

AN OUTLINE OF WORLD EXPANSION
from
EARLY BEGINNINGS TO THE DAWN OF THE AGE OF DISCOVERY,
CIRCA 3000 B.C. - 1500 A.D.

AN ABSTRACT
of
A THESIS
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The first chapter begins with a short introduction, followed by a discussion of the geographic knowledge of pre-literate societies. The empire of the Incas in South America, and archaeological discoveries in the Old World, are used to illustrate some of the points made.

The remainder of the essay is devoted to an outline of the widening geographical horizons of literate societies, starting with a description of the world views of the Sumerians, the ancient Egyptians, and the Minoans. These three cultures are singled out as the earliest historical prototypes of the self-contained society, the imperialistic society, and the commercial society.

The second chapter opens with the aftermath of the expansion of the Indo-Europeans, including a description of the world of the Tell el-Amarna letters, and the invasion and transformation of the Levant by the 'Peoples of the Sea'. This transformation is documented by excerpts from the Golenischeff Papyrus.

Following an outline of the exploration and colonization of the western Mediterranean by the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and the Greeks, there is a brief discussion of the movement of the economic center of gravity of the Mediterranean world to the new western territories, and their domination by the Roman Republic. The contemporaneous extension of the civilized world of the ancient Levant to the East is also noted, as a concomitant of the establishment of the empire of the Achaemenian Persians.

The second chapter closes with a descriptive geography of the Hellenistic Age, and of the Roman Empire, including the systematization of geography and certain related disciplines, especially astronomy. The scientific advances of this period are underscored by accounts of the explorations of Hanno the Carthaginian, and Pytheas of Marseilles, and of the putative circumnavigation of Africa by Phoenician seamen in the employ of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.

Chapter three covers the Middle Ages, from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. It describes the rivalry of Christendom and Islam in western Eurasia, their impact upon the barbarian societies surrounding them, and their geographical growth through the period of the Crusades and the Mongol conquests. Especial attention is paid to the work of Muslim geographers.

The conquests of the Mongols are evaluated more fully than is usual in general historical outlines, both because of their negative role as a major contributor to the stultification of the once-dynamic culture of Islam, and because, by uniting most of Eurasia, they first brought the extremities of Europe and of Asia into direct contact with one another. This point is underscored by a discussion of the accounts of Marco Polo and other mediaeval travelers in the Far East.

The fourth chapter touches briefly upon the interruption of contact between Far West and Far East in late mediaeval times, and the transatlantic voyages of the Norsemen. It ends with the beginning of the great age of discovery which ushered in the modern era, and closes with a short summation.