"The Touch of Civilization"

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The progression of American and Russian expansion across the continents was conquest based on military might and populations willing to migrate, endure harsh terrains and climates, and settle on the land. The American growth across the plains and the continent did not precisely parallel the Russian advance eastward into the Kazakh Steppe and Siberia, but there were comparable perceptions and attitudes expressed about the land and people being colonized to justify internal colonization. Americans and Russians shared with their European contemporaries the same philosophies, science, ethnologies, and agrarian motivations prevalent in the nineteenth-century imperial vision. These mutually held beliefs shaped the relationships and policies between the colonial frontier and the metropole, between the central government and local administrations, and between colonizer and colonized.

The American and Russian perceptions and attitudes were not, however, mirror images of each other, but Americans and Russians nonetheless held firmly entrenched perceptions and attitudes about the Sioux and Kazakhs. Backwardness and barbarism were like conjoined siblings in the minds of Americans and Russians, whose civilizing missions could elevate the Sioux and Kazakhs sufficiently from their backwardness and barbarism to prevent the seemingly inevitable extinction. When analogized against competing perceptions, attitudes, typologies, and images—particularly American and Russian exceptionalism—the result was denigration and dislocation of the Sioux and Kazakhs.
Internal colonization operated under amalgamated typologies and imagology in the depiction of other peoples, as well as one’s own, which fused with American and Russian nationalisms in the latter half of the nineteenth century. According to Margaret Ziolkowski, typologies and imagology was “not transparent but a conventionalized process” that placed value on social constructions and identities. Typology and imagery presented portraits of Sioux and Kazakhs that did not “simply reflect stereotypes—it reinforces or even helps to engender them.” Contrasted against concepts of “American” and “Russian,” these typologies and imageries reinforced imperial expansion that resulted in the process of internal colonization.

In order to understand this process, it is important to note that the military conquest and subsequent internal colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs did not happen in a political, economic, or social vacuum. The United States and Russia eagerly consumed the land and adopted and implemented strategies to assimilate the people but failed consistently to achieve the objective using the policies and programs designed with that purpose in mind. In this regard, the two processes differed considerably despite sharing similar objectives. In the end, however, the consequences for the Sioux and the Kazakhs were comparable. Americanization or Russification, two policies designed to assimilate the Sioux and the Kazakhs, also intentionally destroyed or severely undermined the social bonds that seemed to Americans and Russians as the reason for Sioux and Kazakh backwardness and barbarism.

Therefore, while the process is manifest, that alone does not explain the consequences for the Sioux or the Kazakhs, nor does it necessarily illuminate the perceptions and attitudes voiced by Americans and Russians about expansion, conquest, and internal colonization. It was clear that the seemingly empty spaces of the plains and the steppe attracted pioneers and peasants to that presumably free land, which pushed the United States and tsarist Russia to expend considerable resources and effort to conquer and colonize the regions claimed by the Sioux and the Kazakhs. This chapter examines the American and Russian typologies and imageries of the land and people used to justify and eventually implement expansion and internal colonization.

AMERICAN VERSUS RUSSIAN EXCEPTIONALISM
Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans and Russians created exceptionalist narratives to justify expansion and conquest and to explain the accompanying cultural, social, political, and economic rejuvenation. The United States and Russia both desired to distinguish themselves from European traditions,
empires, societies, and cultures. In the American case, the goal was to illustrate that the United States differed from Europe; but the Russians desired to demonstrate their similarities. The American narrative, according to Barbara Bush, imagined “an exceptional republic [destined] to spread the superior American way of life, rooted in democratic republicanism and Protestant religious values.”

Thomas Jefferson explained in an 1809 letter to James Madison that “we should have such an empire for liberty as she has never surveyed since the creation: & I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire & self government.”

It was as optimistic an expression as one could possibly imagine that prophesied an American expansion across the continent. Historian Walter Nugent summarized American ideologically constructed exceptionalism that exuded “progress, national glory, and successful stewardship all rolled into one. White Americans were certain that they had the right and duty to take land because they would make it more productive than native peoples, or Spaniards, or Mexicans, had done.”

American exceptionalism situated American expansion as something different from the old European imperialism and colonialism; it was a break with old European social and political edifices. The American vision for the future was optimistic and enlightened; it had a destiny. It was none other than Alexis de Tocqueville, in his classic *Democracy in America,* who envisioned a destiny for the United States that paralleled the destiny of the Russian Empire—only the obstacles and consequences seemed to differ. He explained that the “American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him, the adversaries of the Russian are men. . . . The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword.” Much as the expansion west rejuvenated and invigorated American ideals, Russia’s expansion east resurrected Russia and moved it beyond the self-loathing sometimes evident in literature.

Russian writer Peter Chaadaev lamented, “From the outset of our existence as a society, we have produced nothing for the common benefit of all mankind; not one useful thought has sprung from the arid soil of our fatherland; not one great truth has emerged from our midst; we have not taken the trouble to invent anything ourselves and, of the invention of others, we have borrowed only empty conceits and useless luxuries.” Most Russian intellectuals and government officials did not share Chaadaev’s views. According to historian Andrzej Walicki, Chaadaev believed Russia was “forgotten by Providence, a country without past and without future . . . isolated from mankind and playing no part in universal history.”

Foreign observers also wondered about the civilizing benefits of Russia’s expansion, as Charles Rudy suggested, “the rising sun of progress” casting “its golden beams over the regions of the East. Are these to be intercepted by the
clouds which envelop the Russian Empire?" Russia’s burden, however, was the deleterious stereotypes that one unyielding but prominent critic of Russian imperialism in Asia—George Curzon, an ardent Russophobe—voiced in expressive but rather misanthropic imagery. He claimed that Russia’s expansion into central Asia was a “conquest of Orientals by Orientals, of cognate character by cognate character.” It was not, Curzon asserted, European civilization that “marched forth to vanquish barbarian Asia. This is no nineteenth-century crusade of manners or morals; but upon its former footsteps to reclaim its own kith and kin.” Nonetheless, Walicki rightly noted that Russian backwardness—and to some extent, its exceptionalism—radiated a “peculiar advantage.” Russia “could learn from the experience and use the achievements of Europe, that the intellectual and cultural impact of the West served as a powerful catalyst in the emergence and development of Russian social thought.” The diverse intellectual currents in Russia likewise juxtaposed Russia with the United States, often relying on de Tocqueville’s descriptions.

In 1837 Russian historian, journalist, and Slavophile Mikhail Pogodin critiqued the United States as a country that “cares solely for profit; to be sure she has grown rich, but she will hardly ever bring forth anything great of national, let alone universal significance.” According to historian Abbott Gleason, many Russian intellectuals believed that the Russian Empire and the Russian people represented a “healthy collectivism” and a “peasant socialist utopia” that compared favorably to an America “fated to embody extreme individualism.” Slavophile thought was, Walicki argued, rooted in a “retrospective utopia, a yearning for a lost harmony, a Russian variant of conservative romanticism, setting itself in opposition to the institutions and values of modern, capitalist civilization.” American and Russian intellectuals and political leaders tended to imagine their empires rooted in the agrarian ideal, although it differed somewhat.

