauwolf (1535/40 – 1596) and Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1658 – 1708), both botanists, “never before had so complete a description of the city and its environs been published.” \(^2\) In fact, the two editions were unlike any other piece of literature published about the Levant and Middle East during the eighteenth century.

The Russell brothers, educated at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland when the city was a major cultural center and where “British concepts of usefulness involved both practical uses and moral and intellectual improvement of humanity,” \(^3\) were part of an intellectual body of scholars who followed the Natural Scientific philosophy behind the Enlightenment, in which its scholars believed in an empirical approach to the physical environment for the purpose of scientifically and objectively ordering, cataloguing, and eventually controlling the natural and chaotic world. \(^4\) The detached observer, who was considered one to be exempt, could, through observation and sensory experience, ultimately determine the true causes of natural events. \(^4\) Both

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2 Boogert, “Republic of Letters,” p. 224. Leonhard Rauwolf and Joseph Pitton de Tournefort were both botanist who traveled through the Levant.
3 Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 35.
Alexander and Patrick, similarly to other scholars and travelers during this time, were interested in the geographical and topographical diversity, climate differences, natural history, and cultural variations of Middle Eastern communities, devoting large portions of their editions to discuss these four topics. However, the differences in the versions are a clear indication of the evolving scholar of Enlightenment.

The Russell brothers’ versions illuminate the progress of Enlightenment theories in the span of the forty years between the publications of the two editions. By the time Patrick published the second edition, the study of Natural History and foreign societies was breaking down into separate disciplines, such as the division of labor in the task of achieving total knowledge of the natural world provided many more avenues through which scholars could endeavor. Alexander was a naturalist, a scholar of Natural History in the broadest sense. His edition consisted of a wide range of topics, but lacked depths. Patrick was not only a naturalist, but also an Arabist, a herpetologist, an ethnographer of Aleppine society, a scholar of many specific disciplines. Above all, he was an orientalist, a scholar of the “Orient,” in which the many disciplinary fields he studied – linguistics, ethnography, cartography, and, in hindsight, anthropology – contributed to the shaping of the image of the “Orient” and European attitudes towards it.

In the eighteenth century, Patrick’s edition was a book of a new genre: scientific principles based on Enlightenment theories were applied to report on foreign territories and their inhabitants. Although Patrick intended to “assimilate [these changes] as nearly as possible with the ideas of the Author,” his revision had new scholarly ambition, consisting of massive additions and several corrections to the original text, and the
intellectual and physical world had changed during its construction. The corrections, additions, and divisions of opinion printed in the two editions is evidence of the maturity of the European state of mind during a time of great socio-economic, political, and cultural changes relating to the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and the growth of Western European, particularly British, global hegemony. The Russell brothers’ editions act as the main catalyst for the investigation into Britain’s transformation from a mercantile power to an imperial empire.

Recently, more scholars have become increasingly interested in the investigation of Alexander Russell’s *The Natural History of Aleppo*. While for years, his text was used as a resource and reference for modern historians writing about Ottoman Syria, the city of Aleppo, or Levantine commercial activity, it is only in the last decade that scholars have begun to consider exactly what this text can tell us as an historical document in its own right. However, these scholars continue to overlook one major piece of information: *The Natural History* was written in two editions, with two distinct authors, during two different points in history. Not only had the intellectual world progressed from natural history – the study and ordering of the natural environment – to Orientalism – the study and ordering of “Oriental,” i.e. Middle Eastern, societies, but the physical world also shifted and was reorganized as Western Europe, particularly Britain, emerged as a global hegemony. Even Aleppo’s position within this framework was irrevocably altered and significantly different when Alexander and Patrick resided in the city. These socio-economic, political, and cultural changes resulted in the growth of particular and

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evolving attitudes towards what became constructed as the “Orient.” These editions and their authorship – the views expressed in them and the presentations they convey – are often used interchangeably, paying little attention to the different ethos that shaped the construction of these two editions.\(^1\) However, it is exactly in the investigation of the differences in these two editions that we discover exactly how the variations were the result of an ongoing global economic, political, and cultural phenomenon of transformation in the eighteenth century.

**II. Physical and Intellectual Change**

*European International Commerce with the Ottomans*

The Ottoman Empire was a steadily expanding and formidable Islamic presence for Western Europeans, having penetrated into the Mediterranean and Christian-European world after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Ottoman expansion from 1453 to 1683 into a prominent and formidable power in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean brought those territories and their overland routes under the control of the Ottomans. Although historically, Europe and Islamic empires rarely fostered positive and peaceful relationships and the legacies of the crusades still loomed large, the Ottoman conquest of the whole eastern Mediterranean and its overland commercial routes, brought stability and security to the territories under Ottoman control. While Ottoman conquest and authority over these historical commercial land

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\(^1\) Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516 – 1800* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2008) often referred to the editions for her work. Although Anita Damiani acknowledge the differences in the two editions at the start of her chapter, she then fails to distinguish the information produced from the two editions. See Anita Damiani, *Enlightened Observers: British Travellers to the Near East, 1715 – 1850* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1979), especially pp. 133-170.
routes prompted European countries to seek other, seaborne routes, for access to Asian goods, it also resulted in the establishment of new commercial relationships between European countries and the Ottomans. In the sixteenth century, since there was an increasing demand for Middle Eastern and especially Asian commodities and since Portugal held a monopoly over the seaborne route to India, European merchants decided to invest in and capitalize on trade with Ottoman ports on the Mediterranean and commercial land routes.\(^1\) To do so, they would need the permission of both their sovereign and the Ottoman Empire.

In the sixteenth century was a period of renewing commercial relations, as European merchants were able to establish residential trading communities, or “factories,” at major trading ports throughout Ottoman territories. The merchants of Genoa and Venice were the first to negotiate political and commercial agreements, capitulations, with the Ottoman Empire. These capitulations, granted Italian merchants certain rights of domicile and commerce in Istanbul and other eastern Mediterranean Ottoman ports in exchange for tariffs against commodities traded. These capitulations would also be granted to France in 1569, England in 1581, and the Netherlands (1600),

\(^1\) Most of the explorers of this period of unprecedented voyages into the horizon, such as Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506), shared the same goal: to reach India. There was great competition between European countries to reach India first, as to do so would be to monopolize on its markets and commodities. It was eventually the Portuguese who, in 1498, were the first European country to reach the shores of India by sea, when Vasco de Gama (1460/9 – 1524) circumvented the land routes by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. The Portuguese, since it was they who discovered the Cape route, monopolized this seaborne route until the seventeenth century when it was successfully challenged by the Dutch and English. Refer to Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, vol. 5, *The New Cambridge History of India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 23-71.
the principle Atlantic seaboard nations. Since the Portuguese monopolized the seaborne route to India, European merchants began to slowly push their ventures into Ottoman territories and major cities along land routes to Asia. Aleppo, historically a critical emporium for regional and international trade, was an ideal Syrian city in which to establish one of these European factories.

The Ottomans, after extensive conquests in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, conquered Aleppo in 1516. Although not accessible by port, as Istanbul and Cairo were, both of which monopolized sea trade in the Mediterranean, Aleppo was geographically and historically a pivotal site for a commercial center, functioning as a desert “port city.” The Ottomans inherited Aleppo’s legacy as an important commercial hub, which connected Mediterranean ports, including Antioch and Iskenderun, with caravan routes to the Euphrates, Basra, Persia, and India via the Great Desert Route, an extensive interconnected network of trade routes. The success of Aleppo in the Ottoman Empire, while undeniably significant in facilitating international trade with Europe, was not exclusively the result of European investments.

Aleppo was very much an Ottoman commercial entrepôt, facilitating Ottoman regional trade. The Ottomans capitalized on Aleppo’s commercial infrastructure,

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2 The addition of Syria into the Ottoman Empire signaled the first territorial conquest in which the Sunni-Ottomans found themselves ruling over another Sunni-Muslim population.
3 Bruce Masters, “Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire’s Caravan City,” in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), p. 19. Aleppo, one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, having human settlement as early as the eleventh millennium B.C., occupied a strategic trading point midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates and has a long commercial history.
4 Iskenderun, also known as Scanderoon, is modern day Alexandretta.
through charitable endowments, and its promise of economic prosperity, becoming the Ottoman Empire’s “caravan city.”¹ The city became the administrative capital of the new Ottoman Syrian province and brought much wealth to the empire as it facilitated the exchange of eastern goods and acted as the catalyst for East-West contact so desired by Europeans. Thus, the renewal of European and Ottoman commercial contacts resulted in the revival of the Great Desert Route, with Aleppo as one of its main stations, by travelers and merchants. The British establishment of the Levant Company at Aleppo in 1581 was not only an attempt for Elizabethan merchants to promptly dominate the city’s market over its European competition, but also to have access to Asian commodities and to participate in eastern commerce.

In 1575, Sir Edward Osborne and Richard Staper, two prominent English merchants, sent agents to Constantinople to prepare the way for re-establishing English Trade with the Levant on a more permanent and effectual basis. William Harborne, acting as Sir Edward’s factor, was able to obtain from the Sultan Murah III a charter of capitulation, in 1580, conferring ample privileges upon English merchants. To reward Sir Edward Osborne and Richard Staper for their success in opening new markets for English foreign trade, Queen Elizabeth I granted them, along with ten other merchants, a monopoly of English trade for a term of seven years. This group of merchants composed of the Levant Company, which quickly had full power over all

¹ For an example of an Ottoman charitable endowment, Mehmed Pasha established a waqf, charitable endowment, for the caravanserai, which became the city's largest commercial edifice and served as the residence for many European merchants and residents, including the Russell brothers, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These waqfs were essential for the facilitation of commerce in Aleppo. See Masters, “Caravan City,” p. 26. Masters also coined the term, “caravan city” as I use it in the sentence above.
English subjects trading in Turkey, regulating and governing English activities in the
Ottoman Empire.\(^1\) It is this Company that would hire Alexander and Patrick Russell to
be its physicians in 1740 and 1753 respectively and appoint them to the task of
investigating into the plague at Aleppo.

The role of the Levant Company and Aleppo changed, however, when Britain,
later the Netherlands and the French, was finally able to successfully challenge the
Portuguese monopolies over vital coastal ports in India in the seventeenth century.
Afraid that the Dutch domination over the spice market in northwestern Europe
encouraged a group of London merchants to apply for a monopoly charter for the East
India trade. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted this charter to the Company of
Merchants of London trading in the East Indies (Indonesia), thus founding the English
East India Company.\(^2\) The East India Company gained an advantage over other
European competitors when, in 1612, the Mughal Empire, ruling the territories in India,
granted Britain rights to trade and establish “factories,” or European trading
communities, in the region and by the eighteenth century, the Company had become the
largest commercial operation among the European powers, stretching from Basra on the
Persian Gulf to Bencoolen (Bengkulu) in Sumatra, an island in western Indonesia.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Hachicho, “English Travel Books,” p. 57.

\(^2\) Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise*, pp. 76-78.

\(^3\) Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750 – 1850* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 24. Although the Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish roots in India Britain defeated the Portuguese in the Battle of Swally in 1612. In 1664, French finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert launched the French equivalent of the English East India Company. The French obtained a few port cities in India and were able to expand their trade, but by 1740, “France’s company sales were only half of those of the English East India Company.” Refer to Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise*, especially pp. 77-84.
At the foundation of the Levant Company, trade and commercial polices were governed by the Ottomans, whose proximity to Europe and presence in the Mediterranean allowed for the Ottomans to dictate and dominate the flow of commercial goods and markets. Shari’ā, or Islamic, Law dictated Ottoman commercial policies. However, Britain, and Europe, was firmly rooted in mercantilist principles that greatly contradicted and continually competed with Ottoman Islamic commercial policies. The European theories of mercantilism, an ideology that directed European policies, attitudes, and mindsets, were essentially justifications for rent-seeking.\(^1\) During the fifteenth and sixteenth century, many of the first European commercial companies, such as the “Merchant Adventurers Company” and eventually the Levant and East India Company, had rent-seeking ambitions and, as illustrated above, and aimed to capture special monopoly privileges with the Ottoman and Mughal empires.

The ideology of mercantilism and the policies it enforced were particularly aggressive and inherently nationalistic; European powers, driven by this zero-sum theory that is mercantilism and competing for commercial influence in Mughal and Ottoman territories, aimed to improve its position at another’s expense. If Britain were to control commercial markets through exclusive trading rights, other European countries, and even the Ottoman and Mughal empires who played hosts for these trading companies, could only be a subordinate and secondary participant in world economy. In the mercantilist was of thinking, wealth generated power, because it built

\(^1\) Rent-seeking involved the process in which an individual or corporation would gain economic prosperity through manipulation, corruption, and, sometimes oppressive domination, rather than engage in economically productive activities. Refer to Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, p. 7.
ships, while it also was believed that power generated wealth, since military strength could force competitors out of markets.¹ Competition between European countries reinforced the Western ideology of mercantilism, which led to protectionists, and eventually exploitive policies. Mercantilism, then, was the driving force for the foundation of these trading companies, the ideology by which most merchants and companies conducted trade in the Middle East and Asia, and ultimately a major facilitator of imperialism. As this was the perspective of all European countries, mercantilism encouraged aggressive strives for European countries to establish their footholds in desirable markets at the expense of their competition, and eventually, their commercial partners – the Ottoman and Mughal empires.

