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The formation of state borders is often told through the history of war and diplomacy. What is neglected is the tale of how borders of seemingly peaceful and long-extant places were set. In drawing Egypt’s borders, nineteenth-century cartographers were drawing upon a well of knowledge that stretched back into antiquity. Relying on the works of Greco-Roman writers and the Bible itself, cartographers and explorers used the authority of these works to make sense of unfamiliar lands, regardless of any current circumstances. The border with Palestine was determined through the usage of the Old Testament, while classical scholars like Herodotus and Ptolemy set the southern border at the Cataracts. The ancient cartography of Rome was overlaid upon the Egypt of Muhammad Ali. Given the increasing importance Egypt had to the burgeoning British Empire of the nineteenth century, how did this mesh with the influences informing cartographical representations of Egypt? This study argues that the imagined spaces created by Western cartographers informed the trajectory of Britain’s eventual conquest of Egypt. While receding as geopolitical concerns took hold, the classical and biblical influences were nonetheless part of a larger trend of Orientalism that colored the way Westerners interacted with and treated the people of Egypt and the East. By examining the maps and the terminology employed by nineteenth century scholars on Egypt’s geography, a pattern emerges that highlights how much classical and biblical texts had on the Western imagination of Egypt as the modern terms eventually superseded them.
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By

Miguel Angel Chavez
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES</th>
<th>iv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 THE TORRENT OF EGYPT: THE WADI AND THE BIBLE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 CATARACTS OF THE NILE: THE CLASSICS AND EMPIRE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 THE CREATION OF THE SINAI: PARAN, ARABIA PETRAEA, AND SINAI</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 NEW BORDERS: BRITISH EGYPT AND POLITICAL REALITIES</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Pyramids at Giza,” from <em>The People’s Dictionary of the Bible</em>, 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>From James Wyld’s “Egypt, showing the places mentioned in the Holy Scriptures,” 1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>From Arrowsmith’s “Turkey in Asia,” 1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sawyer and Bennett’s “Africa,” 1787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>J. Arrowsmith’s “Egypt,” 1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A. Arrowsmith’s “Map of Upper Egypt,” 1807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thomas Fuller’s “Desertvm Paran,” 1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bernard Lewis’s Map in <em>Islam in History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Map of the 1841 Firman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pitcher’s Map of Ottoman Elayets, circa 1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Delarochette’s “Lower Egypt and the adjacent deserts,” 1802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Martin and Tallis’s “Egypt, and Arabia Petraea,” 1851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Carry and Lavoisne, “Geographical and Historical Map of the Roman Empire,” 1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>“Johnson’s Roman Empire, Imperium Roman,” 1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Johnston’s “Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and Lower Nubia,” 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Google NGram analysis of the usage “Sinai Peninsula,” “Arabia Petraea,” and “Peninsula of Mount Sinai,” between 1800 and 1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Samuel Mitchell, “Map Of Africa, Showing Its Most Recent Discoveries,” 1865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 18: Samuel Mitchell, “Africa,” 1886.................................................................76

Figure 19: Richard Andree, “Africa, north-east,” 1895................................................78

Figure 20: “The Sinai Peninsula proposed borders” as shown in Warburg’s article “The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47”........................................................................84
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Cartography is a lost art. With a swipe of a smartphone, we can find our exact location on the planet in mere seconds. Modern global positioning satellites enable anyone to drive across states and countries without the embarrassing task of asking someone else for directions. We can track shipments of the latest gadgets from Shenzhen, or the location of American drone strikes in Yemen. From afar, anyone can leisurely sit in front of their desk and join in for the search of missing airliners, or just find out the nearest burger joint to eat. As maps are becoming more accurate, more powerful, and more ever present, we need to remember that cartography was a literal art, more akin to literature than mathematics.

What do we mean by art? Maps are, and continue to be, subjective. This may sound like heresy, especially given the advances in geography, topography, and computer science during the last century. But such subjectivity is not blatant, but so embedded into our society as to be considered the norm. To give an example, why is the North Pole on top of the map? And why is the South Pole on the bottom? While it would certainly be jarring, there is no objective reason that north is up, and south is down. And yet, aside from a few novelty maps here and there, the tyranny of north-on-top prevails in modern maps. Why is that? More to the point, even if cartographers were to have an overnight conversion and make the south the “top” of any map, would the lay public accept that?

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1 At the time of this study’s release, the United States was engaged in a aerial drone campaign against the Islamic militants in Yemen. The city of Shenzhen, China was the contemporary center of much of the production of smartphones and other electronic devices shipped around the world.
Thus, like literature, the subjectivity and assumptions of cartography are not simply the confined to the creators of the work, but are instead shared between writer and reader. Cartographers – then and now – do not simply make maps within a vacuum. Their maps must be comprehensible and familiar to their readers. Not only that, but they must be palatable as well. Design matters. Context matters. Assumption matters. And even when the process is complete, the issue of intent and meaning do not end. Like literature, the intent of the cartographer does not monopolize the interpretation of his work. The map-reader can imbue significance and meaning to the map that was never intended by the cartographer. Maps are living documents whose context and meaning change depending on the context of the individual reader. Like a poem or book, a map is open for interpretation by everyone involved.

Like literature, there are general rules in any good mapmaking. Maps must be comprehensible given the context they are created for. A classic example is the subway map of London, New York, or Tokyo. Are those maps scaled representations of the actual train networks of their respective city? No, not in the least. The distances between stations on such maps are not reflective to the real-world distances between those stations. Rather, the map needs to be quickly understood by commuters. The commuter is concerned with the number of stops before their destination, and not necessarily with the fidelity of the map. Likewise, a surveyor may favor a map that is detailed in the topography, elevation, and physical nature of the land in question. That the site may have been the site of a joyous family home or the site of a nefarious crime is irrelevant to the surveyor, who is concerned with the applications of the land for a future construction project. Context matters.

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Where cartography has ceased being an art is not based on the lack of subjectivity or uniform interpretation of the map in question. That will continue so long maps continue to be made and read. Rather, the lost art of cartography stems from our modern context. While cartography is now the product of complex software and satellites, cartography was once the domain of the lone artist, the lone geographer, or the lone historian. More often than not, this was the same individual.

If we conclude that cartography is as subjective and open to interpretation as literature, we must also turn our gazes to the political power of both arts. While the novels or maps may not inspire politicians or generals to decide the fate of nations, these works set the societal tone by either abetting or changing perspectives and arguments. Abraham Lincoln was not off the mark when, meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe for the first time, he was allegedly said to have remarked, “So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!” While nothing in this study will have the singular importance as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, there is also the fact that works need not be revolutionary. Rather, they can simply hold forth the status quo of assumptions and attitudes.

This is where we confront the question of cartography in the context of colonialism and imperialism. Much ink has been expended in detailing the role art and literature played in both perpetuating and challenging Western imperialism across the world in the last two centuries. While many different writers have approached the intersection of the arts and imperialism, none have had as much impact as that of Edward Said’s thesis on the nature of Orientalism. As Said states, Orientalism…

3 Stowe was the author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. It should be mentioned that whether Lincoln actually was to have said this is disputed. Even if not true, the quote’s popularity is due to the fact the idea that Uncle Tom’s Cabin provided a sea change in highlighting the barbarism of slavery in the antebellum United States. The ideology and perception of importance are the context for the quote’s usage above.
“[...] is rather a *distribution* [sic] of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* [sic] not only of a basic geographical distinction the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of “interests” which...it not only creates but also maintains.^[4]"

By this Said suggest that Orientalism, instead of being a simple literary trope, was a systemic framework of knowledge so pervasive, and so universal as to subsume the humanity of those outside “the West” by making “the East” be both simpler and inferior.^[5] Orientalism was not an ideology, but is instead the “constrained” understanding of the complexity of those assumed to be oriental.^[6] In the context of colonialism, Said does not view Orientalism as a post-hoc creation of wily propagandists justifying the evils of imperialism, but as preceding colonialism and even causing colonialism in the first place.^[7] Regardless of the exact nature Orientalism had in the eventual colonization of the Middle East at the hands of Britain and France, what matters is that the cultural and intellectual productions regarding the Orient abetted Orientalism. At the intersection of these ideas, cartography is no exception.

Given the power inherent in the literary (and cartographical) productions to not only convey meaning on the individual level to the reader, but also to perpetuate systemic epistemological frameworks on the collective scale, we can try to ascertain what meaning individual cartographers gave (knowingly and unknowingly) to the regions they sought to depict. But we have to remember that these individuals – be they cartographers, writers, historians, politicians – were simply human. Modern academia is defined by the ever-increasing specialization scholars undertake over niche topics. The expectation that scholars should become world-class experts over a narrow field of study is not without its logic. Even in the narrowest of

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topics, we can find immense richness and depth. This is true in both the sciences and the humanities. But this specialization is a recent phenomenon, a consequence of the ever-expanding knowledge brought forth by the maturation of scholarship in the last couple of centuries. In contrast, such specialization – while not non-existent – was nonetheless not the norm in the nineteenth century. Given that fields as diverse as archaeology, paleontology, physics, astronomy, biology, and geology were barely forming, we must understand the mindset of individuals who did not have our level of knowledge about the most basic questions. It is easy to condemn these individuals for their ignorance. And while such condemnation may be needed, the goal of any analysis of cartography here is not to mock these geographers. It is to understand their mindset.