Americans sought to distinguish their social and political institutions from Europe, which de Tocqueville highlighted. Those institutional differences became the basis of American exceptionalism, which intensified the contrast between whites and Indians (as well as blacks, Mexicans, and other minorities) in the American milieu. Russia shouldered a different, but very onerous, exceptionalism. Russian autocracy, serfdom, and economic backwardness persisted in the minds of most Europeans and many Russian intellectuals and statesmen. Europeans often used Orientalist rhetoric to characterize Russian social and political institutions, as Curzon did in his polemic against Russian imperialism in central Asia.

These images of Russia as being equally backward and little more than talented imitators of Europe permeated Russian exceptionalist typologies. In
this convoluted calculus, Russians were little more than Oriental Orientalizers. Russian novelist Feodor Dostoevsky, for example, echoed the thinking of many Russian intellectuals who enthusiastically supported Russia’s expansion into the Kazakh Steppe and central Asia. He wrote, in “Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, while in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we are the Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit . . . A new Russia will be created that will restore and resurrect the old one in time and will clearly show her the path to follow.” Russia’s nineteenth-century imperial expansion into central Asia and the Far East represented Russia’s future; it made Russia equal to its European neighbors, who, more often than not, praised Russian mimicry rather than Russian innovation. Russia’s autocratic, subservient past and seemingly unlimited present and future firmly grounded its exceptionalism; however, for many, Russian exceptionalism, its contributions to mankind, directly correlated to its eastward expansion.

Thus, American expansion and the pioneer exemplified the new empire of liberty and the rugged individualist, unshackled by the European cultural and social limitations. An 1871 Handbook for Immigrants to the United States, produced by the American Social Science Association, explained, “The American is born free, he lives free, and he dies free. His government regards him not as a subject, but as a citizen. His laws treat him as equal with everybody about him . . . The whole spirit of this society is in favor of personal independence.” For many Russian intellectuals, unquestionably for Russian Slavophiles, the Russian peasant symbolized and embodied the communal rebirth of the Russian Empire and the Russian nation that European influences unnecessarily corrupted. Historian Hans Kohn, an astute student of Russian history, explained Russia’s exceptionalism: “Out of the very consciousness of her backwardness and lack of liberty grew extravagant dreams of Russia as the founder of a new civilization, as the bearer of universal salvation.” As part of the rhetorical conquest of the Sioux and the Kazakhs, Americans, Russians, and foreign observers evoked ancient images—which later scholars defined as Orientalism—to justify expansion and to characterize the obligation of civilization and progress on ostensibly backward and barbarian peoples.

**COMPARATIVE ORIENTALISTS**

Typologies and imagery were essential elements in American and Russia exceptionalist concepts and vital to the perceptions and attitudes that influenced policies. Edward W. Said’s influential study, *Orientalism*, defined the term in its most negative connotations—exploitative, dominating, and expropriating—a
European invention to describe the exotic, the unusual, the romanticized but not realistic East. The American West, and the indigenous people who lived there, provided a comparable opportunity for Americans to exoticize the region and the people. Writers expropriated Orientalist rhetoric to explain the geography and the people living beyond the frontier of civilization in terms that readers would associate with difference—not one of us, but something old, exciting, perhaps even dangerous, but also weak and slowly dying. Richard Francaviglia, however, defined it in the American context as “a mind-set that readily imagines or perceives an East when it encounters non-Eastern peoples and places.”

According to Francaviglia, the Orient fascinated Americans, which created an exotic region and peoples to colonize; the Americans exoticizing the “American landscape worked hand in hand with the Orientalization of people in frontier America.” In 1858 William Pidgeon observed, “Traits of ancient nations in the Old World are everywhere seen in the fragments of dilapidated cities, pyramids of stone, and walls of immense length; but here, in North America, is found the wreck of empires . . . older than the beginning of the pyramids, and whose history may only be read in the imperishable relics of tumuli, and such great records.”

The Orient these writers described, or the images conveyed, was decadent and backward. Although the Orient once had a glorious past, its present and future was rapidly and indisputably vanishing when confronted with modern civilization.

The travelogues, memoirs, histories, literature, and even official reports used terms, languages, and expressions that a reader readily recognized and that needed no explanation. In the 1894 book Slav and Moslem, Jane Milliken Napier Brodhead descriptively wrote, “the Steppes of Asia, for so many centuries the scenes of permanent rapine and pillage, have been made safe highways by these noble [Russian] pioneers.” The steppe and its nomads axiomatically meant “rapine and pillage.” The words savage or barbarian evoked specific images of the people encountered; lengthy definitions were unnecessary. As Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. noted in the American case, “commentators linked Indians with most of the cultures known previously to Westerners from Old World antiquity: to ancient Greeks, Scythians, Tartars, Spaniards, Hebrews,” but Russians understood these concepts as well. In medieval Europe, the term barbarian meant “Tartar.” Americans embraced the belief that civilization and agriculture were synonymous. The antonym was barbarism, and Americans, Russians, and Europeans readily depicted nomadic peoples to be barbarians and uncivilized. Thus, in the nineteenth century, Americans expropriated some of these ideas and references to describe the American West. “The analogues,” to reference Plains tribes such as the Sioux, according to Henry Nash Smith, that appeared
most often were “the Bedouins of the Arabian desert [and] the Tartars of the Asiatic steppes.”

American readers clearly understood Indians as comparable, and writers framed their analysis, observations, and depictions in expropriated Orientalist images. For example, one description of a possible attack on a wagon train by Indians evoked central Asian imagery without ever mentioning the tribe: “Nothing could be more interesting, than to witness this little caravan surrounded by hordes of the ruthless red Tartars of the desert, brandishing their lances on horseback, and scenting the plunder with panther keenness of instinct.” Every reader understood the context and image: Old World antiquities applied to the American environment. For what other reason would an author refer to “red Tartars”? It was literary typology; America had red Tartars, but so did Russia.