Consequently, Britain’s establishment of the British Levant Company in 1581 at Aleppo and the British East India Company in 1600 was not only a response to growing demand for eastern commercial goods, but also a strategic political attempt to gain exclusive commercial rights to trade within these regions over her European competitors, particularly France. The establishments of such companies resulted in permanent diplomatic and commercial contacts between the Ottoman Empire and Europe. Company members, consisting of residents and merchants, lived within these trading communities as foreign nationals protected by extraterritorial privilege guaranteed by the agreements made between their government and the Ottoman

¹ Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 64. The theory, for example, went something like this: Britain believed that if its ancient rival, France, obtained the exclusive rights to trade within prominent international markets, Britain would have lost those markets, even though, on a very practical level, they were never “British,” nor “European” for that matter, to begin with.
sultan.\textsuperscript{1} Although by 1750, as Britain was increasingly aiming to dominate direct trade with the East Indies, the Levant Company and particularly the city of Aleppo experienced commercial decline.

Furthermore, although Islamic policies governed early international commerce between European countries and Islamic empires, with the reorganization of world power structures and amidst the changing commercial alignments in the eighteenth century, as Britain achieved global ascendency, trading activities in the Mediterranean and the policies that governed commercial transactions were increasingly determined by the theories of mercantilism. Although previously, commercial activity on the Mediterranean Sea was predominately controlled by the Ottomans, the roles were steadily reversing as the British Empire began to be born as a result of late seventeenth and eighteenth century phenomenon. In the span of two centuries, British presence in the Middle East would transition from traveling guest, to semi-permanent resident, to colonizers and eventually imperial rulers.

\textit{European Competition, Physical Change, and National Identity}

The establishment of European trading companies on foreign territories, although not national corporations, were inherently nationalistic. At their foundations, European trading companies competed as independent corporations and factories. The Levant Company competed against the English East India Company, and vice versa, in the same way it competed against the French and Dutch trading companies. The English East India Company even attempted to siphon off the Levant Company’s pan-Iranian

\textsuperscript{1} Prakash, \textit{European Commercial Enterprise}, pp. 72-81.
trade, by shipping the product directly to London from the Persian Gulf at lower costs.\textsuperscript{1} Although these trading companies had national affiliations and interests, they were not national corporations. However, the identity of company and country began to emerge as a single composite identity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when “trade wars,” due to competition, resulted in national responses to the atrocities committed during violent altercations between European trading companies. Continued competition among Britain, France, and other European powers ignited into conflict, as these countries battled for political and commercial dominance of territories, markets, and commercial ports in India, and escalated in the eighteenth century.

At the establishment of these trading factories, there was a mutual relationship between country and company; Britain’s political success globally provided access to new markets and the company’s commercial prominence brought wealth for the country. However, until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the conduct of business was essentially a corporate concern, whose commercial regulations laid outside the purview of the British crown.\textsuperscript{2} As mercantilism led to aggressive competition between companies, as they combat against each other for commercial monopolies over critical markets, European governments became involved to protect the political

\textsuperscript{1} James Mather, \textit{Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 202. To the peril of the Levant Company, such a bypass envisaged by the East India Company was actively being promoted by the East India Company itself by the complaints of the textile manufacturers and the predilections of the mercantilists, sent pamphlets of grievances to the King in 1681. However, the King’s favor in the English East India Company resulted in its eventual victory. See Mather, \textit{Pasha}, pp. 201-205.

\textsuperscript{2} Rhoads Murphy, \textit{Studies on Ottoman Society and Culture, 16th – 18th Centuries} (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), p. 10. Although not national corporations these companies did not erupt in violent trade wars between other trading companies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Jasanoff, \textit{Edge of Empire}, pp. 25-26.
authority they gained at the expense of others. Commercial policies for sea trade were based on the belief that a strong naval presence supported commerce and the British navy was actively involved in providing a secure environment for long-distance trade, clearing the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters of pirates and privateers.¹ Such fusion between company and country was especially poignant during the Carnatic Wars, Seven Years’ War, and Battle of Plassey in the eighteenth century.

The East Indian Company’s involvement, given the right to a monopoly to trade, with India started off with its participation as customers and commercial carriers through partnerships between company officials and Indian merchants and was a “prosperous and respectable commercial and financial cooperation.”² Until this period, the East India Company’s role focused on trade and commercial ties, but the weakening and decline of the Mughals and the Ottoman empire’s increasingly inability to dictate the conduct of trade on their own territories as the western ideology of mercantilism began to dominate international commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, set the stage for confrontation between competing countries, particularly France and Britain, and the eventual rise of Britain’s “imperial sun.”

The rivalry and competition between Britain and France, as a result of mercantilist protectionist measures, climaxed during the eighteenth century in several wars that dramatically reorganized the political surface of the world. Since the 1600s, Britain’s competition with France, which was to become one of the strongest powers in

¹ Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, pp. 157-158.
Europe under the Sun King, Louis XIV (1638 – 1715), climaxed in the eighteenth century.\(^1\) In the 1740s, 50s, and 60s, France and Britain fought in the Carnatic Wars and the Seven Years War, two wars which would, in the mid- and late-eighteenth century, dramatically change the role of the English East India Company in India.\(^2\) The Carnatic Wars were a series of battles fought between 1746 and 1763 for the control of the trading ports along the coastal strip of eastern India. The decline of the Mughal Empire acted as a catalyst in which these countries could, and did, seek to promptly exert total colonial influence through imperial aggression.\(^3\) The Seven Years’ War (1757 – 1763) was a continuation of French and British conflict in India, which effectively came to an end after British victory at the Third Carnatic War.\(^4\) The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 officially ended French ambitions for establishing a French-Indian empire; Britain was now the dominant foreign power in India.

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\(^1\) Under Louis XIV’s reign, one of the longest in French history, France was stabilized and became one of the strongest powers in Europe as a result of his absolute monarchy. He extended France’s eastern borders at the expense of the Habsburgs and then, with the War of Spanish Succession between 1701 and 1714, he secured the Spanish throne for his grandson. Furthermore, he strengthened France through commerce and trade, ordaining new industries and encouraging manufacturers and inventors. However, French defeat of the Seven Years’ War was great and, consequently, their successes always remained interior to Britain’s. Refer to William F. Church, ed., *The Greatness of Louis XIV* (London: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972).

\(^2\) Also during this time, the British and French were engaged in war across the Atlantic for control of North American colonies. This war is known as the French and Indian War (1754 – 1763) and was part of the worldwide conflict for colonial control through imperial aggression. Britain’s victory ultimately led to massive land gains of French colonies, particularly Canada and Acadia, and changed the economic, political, and social dynamics of European international commerce. Refer to Kitchen, *British Empire*, pp. 3-8.

\(^3\) The Mughals started a steady decline as early as 1707, a date marked by the death of Aurangzib, the sixth Mughal emperor, and the end of the empire’s “classical period.” After which, the Mughals were greatly weakened by external wards, local revolts, religious intolerance, and eventually British conquest and colonialism. Refer to John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, vol. 5, *The New Cambridge History of India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 253-281.

The Battle of Plassey resulted in a resurgence of French-British conflict and marked the beginning of the Seven Years’ War. During this battle, East India Company troops, consisting of Britons and sepoys, native Indian soldiers in the service of Britain, defeated the Nawabs of Bengal and their French allies. Led by Robert Clive (1725 – 1774), an East India Company clerk and the legendary hero who led this British troops to victory, Britain’s victory at Plassey decisively dislodging the Mughal power structure and gained military and political dominance over a territory larger than Britain itself. British colonialism and imperialism founds its origin at Britain’s triumph at Plassey, since it was after this battle that “the imperial sun had risen, and seemed unlikely to set.”1 The victory set into motion a new age in which the East India Company would act as the political agent in India; the rise of company correlated to the rise of empire. The East Indian Company would continue to be the agent through which Britain would exert its political control until the Indian Mutiny of 1857, one of the most important uprisings during British colonization of India.

The competition between European countries, driven by mercantilism and resulting in these long wars and massive territorial gains and losses between these countries and the eastern Islamic empires reorganized the physical and political world that world informed world attitudes and shaped national identities. With Britain’s victory, the country’s relationship with India was no longer merely a commercial and mercantile partnership, but was now a relationship of dominance and dependence. Consequently, new conceptions of national and self identity arose as the global and

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1 Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p. 6.
national context from which people understood themselves was reshaped. During the eighteenth century, “many Britons had come to see the empire as a fundamental part of what Britain itself was about, a key component of national identity.”\(^1\) Alexander and especially Patrick were two Britons who would have been influenced by the events of the eighteenth century and the emergence of British ascendancy and national identity.

Since Alexander and Patrick resided in Aleppo before and after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the birth of British colonialism, their different viewpoints, drastically different as a result of these eighteenth century events and the growth of British global hegemony, greatly impacted the construction of the two editions. The different viewpoints represent the progression of the physical, intellectual, and technological transformations of the eighteenth century in the forty years between the constructions and publications of the two editions. Such transformations are evident not only in Alexander and Patrick’s transition from the naturalist to the orientalists, but also in the intellectual ascendancy of European authority that emerges with political domination.

These physical – socio-economic, political, and cultural – changes in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries related to coinciding intellectual and technological changes as a result of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. In the span of two centuries, British presence in the Middle East would transition from traveling guest, to semi-permanent resident, to colonizers and eventually imperial rulers.

\(^1\) Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p. 6. Britain’s rise to an imperial power was felt nationally as well as globally, without doubt greatly harming the French national psyche. Napoleon Bonaparte tried to repair some of France’s injured national ego when he attempted to establish a presence in the Middle East, putting France’s mark between Britain and India, by invading Egypt in 1798.
Intellectual and Technological Change

The late seventeenth and eighteenth century was dominated primarily by the pursuit of inquiry that stimulated and promoted eighteenth century socio-economic, political, and cultural transformation. On the one hand, the transformation was in the individual’s state of mind, facilitated by the growth of Enlightenment theories. These theories began to emerge at the end of the seventeenth century, in which the belief that empirical investigation, as oppose to the acceptance of innate voices of authority, particularly religious authorities, offered a new way to view the world. On the other hand, technological changes were reinforced by industrial growth and the Enlightenment theories that facilitated it; empirical research, the collection of scientific data, and the dissemination of this information provided accelerating opportunities for scholars and scientists to continually reinvent and innovate the experiments and ideas of other scholars and scientists.

Enlightenment theories, at the heart of which was empirical investigation, appeared in a European, not exclusively a British, context and provided the tools with which European scholars and scientists could order and control the natural and chaotic world. Scholars in the eighteenth century, such as Alexander and Patrick Russell, were fascinated with the discovery and ordering of their natural environments. These contemporary scholars – naturalists, botanists, orienalist, Arabists – and their publications mark the, “beginning of scientific methodological recording based on the ideal that Natural Scientists could discover the truth about how the world operated
through empirical investigation.”¹ The theories of Enlightenment, pioneered by philosophers such as John Locke (1632 – 1704), David Hume (1711 – 1776), and Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), augmented industrial growth in the collection of empirical information of and to which others could easily comprehend and contribute.² Central to the acquisition of knowledge and approach to the world was the use of impersonal efficiency for collecting precision. Since religious organizations and the acceptance of innate characteristics given by God had historically governed man’s thought, reason, and approach to the world, the introduction of a new empirical method for understanding the world lacked, ideally, the biases and prejudices that arises from religion. Thus, the information collected from empirical observation resulted in a body of useful knowledge.

Useful knowledge was the collection and dissemination of natural phenomena and regularities that had the potential to impact European societies, both practically, for technological progress, and intellectually, for humanity’s progress, and it is on such

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² John Locke was an English philosopher, physician, and is often considered the first British empiricist. His work greatly influenced the development of epistemology and political philosophy. Furthermore, his “theory of mind” is commonly praised as the origin of conception of identity and self. His theories greatly impacted other Enlightenment thinkers, such as David Hume, a Scottish philosopher, economist, historian and empiricist, and Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, considered to be the last of the Enlightenment thinkers. Marshall Hodgson titles this European process of change “The Great Western Transmutation;” this change culminated in the Industrial Revolution and allowed for European powers to obtain vast social and political power, imposing their will on most of the world. See, Marshall Hodgson “The Great Western Transmutation,” in Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) for more on how the Industrial Revolution resulted in the complete overhaul of agrarian societies into a technological and industrious one.
knowledge that other scholars could expand.¹ The scholar’s purpose in collecting information was not only to describe the world, but also to reform and improve it, by supplying society – fellow scholars, merchants, or the general public – with the tools necessary for their technological, medical, commercial, or travel pursuits. Alexander’s and Patrick’s editions were both part of the body of Enlightenment literature that collected and distributed useful knowledge for the purpose of facilitating commercial trade through the control of natural threats – such as the plague at Aleppo and snakebites in India. Enlightenment was not simply about mental expansion, but perfection.

The beliefs and theories of the Enlightenment interacted with technological advances and institutional changes. Not only did the empirical collection of information provide a standard for which one could expand, but the movement from knowledge of nature to technology was also the movement from practice to theory.² The knowledge of natural elements and a greater comprehension of the chemical relationships in nature led to the technological discovery the mercury thermometer by Gabriel Fahrenheit (1686 – 1736) in 1724. This new technological devise was employed by Alexander to more accurately investigate into the correlation between atmospheric temperature and disease in Aleppo. Such a tool, as Alexander stated, was far more effective and precise than the barometer that he used before the introduction of the thermometer in Aleppo.³

¹ Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, p. 35.
² Ibid., p. 9.
Intellectual and technological investments were being used so others may institutionalize and build on them further.