This ultimately leads us to the purpose of this study. What is the importance in analyzing the Orientalism of cartography? As stated earlier, Orientalism is a framework of knowledge (and the production of knowledge) that distributes the “geographical awareness” of the East through a multitude of sources. In describing the many roots of Orientalism, Said gives the following statement that articulates the psychic divide that differentiated East from West:

“The two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West in this pair of plays will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography. A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant. Aeschylus represents Asia, makes her speak in the person of the aged Persian queen, Xerxes' mother. It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries. There is an analogy between Aeschylus's orchestra, which contains the Asiatic world as the playwright conceives it, and the learned envelope of Orientalist scholarship, which also

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8 This is not to say that interdisciplinary studies are non-existent. This study is indebted to the hypothesis of an eminent English literature scholar.
will hold in the vast, amorphous Asiatic sprawl for sometimes sym-pathetic [sic] but always dominating scrutiny.”

In other words, Said is describing how the division between East and West leads to the study of the East as inherent different and inferior. What is clear here is that the spatial division of the world inherently creates an “us versus them” mentality that has been a mainstay of Western thought for centuries.

Given Said’s mission in Orientalism is to outline a historical narrative to explain both Anglo-French and American imperialism in the Middle East, Said’s explanation on Orientalism’s real-world impact is not going to dwell too much on the minutiae of the origins of each and every orientalist tropes. But it is those tropes that can give us the answer to those very sources that undergirds the phenomenon of Orientalism. The tropes range from the political (e.g. “oriental despotism) to the scandalous (e.g. myths about the eastern harems) to the racial (e.g. inherent oriental deficiencies versus those of Westerners). Each of these tropes have their own, unique origins and unique context. To go over the origin of each and every trope is beyond the purview of this or any single study. But we can study one aspect of Orientalism. And these are the geographic and biblical origins of the borders of one country: Egypt.

Why Egypt, then? To start with, the French invasion of Egypt (1798) is often considered the historiographic starting point for modern Egyptian history, as well as modern Western contact with the Middle East. Leading the invasion, Napoleon Bonaparte sought to emulate the example of Alexander the Great by carrying a copy of the Iliad and Xenophon’s Anabasis with

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9 Said, Orientalism, 57; By “learned envelope of Orientalist scholarship,” Said refers to the collective of Orientalist scholars.
10 Juan Cole, Napoleon’s Egypt, 245-246; This is not to say that the invasion initiated contact, as East-West contact has always been continuous to before notions of “East” and “West” emerged. Rather, the invasion of a Western army against Egypt set a tone of Western economic, political, and military dominance over the Middle East that extends to this very day.
him, as well as Plutarch’s *Lives* in his tent.\textsuperscript{11} Much like Alexander, Napoleon hoped to conquer Egypt and incorporate it into France’s empire. While this expedition turned out to be a massive failure, the scholarly, military, and economic contact the invasion brought did not end with France’s defeat. If anything, the archaeological finds of the ill-fated expedition whetted the curiosity of Westerners for all things Egyptian.\textsuperscript{12}

Aside from the ignominious French invasion, we also have to note something else stated in *Orientalism*. In describing the multifaceted origins of Orientalism, Said gave examples of the eclectic mix of scholars associated with the movement:

“By and large, until the mid-eighteenth century Orientalists were Biblical scholars, students of the Semitic languages, Islamic specialists, or, because the Jesuits had opened up the new study of China, Sinologists.”\textsuperscript{13}

This variation of the scholastic origins of Orientalism indicates that Orientalism, while a systemic monolith that has colored our perspective of Westerners for centuries, is also a variegated, contradicting web of tropes and assumptions. Orientalism is an interconnecting web, structurally supporting itself throughout all aspects of society. While not as pervasive as patriarchy as a system, it is a system nonetheless. And a component of this system is the dual role of biblical and classical influences.

My hypothesis is that the turn of the nineteenth century saw an explosion of philological and archaeological knowledge (and knowledge production) that fundamentally altered our understanding of the past. Ancient civilizations were rediscovered. And ancient tongues like Assyrian and Egyptian were revived after centuries of silence. But this new knowledge was added onto centuries of knowledge beforehand.

\textsuperscript{12} By Egyptian, I mean the Pharaonic and classical phase of Egyptian history.
\textsuperscript{13} Said, *Orientalism*, 51.
Such knowledge is not simply limited to what we consider “empirical” science. Rather, it was the accumulated wisdom and assumptions that the Bible and doctrines imparted on generations of Westerners. The languages of Europe are peppered with idioms and sayings from the Bible. Even our profanity is often to take the Lord’s name in vain. Regardless, the influence of the Bible on our understanding of the world – even in the modern epoch – is so pervasive that it is ironically imperceptible. That is, it is taken for granted to be inherently true because it is so common. In contrast, when Westerners come in contact with Muslims, East Asians, or other cultures, the hegemonic perceptions and idioms of those cultures are jarring on first impression. But it is only in the absence of familiarity that those assumptions become manifest.

This leads us back to the start of this study. Maps are rife with these assumptions. From the orientation of the cardinal directions to the projection used, what is assumed to be objective is in fact subjective. Such subjectivity includes how and where borders are placed. Territorial disputes are a mainstay of geopolitics. Because of this, the drawing of borders is of immense importance. National boundaries are based on many factors like natural markers. Treaties also define national borders. But what about the borders of the past? What about an epoch before the rise of the United Nations and international agreements? About regions without definable landmarks, or agreements that would be familiar to western diplomats? If there were gaps in the knowledge of Westerners, would cartographers not default to using prior sources to make sense of these gaps? Like the bible and classical texts?

This leads us to the case of Egypt. The Nile Valley is the heart of Egyptian history and culture. The river provided life and sustenance for millennia. And yet, the modern boundaries of Egypt extend far outside the valley. They extend hundreds of miles to the west towards Libya, and east to the Red Sea. But of note are two boundaries: the northeastern boundary with Israel
and the border with Sudan. Why is the Sinai part of Egypt? And why is the border of Egypt at the current location with Sudan, especially given the intertwined history of Egypt with Sudan?

Through the investigation of this study, we will see a few phenomena. First, early nineteenth century cartographers relied on biblical and classical texts in order to make sense of the regions in and around Egypt. Increasing contact with Muhammad Ali’s Egypt and the Ottoman Empire necessitated a clear delineation of the boundaries between both states. As time went on, increased British and Western presence in the region meant that familiarity with the state of affairs of the region slowly eclipsed ancient boundaries. Lastly, as Britain established control over Egypt after 1882, the borders of Egypt were no longer an abstract object to be examined from afar. Rather, Egypt’s borders were now bounded with the interests of the British Empire. As real-world facts made their way to Britain and the West in an ever-increasing frequency, the imagery of the past faded away, if inconsistently.

The British perspectives on the shifting Egyptian borders are given primacy in this study. As post-Urabi Egypt was a de facto domain of the larger British Empire, the effect the classics had upon British assumptions in the ultimate demarcation of Egypt’s borders is of greater importance than those of other Western powers. This is not to say that the perspectives of Americans, the French, or other peoples will be ignored. Given British dominance of Egypt until the 1950s (thus outside the bounds of this work), it is only natural to focus on the one Western power to have the ability in demarcating Egypt’s border once Egyptian sovereignty collapsed.

Further, this study is not centered upon the perspectives of indigenous Egyptians or Ottoman Turks as to the demarcation of Egypt’s border, aside from examples given for comparative purposes. The lack of coverage of these opinions is not due to the author’s belief that the opinions of non-Europeans are irrelevant compared to those of Westerners. Nor is this
omission of indigenous opinions an implicit belief that Egyptians or Turks had nothing to do with Egypt’s eventual borders.\textsuperscript{14} Rather, the omission of Egyptian and Turkish perspectives is due to several reasons. First, this author lacks knowledge in either Ottoman Turkish or any dialect of Arabic.\textsuperscript{15} Second, given that the focus of the study is the interplay of Biblical (i.e. Old Testament) and classical (i.e. Greco-Roman) texts with Western cartography, an expansion of the study to cover indigenous beliefs would undermine the narrow arguments of this work. This is not to say that such a study is not worthwhile; only that the bounds of this work are a bit more modest. Indeed the lack of secondary-sources on nineteenth century Islamic, Ottoman, and Arab cartography necessitates further research. Finally, the limited extent of this study is, for all intents and purposes, a case study as to the effects of one strand of Orientalism with regards to the geographical boundaries of one country. Thus, as a subset of the wider notion of Orientalism, the classical influences upon Western conceptions of the geographical Egypt are the primary focus of this study.

This study is structured into six chapters that will examine the shift in British and Western portrayals of the Egyptian frontier throughout the nineteenth century. In Chapter 2, the first geographical feature to be examined at-length is that of the so-called Torrent of Egypt.\textsuperscript{16} Multiple passages in the Old Testament allude to the river as being the southern boundary between the various Jewish states of ancient Canaan and that of Egypt. Further, the manner in which “Egyptian imperialism” operated in Palestine and Syria during the New Kingdom is not

\textsuperscript{14} In fact, the facilitation of Anglo-Egyptian imperial control across the Sinai and into Equatorial Africa is primarily the work of the nameless Egyptian laborers and soldiers who thanklessly fought and expanded Cairo’s (and later London’s) rule across northeastern Africa.