Russians often referred to all Muslims as Tatars—particularly in Siberia and the Kazakh Steppe—failing to distinguish specifically between Tatars and Kazakhs or Tatars and Bashkirs. Russian writers often used terms that a Russian reader interpreted differently although in context might make sense to an American or European. Kochevnik (nomad) needed no explanation in the Russian milieu, nor did musulman (Muslim), and, therefore, Russian writers rarely used terms such as savages or barbarians to describe the Kazakhs but instead relied on words that inferred the inferior character of the non-Russian population. The most authoritative four-volume Russian dictionary of the period defined Tatar to mean “dishonest, cunning, sly, and crude.” There was no need to translate Tatar—Americans understood it as well, and many used the term to define Indians, including the Sioux. Russians easily embraced the term as well. Kazakh and Tatar languages were part of the large Turkic language family; Kazakhs and Tatars were both Muslims, but Kazakhs were not members of the Tatar nation. In the United States, similar etymological transfers occurred; a Sioux was an Indian, a savage was a nomad, but not all Indians were Sioux, nomads, or even savage. In the American lexicon, nineteenth-century American colonizers and pioneers simply carried the typologies and imageries westward to graft these Orientalist concepts onto indigenous peoples. If Indians were red Tartars, so too was an Indian sly, savage, crude, and so on; a Sioux shared those characteristics and was a nomad.

Americans, however, had a term to describe Indians that did not penetrate Russian thinking about the Kazakhs. Americans had, or so they believed, their
own uncivilized barbarians to observe; and by the mid-eighteenth into the nineteenth century, interest in the “noble savage” of the American West replaced fascination with barbarians in Asia or Africa. According to Roy Harvey Pearce, Americans embraced the image of the Indian as noble savage, a supposed opposition to civilization, in order to justify expansion, colonization, extinction, and assimilation.

The Russians never considered Kazakhs to be noble savages. In America the noble savage was dying; in Russia the noble East was already dead—its history lost and replaced by nomads who had no future because they had no past. Nomads existed within the landscape, but they did not remake it. Nomads were a part of the natural world; they were not able to influence it but merely react to its whims. Nomads could follow a trail; they could not make a road. Nomads left no discernible impression on the world they occupied. A nomad never built a library because he had no need for a book. Observers defined nomads by what they were not, not for what they were. For the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, as with many of his contemporaries, peoples of the East had no sense of history, which he regarded as necessary for a civilized people. He wrote that a “respect for the past is a characteristic that distinguishes the educated person from the savage; nomadic tribes have neither a history nor a nobility.” Thus, using language that evoked images of a distant place or a distant past also meant that the people encountered—Sioux or Kazakh—represented a “natural history, not quite human history. Indians became, in the eyes of Euro-Americans, a people with a past, but without a history.” Nomads, such as the Sioux and the Kazakhs, were part of the landscape; and when Americans or Russians entered the plains or the Kazakh Steppe, they perceived “places empty of history, and gave them a beginning and thus meaning.”

The noble savage was living history but also primitive and often a disappointment to Americans hoping to catch a glimpse of a member of a dying breed of man. Sarah Raymond Herndon, describing her encounter with some Sioux, noted that they “were the most wretched-looking human creatures I ever saw, nothing majestic, dignified, or noble-looking . . . I fail as yet to recognize ‘The noble red man.’ They are anything else than dignified; they seem lazy, dirty, obnoxious-looking creatures.” It should be noted, however, that by the time Herndon encountered her “creatures,” the concept of the noble savage was withering away and being replaced by thoughts that the Sioux, as nomads, were prisoners of their primitive society and environment.

In the course of the nineteenth century, Americans and Russians focused on so-called scientific discoveries to explain the backwardness of the Sioux and the Kazakhs, who became objects for study. Americans and Russians embraced
science to justify expansion and colonization as well as to provide seemingly empirical evidence to characterize whole societies as barbaric, backward, uncivilized, ignorant, superstitious, warlike, and untamable. Berkhofer noted that the “effect of physical environment as an explanation of human social and cultural diversity goes back at least to the ancient Greeks, but as a way of analyzing the place of the American Indians among the races of man it was particularly characteristic of Enlightenment thought. An environmental explanation of Indian life originated in Europe, but this approach particularly appealed to thinkers in the newly founded United States.” As Sherry L. Smith asked, “Was savagery an inherited state, or did physical environment explain it?” A nineteenth-century traveler to the Kazakh Steppe, Ellsworth Huntington, raised a similar notion of the “primitive” Kazakhs. He wrote that the “Kirghiz [Kazakhs] are so primitive, their manner of life is so simple and so closely bound up with their physical surroundings, and they are so little influenced by outside forces, that they furnish an unusually good example for the study of the influence of environment on human life.” Huntington also subjectively asserted, “Everywhere the Kirghiz are lazy, according to Occidental standards.”

The disappointment expressed by Herndon and the curiosity conveyed by Huntington reflect two essential perceptions—and one unquestioned assumption—that seemingly merged during the expansion into the plains and steppe: perceptions and attitudes proliferated about the land and people and their relationship to one another. The land was rich, open, untamed, undeveloped, unsettled, and unquestionably an integral part of the expanding state. The people were wild, warlike, in the way, and unquestionably compelled to assimilate or suffer extinction. The land and people both were dangerous, unconquered, untamed, and living in a world outside American and Russian state structures. These perceptions often melded into common attitudes, typologies, stereotypes, and clichés to explain the environment and its inhabitants; they shared similar socio-environmental explanations to describe the failure of the indigenous populations to exploit the land or socially evolve above their barbarism. Americans and Russians assumed that the Sioux and the Kazakhs must assimilate—to which Americans, more than Russians, also accepted the probability of extinction.

Thus, the idea of the noble savage was an exaggerated exoticism that diminished by the time the United States determined to conquer the Sioux, but Americans measured themselves by the images and typologies they constructed and encountered. Russians continually used Europe—its culture, its own civilizing progress—to evaluate their societal growth; it was also a useful barometer easily measured against the peoples of the steppe. The United States and Russia juxtaposed their own societies against the exotic Other, the axiomatic
backwardness of those peoples colonized; Americans and Russians both exhibited their own different brand of Orientalism.

**ORIENTALISM IN THE AMERICAN WEST AND THE RUSSIAN EAST**

Writers and travelers in the United States or Russia provide some of the richest descriptive Orientalist accounts that reflected not only their own perceptions and attitudes; travelogues conveyed to the reader those essential elements of the people or the environment they encountered in a language and utilitarian manner that reinforced attitudes and perceptions about the other. It is also a form of Orientalism that is not often attendant with American expansion and colonization but is typically associated with British, French, and Russian imperialism in South Asia, the Near East, North Africa, and central Asia. It was not always an overtly conveyed juxtaposition but was often surreptitiously concealed within the narrative.

American and Russian perceptions, attitudes, typologies, and imageries were not nineteenth-century fabrications but manufactured over two or three centuries of expansion and reinforced during the nineteenth-century era of conquest. Equally important, Americans and Russians had perceptions of themselves as superior, civilized, and Christian that easily juxtaposed against the people they encountered during expansion, conquest, and colonization. The Americans knew Indians—or at least thought they did—dealt with them, fought against and with them, and perceived them, ultimately, as obstacles to expansion. Just as the wilderness needed to be conquered and tamed, it was understood that so too the people should be governed and disciplined. When Americans encountered the Sioux, they already possessed, in their minds, indisputable facts about their Indianness that made the Sioux obstacles to American expansion. In the world that Americans created during westward expansion, the Sioux were warlike and uncivilized. It was almost axiomatic—supported by new science and reinforced by seemingly weekly reports of attacks and depredations despite evidence of intelligent, articulate, educated Sioux who shared and exhibited all the characteristics of Americanness that Americans wanted, such as faith, frugality, and labor.