*Intellectual and Technological Impact on Commerce and Company*  
*In Europe and the Islamic empires*

European interests in India were not merely for the acquisition of eastern commodities. India’s raw resources, including iron, copper, and coal, were essential to the Industrial Revolution in Europe, since it was from these materials that machines would be built and powered. Controlling certain Indian markets meant more access to these raw materials and more technological advancement. Consequently, India’s resources and markets were critical for technological progress, commercial presence, and political superiority. Industrious innovations, and the Enlightenment theories of empirical research that facilitated these innovations, improved naval and shipping manufacturing and the use of certain tools, such as the sextant, invented by John Campbell (1720 – 1790) in 1757, which allowed for quicker and easier navigation through the Atlantic and Mediterranean waters.

Enlightenment theories also refuted the beliefs established in mercantilism, offering new approaches to political economics. The theories of Adam Smith (1723 – 1790), a Scottish moral philosopher and pioneer of political economics, whose two major works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) established the modus operandi for modern economics.¹

The intellectual and technological phenomenon of the eighteenth century not only impacted the theories that governed international commercial policies, but also

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¹ Ferguson, *Scottish Nation*, p. 118.
facilitated international trade and the production of commercial goods. Furthermore, the demand for eastern silks corresponded with the technological improvements of textile machinery, in which power-driven machinery replaced handwork and large factories, buildings that housed these machines and the workers who managed them, replaced guilds. These quick, cheap, and efficient industrial methods in Europe effectively ousted the Ottoman craft industries based on guilds.

_{Eighteenth Century Literature}_

The re-awakening of Europe to the importance of Asia in the fifteenth century, evident in the countless attempts of European countries took to reach the shores of India, and the Portuguese monopoly of sea trade with India produced an era of venturesome discoveries by explorers via Ottoman territories into Asia. Such exploration and traveling in the Middle East and Asia substantially increased the knowledge of these regions and the inhabitants who resided there. Enlightenment theories of empirical investigation for ordering and collecting the world provided a framework within which the European who was now in regular contact with societies so externally different from himself could make sense of the societies and the world. Man’s quest for knowledge sent him across distant foreign lands, oftentimes at his own expense and risk, and back home where he informed the world of his observations. There was more cultural contact between different societies and these encounters motivated man to find ways to understand these societies and their increasingly diverse world. This period was a period when maps became more comprehensive and accurate; linguistic expertise developed and there was a “serious attempt to present the customs
and manners of alien peoples as something more than a string of anecdotes.”¹

Commercial routes were expanding outside of the Mediterranean network and into the Atlantic and Asia. This was a world that was emerging on the cusp of Empire.

*Useful Knowledge, Specialized Knowledge, and Power*

Britain’s industrious transformation and the theories of Enlightenment not only revolutionized technology, labor, and consumption, but also irrevocably changed the social, political, and cultural paradigms in which people understood self and nation. Enlightenment “lent Europe a decisive industrial advantage, from which Europeans, scholars and laypeople in general, could launch a concerted assault on the Orient in the cultural realm, turning their new-found knowledge of this corner of the wider world to the ends of asserting political dominance over it.”² Arising theories of Enlightenment informed attitudes about the world through the process of empirical research for the purpose of ordering and controlling the world.

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PART I

Britain in the World:
From Commercial Power to Colonial Empire

The first part of this thesis attempts to illustrate Britain’s transformation from a commercial power to a colonial empire.

Section I places the city of Aleppo in its historical context and maps the city’s changing global position from a commercial center to a imperial gateway during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This section also includes a look at Aleppo’s role in the European imagination.

Section II follows the footsteps of Patrick Russell as he travels from Aleppo, Syria, to Vizagapatam, India, and back to Britain between the years 1781 and 1789 as he follows the footsteps of the British Empire.

Section III maps the transformation of the British East India Company from an independent commercial conglomerate to a political agent of the emerging British Empire. The Industrial Revolution, Enlightenment, mercantilism, commercial corporations, and war were all major defining elements of the British Empire and its national identity.

Section IV considers the ways in which “useful knowledge” was disseminated via literature, as part of a collecting culture, the corollary of which included botany, orientalism, ethnography, linguistics, and, in hindsight, anthropology.
I. Aleppo: From Caravan City to Imperial Gateway

Although it was already an established commercial center, the Silk trade and
Desert Route made Aleppo an international emporium due to its convenience for
caravans trade between Europe and Asia. Raw silk, from China and Safavid Iran,
formed the bulk for Aleppo’s trade from the East. Raw silk in Aleppo would then be
shipped to weaveries in Istanbul Bursa, Cairo, and various cities in Europe.\(^1\) Renewed
interests in the “Far East,” or India, between 1600 and 1750, revived Aleppo’s status as
“one of the premier cities of the Ottoman Empire” and the city became a stage for
economic and commercial competition raged between different European powers
struggling for the control of ports and markets.\(^2\)

Due to its proximity and ease of access, the part of the world likely to be etched
most firmly upon the minds of educated Europeans driven by the pursuit of inquiry at
the end of the seventeenth century was the Levant. The considerable wealth of material
about the “Near East” reflects that the Levant was part of the “East” that seventeenth-
and eighteenth-century Englishmen were interested in exploring.\(^3\) Aleppo, situated
between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast and historically essential for
facilitating contact between the European Mediterranean and the Asian Persian Gulf,
proved a critical catalyst for eastern trade.

\(^1\) Hathaway, Arab Lands, p. 159.
\(^2\) Bruce Masters, The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the
\(^3\) Marshall, Great Map, p. 9.
Since Aleppo was historically a critical emporium for regional and international trade, it was no surprise that Europeans wanted to participate in its commercial wealth, especially as competition between European countries grew. Dr. Leonhart Rauwolff, traveling in Aleppo between 1573 and 1576, stated that, much to his own surprise, “great caravans of pack-horses and asses, but more camels arrive there daily from all foreign countries, viz. from Natolia, Armenia, Egypt and India” to Aleppo.\(^1\) The prominence of Aleppo as a commercial terminus in the late sixteenth century is evident in the creation of the British Levant Company, established in 1581 by a royal charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I. However, these companies needed the permissions of Islamic governments in order to establish commercial monopolies within these desirable markets. Since the Ottoman Empire, with its conquest of Aleppo in 1516, resulted in Ottoman authority over these land routes.

While on the one hand, the Ottoman’s conquest and authority over these historical land routes prompted European countries to seek other, seaborne routes for access to Asian goods. On the other, European competition, especially as the Portuguese, the first European country to reach the shores of India by sea, monopolized this new seaborne route, prompted European merchants to slowly push their ventures into Ottoman territories on the eastern Mediterranean. The Venetians were the first to establish a commercial relationship in the Mediterranean with the Ottoman empire and to establish a consul for Syria in Aleppo, which they did in 1548 in response to the

demand of and increasing trade with East Indies [Indonesia] spices which followed the Euphrates River from Aleppo to Basra and then onto the Persian Gulf into India.\(^1\) However, other European countries, including Britain followed suit. Since Europeans needed the consent of local authorities and merchants to establish such trading outposts, or factories, and since European companies were competing with one another for the same markets, European representatives “constantly jockeyed for position with local rulers playing them with gifts, promises, favors, and bribes.”\(^2\) To supply the growing demand for silk and to claim commercial entitlement, English merchants sought to make their presence in the Levant trade.

In 1581, the English Levant Company Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter, signaling the beginning of a long and close relationship between England and Aleppo. The account of a Levant Company official Lewes Roberts (1596 – 1641) illustrates the high commercial activity occurring at Aleppo in the sixteenth and seventeenth century:

The commodities which are found in this Cittie, are commonly all the commodities of Asia and Africa, as spices of all sorts, drugs of all sorts, silks of Persia, jems of India, spices of Arabia, and the common commodities proper to the Country, as Grogram, grorame yarne, galles.

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\(^1\) Masters, “Caravan City,” p. 26. The Venetian presence had originated in the division of the Byzantine Empire during the fourth crusade in 1204, which had netted Venice a number of islands and territories on the Aegean coast. Venetians retained its prominent relationship with throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This close relationship between Venice and the Levant is evident in Ambrosio Bembo’s account of his fifteen-month residency and travels through Aleppo. However, Venice did not have the resources or the population to support a significant role beyond the Mediterranean, even though Venice remained an important naval power. See Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 140; and Benjamin Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Easter Mediterranean* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

That Aleppo served as a commercial terminus was incredibly convenient for Europeans to invest in due to its proximity. While later European companies would go right to the source of commercial markets, particularly those in India, The Levant, and Aleppo, offered Britain, along with the French and Dutch, a means to participate in the international commerce for Asian goods. The significance of Aleppo as a catalyst in which to invest in eastern commercial goods, especially in the silk trade, is evident by the fact that in 1586, Aleppo was designated as the British consul’s chief residence for Syria.\footnote{Lewes Roberts, \textit{The Merchants Map of Commerce: wherein the universal manner and matter of trade is compendiously handled} (London: 1671), p. 134.}

The significance of Aleppo then was in providing some of the first and most extensive literature about the “Orient” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Russell brothers’ editions of \textit{The Natural History} were part of this growing body of literature that not only exposed European readers at home about their Islamic neighbors, who were so drastically different from themselves, at least externally, but also facilitated and informed attitudes about eastern societies, especially in the growing context of British ascendancy. Aleppo’s role was influenced by European interests in controlling the markets of important commercial ports, first as a commercial terminus, an entrepôt that was dominated by the Ottomans and whose commercial policies were dictated by Islamic Law. However, as Aleppo’s position in the world began to change as a result of corresponding circumvention of the Levant and British global ascendancy,\footnote{Masters, “Caravan City,” p. 27.}
the city became increasingly employed for the purposes of British expansion into Asia and its commercial terminus became obsolete.

Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire’s Caravan City
A Changing World Around Aleppo

The social structure, the world of thought and belief, the system of rule, the main social and economic institutions, the demographic regime, and the general way of life in the eighteenth century maintained a striking level on continuity in Aleppo. However, the world was changing around the city, and although greatly impacted the city – the level of commercial trade, the main role of the city – it was not until the nineteenth century that Aleppo began to change in dramatic ways.¹

There were many contributed factors to Aleppo steady decline in its importance as an international terminus. Aleppo by the mid-seventeenth century was losing importance as a trade entrepôt to the booming southern Anatolian port city of Izmir, which had begun to encroach on Aleppo’s trade with Europe.² In the following century, its value to British textile merchants eroded as cheaper, high-quality Bengali and Chinese silk shipped directly to Europe by the East India Company began to compete with raw silk produced in or shipped through Aleppo. Aleppo’s silk market declined rapidly with collapse of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, a major exporter of silk to the city, in 1722. This collapse was extremely detrimental to Aleppo’s economic and commercial position as it coincided with the time when the Levant Company’s position was becoming nonessential as Europe acquired Asian goods directly. However, it remained

² Hathaway, Arab Lands, p. 161.
an important regional commercial center for goods, such as soap, coffee, rice, dried fruits, and silk cloth. Since the Portuguese discovery of the Cape route in 1498, European merchants either shipped goods overseas, but also started to import Indian spices to Ottoman Mediterranean ports such as Alexandria. By 1814, the level of Aleppo’s trade with Europe was only a fifth of what it had been in 1789.¹

As European economic interests spread eastward and Aleppo’s position as commercial terminus became superfluous, Ottoman Aleppo failed to adapt to growing industrious changes in technology and labor organization. Aleppo was not “a society in a state of transition towards Western-inspired modernity.”² Aleppo’s manufacturing infrastructure consisted of local industry of small, labor intensive, and low productivity guilds. Since Aleppo witness no significant technical progress during the eighteenth century, Aleppo had a low level of productivity in industry.³ The commercial and economic atmosphere changed in Aleppo during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as the process of buying, marketing, financing, and transporting in Aleppo was no longer cost effective.⁴ Consequently, by the early eighteenth century, the English, who had become the dominant European commercial presence in Aleppo, started to dwindle as a result of the increasingly difficulty to sell broadcloth that they

¹ Masters, “Caravan City,” p. 65.
² Marcus, Eve of Modernity, p. 331.
³ Ibid., p. 163.
used to trade for silk in the Levant.\(^1\) Furthermore, with European nations – particularly Britain and France – acquiring their commercial goods – spices, cotton, and silk – in other, new markets in the eighteenth century, Aleppo failed to share in the growing Western demand for world goods.\(^2\) In the eighteenth century, “many people in Aleppo were drinking French colonial coffee instead of the Arabian coffee, which had previously conquered the world, illustrating how regionally produced sugar failed to compete with European exports of sugar.”\(^3\) However, while trade declined in the eighteenth century, it did not cease altogether, as Aleppo retained its importance as an Ottoman internal market to outlying regions.

Most importantly, Aleppo had always served as a catalyst for European advancement and participation into Asian commercial ports. Monopolies over the markets in India had always been the goal for European countries. The establishment of the English East India Company shortly after the Levant Company is evidence that Europeans were ultimately interested in direct participation and exclusive commercial rights in Asian markets. With the establishment of the East India Company and direct trade with India, the Levant Company’s role as a facilitator of trade became superfluous, especially after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the Seven Years’ War. This decline was gradual but apparent even to some contemporary travelers. Patrick reported that in 1753, the year Alexander departed Aleppo, there were eight English merchant houses inhabiting members of the English factory - merchants, consul,

\(^1\) Masters, “Caravan City,” p. 48.
\(^3\) Ibid.
chaplain, chancellor, physician – but there were only four in 1772, the year of Patrick’s departure.\footnote{Russell, Natural History, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 3.} Essentially, Aleppo and the Levant Company served its purpose: it enabled Britain to participate in the markets for Asian silk and other goods, especially when the Portuguese monopoly required that Britain resort to other ways to get these goods, and it acted as a stepping stone for British expansion further east into India. Afterwards, it was no longer necessary for Aleppo to serve Britain as a commercial terminus and thus the Levant was open to free trade in 1754.