\textsuperscript{15} While I wish to learn these languages in the near future, I am forced to work with the tools at my immediate disposal.

\textsuperscript{16} Also known as the ‘Brook of Egypt,’ or the ‘River of Egypt,’ and even in the Oxford Dictionary as the ‘Wadi of Egypt.’ To avoid confusion, any reference to “river,” “brook,” “wadi,” or “torrent” refers exclusively to Wadi El Arish. All other rivers will be referred by their name only; i.e. the Nile River.
analogous to that of Rome or Britain. This is all to say that how boundaries operated in the long span of ancient Egypt and ancient Canaan does not fit our Westphalian notions of national sovereignty. Nonetheless, as this chapter will make clear, the creation of maps purporting to show both Egyptian and Levantine boundaries (ancient and modern) will not only implicitly support the notion of fixed boundaries, centered on the dry wadi of El Arish. Using maps and references, the chapter will detail the trajectory of cartographical uses of the Torrent of Egypt from the late eighteenth to the latter nineteenth century. Such depictions of the Torrent of Egypt are indicative of cartographers and scholars using the Bible to make sense of the geography of a region they were fundamentally unfamiliar with.

Chapter 3 will then turn its attention to the Nile Valley: the interplay between classical guides in demarcating the southern frontiers of Egypt, and the shift in representations of that frontier in cartographical and travel representations. We will examine Egypt’s empire in Sudan, and grapple with the lack of Western representation of that reality. Even as Western-led expeditions nominally extended Cairo’s control towards the shores of Lake Victoria, cartographical representations of Egypt and Sudan struggled to recognize Egypt’s control (both real and proclaimed).

Chapter 4 will return to the Sinai to examine the changing names of the region. From the late 18th century onwards, cartographers and scholars gave the region different names. From Paran to Arabia Petraea, the shift in nomenclature was due to a shift in emphasis of the geographic understanding of the region. Using maps of the region, we will see how Arabia Petraea was the de facto name assigned to the region, and how the borders of Arabia Petraea did not change much when alternative maps were created depicting the region’s ancient past. Given

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the fluctuating boundaries of Egyptian control over the centuries of Egyptian military might in the ancient Levant, the idea that Egyptian control was constrained within an arbitrary location in the Sinai is ludicrous.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, Chapter 5 will describe the state of cartography after the Urabi Revolt. We will see the final shift in cartography away from these classical and biblical motifs towards the modern maps we are familiar with today. The narrative will end with the Al-Aqaba Crisis of 1906, where the final borders between the Ottomans and British Egypt will be set. These are the same borders that divide present day Egypt from Israel.

\textsuperscript{18} One notable example of this is Egypt’s rivalry with the Hittite Empire, most clearly in the Battle of Kadesh (c.a. 1300 BCE).
CHAPTER 2
THE TORRENT OF EGYPT: THE WADI AND THE BIBLE

Biblical analysis is a tricky business, especially when it comes to the question of who is doing the analysis. After all, what are the motivations of biblical scholars in studying the Bible’s text, authorship, and meaning? Certainly there are scholars who want to find the empirical evidence for the historicity of this or that biblical character. On the other hand, another biblical scholar may be motivated to prove the inerrancy of the Bible against any secular threat. The spectrum of biblical scholarship ranges from apologetics to philology and archaeology. It is not a stretch to argue that a contemporary scholar from the University of Chicago may have different motivations in analyzing the Bible than a scholar from Bob Jones University.

Distinctions between the scholarly and the apologetic break down as we look back upon the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries. Given the lack of knowledge over simple things like radio-carbon dating, the age of the Earth, or more nuanced forms of historical analysis, we have to keep in mind that those scholars in the past we examine here will not necessarily abide by modern standards of scholarship. This chapter will look at the northeastern border of Egypt on the Sinai and look how it was intrinsically linked with a wadi.

Without any context, and without any knowledge of Biblical scholarship, what comes to mind when someone states “the river in Egypt?” Or what about “the river of Egypt?” Given the centrality of the Nile River as the river of Egypt since time immemorial, the Nile is the obvious answer to that question. So, if a version of a Bible supplemented “river” for “torrent,” what would the lay reader imagine in the mental map she constructs? Without any additional context, Canaan may well extend all the way to the eastern bank of the Nile River. But references of
Judean or Hebraic conquests in Egypt are not evident. So what is the River of Egypt, to be sure? And are there any means by which biblical scholars contextualize the vagaries of the Bible? We will examine the interpretation and tools used by such scholars in clarifying what exactly is the River of Egypt. Lastly, we will examine how this river manifested itself onto the maps of nineteenth century Egypt.

The Bible and The Torrent

At the root of these representations of the Egyptian-Palestinian border is how the town El Arish functions within the Western imagination. El Arish is a coastal city, situated on a dry riverbed (the eponymous Wadi El Arish) that channels flash flood waters from the central Sinai towards the Mediterranean. Today, the wadi can be seen from satellite imagery as a winding river of dirt, surrounded by farms, irrigated by the ground water deposited deep by the wadi over many centuries. Once the wadi enters El Arish, the winding dirt river divides El Arish in two. While a river of dirt from these images, the flash floods that do occasionally occur prevent the construction of anything permanent on top of the wadi itself. In essence, there is nothing particularly remarkable about this riverbed at all.

And yet, while wadis are not uncommon in the Sinai or the Levant, Wadi El Arish is significant as it is the most commonly referred location of the River of Egypt. The source for this statement comes from several passages of the Old Testament that touch upon the southern frontiers of Canaan. Within Biblical passage, several different names are given to the wadi. This work will refer it as the Torrent of Egypt, but “River of Egypt,” “Brook of Egypt,” and “Stream of Egypt” are also used in the sources.

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19 While many maps use “Al Arish” or simply “Arish” to describe the name of the city, for the purposes of consistency, this study will only use “El Arish.”
20 Genesis 15:18; Numbers 34:5; Joshua 15:4; Joshua 15:47; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 24:7; 2 Chronicles 7:8; Isaiah 27:12; Ezekiel 47:19; Ezekiel 48:28.
Let us now look at the Biblical inspiration behind the Torrent of Egypt. For the purposes of brevity, we will look at a single passage, Isaiah 27:12. Normally this would be the time where the passage would be quoted. However, with Biblical passages, we have to be mindful of a few things. First, there is not a single Bible; instead, there are multiple translations of the Bible. Each may be translated from different languages. A certain Bible may be the direct translation from Greek to the target language, or it may be translated through Latin instead. Further, each translation is going to be filtered through the preferences of the translator. As we will soon see, the translation of a certain word into English (or any other language) is not simple. There are multiple words in each language for the same thing. In our first example, the New Oxford Annotated Bible’s translation of Isaiah 27:12 describes the Torrent as:

“On that day the Lord will thresh from the channel of the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel.”

This modern translation of the passage recognizes the current understanding of the wadi to be, well, a wadi. The Oxford translation is in full keeping with the modern geography of the terrain, and understands that the name “Torrent of Egypt,” when applied to Wadi El Arish, may be confusing to the reader. Here, there is no ambiguity. However, an older translation gives us the word “torrent” instead. In the Vulgate of St. Jerome, Isaiah 27:12 is given to us (in Latin) as:

“Et erit: in die illa percutiet spicas Dominus a Flumine usque ad torrentem Aegypti; et vos congregabimini unus et unus, filii Israel.”

As we see, “torrentem Aegypti” is the culprit here, giving us the phrase “Torrent of Egypt.” The Latin “torrentis” is defined as a “torrent” or “rushing stream.”\(^22\) A torrent can describe the flash floods that will occasionally occur in a wadi. In any case, there is ambiguity in however a

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translator wants to proceed when translating the passage. If we look at Isaiah 27:12 in the 1611 edition of the King James Bible, the passage comes up as:

And it shall come to passe [sic] in that day, that the Lord shall beate [sic] off from the chanell [sic] of the riuere vnto [sic] the streame [sic] of Egypt, and ye shall bee gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.  

This time, the torrent of Egypt is a stream, not a wadi or torrent. The meaning is the same in all three passages above: that there is a body of moving water that demarcates the Land of Israel and Egypt. But the context of the passage changes when the specific word changes. The passage is either discussing a dry riverbed, a raging torrent, or a calm stream.

Given this ambiguity in translation, how did scholars and the lay public make sense of passages relating to the Torrent of Egypt? One avenue is to examine the written works meant to clarify all this to the readership of the nineteenth century. Here, John Relly Beard’s *The People’s Dictionary of the Bible* (1847) is indicative of this genre of dictionaries.  

These works were compendiums of knowledge meant for the mass public. Much like a standard dictionary or encyclopedia, Beard’s *People’s Dictionary* is sorted alphabetically. Each article is accompanied by an entry and the occasional picture or map. For example, Figure 1 (below) is an idyllic scene of the Nile shoreline, with the Pyramids of Giza in the background. Nothing novel. However, the entry for “Egypt” spanned three to four pages, with multiple images of Pyramids, temples, and a map. In describing the geography of Egypt, Beard’s dictionary proceeds to describe Egypt’s territorial extent:

“The Egyptians, however, possessed the country so far at the northern extremity of the Red Sea, which was of great mercantile importance, as well as the coast of the Mediterranean [sic], on towards Palestine. Hence a winter stream which lies to the south of Gaza, where afterwards the town of Rhinocolura probably lay, may have received the name of

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23 KJV Isaiah 27:12.
‘river of Egypt,’ because the Egyptians extended tither their power along the northeastern coast.”