Similarly, when Russians encountered the Kazakhs, they possessed attitudes already shaped by a discourse that evolved over centuries, reinforced during the nineteenth century by scholars and government officials, and not quickly abandoned by a newly formed respect or disgust for these incorrigible Turkic nomads. In the nineteenth century, the Russian perspective evolved through
an emerging sense of greatness and empire, Christian civilization, and both Americans and Russians regarded nomadic peoples as obstacles to expansion, empire, and civilization. But Russians also equated the Kazakhs with a horrific past—the Mongol Yoke—a memory not easily erased during expansion. It was, instead, partial justification for further expansion, which was always about land and people. As both empires expanded their frontiers, they incorporated new territories and new populations. The land, whether the American West or the Russian East, was fresh; untilled; and a vast, open space just waiting for the right people to exploit its bounty. Many Americans and Russians believed fervently that they were the people chosen to civilize and tame the untapped riches long neglected by the indigenous peoples. In a sense, the Sioux and Kazakhs saw the land as it was; Americans and Russians saw the land for what they wanted it to be.

PLAINS VERSUS STEPPE

The American Great Plains for decades persisted in the public consciousness as the “great American desert,” comparable to the “sandy wastes of the deserts or steppes of Siberia rather than to the dead sands of Africa.”\(^43\) Zebulon Pike, one of the first Americans to cross it, described it as a desert that might “become as celebrated as the African deserts,” although he also believed it could support pastoral livestock rather than intensive agriculture.\(^44\) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle described the plains as preserving “the common characteristics of barrenness, inhospitality, and misery. There are no inhabitants of this land of despair.”\(^45\) It was a region that “for many a long year served as a barrier against the advance of civilization.”\(^46\)

Russians had no illusions about the steppe; it was arid, dangerous, and absent all signs of civilization. But while it might not possess anything of great value, the steppe was the path to Asia’s riches. In the United States, the plains were not always the destination; the plains gave access to the West’s riches (California’s or Montana’s gold). In both cases, the plains and the steppe opened the doors to something better, richer, and settled after Americans and Russians charged through to the other side. Of course, accounts of a journey across the barren Kazakh Steppe mirrored similar fears and dangers expressed by American travelers across the barren plains. One seemingly fatigued writer revealed, “Fourteen weary days were occupied in crossing the steppe; the marches were long, depending on uncertain supplies of grass and water, which sometimes wholly failed them; food for man and beast had to be carried with the party, for not a trace of human habitation is to be met with in these inhospitable wilds.”\(^47\) And so, the weary traveler notes the “[a]rid uniformity and silence characterize the steppe. Throughout
its entire extent of four hundred and thirty-four miles, one discovers trees in two places only; moreover, everywhere only small prickly shrubs sprouting three feet in height, and but sparingly distributed, so that the eye of an European is unable to support the monotony of this horrible desert.”

British traveler Fred Burnaby described his venture into the steppe as a place that “underwent an entire change. We had left all traces of civilization behind us, and were regularly upon the steppes.” The American Great Plains could be likened to “the dead level extending on either side the Father of Waters . . . like an ocean petrified in the midst of a great storm . . . where, if ever, broken surface and pines, sparse and stunted, bring relief to the eye.”

Many travelers compared the plains and steppe to the ocean: “a vast unbroken plain, like that in which we now travelled for nearly one hundred and fifty miles, is little less tiresome to the eye, and fatiguing to the spirit, than the dreary solitude of the ocean.” For many observers, the rolling, treeless, and stunted hills prompted the ocean images, with those unending gentle waves. Perhaps it was the horizon, so distant yet always seemingly within reach; mountains with trees become a new but formidable shoreline to attain. Quoting geographer Alexander von Humboldt, another writer notes that the plains and the steppe resemble “the ocean, the steppe fills the mind with the feeling of infinity; and thought, escaping from the visible impressions of space, rises to contemplations of a higher order.”

A British journalist offered this description of the American plains and prairies: “walk out to the east till all sight and sound of the little village is lost in the distance, and then look round you. There is a huge, undulating ocean of long, rich grass and flowers . . . not a shrub or bush to break the dead level of the distant horizon—nothing to vary the wide-spread sea of verdure.” Father Pierre De Smet described his journey across the plains as “a troubled sea that had suddenly calmed. Day after day the scene is unchanged. Like waves, hills succeed valleys interminably . . . In summer it is an ocean of verdure strewn with flowers.”

The ocean metaphor was ubiquitous: “that terrestrial ocean well styled ‘The Great Plains’” where one sees “that wonderful platitude of the continent . . . As far as the eye can reach—not a house, not a tree, not shrub, except the dwarf sage-brush! It is one rolling sea of light green, often settling into a level as smooth as Holland.” Emigrants and traders departed Independence, Missouri, to “embark upon the great prairie ocean” along the Oregon Trail, where they encountered “scenery, though tame, [that] is graceful and pleasing. Here are level plains, too wide for the eye to measure; green undulations, like motionless swells of the ocean.” Railroads across the plains and, much later, the steppes and Siberia, became “those palace ships that navigate the great ocean of the plains, ay, and run the breakers of the mighty mountains, dashing through
canons and over devious passes.”

On the steppe, “Not a tree nor a shrub is to be seen on which the wearied eye can rest. The whole steppe may be compared to the boundless ocean when its wide-spreading waves have become all at once motionless.”

Sunsets conjured stirring and romantic visions on the plains, where “out at sea in this green, waveless ocean, the sun goes down upon us. Seldom has such a setting been seen.” Similarly, on the Kazakh Steppe, Charles Rudy observed that its “uninterrupted expanse . . . lends an almost inconceivable splendor to the reddened sky, and the sands, rendered blood-red by the sinking orb, are reflected upon the overhanging sky in innumerable and ever-changing forms.”

Trees, mountains, trails, and even a solitary cabin or hut morphed into majestic symbols of civilization; the plains and steppe remained barren and strangely wild, backward, and uncivilized. As historian Katya Hokanson explained, “the flatness of the [plains and steppe] indicated a lack of cultural and historical highs and lows—names and places that should have left their mark on history but instead remained uninscribed by culture.”