A consistency throughout the history of Aleppo was that commercial, and eventually colonial, interests in India resulted in and retained Aleppo’s importance throughout the eighteenth century.\footnote{The events of the mid-eighteenth century are not wholly responsible for the decline in Ottoman Syrian trade and the loss of prominence in Aleppo’s commercial status. Vasco de Gama’s discovery of a seaborne route to India in the fifteenth century was one of the many contributing factors.} Territorial conquest in India meant that Aleppo came to represent the gateway towards new commercial frontiers for a growing British empire. While Aleppo remained an important city, and experienced prosperity, but it lost its economic and commercial prestige as trade was directed towards Asia and India. The significance of Aleppo in European commercial and political history is vital in our understanding of the literature produced by those who traversed through and within the region and city, since the evolution of Aleppo’s commercial position is most reflected in literature as it transforms over time.
Aleppo: Europe’s Imperial Gateway

Britain’s conquest of territories in India after 1757 and its eventual defeat of the Mughal empire and session of more territories at the end of the Seven Years War changed the ways in which people travelled to Aleppo. The shift in Britain’s role in India meant that Aleppo served a different but equally important role: Aleppo was no longer, as it had been historically, a commercial terminus, a meeting point between “East” and “West,” but now served as a gateway into Britain’s commercial and political frontiers in India. Furthermore, the purpose of traveling to the Levant was itself changing after Britain’s occupation of India in 1757. By the middle of the eighteenth century, travelers through the Levant were almost all of British nationality and most of them were in the service of the East India Company. And although the Levant Company no longer had a monopoly over trade, it continued its activities in Aleppo until 1825, serving primarily as a mail carrier and post office for letters between Europe and Asia. By the end of the eighteenth century, the consul for the Levant Company in

Image 1: A panoramic view of Aleppo in the eighteenth century.
Aleppo was also an agent for the East India Company, responsible for forwarding mail.\(^1\) Thus, the significance of Aleppo was that it was a fast and efficient way to travel and communicate with Europe.

When the Ottomans dominated the pace and policies of commercial transactions between Europe and Asia, Aleppo marked the transition in which a merchant would be leaving Ottoman territory and moving into European territory. However, as commercial activities became increasingly dependent on the Western ideology of mercantilism, Aleppo, although still Ottoman Syria, was no longer exclusively Ottoman has Europeans took claim and started dominating commercial activities in the midst of growing European dominance. Thus Aleppo was important because European prosperity and its acquisition of eastern goods depended on its presence and commercial networks in the Levant, particularly Aleppo. However, with the growth of European power, the dependence commercial activities becoming increasingly dependent on Western ideologies of mercantilism, and Europeans began circumventing Levantine territory, Aleppo could no longer represent this meeting point precisely because, in the advent of European shifting eastward, it no longer was. India and its resources were the new goals and Europeans found ways to get there without the mediation of Aleppo.

With growing interest in new eastern frontiers the onset of Aleppo’s diminishing trading position, Aleppo’s role began to change from one of commercial center to gateway. While Aleppo did serve as a meeting point between “East” and “West,” and

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could arguably be considered a commercial gateway, such a concept insinuates inequality, which, even if that was the case by the end of the eighteenth century, was certainly not the case at the end of the sixteenth century. Europeans gained access to Asian goods through their established networks in the Levant, but the Ottoman empire’s Islamic philosophy on commercial transaction was still the dominant ideology in which commercial activity in this region was conducted. Therefore, it was really a commercial hub, a center for commercial activity between Europe and Asia. However, as competition resulted in new trade routes and war, thus reorganizing world political dynamics as territories were lost and gained, greatly impacted, inevitably, if not gradually, the role of Aleppo. Aleppo’s position changes in relations to Europe. In this way, Europeans began to consciously shape the role of the city based on its what the city could offer Europeans. Britain no longer needed Aleppo to serve as a commercial center; Britain was going right to the source of the desired commercial goods: India. It is only in Aleppo’s relationship with external forces, particularly Europe, that the city became a gateway, which is very noticeably insinuating a one-way and unequal exchange. “Gateway” signified a means of access to a frontier
further eastward and once Britain achieved direct commercial contact, that means of access was no longer necessary.

Aleppo in the European Literature and Imagination

Aleppo had historically been a cornerstone of the Western perception of the Orient, serving as a part of the European imagination as early as the eleventh century to as late as the eighteenth century. During the Elizabethan era, when the Levant Company and the English East India Company were established, William Shakespeare wrote in his famous play Macbeth, “Her husband’s to Aleppo gone, master o’ the Tiger.”1 The fact that Aleppo was a city well known to Shakespeare’s audience illustrates that Aleppo was already a notable city in the imagination of English society. In Shakespeare, Aleppo represented the place were the European could strike his fortune.2 Aleppo was the commercial hub for traffic in oriental luxuries, which have long been infused with the “Oriental romance” in western narratives of Ottoman trade.

Aleppo in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, “a major Arab metropolis” whose population ranked it as the third largest settlement in the region after Istanbul and Cairo.3 It was the administrative capital of an important Ottoman province extending over most of northern Syria, and a “renowned center of textile manufacturing and East-West trade.”4 Consequently, Aleppo has figured more prominently in historical writing than most other places. Much literature about Aleppo

1 Macbeth I, iii, 5 as cited in Masters, Economic Dominance, p. 1.
3 Marcus, Eve of Modernity, p. 3.
4 Ibid., 3.
in travelogues transformed from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Aleppo historically a commercial hub then becomes a gateway to the Great Desert Route, at this time, the fastest route to India.

Aleppo, in eighteenth-century literature, was primarily recognized as prominent commercial entrepôt, despite the fact that Aleppo was starting to experience decline. As John Green (1706 – 1779), a British clergyman and academic, writing in the 1730s, states, “Aleppo does not abound like Damascus in ancient and beautiful monuments, but surpass it in business, trade, and consequently in wealth [rendering it] one of the most famous cities of the Turkish Empire.”¹ Imagery of the “Orient” was inherently faulty, which is why it should be of no surprise that Aleppo, the Islamic city that most Europeans, especially British, had their first cultural encounters at the start of the sixteenth century, still held a place in the European imagination, although other, more aesthetically pleasing cities, such as Istanbul, Cairo, and Damascus, would become model cities off of which Oriental tales would be based.

Although experiencing decline, Aleppo was still powerful enough to attract attention and appear in a great number of accounts. Even after Aleppo’s position became superfluous with British investment in territories and markets further east, the Levant, and Aleppo, still held a prominent position in the imagination of the European. Richard Tyron, a British traveler who traveled to Jerusalem via Aleppo in 1776 remarked that, “There is a very considerable trade here for silks, camblets, and Turkey

¹ John Green, A Journey From Aleppo to Damascus with a Description of those two capital cities, and the neighbouring parts of Syria. To which is added an account of the Maronites inhabiting Mount Libanus, also the surprising adventures and tragical end of Mostrafo, a Turk, the whole illustrated with notes and a map (London: 1736), pp. 1- 2.
leather. Every European nation almost has its factors here; the English factors are about forty in number.”1 The fact that Tyron recorded it suggests that Aleppo was still an important city, at least in the imagination of Englishmen.

Aleppo did not always satisfy the European travelers desire for “exotic” places, especially not in the ways that other Islamic cities did. As Alexander Russell states, the mosques and palaces, “striking the eye transently through the court gates” added “little, on the cursory view, to the embellishment of the city.”2 In many travel narratives, including Richard Pococke’s (1704 – 1765), an English Protestant Bishop and anthropologists, expressed excitement while approaching the city, with its beautiful urban skyline, though they were disillusioned once in the city. This was a popular theme in the construction of “Oriental perceptions” and perceptions of Aleppo were no exception. While the “Orient” had this picturesque and exotic appeal from far away, a closer examination revealed that these societies consisted primarily of primitive and simple peoples with barbarous customs and superstitious beliefs who were governed by oppressive despotic rulers.

Aleppo was generally seen unfavorably, sometimes because generally received Islamic characteristics of the city were unappealing. Alexander commented on the narrowness of the alleyways, which “seem little better than alleys winding among the melancholy walls of nunneries; for a few high windows guarded with lattices are only visible, and silence and solitude reign over all.”3 Many Islamic cities consisted of high

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1 Richard Tyron, Travels from Aleppo to the City of Jerusalem (London: 1800?), p. 36.
3 Russell, Natural History, p. 15.
walls and small windy streets to fit their cultural desire for privacy and since everyday movement within the city did not rely on donkey carts that required a specific amount of street space, disagreed with many Europeans. Alexander Drummond, the English consul at Aleppo from 1754 to 1756, said of Aleppo that, “there is nothing curious or agreeable to be seen about the place.”

However, others, such as John Green, merely accepted Aleppo as a commercial hub.

Commercial partnerships between Europe and the Levant did not eradicate Christian-European and Islamic-Middle Eastern tensions. And such tensions were the subtext that permeates through this literature. As Patrick stated, “an aversion to the Franks, as enemies of the true believers, is certainly not imaginary,” since many Aleppines would “unwarly drop expressions, which sufficiently indicated the notion they entertained of the Franks.” Increased cultural encounters did not foster long and permanent friendships between Europeans and Ottoman Syrians. Englishmen in Aleppo lived secluded lives within their own communities “never visit[ing] the natives of their acquaintance.”

As Henry Maundrell (1665 – 1701), chaplain for the Levant Company in 1745 stated, “As for our living amongst them, it is with all possible quiet and safety and that’s all we desire, their conversation being not in the least entertaining. Our delights are among ourselves. We live in separate squares, shut up every night…."

The deep-rooted religious and cultural undercurrent persisted even in light of these new

1 Alexander Drummond, *Travels through Different cities of Germany, Italy, Greece, and several parts of Asia, as far as the banks of the Euphrates in a series of letters*, Tobias Smollet ed. (London: W Strahan, 1754), p. 184.
3 Ibid., 1, p. 12.
relationships. These stereotypes of Islam would remain an important caricature in Britain about Islamic societies and Muslims, even as European encounters with Muslims brought greater knowledge, although not necessarily comprehension or compassion, of their religion and customs.

These variations in the image of the Aleppo tells us that Aleppo’s position as a commercial entrepôt was not always easily transmitted into the imaginations of Europeans. Europeans judged Aleppo by their own personal standards of aesthetic beauty in comparison to other Islamic cities and even European cities and their own prejudices: a chaplain in an Islamic city would most likely have received that city completely different from the traveler or the merchant.

II. Patrick Russell: From London via Aleppo to India and Back

*Mapping the Relationship between Aleppo and India*

Aleppo, as illustrated above, was historically an important commercial terminus and facilitator of commercial contact and activity between the European Mediterranean “West” and Asian Persian Gulf “East.” The Great Desert Route was the most ancient and most direct route between Europe and Asia. It was the “Golden Road of the Ancient World” and was “the main channel by which the riches of the East flowed to the West.”¹ Thus, Aleppo’s affiliation with India was one that was rooted in the past. Britain’s establishment of the Levant Company in 1581 at such a critical entrepôt served not only to capitalize on Aleppo’s trade trafficking with India to satisfy commercial demands, but also to gain a monopoly over its markets.

¹ Carruthers, *Desert Route to India*, pp. xi-xii.
This connection remained despite Aleppo’s declining commercial status, since many British travelers, chiefly English East India Company officials, continued to go to or return from India via the Great Desert Caravan Route that passed through Aleppo. The great volume of literature from the eighteenth century that recounts this journey is both revealing of its status as a regularly traversed route and of the relationship between these two regions, despite commercial decline in Aleppo.¹ Not only did many of these Englishmen often prefer the Desert Route to the long sea voyage around the cape, but the Desert Route via Aleppo remained one of the quickest means of communication between Europe and Asia.² As British colonial power increased by the end of the eighteenth century a fast and efficient means of communication between Britain and its Indian territories was required to secure the exchange of information, but also so Englishmen in India could maintain communication with their families and friends in Europe. Such communication was important since it meant that more Britons could travel great(er) distances and still maintain, if not regular at least more, contact with their home land. Thus, even though Aleppo lost its economic and commercial prestige as trade was directed towards new eastern frontiers, it was the colonial situation in far India that retained Aleppo’s important status.

Britain’s victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked a dramatic victory for Britons. The defeat of such a massive Islamic empire and the acquisition of Indian

¹ See Appendix for a list of travelers on the Great Caravan Route from Aleppo to Basra and onto India.
² For an example, see Henry Abbott, A Journal, with Occasional Remarks, Made on a trip from Aleppo to Bussora, Across the Grand Desart of Arabia (Calcutta: Josphe Cooper, 1789), p. 17; Abbott details his preference.
territory, not to mention vital commercial ports altered Britons consciously. While they could never know, or possibly have imagined, the extent that their empire would eventually take in the nineteenth century, Britons were aware that they were “beating” their competition on both the physical and intellectual realms. The eighteenth century was, then, inherently nationalistic, even if not consciously. Such confidence greatly impacted the ways in which Britons approached the world: their authority was more legitimate, their knowledge was more comprehensive, and their intellectual prowess was more impressive. In essence, Britain was leading the way in the acquisition and perfection of knowledge. Thus, not only did Enlightenment theories of empirical ordering and collecting inform establish a means for acquiring knowledge, but conquest facilitated the right to such knowledge. Since Patrick wrote the second edition of *The Natural History* at the end of the eighteenth century during and after his residency in India, not only would his “ordering and collecting” skills have evolved with time, but his sense of self as part of a nation that was on the path towards achieving perfect knowledge would also have greatly influenced how he approached the subject matter he investigated. Consequently, the colonial situation in India is vital to our understanding of Patrick’s residency in Aleppo, his attitudes towards the city and inhabitants, and the construction of the second edition of *The Natural History*.