On the surface, this may differ with the contention of this study that El Arish was the most-oft used boundary in these contemporaneous maps and works. However, El Arish is the modern Arabic name of the wadi and town. Rhinocolura is the Greek name. In other words, the location of ancient Rhinocolura is that of modern El Arish.

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In the same vein, the 1852 edition of *The Biblical Atlas and Scripture Gazette* provides to do the same job as Beard’s *People’s Dictionary* in terms of contextualizing the Bible for a lay audience. What is noteworthy is that *The Biblical Atlas and Scripture Gazette* provides textual descriptions within each map, allowing the reader to make sense of the cartography without the need to flip pages. Embedded within the third map of the atlas (entitled “Journeyings [sic] of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan”), the following passage is given regarding the “River of Egypt:”

“The River of Egypt...or Sihor. Though by way of eminence the term may be applied to the Nile...yet in several places of the Old Testament it refers to a much smaller stream, situate [sic] at the southern border of Canaan...It is more generally considered to be the stream El-Arish [sic]. Amos calls it “the river of the wilderness,” as being on the border of an extensive tract of desert country.”

The description of the Torrent above does note that the Nile would naturally be the candidate as *the* River of Egypt. However, it is imparted to the reader that this natural assumption is incorrect, and that Wadi El Arish is the place that was referenced throughout the Bible; that this wadi is *the* boundary between “an extensive tract of desert country” and Canaan.

By itself, this knowledge would not necessarily translate to more “secular” maps. Aside from maps with a clear religious bent (such as those in the *Scripture Gazette*), the viewpoint of a few religious scholars does not mean cartographers have to agree. That the aforementioned examples would indeed have entries on these topics would not matter if those entries existed within these religious circles alone. Given the modern-day separation between academia and evangelic Christian research, such an assumption would be prudent. And yet this assumption does not account for the fact that the categorization within academic circles today was not as

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clear in the nineteenth century. Case in point is the following report given to the Royal
Geographical Society of London in 1848 regarding an 1847 expedition.28

To give some context, the RGS was founded as a royally sanctioned learned society that
sought to promote the “advancement of geographical knowledge.”29 As Elizabeth Baigent
explains in her review of the RGS’s founders for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,

“The founders aligned geography with the priorities of government, and, by working in
concert with the armed services...and other prestigious learned societies...adroitly won for
the society a commanding position in exploration.”30

In other words, the RGS was not working solo as an intellectual and scholarly association. They
were instead working closely and in tandem with all sectors of the British government and
military.

Augustus Petermann, an elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), was
asked to measure the elevation of the Jordan River as it descended towards the Dead Sea as
compared to the rivers of the United Kingdom.31 Primarily, Petermann wanted to see what
difference the lower elevation of the Dead Sea had on the velocity of the river as compared
to rivers flowing at sea level.32 Petermann concludes his report by explaining the means by which
he obtained his elevation levels for British as well as the map he created of Dead Sea and its
environs. This report would become the basis of a new map that would soon be published. This
map, “Petermann’s Map of Lower Egypt, Sinai, and Arabia Petraea,” is specifically cited in the

28 Augustus Petermann, “On the Fall of the Jordan, and of the Principal Rivers in the United Kingdom,” Journal
of the Royal Geographical Society of London 18 (1848): 89-104.
29 Royal Geographic Society with IBG, “History of the Society,”
http://www.rgs.org/nr/rdonlyres/53ac53b8-ef0a-4129-a97a-db6d83eb59ec/0/historyofthesocietypdf.pdf
30 “Founders of the Royal Geographical Society of London (act. 1.828-1830),” Elizabeth Baigent in Oxford
10, 2013).
31 F RGS stands for "Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society."
RGS report as being published in John Relly Beard’s *The People's Dictionary of the Bible* (1847). Remember, *The People's Dictionary* was cited above. Far from being a niche product for the religiously devout or curious, the citation of a dictionary’s map created on behalf of a governmentally sanctioned organization demonstrates the cross-pollination between popular works and academic, scholarly circles.

With this in mind, we turn to another early example of the duo usage of “Arabia Petraea” and “River of Egypt.” James Wyld’s *Geographia Sacra*, published in 1819 is focused on the geography of the Near East during Biblical times. Most maps are focused on Palestine, showing the territorial extent of various Hebrew kingdoms that are the scenes of Biblical history. In *Geographia Sacra*, four of the nearly two-dozen maps concern Egypt or the Sinai. Despite predating the modern maps that would emerge in the coming decades, the *Geographia Sacra’s* boundaries for northeastern Egypt mimics the geographies of the contemporary Near East. In this first map, “Egypt, showing the places mentioned in the Holy Scriptures” (Figure 2), Wyld names the Sinai as “Arabia Petraea.” More importantly, Wyld depicts El Arish as the easternmost territory under Egyptian auspices. To the north of El Arish, the small area of land depicted by the land is simply captioned “Canaan.” The separation of the two regions is indicated by the presence of El Arish. Oddly, a river of some sort is noted south of El Arish. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the map to indicate its name. But generally, the pattern of boundaries indicated in the reference works is noted here.

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33 Petermann, “On the Fall of the Jordan,” 104.
34 James Wyld, “Egypt, showing the places mentioned in the Holy Scriptures,” *Geographia Sacra. or Scripture Atlas. ; Comprising a Complete Set of Maps Adapted to Elucidate the Events of Sacred History & Which Point Out the Situation of Every Place Mentioned in the Old & New Testaments*, (London: Pinnock & Maunder, 1819).
35 Unfortunately, given the book was accessed through digital scans, a fold-up map purporting to show the Sinai in greater fidelity was not unfolded by the book scanner. Map IV is the only map of the peninsula accessible for the *Geographia Sacra.*
The 1830s and 1840s witnessed a prolific output of cartography from the cartographer John Arrowsmith, a founding fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1830 who took a keen interest in cartography’s relation to the latest discoveries of his day. Arrowsmith used the sketches provided to him by explorers and surveyors, and transformed these into vivid maps of every region of the planet. In honor of his works, numerous mountains, lakes, and other

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landmarks were named after Arrowsmith in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. Despite this, a
cursory look into Arrowsmith’s maps regarding Egypt, the Sinai, and surrounding areas shows
even Arrowsmith was not immune from using classical and biblical toponyms on his maps.

In his map “Turkey in Asia,” published in 1832, Arrowsmith is depicting the geopolitical
state of the Near East (Figure 3). By “Turkey,” Arrowsmith is referring to the Ottoman Empire
itself. Therefore, in contrast to the other examples depicted above, “Turkey in Asia” is situated in
the contemporary world of the 1830s, and not the imagined past of antiquity. And yet, this map is
imagined. Arrowsmith, as far as we know, never travelled to the region. This map on the
Ottoman Empire is based on third-hand accounts. Therefore, the map should not be seen as an
accurate portrayal of the Ottoman Empire. Arrowsmith is making an educated guess as to the
state of the Ottoman realm. We need to keep in mind that there were no satellites or
instantaneous forms of communications for Arrowsmith to rely on.

“Turkey in Asia” extends over a wide area, including Anatolia, the Levant, Mesopotamia,
the Caucasus, and the Sinai. The provinces of the Ottoman Empire are divided into different
provinces, as envisaged by Arrowsmith. What were the implications of the different color
schemes between the regions of “Turkey” and “Egypt” and what can only be termed as
“Arabia?” Further, why did Arrowsmith trace the boundaries of these regions in the manner that
he did? If we look at Egypt’s northeastern border, we see that Egypt “ends” at the “Torrent of
Egypt.” The torrent is clearly marked. In fact, the size of the line drawn to depict the torrent is
the same size as those drawn to denote the Nile Delta. There is no means for any reader of this
map to identify the torrent as a wadi. But more importantly, the map is a map of the region of the

1830s. This is not a map of antiquity or Biblical history. And yet Arrowsmith uses a landmark of that bygone era to depict the boundary between Egypt and Arabia and the rest of the Ottoman Empire. Given Arrowsmith’s unfamiliarity with the region, he had to fill any gaps of knowledge with the information available to him. That information was both varied and numerous. But the Bible’s repeated references to this “River” or “Torrent” is clearly evidenced in Arrowsmith’s “Turkey in Asia.” The usage of the “Torrent of Egypt” in scholarly and popular works allowed him to use this landmark to denote a boundary, a boundary that was not necessarily real.