A Russian traveler, Baron von Meyendorf, wrote after crossing the steppe, “I can scarcely give the reader an idea of the joy which I experienced when I found myself once more in a wood; the roaring of the wind through the branches, the quivering of the leaves of the trees, the greenness of the landscape, all this seemed to me as something entirely new, recalled to me the memories of my father-land, and raised in me the most pleasurable sensations. Amongst the deserts and with the nomads one first learns to appreciate the good fortune of being a European.”

Americans had similar thoughts, rediscovering civilization at some point along the overland trails heading west, and writers often used analogies and similarities between the plains and the steppe that appeared frequently in scientific and popular literature. Many writers described the plains or steppe by referring to the other, tapping into preconceived images. One such author described the plains as “solitary as the Steppes of Siberia, crossed only by roaming herds of buffaloes or by Indian warriors on their wild horses, darting swiftly as the wind, and occasionally by the train of the immigrant moving slowly along and disappearing on the horizon like the caravan on the desert.”

Referencing Siberia immediately conjured images of distant, remote, desolate, and uninhabited regions of Russia, with its long “arable plains [that] are comparable to our prairies and Argentina’s pampas.”

American John W. Bookwalter employed a different tactic to describe his journey through the grassland regions of Russian Siberia into the Kazakh Steppe. He described images that he knew his readers would easily understand: to “all Americans who have traveled to the Rocky Mountains through the States of Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska, the country I have come
through is easy to describe. To simply say it is exactly like it would constitute a more or less perfect description. Indeed, I have never seen any two things more absolutely similar than are the prairie and plains regions of our country and that vast region lying in southeast Russia.66 It was easy for most Americans to perceive the region he visited by sketching the analogous impression of a comparable climate and topography. Americans had a fixed perception of the plains that Bookwalter exploited in his description of the steppe; he relied on canonical typologies to conjure specific images. But Bookwalter was also a tourist; his eyes focused on descriptive features of the land and its inhabitants. He was not there to study, merely to describe what he experienced.

Frederick von Hellwald, who echoed Meyendorf’s appreciation of trees after weeks on the steppe, argued that “steppes and mountain tracts here also form that fundamental contrast which pervades all conditions of nature and civilization. The lofty mountains with their plenteous supply of water tend to produce food, to impart animation, and advance civilization; whereas the low level steppe causes everything to waste away and become depressed, and thus acts as a hindrance to civilization.”67 Hugo Stumm traveled throughout the steppe and claimed that west of the Urals was Russian civilization, but east was “interminable plains and steppes . . . and, like the nomad Kirghiz-Kaissaks by which they are inhabited, giving a picture of thorough Asiatic wildness and absence of civilization.”68 Nature was, as Mark Cocker noted, “fruitful but she was also wild and threatening, which carried profoundly negative implications for those humans who lived closest to her.”69

American, Russian, and foreign travelers depicted the Sioux and the Kazakhs, living closest to the wild plains and steppe, as representatives of ancient mankind, observed for what they might explain about mankind’s social and cultural evolution. The Americans and the Russians eagerly dispatched scientific expeditions to study the land and the people. In a sense, the conclusions and interpretations merged into one: the barren land created barren peoples—peoples who lacked civilization, modernity, and culture. Not all imagery was negative, however. The plains and the steppe appeared, occasionally, to be a garden, a new Eden, beautiful and welcoming but desperately in need of enterprising pioneers and peasants willing to tame and exploit its bountiful possibilities. That control and exploitation of the land meant taking it from those who stood in the way or neglected nature’s gifts.70 The Sioux and Kazakhs occupied land they failed to exploit; the sentiment was so eloquently expressed by John Quincy Adams in 1802 when he asked, “Shall the liberal bounties of Providence to the race of man be monopolized by one of ten thousand for whom they were created? Shall the exuberant bosom of the common mother, amply adequate to the nourishment
of millions, be claimed exclusively by a few hundreds of her offspring? Similar views appeared countless times in the press, historical works, fiction, and scientific or other published sources.

Foreign travelers to the steppe, however, generally used language and expressions to describe the Kazakhs that illustrated the literal comparison their readers easily recognized and understood. For example, John Foster Fraser visited an aul and described the Kazakhs as the “Red Indians of the West Siberian steppes.” He noted that the Russians “have conquered them, and pushed them upon the least fertile tracts of land to make room for immigrants. The race is decreasing in number, and will one of these days disappear from the face of the earth altogether.” He observed parallels between the fate of Kazakh and Sioux populations in the United States. According to Fraser, Kazakhs “lost their heritage and are soon to be extinct. The touch of civilization means death to them.”

The idea of extinction was axiomatic to describe the fate of Indians in the United States; when confronted with the Sioux, Americans were prepared to accept the same fate for them as they acknowledged it for all colonized, uncivilized peoples. According to Pearce, Americans were also of “two minds about the Indian whom they were destroying. They pitied his state but saw it as inevitable; they hoped to bring him to civilization but saw that civilization would kill him.” For Fraser and others, echoing Adams, the Kazakhs must civilize or die in order for Russia to exploit “land capable of immense agricultural possibilities, great stretches of prairie waiting for the plough . . . I saw a country that reminded me from the first day to the last . . . of the best parts of western America.”

**BLINDED BY SCIENCE AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS**

In the nineteenth century, educated Americans and Russians embraced the idea that society progressed through clearly delineated phases, and widely read Enlightenment philosophies reinforced those beliefs. Art, science, and technology progressed society toward civilization, and progress involved all facets of the human condition. Eventually, science seemingly proved the idea of progress, evident in the rapid technological and social advances made throughout the nineteenth century. In his work *History of the Idea of Progress*, historian Robert A. Nisbet noted, “faith in arts and sciences” was “still further intoxicated by confidence in progress as a universal law in mankind’s history.” Nineteenth-century Americans enthusiastically embraced progress, whereas many Russians, according to historian Sidney B. Fay, were more skeptical. Nonetheless, many revered science and embraced the notion that man could understand the natural world, control it, and bend it to humanity’s will.
Educated Americans and Russians believed that the natural world served humanity’s progress. Those closer to an untamed, natural world—the nomads—either progressed or succumbed to extinction. By the early nineteenth century, Lord Kames’s theoretical four distinct stages of human development were widely influential in both the United States and Russia. The four stages—hunter-gatherer, herder, farmer, marketer—echoed strongly in the emerging fields of history, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. American and Russian literary and social Romanticism reflected these concepts in art and literature. Kames claimed, “there is great uniformity in the gradual progress of men from the savage state to the highest civilization: beginning with hunting and fishing, advancing to flocks and herds, and then to agriculture and commerce.”

Science, evident in the embryonic fields of geology, history, sociology, ethnography, and anthropology, unwittingly perhaps, reinforced perceptions and attitudes during the nineteenth century. These disciplines legitimized American and Russian internal colonial policies and programs. The Sioux and the Kazakhs, the plains and the steppe, were exciting and exquisite repositories and laboratories to examine unspoiled nature and primitive man.