As I argued above, Aleppo’s transition from a commercial hub to a gateway, which correlated with Britain’s growing political and economic power, secured this relationship between Aleppo and India, making this link just as vital, albeit different, as previously. However, the expanse into new eastern frontiers not only signaled British
growth colonially or commercially, but also intellectually. India provided new frontiers on which scholars and travelers could make new discoveries for new forms of knowledge, such as the case with Patrick. Furthermore, Patrick was hired by the Levant Company and later the English East India Company to order and classify natural phenomenon that threatened their investments in commercial ports for the purpose of controlling such threats, so they would not hinder the Company’s prosperity.

Image 3: Map of Great Desert Rout from Aleppo to the Persian Gulf. This route was a regularly travel route to get to India.

*Patrick in the Footsteps of Empire*

The English East India Company, similarly to the Levant Company, consisted of merchant communities at major trading ports. Vizagapatam, a coastal city located on the
Carnatic strip in East India between Madras and Calcutta on the Bay of Bengal, became host to the English East India Company in 1683 and by 1756, the year of Alexander’s publication, the territory was exclusively under British control. The craftsmen of Vizagapatam created western-style furniture pieces in the traditional Indian Ivory, fusing indigenous techniques with Western aesthetics, that was increasingly popular in eighteenth century English society.¹ Like all Company ports, Vizagapatam required an administrator and in 1781, Claud Russell, the younger brother of Alexander and Patrick, was appointed the position.

Before he departed from London, however, Claud became sick and Patrick, at this point age 54, accompanied his brother to India as a personal doctor. They left London, where Patrick had settled after his residency in India, shortly after Claud was appointed, traveling through Aleppo and arriving at his final destination, Vizagapatam on the Carnatic, in 1782.² Patrick’s presence in India and his knowledge as a naturalist and botanist quickly provided new opportunities for him. He was hired by the English East India Company in 1785, succeeding Johann Gerhard König (1728 – 1785) as botanist and physician to the Company. During his seven-year residency in India, he made large collections of specimens and drawings of the plants, fishes, and reptiles of the country, samples of which he regularly sent to Banks in London.³ Patrick was employed until 1789 when he returned home and settled in London, where he spent his final fifteen

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² Ibid., p. 228.
years writing several books based on his experiences at Aleppo and India, including *The Natural History*, but also *A Treatise of the Plague* and *An Account of Indian Serpents*.¹

The fact that Patrick worked for the Levant Company and the East India Company is significant in that he was employed for the very reason of furthering European presence. Patrick investigated first the plague in Aleppo and then snakebites in India; these were both threats to European settlement and commercial activity. The threat of a plague or a deadly snakebite would not serve the interests of either the Levant Company or the East India Company, which were, first and foremost, commercial businesses. The presence of danger could greatly hinder one’s enthusiasm to invest in the places were those dangers existed. However, the promise of knowledge was that the threat could be controlled and the danger minimalized. Patrick was part of the intellectual community that used empirical research to control and organize the natural worlds of foreign territories for the purpose of enabling European, and British, presence and power.

Furthermore, to follow Patrick’s his footsteps as he traversed from one company to another, from Aleppo to India, is to, in essence, follow the transformation of the British Empire, as his services accompanied Britain’s eastward movement from Aleppo to India and serviced information to the British empire. With British expansion and conquest, knowledge about new frontiers was required. As Aleppo’s role as commercial

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¹ Ibid., p. 229; Patrick Russell, *A Treatise of the Plague*, containing a historical journal, and medical account of the plague, at Aleppo, in the years 1760, 1761, and 1762. Also, remarks on quarantines, lazaretos, and the administration of police in times of pestilence. To which is added an appendix, containing cases of the plague; and an account of the weather, during the pestilential season (London: 1791); Patrick Russell, *An Account of Indian Serpents*, collected on the Coast of Coromandel (London: George Nicol, 1796).
center became obsolete with the conquest of Indian ports and the discovery of new land routes, India became the new preferable and popular, and also necessary, place for acquiring information. In this way, one can literally track the footsteps of the British empire as it expanded eastward; Aleppo was no longer the destination, it was one station along the road to India. Thus, the city served as a gateway significance of the route from Aleppo to India is that it had become, by the eighteenth century, a “normal,” or regularly-traveled path for civil servants in the service of the English East India Company.

*Patrick’s Work in India*

Unlike his residency in Aleppo, where he “he had had an extensive practice among both foreigners and the Ottoman population,” thus engaging regularly with Aleppines, Patrick focused entirely and exclusively on his botany research while in Vizagapatam.¹ In Aleppo he investigated the causes of and treatment for the plague and in India he identified poisonous snakes and search for anti-venoms.² The threat of snakebite was an obvious obstacle that could hinder and discourage European settlement and travel in India. It was not unusual for Europeans to feel apprehensive about traveling to foreign lands. Travel itself was often uncomfortable and dangerous at times, and only a few would make themselves so vulnerable to bodily harm. Furthermore, the prospects of dangers once these travelers arrived at their destinations were also daunting for most Europeans. The few who braved often related the inhospitality of eastern territories and environments in journals, letters, or published

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accounts, that then circulated throughout Europe. Patrick’s very own account of Aleppo’s environment describes, “fatal winds” that left a person as if “blasted by lightening” and the expansive desert as “uninhabitable” if not for the “Westerly Winds of the Summer.” While these deadly environments may have been real in the minds, or imaginations, of Europeans, poisonous and deadly snakebites posed a very real physical safety problem.

The English East India Company hired Patrick for the very reason of dissolving this threat through knowledge of how to identify it, avoid it, and survive it. His investigations, through empirical research and observations, in India titled, An Account of Indian Serpents Collected on the Coast of Coromandel was an important contribution to the body of literature that would undoubtedly help secure safety for European residents and travelers in India. Consequently, this security paved the way for colonial and imperial control and expansion. Company members were first and foremost a commercial business and with its territorial conquest in India, direct and indirect rule facilitated exploitation for commercial prosperity. The Company could and did impose taxes on India laborers, merchants, and inhabitants. Thus, the Company’s direct involvement in controlling the environment facilitated the growth of empire and its control over people.

Patrick was part of that growing scholarly community who employed Enlightenment empirical ordering and collecting in foreign lands and of foreign relics for the purpose of imperial and colonial control. However, Patrick’s contributions to

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knowledge and his role in facilitating British political control would only be possible as a result of the victories in the Seven Years’ War and at the Battle of Plassey. Alexander could not possibly have had this position because such a position evolved with Britain’s transition from Company to Empire. Thus, Patrick was writing on the eve of British imperialism.

III. Britain: From Company to Empire


Renewed discoveries of the commercial importance of Asia at the end of the sixteenth century and competition between European countries to establish their (exclusive) presence and alliances with the Ottomans resulted in the establishment and growth of the first companies, such as the “Merchant Adventurers,” the “Muscovy,” and eventually the Levant and East India companies.\(^1\) Competition between European nations reinforced the Western ideology of mercantilism, a theory, which believed that commerce was a zero-sum game, leading to protectionist, and eventually exploitive, polices.\(^2\) This western commercial ideology differed drastically from the commercial policies of the Ottomans, whose policies relied on Shari’a Law and resembled a more “free-traders” view. Mercantilism, which facilitated the foundation of these companies, came to dominate commercial activities with Ottoman territories, as a result of Western Europe’s technological and socio-economic ascendancy. That the

\(^1\) Carruther, Introduction, *Desert Route*, p. xiii.

world was becoming economically and politically dependent on British power further facilitated the dominance of mercantilism, which in turn, fueled imperialism.

The battle of Plassey fused the English East India Company with Britain. The seizure of British Company members at Calcutta after the British refused to give up their weapons and pay cash gifts to the new Mughal emperor, resulted in one of the “most emotive and sensational episodes in the history of British India.”¹ The Company’s propaganda to enlist the sympathies of the British audience communicated that the death of one hundred and fifty of Calcutta’s European residents who suffocated to death was a British national tragedy.² Furthermore, Robert Clive, an East India Company clerk, bravely led his outnumbered troops against the Mughals in Calcutta in response to this tragedy and stories of his passion made him a national hero overnight. Clive and his friends had even written about the “revolution” brought on by the battle of Plassey, and this revolution was significant: Britain appointed Indian servants in Indian government, now merely a figurehead, who would protect the interests of British imperialism. To his contemporaries, Clive seemed to “personify Britain’s new Indian empire.”³ While Company and empire had always had a mutual relationship, the interests of Company and empire became the same after the Battle of Plassey. The fact that many British people were drawn to this expanding empire and, consequently, to the employment of the East India Company is evidence that many people began to see their service to the Company as a national service.

¹ Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, p. 28.
² Ibid., p. 28.
³ Ibid., p. 32.
Although the East India Company was established as a monopolistic trading body, the events of the eighteenth century dramatically transformed the Company’s role in India. The victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 brought “fantastic wealth, tremendous opportunity and the seeds of a new colonial society.”¹ Britain used the East India Company as the means to exert its political and economic control on its newly gained territories. The English East India became “a government by Europeans,” in which ultimate authority was exercised by governors and councils with collectors and judges responsible for local administration.² The Battle of Buxar in 1764 secured Britain’s colonial and imperial power in India, with the defeated Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II (1728 – 1806), granted control of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to the Company.

After the Seven Years’ War ended in 1763, British involvement with and its political assertion over India were closely correlated to the Company, since it became an agent and facilitator of British imperialism in India well into the nineteenth century. Until 1834, the English East India Company retained its station in India as a managing agency even though Britain’s commercial monopoly was broken in 1813.³ The appointment of the East India Company to act as the agent and facilitator of British imperialism was both motivated by political and financial reasons. The Company’s control of the territories in India meant that exploitive policies could be put in place to reap benefits for the empire without the political inclusion of the Indians in the empire. The East India Company served as the exploitive instrument through which Britain

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¹ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p. 31.
would achieve economic ascendancy. Company and empire interests became one and the same and during the eighteenth century, there were Parliamentary members in London who had investments with the East India Company.¹

The pursuit of individual advantage, grounded in mercantilism, was believed to be the engine of improvement in all human societies. Yet, in India the stagnation and poverty produced by the abuses of governments as well as by climate and physical environment was by far the most influential of the stereotypes inherited by British administrators in India. Such stereotypes were a result of the collection of knowledge and its (re)production in European literature, which eighteenth-century servants, who often held strong priori beliefs, expressed freely in the dispatches and letters that they sent home. In these, political administration was justified by “sweeping assertions about Indian society.”² Such assertions were rooted in the great body of literary works written about India that had accumulated over the eighteenth century and informed the European reading public of its attitudes. Particularly in India, the greatest significance was of the Enlightenment was undoubtedly the ways in which knowledge was directed to the in particular needs of the ruling and the way in which the Company constructed its administrative system.³ For example, the knowledge of specific Indian tribes and ethnicities was taken into consideration when British administrative policies were dividing

¹ Ibid., p. 154.
² Marshall, Great Map, p. 158.
³ Ibid.,
territories into districts; their knowledge ensured that they caused little disturbance among Indians by mixing ethnicities together.\(^1\) In this way colonialism and Enlightenment perpetuated each other.

_Trouble on the Eastern Front_

Before it was a political agent, the East India Company had recruited native Indian citizens as troops in 1667 in order to maintain and assert their control against their European competitors within their commercial markets. In 1748, the British government followed suit and began recruiting and training Indians to fight with their weaponry and methods.\(^2\) This act in itself represents Britain’s increasingly political involvement in the East India Company and the merging of the two into a single national identity. The Indian unites were called “native sepoys” and soon became the largest part of the British forces in India, eventually outnumbering European troops by twenty percent. Just before the Rebellion, there were over 200,000 Indians in the army compared to about 40,000 British.\(^3\) These sepoys posed a serious threat to British imperialism when they mutinied in 1857.

By the mid-1800s, Britain, with the East India Company as its agent, had gained two-thirds of India’s territory and British imperialism was taking its toll on the natives. Reforms, new laws, new technology, and even religion had been forced upon them. European industrious reforms, such as the formation of the factory, a giant workplace in which many workers assembled for long and arduous workdays, created an incredible

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 264.
\(^3\) Ibid.
amount of tension and unrest among Indian natives.\textsuperscript{1} Furthermore, the creation of the negative images of the “inferior Orient” resulted in massive discriminations against Indian natives.\textsuperscript{2} The Indians were driven to revolt and resist European domination with violence.

The Company went from administrating commercial communities at important ports to politically dominating and ruling the markets and merchants and the port cities and inhabitants. However, as stated previously, the East India Company was a \textit{business}, whose goal was profit; not surprisingly, the Company became a government that had the ability to exploit Indian resources and labor to bolster their commercial and economic prosperity. The Company quickly reaped the fruits its exploits with the assessment and collection of taxation on land supplemented by customs revenue and the profits of state monopolies.\textsuperscript{3} After 1757, the Company made several additions to the territories under their control, either ruling directly or with local puppet rulers.\textsuperscript{4} However, such complete domination and oppressive measures would result in a violence response in the nineteenth century.