Figure 3: From Arrowsmith’s “Turkey in Asia,” 1832
The trope of the “Torrent of Egypt” in modern maps is only one example of the usage of Biblical motifs as a fill-in for the gaps of knowledge of the region. The existence of the wadi is not in question, as the Wadi of El Arish is a real feature. However, the fact remains that Wadi El Arish is only one of many wadis. The lack of major landmarks, of major cities, or any historical states that Westerners were familiar with necessitated something to differentiate two foreign (and yet familiar) regions: Egypt and Palestine. Given the importance of both regions in Christian scripture, it is only natural that the Bible would be a key source of information in the creation of cartographical representations of the region. Given the close relationship between Wadi El Arish and the Sinai in general, much more will be expanded upon in Chapter 4 as to how the Sinai’s depiction in maps shifted in how it was named and how it was depicted. But for now, we will examine the Nile Valley and the influence of the classical texts of Greece and Rome.
CHAPTER 3
CATARACTS OF THE NILE: THE CLASSICS AND EMPIRE

A major impetus of this study resulted from the work of Khaled Fahmy’s *All The Pasha’s Men*. While the book itself described the methods of control and surveillance over the soldiery of Muhammad Ali’s army in the midst of his numerous wars of conquests, the thing that stuck out to me were those very conquests. For a brief moment, Muhammad Ali’s empire stretched from Sudan to Crete, encompassed much of the Red Sea, and stretched through most of the Levant and the interior of Anatolia. Nominally a governor of an Ottoman province, Muhammad Ali waged war against the Porte in two wars, the first from 1831-1833, and the second from 1839-1841.\(^\text{39}\) At the Battle of Konya (1832), the forces under Ibrahim Pasha defeated a numerically superior Ottoman force, forcing the Ottomans to cede Syria to Muhammad Ali.\(^\text{40}\) In the second war, Western diplomatic and military pressure brought about the collapse of Ali’s gains in the Levant, but ultimately secured his family’s place as rulers of Egypt for the next century, initially as nominal Ottoman vassals.\(^\text{41}\) The history of the region – if not the world – would have been very different had Muhammad Ali’s empire lasted. Even if we grant that the fetishization of territorial extent is misplaced, that Muhammad Ali’s empire is simply ignored is odd, given the scholarship devoted to Napoleon’s brief imperium, or that of Hitler’s Third Reich.

Given that this first Egyptian Empire fizzled away, what is more remarkable is that a second empire emerged. Unlike the Levantine Empire of Muhammad Ali, this second empire, stretching from the 1810s until 1882 was African in nature. Beginning with Muhammad Ali, and continuing forward, the conquest of Sudan by Egypt created a new empire, which would remain


\(^{40}\) Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*, 78.

\(^{41}\) The dynasty of Muhammad Ali would survive until the Free Officer Movement overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952.
much longer in the orbit of Cairo than those fleeting Syrian possessions. Unlike the first empire, which hugged the Eastern Mediterranean shoreline, this second empire would extend towards the source of the Nile River. And yet, like the first empire, Egypt’s dominion over Sudan is overshadowed by the later European imperialism of the latter nineteenth century.

But how was this empire perceived? How did Europeans aware of these conquests grapple with the news? In his 1906 travelogue of Egypt, Amédée Baillot de Guerville gave a retrospective of the late Khedive Ismail. In it, he describes the hopes of Ismail in his conquests in Sudan:

This is not to say that contemporaries ignored it, however. But the dream of Ismail was the creation of an African Empire, great and powerful, which, freed from the yoke of Turkey, would stretch from the Mediterranean to the Equator. One knows how the Egyptian soldiers conquered the Sudan and the equatorial provinces. The power of Ismail, at this time, stretched as far as the Great Lakes, and his dream would perhaps have taken a definite form had it not been for an unfortunate event, which marked in a way the commencement of the setting of his star. I refer to the war against Abyssinia, of which the particulars are, to this day, wrapped in mystery.\textsuperscript{42}

de Guerville goes on to give a salacious account of the failure of the Egyptian expedition in Abyssinia, that includes romance, trickery, and the complete and utter destruction of Egypt’s military strength in Sudan.\textsuperscript{43}

However fleeting it was, the memory of this Egyptian Empire in Sudan and Equatorial Africa, does show an important point: political boundaries are rarely static. So why were Egypt’s borders in the nineteenth century universally placed south of Aswan and not inside Sudan? What

\textsuperscript{42} Guerville, \textit{New Egypt}, 98; Abyssinia is an alternate name given to the territory of today’s Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{43} Guerville, \textit{New Egypt}, 98-102; To briefly sum up the story, an Egyptian officer sought to become closer to his Ethiopian wife and engineered a war to both conquer this section of Ethiopia, and be closer to his beloved. However, the “courtiers and flatterers” surrounding the officer’s 4000 men army assured them that the Abyssinians were no match for Egyptian arms. That the entire force was exterminated by the Abyssinians should be of no surprise.
accounts for the disconnect between the Western cartography of Egypt and the reality on the ground?

This chapter will investigate the history of Egypt’s southern frontier in the representations of cartography and scholarship. The expansion of Egyptian power towards Sudan and Ethiopia occurred as Western explorers sought to penetrate the interior of Africa. The influence of classical texts in the decision making of leaders, explorers, and cartographers would indicate a systemic usage of orientalist motifs to explain all aspects of Egypt – society and geography. Finally, the maps examined in this chapter will show a habitual deference to the Cataracts as the defining border of Egypt.

The Classics and Politics

This link between the Greco-Roman classics and British colonial administration is not merely a supposition. In the case of Egypt, it is explicitly mentioned as a valuable guide stone for Evelyn Baring, the 1st Earl of Cromer. Cromer is so prominent an example of the intersection of Orientalism, the classics, and British colonialism, that Edward Said’s first political target in Orientalism is Cromer himself. In his Ancient and Modern Imperialism, Lord Cromer is adamant that the lessons of antiquity are not simply confined to academic circles. Instead, the parallels between modern and ancient forms of imperialism are self-evident, allowing his readers to understand that the lessons of wielding power over imperial subjects are universal laws, and not contextualized to a specific time or place. In other words, the problems of empire are so

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42 Evelyn Baring (1841-1917) was the first Controller-General of Egypt after the 1882 Urabi Revolt. As Controller-General, Baring was the de facto administrator of Egypt from this point forward, entrenching Egypt within the orbit of the British Empire. Given the convention in British peerage to call an individual after their title, Baring will be referred as either ‘Lord Cromer’ or ‘Cromer’ for the remainder of this study.
universal, that ignoring the lessons of classical historians is folly. This sentiment is evident in this following passage of *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*:

Moreover, as an additional plea in justification of the choice of my subject, I think I may say that long acquaintance with the govern-ment [sic] and administration of a country which was at different times under the sway of the Macedonian and the Roman does to some extent bridge over the centuries, and tends to bring forcibly to the mind that, at all events in respect to certain incidents, the world has not so very much changed in 2,000 years. Whenever… I read that graphic account in the Acts of the Apostles’ of how the Chief Captain, after he had scourged St. Paul, was afraid…that his victim was a citizen of Rome, I think I see before me the anxious Governor of some Egyptian province…who has found out that he has unwittingly flogged the subject of a foreign Power, and trembles at the impending wrath of his diplomatic or consular representative. When I read in Dr. Adolf Holm’s monumental history that the Greeks in Alexandria, under the Ptolemaic rule, had the privilege of being beaten with a stick instead of a whip, I am reminded that their descendants, in common with other foreign subjects, possess privileges of substantially far greater importance.47

When Cromer states that the “world has not so very much changed in 2,000 years,” What is he really saying? That the intervening two millennia between Roman and British-ruled Egypt did not do anything to change the character of the Egyptian people. Lest one think this is simply a fluke, it is necessary to understand the social milieu Cromer emerged from in order to understand why anyone would make such a bizarre claim. The issue is not simply that the world did in fact change in the intervening two thousand years. Rather, it is why are certain ancient tropes prioritized over indigenous tropes and assumptions.

Elevated as the first Consul-General for the British administration of Egypt from 1883-1907, Cromer’s role as the first British governor of a Middle Eastern state is most noteworthy for ushering in the age of Western imperialism into the Middle East.48 Unlike many of his

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contemporaries, Cromer did not receive a classical education in Eton or Oxbridge, but instead a military education of Woolwich, befitting for a member of the middle classes.\textsuperscript{49} As a result, Cromer did not receive an early education in Greek or Latin (in contrast to upper-class students), but nonetheless learned the languages himself in order to fit in with the upper crust of British society as an adult.\textsuperscript{50} By the time Cromer became Consul-General, he had acquired a reputation as a connoisseur of all things Greco-Roman. An anecdote relayed by Ronald Storrs in a visit to Cromer’s Cairene residence markedly shows Cromer’s enthusiasm for all things classical:

Lady Cromer handed me a Latin invitation which the Lord [Cromer] had received from the University of Aberdeen . . . and bade me answer it in the same tongue. [I] undertook to do it most cheerfully: I had no books of any kind, but furbished up a good Roman roll, which I gave to her when she came to tea. She hadn't been gone an hour when I got a note, asking me to luncheon and telling me the Lord had called it 'devilish' good. I found the old man very much pleased about it: he said he felt an infernal hypocrite signing it, and was quite sure he'd be found out, etc. Gave me a copy of his translation from the Greek Anthology, and hoped that the Varsities [sic] would retain Greek.\textsuperscript{51}

The latter sentence is in reference to the fact that there was an increasing movement to drop the requirement of proficiency or knowledge of Greek and Latin from the curriculum of universities (i.e. the “Varsities”). Regardless of this, Cromer’s love of the classics was self-evident. Classical references peppered Cromer’s recollections on his tenure as Consul-General. In his retrospective apologia on his tenure, Cromer compares the downfall of Khedive Ismail with that of the prideful and wealthy King Croesus.\textsuperscript{52} Cromer follows this comparison with a statement on the possibility for (eventual) Egyptian national self-sovereignty:

“History, indeed, records some very radical changes in the forms of government to which a State has been subjected without its interests being absolutely and permanently shipwrecked. But it may be doubted whether any instance can be quoted of a sudden

\textsuperscript{49} Darwin, “Baring, Evelyn,” ODNB; “Oxbridge” is the portmanteau of Oxford and Cambridge.
\textsuperscript{50} Reid, “Cromer and the Classics,” 7.
\textsuperscript{51} Reid, “Cromer and the Classics,” 6-7.
\textsuperscript{52} Evelyn Barring Cromer (Earl of), \textit{Modern Egypt}, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1908), 286; Croesus was the King of Lydia during the 6\textsuperscript{th} century BCE whose wealth became legendary among later Greek writers. Croesus, as King of a Eastern Kingdom, was also the prototypical example of an eastern potentate.
transfer of power in any civilised [sic] or semi-civilised [sic] community to a class so ignorant as the pure Egyptians, such as they were in the year 1882. These latter have, for centuries past, been a subject race. Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs from Arabia and Baghdad, Circassians, and finally, Ottoman Turks, have successively ruled over Egypt, but we have to go back to the doubtful and obscure precedents of Pharaonic times to find an epoch when, possibly, Egypt was ruled by Egyptians. Neither, for the present, do they appear to possess the qualities which would render it desirable, either in their own interests, or in those of the civilised [sic] world in general, to raise them at a bound to the category of autonomous rulers with full rights of internal sovereignty.”

As noted by the biographer J.G. Darwin, Cromer’s prior experience as a secretary in India initiated a marked change from his early reformist enthusiasm to a “world-weary cynicism about the capacity of ‘Eastern peoples’ to attain the moral and intellectual qualities needed for self-government.” Such attitudes can be seen in his retrospective of his time in Egypt:

“Those who have been in the East and have tried to mingle with the native population know well how utterly impossible it is for the European to look at the world with the same eyes as the Oriental…No casual visitor can hope to obtain much real insight into the true state of native opinion…[the Oriental’s] tendency to agree with any one to whom they may be talking; the want of mental symmetry and precision, which is the chief distinguishing feature between the illogical and picturesque East and the logical West, and which tends such peculiar interest to the study of Eastern life and politics.”

Cromer brought this attitude with him to Egypt when he became Controller-General, and the attitude he would dispense onto his examination of his tenure there.

What was Cromer’s purpose in Egypt? It was to manage the finances of the Egyptian state due to the insolvency under the rule of Khedive Ismail. Aside from being King-Croesus-incarnate, Cromer does not believe this to be a simple character flaw found with Ismail alone. Rather, Cromer connect Ismail’s reputation with the wider motif of oriental despotism. For Cromer, the introduction of the European credit system of banking is inherently detrimental to the run-of-the-mill oriental ruler, naturally unfamiliar with such system. The prototypical oriental

53 Cromer, Modern Egypt, 636.
ruler can take out large loans, fulfilling any personal whim or undertaking the most incoherent of projects.\textsuperscript{56}

In a separate essay discussing the economic state of Qing China, Lord Cromer touches upon the finances of the Chinese state. Despite writing in May 1913, the example of Ismail is not far from mind. In explaining to the readers the difficulties inherent with the foreign administration of finances for “Eastern countries,” Cromer comments that the discrepancy in tax revenue collection from taxpayers to the local administration is highly reminiscent of “the Egyptian fiscal system under the régime [sic] of Ismail Pasha.\textsuperscript{57}” Within a vacuum, this statement alone can be seen as a comparative example of Cromer’s own experiences projected onto that of another state. Such comparisons are common even today. However, that Cromer infers that both Egypt and China are “Eastern” countries adds another, orientalist, perspective in his analysis, one that casts oriental societies as woefully behind those of the West.

If anything else, Cromer’s rhetorical linkage of orientalist tropes with his love of the classics is the personification of this entire study. An unfiltered bigotry towards non-Westerners shines through without second thought because such orientalist perspectives are considered to be true by the fact they are considered truisms. It may be hyperbole to call Lord Cromer the personification of Orientalism, but Cromer’s rhetoric and actions are undeniably Orientalist. The travel literature of the latter nineteenth century, as well as the cartography of the era, is created within this political context. The production of Western literature and maps in this epoch, individually, may not be as blunt or as blatant as Cromer’s Orientalism. But in an aggregate they do contribute the culture and the assumptions behind Cromer’s actions as Consul-General.

\textsuperscript{56} Cromer, \textit{Modern Egypt}, 146-147.
Baker’s Speech at the Royal Geographical Society

As soon as the Royal Geographical Society’s journal began publication in 1831, the reports on expeditions to Egypt were made available to a scholarly audience back in Britain. For example, Arthur T. Holroyd’s report on his expedition into Kordofan describes the geological and ethnographical contours of the Sudan and Kordofan as he made his way up the Nile River.\(^5\) Describing the recent acquisition of Khartoum by Muhammad Ali, Holroyd goes on to describe an encounter of local rulers south of Sennar who he described as:

They were on their way to Khartúm, [sic] for the purpose of endeavoring to make terms of peace with Khúrshíd Páshá, and adding their dominions to those already subject to the Viceroy of Egypt; a policy they thought it better to adopt than to expose themselves the annual and biennial incursions of his troops for the purpose of seizing them as slaves.\(^6\) In other words, the military expeditions sent out by Egypt against these nominally independent states south of Sennar were so effective and damaging, that they would rather give up their independence than be subjected to these attacks any longer. And these conquests would continue well into the latter nineteenth century, especially during the reign of Ismail.

Before continuing, a summarization for the reign of Ismail Pasha is warranted. As we have already seen, Cromer had a rather dim view on the former Khedive. Ismail Pasha was appointed the wali (governor) of Egypt in January 1863 following the death of his uncle, Said Pasha. Ismail was the son of Ibrahim Pasha, and the grandson of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the founder of the ruling dynasty of Egypt. Muhammad Ali, nominally a vassal and governor for the Ottomans, nonetheless created an independent power base that made him the most powerful figure in the Middle East. Expanding in Arabia, the modern Sudan, and Crete, Muhammad Ali would eventually engage the Ottomans in a series of wars through the 1830s that saw the

\(^6\) Holroyd, “Journey to Kordofán,” 167; 171-172.
Egyptians conquer into the heartland of Anatolia. Despite a British-backed peace settlement in 1841, Muhammad Ali retained his position and made the governorship of Egypt a hereditary office for his descendants. As the fourth ruler of the dynasty, Ismail oversaw the construction of the Suez Canal and a brief boom of cotton exportation, caused by the European demand exacerbated by the American Civil War. In 1867, Ismail received the further title of Khedive, which was translated by English-language contemporaries as “Viceroy.” During his reign, Egyptian rule expanded into Sudan, with costly military expeditions and infrastructure projects greatly burdening the finances of state. The increasing foreign debt accrued by Egypt resulted in strained relations with both Britain and France. Ultimately, in 1879 a diplomatic intervention resulted in Ismail’s ouster in favor of his son Tewfik Pasha.

Along with his reputation for wanton spending, the other aspect that shaped Ismail’s reputation in Britain was his participation in the abolition of the slave trade in Equatorial Africa. In contrast to Cromer’s scorn, Ismail’s commitment to ending the slave trade was the one endeavor that earned Ismail plaudits from even his staunchest critics. Whereas his predecessor Muhammad Ali Pasha had conquered the territories of modern Sudan for the profit inherent in the slave trade in the 1820s, the expeditions undertaken in the name of Egypt and the Khedive were not done to profit from slavery, but to end it. Samuel W. Baker, the famed British explorer, said much the same.

60 Fahmy, All the Pasha’s Men, 302-305.
On 8 December 1873, Baker spoke at a Royal Geographical Society meeting in London to recount his role in leading the Khedive’s expedition into Central Africa, from 1862-1865. The expedition itself consisted of Baker, leading ninety-six men from Khartoum towards modern Gondokoro to both stymie Arab slave traders based there, and to ultimately find the source of the Nile River. Along the way, Baker battled both mutinies and the slavers as he tried to consolidate control over Gondokoro, before returning to Khartoum in 1865. Thus his 1873 RGS speech was a triumphant retelling of his struggles and survival.

But before beginning, Baker explained the expedition’s purpose to his British audience. While Baker believes that the primary intention of Ismail was to found a “great [e]mpire in Central Africa,” Baker nonetheless believes that the aim of the expedition (and subsequent annexation) of Central Africa was not done only for the sake of territorial expansion. Instead, the purpose of annexation was but a “first step” to end the slave trade once and for all in Central Africa. In Baker’s own words, this mission was in line with “the great aim of England, freedom and liberty for every human being.”