Americans and Russians dispatched numerous expeditions to discover and study the lands and peoples they conquered, which paralleled similar efforts conducted by the British, French, and Germans in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. Initially in the United States, the military led the majority of these expeditions, of which the Lewis and Clark voyage was but one; but fur trappers also gathered significant information that proved useful to the government. By the 1820s, travelers to the plains published accounts of their adventures that also yielded ostensibly important data on the land and peoples, which further reinforced so-called scientific assessments about civilization’s influence on primitive man and the natural landscapes. In Russia, most expeditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were under the auspices of the military or the Academy of Sciences and, later, the Imperial Geographic Society. Scientific expeditions and military leaders, such as Chokan Valikhanov, Vasili Radlov, and Peter Semenov, expanded the fields of geography, geology, botany, ethnography, and sociology in the Russian Empire.

The United States and Russia dispatched dozens of scientific expeditions into the plains and steppe in order to ascertain the regional natural and human resources, access routes, agricultural suitability, climate, etc. It was also evident that most government-sponsored expeditions were precursors to expansion and conquest. President Jefferson instructed Lewis and Clark not only to map the newly acquired Louisiana Territory, but that the expedition was a “triumph of the American Enlightenment . . . [that] would combine scientific, commercial,
and agricultural concerns with geographical discovery and nation-building.” He insisted that the explorers identify the various tribes along their route, negotiate with them, and inform them that there was a new “Great Father” to advise and protect them. They were to learn all they could about the more powerful tribes, including the Sioux, who inhabited the lands along their route to the Pacific Ocean. Other intrepid explorers followed Lewis and Clark on dozens of similar expeditions, including Zebulon Pike, Stephen Long, Ferdinand Hayden, and even George Custer, on his infamous exploration of the Black Hills in 1873. Beginning in the 1730s and throughout the nineteenth century, Russia dispatched numerous diplomatic and scientific missions to the steppe. In the process, these missions gathered detailed information about the Kazakhs and the land, its resources and commercial opportunities. Herein is one of the major differences between how the United States mapped its interior and learned about its inhabitants compared with Russia’s methods.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Americans used natives as guides and translators, something Russia did as well (chiefly Tatars). In the nineteenth century, however, Russia employed Kazakhs to explore and map the steppes and to penetrate deeper into central Asia. The difference rests on the length of contact and incorporation. Russia claimed sovereignty over the Kazakh Steppe beginning in 1732, and, following the defeat of Kenesary Kasymov in 1847, Russian domination over the steppe and the Kazakhs was generally unchallenged. The United States, on the other hand, was a relative newcomer to the northern plains, purchasing the region in 1803 from France in the Louisiana Purchase. It took the United States another four decades to exert a serious presence there. Well before the American government actively supported formal education for Sioux, the Russian government opened schools in the steppe designed to assimilate Kazakhs into the empire. The Russians wanted to use Russified Kazakhs to explore and negotiate with steppe and central Asian inhabitants.

In 1847 the Russian government’s Omsk kadetskii korpus (Omsk Corps of Cadets) opened and graduated many Kazakhs for duty in the army as translators, guides, and scribes. One of its first students was Chokan Valikhanov (1835–1865), regarded by many scholars as the “first modern scholar and intellectual of his people.” He became a close friend of novelist Dostoevsky (after his exile to the steppe due to his “revolutionary” activities), who later encouraged the young Kazakh to be “the first of your people to interpret for Russia the steppe, its significance, and your people in their relation to Russia.”

Valikhanov’s own scientific career started soon after his appointment to the steppe military staff. In 1858 he undertook the difficult mission to Kashgar,
which was his most significant adventure as well as the one that earned him widespread acclaim. This was a part of the Great Game with Great Britain for influence and control of central Asia. The Russian Geographical Society published accounts of his expedition that were subsequently reproduced in German and English works. As the editors of the English translation noted in the introduction, “Although an officer in the Russian service and a man of good education, he is the son of a Kirghiz Sultan and a native of the Steppes. He is consequently well acquainted with the language and customs of the people of Central Asia, and could go amongst them without exciting the least suspicion of being connected with Russia.”

After Valikhanov’s triumphant return, the government assigned him to the War Ministry and, later, to the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saint Petersburg. While living in the capital he enjoyed the life of a young army officer, but tuberculosis compelled him to return to the Kazakh Steppe in a futile attempt to recover his health.

Valikhanov represented the fully assimilated Kazakh—educated, civilized, and espousing views that conformed to Russia’s agenda; he thoroughly criticized Islamic fanaticism and urged Kazakhs to embrace Russian civilization. He was a remarkable figure—a statue of him still stands in front of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Academy of Sciences building—transcending opposite cultures (nomad versus sedentary, Turk versus Slav, Muslim versus Christian). The American government did not create comparable educational opportunities for the Sioux or most natives, although it later used education to accelerate assimilation. Clearly, there were Indians who emerged in the nineteenth century—most notably, Ely Parker (Seneca), but he was the exception. Americans certainly did not create an opportunity for a Sioux that resembled Valikhanov’s extraordinary expedition. But clearly, Valikhanov was the exception, and his accomplishments did little, if anything, to influence positively the conventional perceptions and attitudes about Kazakhs. By the 1890s, there were certainly some Sioux who exemplified the American ideals of assimilation, such as Charles A. Eastman (Ohúye S’a, “Wins Often”) and Gertrude Bonin (Zitkala-Sa, “Red Bird”), but they too remained exceptions, as long as the vast majority of Sioux remained confined on the reservations. Opportunities for Indians, including Sioux, and for Kazakhs existed in the United States and in tsarist Russia, but they were generally rare and did little to alter base typologies. Predictable stereotypes and clichés were firmly entrenched; although individuals emerged to complicate the typologies and perceptions, their individual successes—exceptional though they might be—could not shake apart the more universally accepted imagery and attitudes that the Sioux and Kazakhs were backward, inferior peoples in desperate need of American or Russian civilizing benefits.
Eastman or Valikhanov, however, represented an idealized version of a civilized Sioux or Kazakh, and Americans and Russians promoted both men as examples of a Sioux or Kazakh successfully elevated from barbarism to civilization because they embraced American or Russian culture. Nevertheless, while the nineteenth-century literature is replete with negative characterizations of the Sioux and the Kazakhs, there were some positive examples as well. For example, Sioux men were “grand-looking men, the warriors, well-made, powerful, and lithe, grave and courteous, dignified, solemn, and majestic.”91 They might be “extremely symmetrical of form, well knit, agile, and easy in their movements.”92