The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the “Great Mutiny” is one of the most well-known and important uprisings during the British colonization of India.\textsuperscript{5} In the midst of great oppression and discrimination as a result of British imperialism the

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\textsuperscript{1} Mokyr, \textit{Enlightened Economy}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{2} Collier, \textit{Mutiny}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{3} Marshall, \textit{Great Map}, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{4} Jasanoff, \textit{Edge of Empire}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{5} When studied in Indian history, this mutiny is known as the First War of Independence.
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massed ranks of the ruled turned on the tiny corps of British rulers.¹ The rebellion threatened the Company’s power, which ceased to exist as a legal entity in 1873. The British broke this mutiny and by 1859, British power was restored. After the mutiny, the Company was nationalized, as punishment for “permitting” the events to occur, and was replaced by the direct rule of the British Raj, when Queen Victoria, proclaimed Empress of India in 1876, approved the bill that transferred administrative power of India from the Company to the government.² The Company lost all of its administrative powers and monopolies, but continued to manage the tea trade of the British government.³ The British raj was part of British national and self identity; it signaled not only cultural and moral superiority, but also political inclusion into the Empire. Britain’s main priority, in theory, was to civilize the Indian people through commerce – a nice way of justifying exploitive labor and commercial activities in India.

The genesis of Britain’s relationship with India was commercial motivation to participate in desirable markets at the expense of their political competition. However, it was the wholesale shift in the balance of global politics during the eighteenth century, as a result of conflict and wars, which would quite abruptly change that relationship. At this point, it was long established by mercantilist theories that the acquisition of territory directly correlated to a power; to have what another does not meant power – power over markets, routes, resources, and labor production. Britain’s new economic and military authority in India reflected the reality that was British dominance and

² Marshall, *Great Map*, p. 34.
India’s dependence. The start of such a conquest ignites the historical trajectory that would motivate colonialism and eventually British imperialism. With the English East India Company as the national agent acting in the interest of Company and empire for both financial and political gain, the Company would become the force behind much of the colonization of India.

IV. Ordering and Collecting: Enlightenment and Imperial Knowledge Regime

*Empirical Ordering of the World, Collecting Culture, and the Production of Knowledge*

The collection of information in literacy in the eighteenth century witnessed a transition from knowledge employed for very practical reasons to metaphysical. Originally, travel narratives aimed to inform other travelers of their experiences so it might be a useful instrumental towards “the safety or comfort of any future traveler.”¹ This information would impart knowledge of the region, trade routes, climate, and local customs and manners as it pertained to commercial transactions. Henry Abbott’s publication was part of the informational genre that aimed to assist other travelers as a sort of contemporary Zagat guide. However, literary works by the eighteenth century were also being read by the European reader, one who was not necessarily traveling to the Middle East, but certainly one who was aware of their Islamic neighbors.

Eighteenth century physical change resulted in increased cultural encounters between Western-Christian Europe and Eastern-Islamic Middle East and Asia. One can imagine how disorienting individual and collective experiences in the Levant and Middle East must have been, as a result of the cultural encounters experienced in these

territories. The Enlightenment theories of empirical observation informed attitudes for the purpose of ordering and controlling the physical and material environment. Thus, Enlightenment theories offered a means through which Britons, such as Patrick and Alexander, could order, collect, organize, tabulate, information and data based on their empirical observations and made sense of these cultural encounters. Not only did European travelers bring home eastern artifacts and commercial goods, they often wrote about and published their accounts in literary works. The construction of “Other” is a direct result of this literary consumption in Europe.

In 1690, John Locke (1632 – 1704) published An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, one of Locke’s most famous works.¹ The essay described how everyone is born with a blank slate and that the foundation of human knowledge and understanding comes from experience acquired over the years of one’s natural life. Locke’s Essay presented a detailed, systematic philosophy of mind and thought, questioning such things as how one thought and perceived the world, challenging other philosophers, such as René Descartes (1596 – 1650) and Plato (426 B.C.E – 346 B.C.E.) and their assertion that all are born with innate ideas.² Instead Locke believed that the production of knowledge would not only order and classify nature, but also of people. Thus, social, political, and cultural hegemony was established, not as a result of an accepted authority, but as a proven authority.

² Descartes was a major figure in the seventeenth century era of rationalism, the belief that relied on reason to obtain knowledge, a school of thought which empiricists, such as Locke, Hume, and the Russell brothers, would oppose at the end of the century and especially in the eighteenth century. The Greek philosopher Plato’s theories are more well known and can be drawn extensively from Plato’s allegory of the cave.
Historically, interest in the societies beyond the shores of the eastern Mediterranean in the Middle East and Asia was predominately due to the great differences in religion, which had brought the European nations of the Mediterranean and the eastern Islamic states into conflict during the Crusades. With the Enlightenment, interest in the Middle East shifted towards scientific validity extended beyond mere scriptural or religious reasons for investigation. As Patrick illustrates, interest in Middle Eastern and Asian territories and natural history was only due to “their connection with Scriptural History.”¹ Of course, to the Western European, the Levantine and Middle Eastern regions held a unique position due to the inherent traditions of Christianity. However, Enlightenment offered new ways in which a person could understand his surroundings and Patrick rejected the authority of the Bible and religion and discovered these regions based on his empirical observation. Not only is this significant in that it represents the movement from traditional religious sources of authority towards science and rational thought, but the application and utility of useful knowledge in these regions were not towards God.

*The Natural History* represented a new genre in which information, or knowledge, was produced for scientific purposes and not religious. Useful knowledge in the form of empirical observation was useful precisely because it offered European readers and scholars more than moral justification and ascendancy, but cultural and intellectual ascendancy as well. Thus, moral superiority, although one of the justifications for British colonialism and imperialism, was rooted in perception, as Enlightenment thinkers, such

as Patrick, acknowledge that religion was often rooted in bias. However, with the collection of knowledge shifted away from God, British ascendency was not merely based on innate religious authority, which could easily be discredited as bias and prejudicial, but *scientific* and *rational* authority. Empirical evidence, because it was believed to be objective, proved to be concrete evidence of the inferiority of the “Orient.”

The creation of knowledge from the eighteenth-century scholar’s fascination with the discovery and ordering of the natural world evolved into the rise of different academic disciplines and the controlling of people. Knowledge about the “Mohammedan religion” continued to be of interests to Europeans even after the move away from viewing Middle Eastern territories in the light of Biblical writings and their religious significance. As the collection of information, formally produced from curiosity and commerce, transitioned into the collection of information for the production of a specialized body of knowledge, the study of the religion of the Islamic societies became one of these areas of specialization. The dissemination of knowledge about the Arabic language meant that scholars at home, having never come in contact with eastern societies or Muslims, could specialize in that field and produce knowledge from it. George Sale (1697 – 1736) wrote *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammad* (London, 1734), one of the first and most popular English translations of the Qur’an, without ever leaving his native home. Furthermore, Reverent Lancelot Addison (1632 – 1703) published one of the first accounts of the life of Mohammad in 1679, one of
the earliest accounts of the prophet’s life available for Europeans in Europe. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries greater knowledge of Arabic and increased access to text led to a serious study of Islam as a scientific discipline rather than as a religious justification.

These literary works of the scientific order of things produced knowledge among a general reading audience, that the “exotic Orient” was more greatly widely known and possibly, in their own minds, better understood. Physical artifacts often accompanied these literary pieces to shape the attitudes and images of the “Orient.” “Collecting culture” involved not only literary knowledge production but also the removal of artifacts that Europeans brought home with them from overseas. Such artifacts, placed in museums on displays for people to view, also directly shaped the image of the “Orient.” European travelers, as evident in their literary works, often viewed characteristics of foreign societies in relations to their own, comparing and contrasting the cultural and social elements of these societies with their own. Although there were certainly similarities between these difficult cultures, such as the cultural roles of men, women, and the family, these travelers, like their literary compatriots, would bring home artifacts that encapsulated and represented all of the “bizarre” and “exotic” elements of these societies. In this way, the European travelers and writers got to choose what represented eastern societies. Patrick also was part of this construction of the “East,” even in all his attempts to impartially collect information: his two long

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1 Lancelot Addison, The Life and Death of Mahumed, the author of the Turkish Religion: being an account of his tribe, parents, birth, name, education, marriages, filthiness of life, Alcoran, first proselytes, wars, doctrines, miracles, advancements, etc., (London: 1679).

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chapters on the Turkish harem at Aleppo is evidence that Patrick was conforming to popular “Oriental” images. Patrick is participating in the romanticizing of the “Orient” by his mere contribution to it.

Since the Enlightenment was a European phenomenon, the acquisition, possession, and dissemination of knowledge and collecting culture was almost always a one-way exchange. However, in this one-way exchange, two images were created. Knowledge about eastern societies and their customs brought to light both what “East” was and what characteristics defined it and what “West,” i.e. Europe, was not. Collecting culture in the form of physical artifacts of literary writings facilitated the making of cultural boundaries.

Patrick was also a collector of artifacts from the Middle East and Asia where he lived and traveled. Alexander may or may not have brought home “Oriental” artifacts, there is no evidence of it, but Patrick’s many contributions to the first British museum, created in 1759, illustrates the transition from the collection of artifacts for personal identification to the collection of artifacts to serve as a contribution towards national identity. Not only did Patrick send back samples from his collection of snakes and reptiles during his work in India, he also exported many valuable Arabic manuscripts from Aleppo to Britain.¹ According to Patrick such collection was really his duty as a scientists, since the Ottomans, “have shown a national disposition so unpropitious to science” and therefore Ottoman manuscripts either get lost or destroyed.² Among these manuscripts were “Oriental tales” that he believed to be a “continuation of the Arabian


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Nights, published in Edinburgh in 1792” and the writings of for principle Arabian medical writers.\(^1\) In his appendix to the second volume, he includes translations of and comments on Arabic medical documents.

*From Knowledge Stems Fiction*

Since Britain’s transformation saw new moral standards that were closely correlated to economic and technological innovations, the investigation and collection of the manners of foreign societies was an important measurement of those new moral standards, whether the authors of literature were aware of it or not. Translations of Oriental tales, “pseudo-oriental fiction,” and travelogues were popular in several forms of literature during the eighteenth century in England. *Arabian Nights* was first printed in English during this period, from Antoine Galland’s French translation. These tales aroused popular enthusiasm for what was thought to be “oriental” literature, that is literature that was produced and popularly read by individuals in eastern societies. These tales drifted across Europe by way of Syria and into the hands of a curious Western public. More importantly, these “Oriental tales,” which found legitimacy in empirical knowledge, since knowledge supplemented and validated these tales, would later become the means through which Europe would launch a cultural attack on the moral standards and the level of “civilization” of eastern societies.

*Possessing Knowledge and Power*

Enlightenment acted as a movement to acquire and possess knowledge. The act of possession knowledge is to possess power by the mere fact of being the beholder, and

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thus the manipulator, of information. It was the knowledge of the Enlightenment that was “used to acquire power over others” and facilitated imperialist ideas.¹ Different populations were generalized and categorized and boundaries were drawn. Just as the science of the Enlightenment lent Europe a decisive industrial advantage, its “men of letters would now launch a concerted assault on the Orient in the cultural realm, turning their new-found knowledge of this corner of the wider world to the ends of asserting political dominance over it.”² Well before British troops ever set foot in the countries of the Middle East, “the ground had been softened by this combined economic and cultural barrage.”³ Britons’ belief in their own superiority, moreover, had by then become enshrined in a rigid national identity.⁴

The acquisition of knowledge was never exclusively a contribution to an individual’s intelligence and personal gain; the Enlightenment believed in the importance of total knowledge, complete and perfect knowledge. In order for knowledge to be perfected, it needed to be expanded, built on, refuted, validated, and confirmed. The only way this could be achieved was if many different scholars relayed their information and knowledge in such a way that contributed to this process of perfecting knowledge. Therefore, knowledge was widely disseminated and shared as to

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¹ Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 35.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Mather, Pushas, p. 13.
facilitate new and better knowledge and the processes of collecting and disseminating knowledge were equally important.¹

Patrick was a firm believer in the collection of information, often commenting on particular fields that could use more investigation. While in India, he also proposed to the governor of Madras in 1785 that the East India Company’s medical officers should be officially requested to collect specimens and information concerning useful plants of the various districts of India.² Furthermore, he suggested the establishment of up-to-date research centers in trading outposts, which would contain, “a small collection of Books on Astronomy, ancient Geography, and Natural History, together with a few Instruments.”³ These books then “might advantageously be placed in the Libraries of the Levant Company, at their principle settlements,” thus not only enabling and supporting the network and settlement of Europeans in Middle Eastern territories, but also providing access to a guide from which others might draw information about the management of the city and natives.⁴ Patrick’s belief in the power of collecting and disseminating knowledge is evidence that there was a strong correlation between knowledge and power and, furthermore, that Patrick, as possibly other European scholars and travelers, was consciously aware of this fact.