Baker’s positive portrayal of Ismail is not entirely exceptional but for the fact that Baker marks Ismail as singular and unique with his “enlightened” views. Baker terms the idea of abolition as a “progressive principle” that was unfortunately uncommon among Egyptians, and only to be found among three individuals in Egypt, Ismail and his two advisors. In contrast, Baker recounts a tale of intrigue and treachery that was inherent in being a Christian leading “three Mohammedan regiments” to end slavery, “the most cherished of Mohammedan

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institutions.\textsuperscript{68} Thus, Ismail is unique in being outside the supposed Muslim norm and instead is an avid proponent of English/Christian/Western presumptions. Baker was not alone in sharing this sentiment. Attending that same meeting of the Royal Geographic Society was the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII), who both applauded the exploits of Baker and gave his opinions on the Khedive. The Prince lamented that the Khedive may simply be too ahead of his time for “his country,” but did remark upon the sincerity of the Khedive’s motives to expand into Equatorial Africa.\textsuperscript{69}

This pair of speeches highlights an all too common assumption among many educated Britons. The notion of progressive liberty versus that of despotic slavery is a recurring motif in Orientalism. Here, the connection made by the Prince of Wales is remarked to consist of a Christianity and Islam fundamentally at odds with one another. In the example of slavery, Ismail is defined as being outside the norm of other oriental rulers, including his grandfather Muhammad Ali.\textsuperscript{70} Ismail’s stance supporting abolitionism and to eliminate the slave trade are admired not simply because of the merits inherent within those causes. Instead, the admiration derives from Ismail bucking the orientalist presumptions about the East and of Islam. In his support for abolition, these orientalist tropes do not apply to him. Nonetheless, he is very much defined by them because he is nonetheless judged to exist within a society where slavery is natural, if abhorrent.

This detour on Cromer, Ismail, Baker’s expedition, and the orientalist thought-process is important to this study for this reason: it shows how connected cartography, exploration, and politics with one another, and how they fed off one another. Baker reported his exploits to the

\textsuperscript{68} Baker, “Expedition to Central Africa,” 52.
\textsuperscript{69} Baker, “Expedition to Central Africa,” 68.
Royal Geographic Society, in front of the Prince of Wales. Baker was tasked to not only explore Equatorial Africa, but to annex it into the Egyptian Empire.⁷¹ That the orientalist perspectives expressed by all were systemic, from Baker’s criticism of the Muslim troops serving him, to the exceptionalism of Ismail in differing from other Muslims. The connection between all these demonstrates that any examination of the underpinnings behind orientalist tropes in cartography is not simply isolated among scholars. It is informing the opinions and actions of all participants in the lead up to Britain’s eventual domination over Egypt.

The Nile and Antiquity

The path Baker followed in his expedition towards Gondokoro was entirely along the Nile. To say the Nile is the lifeblood of Egypt is no exaggeration. It can even be argued that Egypt is the Nile. Because of that, the relationship between Egypt and the Nile has been examined ad nauseum for centuries. One of those questions is regarding the point along the Nile where Egypt changes into something else, be it Nubia, Sudan, or whatever. While culture, language, or political control would make a decent demarcation, Egypt’s boundaries have been bound by one geographic feature: the Cataracts. After all, the Nile itself extends far past the confines of Egypt. In total there were six cataracts along the length of the river, from the Mediterranean up to modern Khartoum. The first Cataract was located south of modern day Aswan (ancient Elephantine).

In describing the cataracts, the orientalist Edward William Lane states, “At its entrance into the valley of Egypt the Nile is obstructed by innumerable rocks of granite, which cause a

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succession of cataracts, or rather *rapids*.”

Echoing her brother, Sarah Lane Poole expanded on the geological nature of the Cataracts:

“The mountains on the east of the river, as well as the islands in it, are here of granite: those on the western side are of sandstone. From this point, to the distance of thirty leagues southward, sandstone mountains of small altitude extend on each side of the river. The valley, so far, is very narrow, particularly throughout the upper half of the sandstone district; and there is but very little cultivable land on the banks of the river in that part; in some places the mountains are close to the stream; and in others, only a narrow sandy strip intervenes."

This emphasis on the role of the Cataracts as definable and notable geographic landmarks was not only reflected in the testimony of nineteenth century travelers, like that of the Lane siblings. Instead, the notion that the Cataracts were the defining boundaries was known even in the antiquity. Most famously, the Greek historian Herodotus gives his view on the matter. Choosing the opinions of the “Hellenes” over that of the “Ionians,” Herodotus enters into the discussion over the question of Egypt’s extent as:

“If however we shall adopt the opinion commonly held by the Hellenes, we shall suppose that the whole of Egypt, beginning from the Cataract and the city of Elephantinē…for the Nile from the Cataract onwards flows to the sea cutting Egypt in two…Moreover also the answer given by the Oracle of Ammon supports my opinion that Egypt is as big as I declare it to be in my account…The god [Ammon]…said that that [sic] land was Egypt which the Nile came over and watered, and that those were Egyptians who dwelling below the city of Elephantinē drank of that river. Thus the Oracle answered about this.”

As mentioned earlier, Elephantine (modern Aswan) was located just north of the First Cataract.

Finally, an alternate name was given to the first cataract: “El-Shellaale.” The Arrowsmith maps below have the name as an alternate to that of “cataract.” In giving his tales of visiting the region, John Madox provided the following anecdote giving this name to the cataract:

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73 Sophia Lane Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt* (London: Charles Knight, 1845), 80-84.
“We next arrived at the first cataract, or Es-Shellale, and halted at the village, surrounded as usual by dates, and with numbers of its young, naked, and the black population running about on the sands. As I advanced, I found the natives became darker, approaching to black; those that come from Dongola are quite black, and are a hardy race of people.”

Aside from the anthropological descriptions here, Madox is tapping to a base of knowledge deeper than any one traveler to the region.

Regardless of what the Greeks or Westerners thought, Herodotus’s interpretation as to the definition of Egypt emerged as definitive as evidenced in the habitual use of the First Cataract as the southern border of Egypt in nearly all nineteenth century maps of this study. While the southern terminus of Egypt at the First Cataract makes sense initially, upon further scrutiny questions emerge. Because what do we mean by Egypt? Is the polity being discussed, or the region? And given the millennia that Pharaonic Egypt existed, under numerable dynasties, what is ultimately Egypt? And how was this southern boundary depicted?

Cartography of the Nile

The classical geography of the Nile Valley manifested itself in Western cartography. An early example can be seen in a 1787 map of Africa (see Figure 4 below). Produced by Robert Sawyer and John Bennett, “Africa” depicts the northern half of the continent with the current knowledge available to Western scholarship. Geographical and political features were drawn. Of note is the lack of knowledge of the interior of the continent. Polities depicted either hugged the African coast or were areas that had prior European contact, such as Ethiopia. Egypt itself was shown as a separate entity. Whether Bennett and Sawyer consciously believed Egypt to be

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separate from the Ottoman Empire or sought to highlight a region within the empire is unknown. However, what matters was that Egypt was depicted as a whole. How does “Africa” depict the southern boundary of Egypt? Unhelpfully, “Africa” does not number or differentiate between the Cataracts of the Nile. However, “Africa” does indicate that Egypt’s southern boundary extends directly south of Aswan. This is in keeping with the location of the First Cataract of the Nile. Thus such classical cues informed both Sawyer and Bennett’s placement of boundaries in a map that clearly depicts Western ignorance of the political state of affairs in Africa. Such knowledge was not simply informed by hearsay or prior travel, but by the unspoken authority of classical scholars and thinkers.

Figure 4: Sawyer and Bennett’s “Africa,” 1787

77 The map spells it as “Afuan.”
Fast-forwarding into the middle of the nineteenth century, we will now reexamine the map of John Arrowsmith. Arrowsmith’s “Egypt” (1844) depicts an Egypt after the transfer of Syria and southeastern Anatolia back to the Ottomans and in the latter days of Muhammad Ali’s rule (shown in Figure 4 below). Like his prior “Turkey in Asia,” “Egypt,” contains the territories of Arabia Petraea and Egypt, but also the length and breadth of the Egyptian Nile Valley. And like “Turkey in Asia,” “Egypt” has the country depicted in the present day. Whereas the examples above have dealt with classical motifs, this map is centered on the modern Egypt.

In “Egypt,” Arrowsmith has depicted the southernmost boundary of Upper Egypt as is drawn as crossing most of the length of 24° N latitude. The exception is a slight deviation to the southeast towards the city of Berenice. But more importantly, the boundary bisects the city of “Es Souan” – modern Aswan. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, just south of Aswan lays the First Cataract of the Nile. Indeed, the cataract is clearly titled on the map. Any close examination would leave no doubt that this landmark defines Egypt’s southern border. In addition, while “Egypt” depicts modern cities and towns, it does give recognition to antiquity. Throughout the map, place names of ancient towns and ruins are underlined in the map. Thus, towns can both have an Arabic or pre-Arab name assigned to them. We do not know why Arrowsmith decided to include both names in his map. Perhaps it was a means to keep his map as comprehensible as possible, the go-to source of all audiences, classically-minded or not.