Figure 4.1. Charles A. Eastman, 1913 (courtesy of National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution).
The Kazakh was “Mongol-Turkic,” his “face was flat and wide . . . [with] narrow black eyes, small mouth,” and rarely any “facial hair.”93 His body might be “thick, compact, stout,” of “varying height,” and “strong, when he sits on a horse, so powerfully, it would be difficult to dislodge him.”94 Individuals could be positively described, such as Meyendorf’s meeting with Kazakh sultan Harun Ghazl, “the most distinguished head of the Kirghizzes”: he had “a healthy complexion, large, good-looking eyes, and a pleasant as well as earnest expression; we could easily perceive that he was an exceedingly intelligent person.”95 These physical characteristics are relatively neutral commentaries—quite generalized—but physical appearance was not an attribute of Sioux or Kazakh decline. For these and other observers, the cultural, social, economic, and political conditions established the decline narrative that influenced subsequent American and Russian policies. As Smith noted in the American case, but which was wholly applicable to the Russian one as well, these observers were not “ethnologists or anthropologists in the twentieth-century mold; they did not transcend their own values and worldviews and assumptions about savagery and civilization to meet tribes on their own terms.”96

Writers, government officials, and settlers often depicted the Sioux and Kazakhs as childlike, lazy, and prone to rapaciousness. The governor of Orenburg,
D. V. Volkov, wrote Catherine II that Kazakhs were not innate barbarians but rather were immature and lacked proper morals and manners; they were like infants. The negative perceptions reinforced simplistic stereotypes, such as Sioux being profligate, “unable or unwilling to save enough food for winter, consuming enormous amounts of food at feasts one week then starving the next.” A Kazakh “can go for two days without eating . . . but on the first opportunity
that offers itself he will eat enough for three persons.”99 While Sioux and Kazakh men were lazy gluttons, the women did all the work. Women did “most of the cultivating” and were enslaved by their husbands; “women do all of the work.”100 The treatment of women reflected the uncivilized state of the Sioux and the Kazakhs because “[c]ivilized people pampered women; savage people enslaved them.”101 Americans and Russians identified these various cultural markers to dehumanize the Sioux and the Kazakhs, to treat them as less than individuals with personalities and sensibilities that might require more than simple stereotyping. Dehumanizing the Sioux and Kazakhs absolved the colonizers of guilt and responsibility as they implemented policies that dislocated them from their land, eroding further Sioux and Kazakh social and political institutions.

A certain Sioux and Kazakh behavior that often flummoxed Americans and Russians was the value the Sioux attached to raiding and horse stealing and the value Kazakhs committed to the practice called barymta (that which is due me), believed by the Russians as little more than theft and comparable to American reactions to the Sioux.102 In the minds of both Americans and Russians, these practices epitomized Sioux and Kazakh backwardness, even more than their ostensible mistreatment of women. The simplest reason contrived by Americans and Russians for these two seemingly pointless practices was that the Sioux and Kazakhs were congenital and incorrigible thieves. It was a far more complex cultural and social explanation, but the Americans and the Russians generally failed to look beyond preconceived notions and, instead, relied on well-established typologies.

Scholars identified the role that raiding and horse stealing had for Sioux men, but it was never just simple thievery. Anthony R. McGinnis concluded that the “prestige that came from the risk taken in stealing the horses” equaled the “glory” associated with the “risk of counting coup in battle.”103 Americans often complained about the practice, considered it one of many reasons for unrelenting conflict on the plains, viewed it as motivation for persistent depredations committed against pioneers crossing the plains, and demanded it stop in the numerous treaties they negotiated with the Sioux. The practice also disturbed American sensibilities, conflicted with American perceptions of law and respect for property, and was a source for sustained misunderstanding between Americans and Sioux. According to Agent N. S. Porter on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, stealing horses caused him “more trouble than any other one thing . . . . Where a horse belonging to a white man is found in the possession of the Indians I have no difficulty in getting him; but horses stolen from other Indians they do not like to give up, as they claim it is one of their customs to steal from one another, and the more horses an Indian steals the great Indian he is considered
among his tribe.” 104 The Kazakhs also frustrated the Russians with a practice that from the colonizers’ perspective was simple larceny, but to the Kazakhs it had far more complex social and cultural meaning. The Russians could only see value in the property taken during a barymta, but they were unable to see value in the act or its important cultural or social symbolism. In the Kazakh case, Russian officials understood barymta permitted a claimant to press a grievance; as Aleksei I. Levshin noted, the claimant should not take more than the contested value during a raid. 105 Historian Virginia Martin described barymta as a means to avenge “insult and upholding personal and clan honor.” 106 Even if an American or Russian understood the practice, it still represented a defect in native character, native society, and the cultural attachment to something considered fundamentally uncivilized.

What happened on the frontier of expansion affected and influenced attitudes and policies in the metropole, which more often than not seemed to be playing catch up with boundaries—both the arbitrarily erected physical and political boundaries and the less tangible but equally powerful cultural and social boundaries that distinguished Sioux from American and Kazakh from Russian. The American and Russian governments instituted policies designed to control their indigenous populations, but each also had to manage the expansion and resettlement of millions of pioneers and peasants in the newly conquered territories. In order to facilitate that transfer of land and its resources, the United States and tsarist Russia developed policies that were based on specific need, such as removal and reservations—or, in the Russian case, districts—and were often based on fragile and faulty perceptions of the Sioux and Kazakhs as backward, uncivilized peoples. Essentially, Americans and Russians dehumanized the Sioux and Kazakh symbolically and physically; Americans and Russians Orientalized the Sioux and Kazakhs as subjects to study and a people to assimilate or eliminate. Americans and Russians also Orientalized the places conquered and resolved to remove the land from Sioux and Kazakh control. This process of conquest and internal colonization subsequently deprived sovereignty in the name of civilization. For Americans and Russians, the Orient as an imagined place easily applied to the lands and peoples they encountered. Russia had a real Orient on its frontier, but there was also the imagined one that was backward, decadent, and required Russian civilization. The United States had the West—Orientalized in the imagination—but it too required the American civilizing influence.

The Americans had a wonderful means to express this sense of entitlement, expansion, and empire: Manifest Destiny—a term coined in the 1840s to explain and, more importantly, justify westward expansion. The Russians, on the other hand, never devised a useful singular term, but they certainly debated their
role in Asia and just as eagerly embraced rhetorical justifications about Russia’s expansion, empire, and destiny. Consequently, in the United States after the Civil War, railroads; municipalities; and local, state, and the federal government all promoted expansion and settlement, rapidly accelerating the process and increasing the potential for conflict between pioneer and Sioux. Promotional materials and state institutions are also rich resources to detect perceptions and attitudes. The Russian government, however, officially resisted peasant resettlement until the 1880s, when the government started to enact numerous laws designed to assist peasants who wanted to migrate east. This difference also reflected the pattern of expansion and settlement, but it also complicates the historian’s effort to decipher perceptions and attitudes among Russians regarding the Kazakhs or imperial expansion and colonization.