At the beginning, collecting culture and knowledge was not for the purpose of controlling or dominating over other peoples. Originally, such ordering of the natural

¹ Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 58.
³ Russell, Natural History, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. xii.
⁴ Ibid., p. xiii.
environment was for the purpose of controlling the physical environment and facilitating commercial activities. A standardized table of information about weather patterns and the creation of rules to avoid diseases would inform European merchants of the best seasons to conduct trade or how to preserve their own lives overseas when they were greatly cut off from familiarity. However, such knowledge used for facilitating commerce was directly related to competition between European nations as they competed for control over markets and trading ports. Competition and mercantilist principles, consequently, led to nationalistic tendencies, as knowledge became “intellectual property,” in which the possession of knowledge correlated to the ownership of it. The more knowledge a nation had, the more powerful it would be, since it was through the possession of knowledge that European nations first gained political ascendancy over each other and eventually cultural ascendancy over the “Orient.” Furthermore, knowledge, either as descriptions of “discursive practices” or specialized fields of information, were social ideologies that function as forms of exerting power and disseminating the effects of power. Power and culture, collecting and ordering, and self-fashioning were all closely interrelated to Enlightenment and imperialism.

1 I am referring here specifically to Alexander’s compilation of rules to avoid the plague at Aleppo. See Russell, Natural History, pp. 260-261. Alexander and Patrick naturally represented the interests of their nation in maintaining Britain’s commercial position. Much like Patrick’s role in Aleppo, which was concerned with ordering the plague for the purpose of overcoming its hindrance to commercial activity and European settlement, Patrick’s role in India, as hired by the East India Company, was to prevent deadly snakebites from posing a real problem to European presence in India. To be explored more in the following section
2 Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, p. 216.
The competition between the British and French for the acquisition and possession of ancient oriental relics was not merely about possessing property, but having the historical *right* to do so. Furthermore, it was by virtue of their apparent ability to *know better* how to analyze antiquity that enabled them to claim possession of the past.¹ In this way, the “removal of ancient artifacts symbolically represented the acquisition and revival of power and hereditary continuity of a modern imperial state.”² The shift from the study of antiquity to the study of contemporary natural history, and eventually ethnography, as we see in the progression of Russell brothers’ editions from previous eighteenth century literature, was the continuation of the right to knowledge after this right was rooted in the possession of antiquity. After establishing the historical right to possess knowledge of eastern societies, the right to use this knowledge for the purpose of controlling and exploiting the people and societies of the Middle East and Asia emerged, closely related to the mercantilist and imperialist theories of individual advancement and power.

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² Ibid., p. 136.
PART II

From Botany to Orientalism in the Service of Company:
The Russell Brothers

The second part of this thesis aims to work directly with the texts of the Russell brothers and to place the two versions within the historical context of eighteenth century transformation as described above. It is the midst of Britain’s transformation that we begin to examine how the differences in the two editions were a consequence of ongoing processes of transformation in the eighteenth century.

In the following pages, I discuss the motivations and constructions of the two editions of *The Natural History of Aleppo*, including the contrasts between them and how those contrasts are a consequence of the progression of knowledge and the rise of disciplines in the eighteenth century. The texts’ transformation from the sampling nature to the sampling of people reveal a major shift from natural history to orientalism and the rise of “Oriental” disciplines. Furthermore, the literary differences in the texts illustrate the ways in which the two brothers appealed to audience and the significance of Patrick’s inclusivity for a wider general public and how such an inclusion reflects not only the self-identity of the brothers, but also of Britain’s national identity.

Lastly, I consider the many ways in which Patrick gained his authority, focusing primarily on how his authority was legitimized through his knowledge of many “Oriental” disciplines, his contribution to these different fields, and through his brother’s voice. This emerging authority as it related to the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and the growth of British social hegemony, resulted in a particular attitude towards eastern societies that became constructed as the “Orient.”
I. *The Natural History of Aleppo: Ordering the World and Constructing the Text*

*In Relation to Other Eighteenth Century Literature*

The two versions of *The Natural History*, particularly Patrick’s, differ from previously published pieces of literature from the Middle East and Asia. The two editions were not translations of “Oriental” tales or accounts of personal travels and pilgrimages through the East. The versions not only lacked many characteristics of eighteenth century travel narratives – adventurism, nostalgia, disappointment – but were also unique in their style and prose, especially as literature to be read among both scholars and the general population. Furthermore, they were unique in the fact that they remained in one city for very long periods of time: Alexander resided in Aleppo as the Levant Company physician for thirteen years and Patrick resided there for twenty one years, eighteen of which he served as the Company’s physician. Their professions as physicians required that they have regular and daily contact with all social levels of the local population and allowed them into intimate aspects of Aleppine social life, such as the harem.¹ Their long residency and intimacy with the inhabitants made them both less critical of Middle Eastern societies and local populations, a striking contrast to other travel literature published around this time.

The intimacy with the inhabitants affected Alexander as he wrote his edition, in which he states on the characters of the inhabitants: “it would be very ungrateful, as well as unjust in me, not to acknowledge that there many amongst [the Aleppines] of all

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¹ Alexander and Patrick’s relationships with the inhabitants of the city extended to their friendship to the Pasha, governor of Aleppo. The Pasha of Aleppo granted Patrick the privilege of wearing a turban, an honor rarely given to Europeans.
sects who deserve a much better character, and whom I know, from repeated experience, to be persons of the utmost honour and integrity.”¹ Although not without opinion, Alexander’s and Patrick’s long residency with the locals undoubtedly positively impacted their construction of Aleppines and both brothers, particularly Patrick, devote time to correcting misrepresentations, even among those authors whose authority they employ elsewhere. For example, Patrick asserted that Lady Mary Wortley Montague’s description of two hundred naked females frolicking in the bagnios was an intentional attempt to appeal to the audience’s sense of “fine imagination.”² Such a description, containing “all the advantages of novelty,” was as a major misrepresentation, as it was “such a deviation from Mohammedan delicacy.”³ Some of Patrick’s patients were women in the harem, so it is clear that he not penetrated these intimate spaces, but also witnessed “behind the scenes” the customs and manners of Aleppine women.⁴

However, this is not to romanticize the two authors as having a moral obligation to right the wrongful interpretations of Middle Eastern societies, as Anita Dimiani would.⁵ Alexander and Patrick were, first and foremost, scholars of the Enlightenment, believers in empirical information as based on observations. They reported on what

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¹ Russell, *Natural History*, p. 80.
³ Ibid., p. 381
they saw and heard as objectively as possible and Patrick, through his empirical observations and knowledge of Islamic customs, came to the natural conclusion that Lady Mary’s description was not only incorrect, but was fanciful.

The two editions are also dramatically different from other literary works at the time since they lack narrations describing Syria and Aleppo’s ancient history, the primary reason why Westerners traveled to and were interested in the region. They did record the information they collected about the city’s history, particularly the topographical and structural aspects of the city, or the origins of certain customs, especially in relation to Muhammad and the Sunna, the traditional portion of Islamic Law based on Muhammad’s words and acts, but only as supplementary to contemporary society. Rather, the two brothers were particularly interested in Aleppine society during the contemporary time and reported not on their ancient cultures, but on the customs and manners of local population as they were when they were there. The two editions would only be products of the Enlightenment and contributors to useful knowledge if the collection of information were actually beneficial for contemporary Europeans.

Although empirical theories demand “objective” observation, it is only through Alexander and Patrick’s intimate immersion into the local population that they were able to acquire such detailed information about social and cultural values. Patrick was well aware of the “extreme difficulty of divesting one’s self of prejudices contracted in familiar intercourse with the Natives, in a long series of years,” acknowledging, in his

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1 Patrick Russell, 2 ed., vol. 1, p. xii.
preface, and possibly even battled with his role as both an empirical scientist and as someone who resided in Aleppo and was intimate with its locals. This is an inherent difficulty, especially as he discredits other sources and manipulates his brother’s edition. This quote also reflects his recognition that his is consciously shaping the people of Aleppo and surrounding regions with his personal experience.

The Author and the Editor

The two Russell editions consist of a narrative with two characters: the Author and the Editor. While Patrick makes clear that he is the Editor, his voice becomes almost completely interchangeable with the Author. Patrick’s disengagement as an author from text is possible through channeling his voice through his brother. However, the very act of Patrick editing his brother’s work is a clear indication of Patrick’s conscious manipulation and reshaping of his brother’s representation of the “Orient,” even if Patrick had no intention of deviation from his brother’s original work.

Although he is clearly the writer of the text, Patrick as a narrative is difficult to detect in the second edition due to his conscious efforts to retain his brother’s authorship and the original text, rendering himself subservient to Alexander and his manuscript. Patrick purposely titled his brother “The Author” and himself “The Editor,” careful to clarify that he is not the creator of the work, even though his edition is so visibly different from his brother’s. Patrick attempted to channel his voice and his observations through his brother, stating that the revision “was not meant to reject whatever had been said before, for that reason only; but to give a concise account of the
inhabitants of the Asiatic city.”\textsuperscript{1} Patrick’s desire to remain in the background “is clear from the way he corrected ambiguities and mistakes in his brother’s texts.”\textsuperscript{2} For example, in describing the relationship between men and women in Aleppo, Alexander stated,

\begin{quote}
It is a kind of reproach among [the Turks] to be thought fond of their women, or to show them much tenderness or respect; the best of them being only treated as upper servants, and often abused and drove out by the very Eunuchs or boys bought or hired to look after them.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

Patrick removed these lines from the original texts and explains in an endnote that “it conveys a meaning not intended, and I can have no doubt my brother upon revisal would have himself altered it.” He further clarifies his brother’s statement with: “by abuse no more is meant then pert language, but [the Eunichs and haram boys] dare not lift a hand even to a menial slave.” Patrick then justifies Alexander’s misunderstanding by stating: “The wife’s not sitting down to table with the husband and ministering to him in other respects, places her indeed in the light of an upper servant.”\textsuperscript{4} In an attempt to correct a misrepresentation, Patrick was still careful to attribute the correction to his brother, the Author. It is clear however that Patrick felt uncomfortable fixing Alexander’s mistakes, claiming that it was indeed not his brother’s original perspective.

\textit{Constructing and Ordering the Texts}

Alexander was hired by the Levant Company to investigate into the causes of and treatment for the plague that was scourging the local population – Aleppine native

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\textsuperscript{1} Russell, \textit{Natural History}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., vol. 2, p. xiv.
\textsuperscript{2} Boogert, “Republic of Letters,” p. 231.
\textsuperscript{3} Russell, \textit{Natural History}, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{4} Russell, \textit{Natural History}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., vol. 1, p. 437.
\end{flushright}
and European resident alike – by collecting and ordering information about the plague for the purpose of controlling it. Alexander’s edition was originally only suppose to include the results of his investigation at Aleppo, he included, at the encouragement of his close friend and colleague, John Fothergill, who stressed, “how acceptable a more accurate account of Aleppo would be to this nation, and to all Europe,” an additional section that included his taxonomic systems of the botany of Aleppo and the surrounding regions and information on the city and its inhabitants.1 The 1756 publication included his botanical taxonomies and his rather miscellaneous descriptions and observations of the city, its inhabitants, and their customs and manners, followed by his description of the plague and other diseases at Aleppo.

In his introduction, he stated that one of his reasons for expanding his work to include “the customs and manners of the inhabitants, the neighborhood of this place, its site, and natural productions” was not only at the encouragement of his friend, but also to provide a reading public with a more legitimate literary work of Aleppo.2 Alexander stated that previous accounts of Aleppo and the surrounding region were insufficient, criticizing the traveler’s limited stay in the city and the faulty portrayals they presented as a result of their transient relationships with Islamic cities. Although he intended to gain authority over other authors and their works, his edition, in relation to Patrick’s, reads more like the works of these authors.

2. Russell, Natural History, p. v.
While he does include detailed descriptions, images, and classifying systems for plants and animals, Alexander failed to organize the actual literary composition of his work. Not only does he provide no organizational method in the form of a table of contents, but his work also reads like a strand of thought that gets distracted and goes off on tangents. For example, after he mentions coffeehouses, which are “frequented by the vulgar,” he proceeds to discuss topics such as opium, bagnios, exercise, coaches, horseback skills, bed times, and music until, almost a dozen pages later, when he surprisingly returns to the topic of coffeehouses.\(^1\) Even though Alexander organized nature and the physical environment, he did not construct his edition as ordered and catalogued as the information he collected.

Regardless, of his organizational flaws, his work continually reflected his passion as a physician, naturalist, and scholar. While Alexander recognized the importance of writing about the Levant and what he observed there, he did not craft his work into a scientific investigation about the people and their society. Given his reasons for writing, his criticism of other writers of Aleppo, and his lack of organization, Alexander clearly expanded his manuscript simply because of his personal and intimate relationship with the city and its residents, both local and European, during his thirteen year stay there. Patrick, however, who revised his brother’s original edition to fulfill his dead brother’s wish for an expanded version of *The Natural History*, applied scientific principles to collect information on people.

\(^1\) Russell, *Natural History*, pp. 91-102.
Patrick claimed in his preface that his older brother “found reason to regret the restraint he had imposed upon himself, in his account of the Oriental customs, by considering it as chiefly subservient to the medical part of his Work.”¹ We cannot know if Alexander’s mindset changed after 1757 or if, before his sudden death from putrid fever, he did indeed intend to write a second edition with an expansion on the characteristics of the Turks, as there is no evidence of it. However, it would be foolish to suppose or accept that the second edition was Alexander’s voice or perspective; the majority of the text was constructed after Alexander’s death and while the inception of a second edition may (or may not) have occurred while Alexander was still alive, Alexander never saw the results of Patrick’s (re)construction. Yet, we do know that Alexander most certainly wrote the entirety of the first edition and Patrick, although he used the original text as the foundation on which to build and consulted fellow scholars for assistance and reference, often relying exclusively on their testimony, constructed the majority of the second edition.