The United States ardently encouraged pioneers to go west, but the Russian government did not. The Russian government, essentially, tried to plug a hole in the dike with a finger. Russian peasants went east anyway, defying authorities, and settled on land claimed and used by Kazakhs. Conflict ensued, but by the 1880s—as in the United States and the conflict between pioneers and the Sioux—violence against Russian peasants or Kazakh nomads diminished significantly. Moreover, in both cases, the violence was never as ubiquitous as reported. There are numerous examples of friendship and cooperation between pioneers and Sioux and between peasants and Kazakhs. However, when violence did occur, it was vicious and widely reported, especially in the American case. Americans and Russians usually attributed the violence to Sioux and Kazakh martial characters, their purportedly ingrained warlike traits. American and Russian retaliation was usually disproportionate to the first act of violence, regardless of who committed it, and used to justify further conquest and colonization. What this meant was that both the United States and Russia struggled to fulfill their obligations to the Sioux and the Kazakhs, but try they did. Ultimately, confining the Sioux and the Kazakhs to limited spaces was the solution reached by both colonizing states while giving liberally to the pioneers and peasants that very land the Sioux and Kazakhs claimed as their own and necessary for their survival.

The American government encouraged westward settlement but struggled throughout the century to uphold its treaty obligations to keep pioneers off land accorded to Native Americans. The Russian government, however, discouraged peasant migration, but land shortages in the European regions of the empire pushed many peasants eastward; landed nobility in the Russian Empire did not want to lose its unfree labor (serfs) to the east. The Russian government hesitated to allow authorized peasant resettlement in the Kazakh Steppe, even after the 1861 peasant emancipation, but finally conceded to what seemed the
inevitable fact of peasant migration with legislation designed to assist it. The American government chose a somewhat different course. Both situations led ultimately to the loss of political and individual sovereignty for the Sioux and the Kazakhs—the subject of the next chapter, which examines the policies that shaped internal colonization.

NOTES

2. Ibid.
6. He continues, noting that the ‘Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends, and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centres all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Century Co., 1898), 1:559.
12. Ibid.
14. See, for example, David Hecht, Russian Radicals Look to America, 1825–1894 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947).


24. William Pidgeon, Traditions of De-Coo-Dah and antiquarian researches: Comprising extensive explorations, surveys, and excavations of the wonderful and mysterious earthen remains of the mound-builders in America. . . . (New York: Horace Thayer, 1858), 15.


30. Ibid.


42. Ibid., 526–27.


46. Ibid.


56. “Prairie Caravans—Trade in the Far West,” *Niles’ National Register*, September 26, 1846, 52.


68. Hugo Stumm, *Russia in Central Asia: Historical Sketch of Russia’s Progress in the East up to 1873, and of the Incidents which Led to the Campaign against Khiva; with a Description of the Military Districts of the Caucasus, Orenburg, and Turkestan*, trans. J. W. Ozanne and Captain H. Sachs (London: Harrison & Sons, 1885), 188.

70. Historian Ben Kiernan argued, “Genocidal conquerors legitimize their territorial expansion by racial superiority or glorious antiquity at the same time as they claim a unique capacity to put the conquered lands into productive agricultural use.” Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 29.


72. Mayne Reid remarked in The Scalp Hunters, “No handful of men have the right to hold from the great body of mankind a valuable portion of the earth’s surface, without using it.” Reid quoted in Ray Allen Billington, Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The American Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 142. The character Elisha Peabody, in The Big Sky, quips, “When a country which might support so many actually supports so few, then by thunder, the inhabitants have not made good use of the natural possibilities. That failure surely is justification for invasion, peaceful if possible, forceful if necessary, by people who can and will capitalize on opportunity.” A. B. Guthrie Jr., The Big Sky (New York: William Sloane, 1947), 278.


74. Ibid., 41.
75. Ibid., 42.
76. Pearce, Savages of America, 64.
77. Fraser, Real Siberia, vii–viii.


85. Chokan Valikhanov, Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh (Alma-Ata, 1985), 5:176–79. This is the only surviving letter from Dostoevsky to Valikhanov, and he declares his deep love and admiration, writing, “I have never been attracted to someone, not even my brother, as I am to you.” He admonishes the young man to “write more often [and] I will always answer you” (176). Included in this volume was a photograph from 1859, in Semipalatinsk, of Valikhanov and Dostoevsky. In addition, these five volumes contain many of the drawings and watercolors created by Valikhanov while on some of his various scientific expeditions to Semirechye, Issik Kul, Kuldja, and Kashgar.

86. For an enjoyable examination of this interesting diplomatic struggle, see Peter Hopkirk, The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia (New York: Kodansha International, 1992).


88. Michell and Michell quoted in ibid., iv.

89. Many believed that the climate, as well as kymyz, a favorite beverage of the Kazaks derived from fermented mare’s milk, might cure his condition. Indeed, drinking kymyz was a common method to treat tuberculosis in nineteenth-century Russia.

90. Charles A. Eastman (1858–1939), Santee Sioux, was born in Minnesota but fled with his grandmother during the Dakota War of 1862. Fifteen years later, he reunited with his Christian Sioux father and was given the Christian name Charles A. Eastman. He graduated from Dartmouth College, attended Boston University, and earned a medical degree. He joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and served at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where he treated survivors of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre. His American wife, Elaine Goodman, encouraged him to write; he eventually published numerous books and stories about his Sioux life, becoming one of the first authentic Sioux voices for an American reading public. In 1902 he published his memoir, Indian Boyhood. He helped found the Boy Scouts and became politically active in Indian affairs, being one of the cofounders of the Society of American Indians.

Gertrude Bonin (1876–1938) was born on the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota. She went to school in Indiana as part of the off-reservation education policy used by the BIA. She later wrote about this experience in numerous articles and short stories. She attended Earlham College in Indiana; although she did not graduate, she took a job teaching music at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, leaving after several years, in 1901. She wrote many books and stories that garnered considerable attention among the American public. She also became politically active in the early twentieth century, working with the Society of American Indians, the American Indian Defense Association and other groups.


93. Aleksei I. Levshin, Opisanie Kirgiz-kazach’ikh, ili Kirgiz-kaisatskikh, ord i stepei (1832; Almaty: Sanat, 1996), 301.


95. Meyendorf, Orenburg to Bokhara, 6.

96. Smith, View from Officers’ Row., 41.


101. Smith, View from Officers’ Row, 57.

102. Kazakhs committed barymata to extract justice or vengeance; it formed part of adat (Kazakh customary law).


105. Levshin, Opisanie Kirgiz-kazach’ikh, 370. See also Materiały po Kazakhskomu obychnomu praucu (1948; Almaty: Zhalyn Baspasy, 1998). This work has numerous references to barymata, attempting to contextualize it within Kazakh customary law.