Patrick’s edition of The Natural History was not an expanded and updated version of the brother’s original text, but was also a greatly reorganized version of the brother’s original edition. The first major difference between the two editions one notices is the striking contrast in length. Patrick’s states that his second edition was “a deviation from the miscellaneous mode formerly adopted,” rendering it “necessary to make numerous additions to the Text.” He did indeed make numerous additions: Alexander’s edition was a mere two hundred and seventy pages compared to Patrick’s

nine-hundred-and-forty eight-paged second edition. The contents of Patrick’s version expanded by approximately three hundred percent from the original text.\(^1\) Patrick discussed several topics Alexander merely stated in passing; topics such as government, physics, and literacy were all mentioned in Alexander’s edition in one or two sentences, but Patrick devoted entire chapters to the discussion of these topics.\(^2\) The second edition was not merely a “deviation” from the original text; it was a whole new construction.

The brothers’ methods use of references and sources was also dramatically different. Patrick consulted the accounts of other travel narratives, referring most regularly to Pedro Teixeira, B. Tellez, Dr. Leonhart Rauwolf, and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.\(^3\) Patrick often employed these authorities to compare their accounts of the customs and manners of the local population at Aleppo and to other Ottoman cities, particularly Istanbul.\(^4\) Patrick often corrected, confirmed or denied the accounts made by these other authors. The mistakes that Patrick most often signals out to all those sources he either confirmed or corrected were either the result of previous misconception, false interpretation, or insufficient contact, disagreeing mostly on the practices of Syrian Muslims and the moral behavior of the inhabitants of the region.

While Alexander referred to George Sale’s translation of the Qur’an and also disagreed

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\(^1\) This calculation is in itself deceiving. In relation to page number this assessment is true. However, the literary style is dramatically different between the two editions. Alexander’s includes wide margins and large prints, while Patrick’s edition has much smaller print and extensive notes. It is more accurate to say that the edition was expanded by much more than 300%.

\(^2\) Compare, for example, Alexander’s statement of physics in Russell, *Natural History*, p. 99 to Patrick’s chapter on the state of physics at Aleppo in Russell, *Natural History*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, pp. 89-114.

\(^3\) Damiani, *Enlightened Observer*, p. 137.

with the symptoms of the plague at Aleppo as described by a Dr. Brown, he does not refer nearly as much to other European authorities, relying only on his observations.¹

The brothers were residing in the city when Aleppo, as explained above, was transitioning from a commercial terminus to an imperial gateway. The fact that the second edition was written after Patrick’s residency in India is important – the right to access. Thus, not only did Enlightenment theories of empirical ordering and collecting information establish a means for acquiring knowledge, but conquest facilitated the right to such knowledge. Since Patrick wrote the second edition of *The Natural History* at the end of the eighteenth century during and after his residency in India, not only would his “ordering and collecting” skills have evolved with time, but his sense of self as part of a nation that was on the path towards achieving *perfect* knowledge would also have greatly influenced how he approached the subject matter he investigated. Consequently, the colonial situation in India is vital to our understanding of Patrick’s residency in Aleppo, his attitudes towards the city and inhabitants, and the construction of the second edition of *The Natural History*.

Alexander and Patrick were two Englishmen who resided in Aleppo at two very different points in time: a time before and a time after. Alexander lived and resided in Aleppo during the first half of the eighteenth century, before Britain’s global ascendancy achieved at the victory of the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the Seven Years’ War. Although he lived until 1768 to see the end of the Seven Years’ War with the treaties of

¹ The reference to Sale’s translation of the Qur’an is a footnote in Russell, *Natural History*, p. 110. ; The reference to Dr. Brown can be found in Russell, *Natural History*, p. 140. George Sale (1697 – 1736) wrote *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammad* (London, 1734), one of the first and most popular English translations of the Qur’ân.
Hubertusburg and Paris in 1763, Alexander did not revise his original edition of *The Natural History* nor publish another major literary work. However, the physical world was dramatically different by the time of Patrick’s residency. Even the position of the very city they resided in was in a state of transition from a commercial hub to an imperial gateway. Only Patrick lived and wrote after the rise of Britain’s imperial sun.

Such distinction is crucial because Alexander’s and Patrick’s attitudes and viewpoints would have been significantly different. With Britain’s rise to cultural and political ascendency, Patrick’s belief in his own *right* to access information, however intimate, would have been much greater than Alexander’s. Such right to knowledge collection is evident in Patrick’s editions not only in fact that he collected such a greater volume of information, but also that the collection of his information was much more invasive and dehumanizing. For example, in note 55, Patrick dedicated several pages to the discussion of circumcision, relating information about the Prophet, who he claimed was “born without the Prepuce.” Although the inclusion of such information was arguably medical, the fact that it was mentioned and its discussion in detail, which could be read by a general public, is itself dehumanizing of eastern peoples.

II. Useful Knowledge and Orientalism: Rise of the Discipline

The construction of the second edition, including topics, references, and illustrations never depicted in Alexander’s edition, was, as a whole, entirely Patrick’s. In the approach towards societies and people, Alexander’s edition consisted of observational collection of information, while Patrick applied empirical methods of data collection.
collecting to order and classify this Levantine city. This transition from the sampling of nature to the sampling of people illustrates the progression of knowledge in the span between the publications of the two editions. Unlike the interruption and tangent-prone style of the main narrative, seen in the first edition by Alexander, Patrick’s narrative is organized and concise which gains scholarly credibility and legitimacy among other intellectuals. Furthermore, his greater discussion and in-depth look into the peoples and customs of the Near East fulfilled public interests. Patrick organized the material aspects of the Oriental society systematically and disseminated this information as specialized knowledge.

Furthermore, Alexander’s lack of organization in comparison to Patrick’s edition is also evident in the ways that literary arrangement of information was evolving. After describing the houses, streets, khans, bazaars, suburbs, river, gardens, topographical area, and seasons, Alexander began his immediate discussion of the natural environment, including his taxonomies and descriptions of the city’s and region’s plants and animals. Starting on page sixteen, these laborious descriptions and taxonomies continue until page seventy-seven. However, within these taxonomic descriptions were random pieces of information about the inhabitants and one must filter through all of this disarray of information, especially if the reader was only interested in one aspect of “Oriental” life. In the second edition, Patrick reorganized the original text and, with his additions, crafted a more concise and succinct version that was neatly catalogued into volumes, books, chapters and subchapters. These chapters and subchapters were divided into different fields of study.
Although the brothers were both scholars and physicians schooled in the British Enlightenment, the physical, intellectual, and technological world changed dramatically between the inception and construction of the two editions. Intellectually, the scope of knowledge was changing. Alexander’s descriptive cataloguing systems and taxonomies for arranging and ordering nature were outdated and obsolete by the time of the second edition’s publication. Since Alexander lacked the method of the Linnaean system, produced after his edition was published, his method of classification consisted of organizing long lists with their Latin equivalent in the footnotes. In that time, Carl Linnaeus standardized the collection of information into categories with his binomial classification system.\(^1\) Patrick reorganized not only Alexander’s taxonomies, but also the text. In the process of revision, Patrick, in his attempt to remain true to Alexander’s original text, maintained Alexander’s organization of the botany of Aleppo and the surrounding regions, only including the Arabic translation next to Alexander’s Latin classifications in the footnotes. However, he stated at the end of the chapter, that these plants and trees will be “inserted under their proper classes in the botanical Catalogue of plants growing in the vicinity of that city,” which was “to be given in a future chapter.”\(^2\) The change from Alexander’s miscellaneous observations to Patrick’s ordered cataloging of the life and manners of the

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\(^1\) Starkey, “Mercantile Gentlemen,” p. 36.
Turkish collective as seen in Aleppo is the shift from “indulgent descriptions” to “descriptions on which Orientalism in general and later Orientalists in particularly can draw, build, and base further scientific observation and description.”¹ Thus, one sees a knowledge production in process. The process of (re)prioritizing the information in Alexander’s edition represented the transition from the Botanist’s observations to the Orientalist’s ethnography.

The division of labor in collecting knowledge and the breaking down of this knowledge into specific fields was for the purpose of perfecting knowledge. As Patrick states, “the subjects of research, contracted within narrower bounds, would be pursued with more vigour; and persons abroad, being more confident in the communications proving acceptable in Europe would more readily transmit their observations.”² The division of knowledge into specific fields and this cataloguing of this information by field, instead of region or author, allowed easier access not only for readers, but also for scholars, who could then expand on the information they read without risking repetition due to their lack of easy access to knowledge. No one person, then, would be responsible for the relaying of information and knowledge about the world; it would take a collection of

² Russell, Natural History, p. x.
literature from numerous specialized fields of knowledge in order to be on the path for perfect knowledge.

Similarly, the collection of information and knowledge about eastern societies and their inhabitants required specific, as oppose to general, investigations into different characteristics of “Oriental” life. Such characteristics that distinguished the “Orient” from Europe, as the image emerged as a result the collection and dissemination of knowledge, included the language, conventions, religion, region and these characteristic formed the fields of Oriental linguistics, ethnography, theology, and topography. The two brothers’ editions then, from Alexander’s general attempt organize the physical and material world to Patrick’s distinction and expansion of this information into specific fields, measures the transformation from useful knowledge to specialized knowledge and orientalism.

III. Authority and Authorship

The relationship between national ascendency and authority is evident in the Russell brothers’ two editions. Alexander, writing before Britain’s political conquest of India, gained his authority as a scientists and a physician. The information he collected and the knowledge he relayed was legitimized not only by his long residency and intimacy with the local population, but also by his profession and empirical observations. Patrick, on the other hand, posits himself as the ultimate authority on the “East” as it was derived from what was, in the late 1700s, the British Empire. Patrick gained his authority because he was British, because the validity of knowledge became closely related to the author’s position within a global hegemony.
The most surprising aspect of these two editions is that Patrick’s revision was so drastic yet he did not assume authorship of his work, publishing his manuscript under his brother’s name. In this way, Patrick achieves authority and legitimacy through the authority of his brother. In this way, Patrick achieves authority and legitimacy through the authority of his brother. Alexander’s publication was incredibly successful. Within a year of Alexander’s publication, an excerpt concerning the description of the city of Aleppo from the book was reprinted in *A Compendium of the Most Approved Modern Travels* (Dublin: 1757), a German translation of which was published in 1784. Alexander’s description of the city was also reprinted in 1757 in Bartholomew Plaisted’s account of his journey from Calcutta to England. Finally, the first and only full translation of the first edition was published by a Dutch ichthyologist in 1762.¹ John Fothergill stated the book was being “one of the most important productions in medicine.” ² The success of Alexander’s book meant that Patrick’s revision would already be a success and his authority, channeled through his brother, would be widely accepted and valued.

IV. Audience: From Ignorant to Informed

The different constructions of the versions Alexander’s editions had scientific purpose and the scope of his scientific investigation was much more limiting than Patrick’s. According to Patrick, Alexander “was liable to the imputation of being obscure by endeavoring to be concise,” and his work to be faulty for “supposing his

Reader already informed of matters familiar to himself” thereby “omitting circumstances in his descriptions, which perspicuity required to be inserted.”

Alexander was writing for a very specific audience. Patrick, on this observation, extended the manuscript to not only appeal to a more general audience but to include a greater audience, an audience which did not necessarily need to be as knowledgeable as Alexander’s intended audience. To be inclusive is to disseminate and create more useful knowledge to a wider and more receptive public.

Furthermore, unlike travel literature before which provided useful information for those travelers and merchants abroad, such as the work of Henry Abbott, the information collected by Alexander and Patrick was information that could benefit non-travelers at home in libraries. The general reader could now gain knowledge about a specific “Oriental” field as he desire without ever having to leave his home. Furthermore, these readers could become authorities of particularly specialized fields. Patrick commented that “an ample field is open for Mohammeden theology; and by looking into the catalogue of Oriental manuscripts preserved in several libraries in Europe, the reader will find that the student versed in the Mohammedan law, must acquire his knowledge by turning over a multitude of volumes.”

 Possibly CONCLUSION

Into the Nineteenth Century

The sixteenth through eighteenth centuries were simply preliminary for the birth of the “pre-modern” period in world history. By the 1800s, the same generation of

Middle Easterners and Europeans who witnessed the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment era also witnessed the establishment of European world hegemony. Although it was indeed a European transformation, Britain was at its forefront. Thus, by 1800 there had reached a decisively higher level of social power than was to before in Europe.\(^1\) Although Britain’s transformation was a historical process and not as an isolated new world state of being, the eighteenth century was decisive and significant for several reasons: the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment and their consequent impact on world politics, economics, and intellectual society. The cultural phenomenon, along with the growth of Western global hegemony, resulted in the construction of particular attitudes towards what became the “Orient.”

\(^1\) Hodgson, “Great Western Transmutation,” p. 45.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Alexander Russell, M.D., FRS</th>
<th>Patrick Russell, M.D. FRS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Life</td>
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<td><em>A Natural History of Aleppo</em> and Parts Adjacent Containing A Description of the City, and the Principle Natural Productions in its Neighborhood; Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases particularly of the Plague with the Methods used by the Europeans for their Preservations*</td>
<td><em>The Natural History of Aleppo containing A Description of the City, and the Principle Natural Productions in its Neighbourhood; Together with an Account of the Climate, Inhabitants, and Diseases; Particularly of the Plague. The Second Edition, Revised, Enlarged, and Illustrated with Notes</em></td>
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<td>“Republic of Letters”</td>
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<td><em>Account of Two Paralytic Cases</em> Of Several Hydatids discharged with the Urine (1767)</td>
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<td><em>An Essay on his Character</em> (London: 1770)</td>
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