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78 The use of quotation marks over “Egypt” and “Turkey in Asia” denotes the name of the maps. This has to be noted ere in case confusion occurs between the dual usage of “Egypt” and simply Egypt.
80 Generally speaking, Upper Egypt refers to the southern portion of the country south of modern Cairo. Lower Egypt most refers to the Nile Delta itself. There are occasional references to Middle Egypt.
81 It should be noted that Berenice does not actually exist anymore. It is an ancient Roman city whose ruins are still evident.
82 Oddly, the word is pluralized despite that there are no other cataracts there.
Whatever the reason may be, it is indicative of the influence of classical sources in informing cartographers in the pre-telegraph age.
Figure 5: J. Arrowsmith’s “Egypt,” 1844

This placement of the cataract can be seen in an earlier map from another member of the Arrowsmith family.\(^8\) Aaron Arrowsmith’s “Map of Upper Egypt” (1807) depicts a highly

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detailed map of Upper Egypt (shown in Figure 5 below).\textsuperscript{84} Aaron utilizes a bluish-green color scheme to contrast the fertile river valley with the surrounding wilderness. The map itself is meant to represent the contemporary world of early nineteenth century Egypt. Yes, ancient landmarks are noted like the Pyramids of Giza. However, the cities are all English transliterations of Arabic town names. This is in contrast to John Arrowsmith’s map that gave space for the ancient names of Egyptian towns.

Most importantly, “Map of Upper Egypt” is the same as John Arrowsmith’s “Egypt” in that it demarcates the boundary of Egypt with the First Cataract south of Aswan. Having the dual names of El-Shllaale and Cataracts, the feature is drawn on the map as a series of islands obstructing the flow of the Nile River. While this may not be an accurate portrayal of how the First Cataract looks in-person, it is helpful for the lay audience reading this map to understand that the cataracts disrupts the flow of the Nile.

\textsuperscript{84} Aaron Arrowsmith, “Map of Upper Egypt, drawn from various documents,” map, David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, 1807. http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/05ewz0.
Figure 6: A. Arrowsmith’s “Map of Upper Egypt,” 1807

The maps by the Arrowsmith pair are indicative of the use of classical motifs in guiding the drawing of Egyptian maps in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They follow the knowledge of classical geographers in determining where they demarcate Egypt’s southern
boundary. Such representations were in stark contrast with the realities on the ground. Egyptian forces continued a southward expansion into modern-day Sudan even as John Arrowsmith’s map elided that fact. Such omissions were not purposeful or malicious. Communication between military outposts in Sudan and the cartographers of Western Europe and North America were understandably slow. Given the gaps in contemporary knowledge, the usage of classical motifs allowed cartographers to make informed guesses as to how boundaries existed between regions and states in unfamiliar domains.

The takeaway here is that while cartographers sought to accurately depict their subjects with an air of objectivity, the reliance on classical motifs in facts shows that such works were largely imaginative in nature. In the next chapter, we will examine the shift in the nomenclature of the Sinai Peninsula through the latter half of the nineteenth century.
CHAPTER 4

THE CREATION OF THE SINAI: PARAN, ARABIA PETRAEA, AND SINAI

During the tail end of the English Civil War, Thomas Fuller, an avowed Royalist and clergyman in the Church of England, published the *Pisgah-Sight of Palestine*, a comprehensive history and geography of the Old and New Testaments. Having served as a chaplain to the Royalist Army, and later as a preacher in the exiled royal court in Oxford, Fuller sought to devote his efforts on religious matters, outside the tumult of the bloodshed surrounding him. According to W.B. Patterson, Fuller viewed the Civil War as a calamity to both the tradition of monarchism and Church of England, both reeling from years of war and Puritanical doctrineering on the part of the Parliamentarians.85 According to Patterson, Fuller's *Pisgah-Sight of Palestine* hints at a wider message: in much the same way the kingdom of heaven will be place in Jerusalem, so too can the Church of England rebuild itself from the ashes of war.86

The *Pisgah-Sight of Palestine* is a geographic description of the Holy Land, dated to 1650. Fuller devotes his first chapter of the *Pisgah-Sight* in defending the merits of his manuscripts from charges of being derivative of other works, or not able to live up to the lofty expectations of his readership.87 Fuller then devotes the next chapter describing the nature of Judea. Interestingly, Fuller differentiates between the “greater” and “lesser” Canaan, with the latter being bound “from the wilderness in the south to Mount Lebanon in the north, and from Jordan on the last, to the Midland Sea on the west.”88 Fuller then devotes time alternating

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86 The English Civil War (1642-51) was actually a collection of wars pitting the forces of Parliament against the forces of King Charles I. Given that Charles I was executed in 1649, the publication of the *Pisgah-Sight of Palestine* shows that the writing of the manuscript occurred as the Royalists were losing to Parliament.
between being a bland account of Judea’s economical and historical production, and being an apologia for Judea’s claim of being a “Land of Milk and Honey.” For example, in the sixth chapter of *Pisgah-Sight*, Fuller lays into a defense of Judea against Greco-Roman writers unimpressed with the region.\(^9\) In retorting Strabo’s report that Palestine was just “a stony country,” Fuller dismisses Strabo as a wayward pagan whose lack of piety explains his ignorance of Biblical truth.\(^9\) What makes this exchange interesting is that Fuller quotes Strabo in the Koine Greek of the Greco-Roman writer. The courtesy of translation is done afterwards, but Fuller’s actions can be seen as communicating his knowledge in Greek to his readership, while in the midst at laying scorn at the Greek geographer. The interplay of classical and Biblical scholarship is highly evidenced in Fuller’s *Pisgah-Sight*, and while Fuller clearly favors the biblical perspective, it does indicate that there was no slavish adherence to the classics. They were simply authoritative sources to investigate, not the only answers.

While we can continue down the description of the entirety of the *Pisgah-Sight of Palestine*, we will instead focus our attention on one map.\(^9\) Entitled “Desertvm Paran,” the map consists of stylized view of the Sinai Peninsula. This early map of the Sinai is not meant to be an accurate geographic representation of the peninsula.\(^9\) A cursory look shows that the map looks nothing at all like the peninsula. Rather, the map’s purpose was to dynamically tell the story of the biblical stories of the Exodus and the Wandering. Here, biblical accuracy, and not geographic accuracy, were what mattered to Fuller. Egypt and Palestine are placed in the far left and far right of the map, respectively. The central feature of the map is not any specific landmark, but an imaginative "path," beginning in Egypt and ending in Palestine, tracing the path the Hebrews

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\(^8\) Fuller, *A Pisgah-Sight of Palestine*, 17.


\(^9\) The Desert of Paran is described in numerous places in the Bible and is associated with the Sinai Desert.
took under Moses's leadership. Numbered "1" to "34," Fuller draws small illustrations depicting specific events in the Wandering, including the parting of the Red Sea, a battle, and the famous scene of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.  

Figure 7: Thomas Fuller’s “Desertvm Paran,” 1650

But apart from the shape of the Sinai, and apart from the narrative-drive nature of the map, Fuller’s map is also noteworthy for the region’s name: the Desert of Paran. And yet the

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Interestingly, the battle shown on the map is a striking resemblance to the battle tactics of pikemen in seventeenth century Europe, especially that of the English Civil War concurrent with Fuller's production of the map. This could be an anachronistic drawing on Fuller’s part, or a subtle reference to the current travails affecting his country during the Civil War. Fuller’s intents are unclear here.
name does not exist in our modern comprehension of the region. The region is the Sinai Peninsula, if not just the Sinai. Where does Paran come from? Not surprising, references to the “wilderness of Paran” or “the desert of Paran” are mentioned throughout the Bible. The wilderness of Paran was the scene where Hagar and Ishmael, after their leave from Abraham, were saved by a well (put up by God). The exact location of Paran is vague, especially given the fact that Islamic accounts of Hagar’s and Ishmael’s plight occurred in Mecca, and not the Sinai. But in 1 Kings 11:17-18, a better description emerges, describing a journey of two people from Edom to Midian, then through Paran, and finally to Egypt. If we look back at Fuller’s “Desertvm Paran” above, we see that Edom is situated in the far right of the map, with the region “Terra Midian” to the west of “Desertum Sinai.” While Midian is within Paran, given Fuller’s drawing, we can at least hazard to think that Fuller was not alone in believing that Paran was either the modern Sinai Peninsula, or was inside the region. Regardless, Desert of Paran fell out of vogue, given that no modern map refers to the region as such any longer. And it is with the question of names that is the focus of this chapter.

**Toponyms**

Changes in toponyms are common. What was once Gaul became Frankia, then France. What was once Constantinople is now Istanbul. The phenomenon of change is not novel. Nonetheless, such changes can tell us a lot of the circumstances to those changes. Such changes can be the result of demography or politics. The change in country name (say from Burma to Myanmar, or Rhodesia to Zimbabwe) can be the result of a statement by that government to break away from the past and usher a new order. And yet the change away from Paran does not

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95 Of course, this suggests modern topographical, political, or travel maps. It is not out of a question that niche maps created by evangelical Christians may include this anachronistic name. But this writer has not found such a map yet.
96 Toponyms are simply the place names of an area.
fit this pattern, because no one from Paran made that change. It was the product of Western cartographers describing a region from afar. Long-distance changes in toponyms are also not novel. However, what is different is that the case of the Sinai Peninsula is one that fundamentally alters the perception of the region as being a part of a framework.

In short, the changes in the toponyms of the Sinai show a shift in perceptions of an area of bounded regions to becoming a distinct region, independent of its neighbors. This change occurred because of the creation of the Suez Canal and increased familiarity on the part of both explorers and cartographers. The centrality of Mount Sinai in the story of the Wandering contributed to the modern name of the Sinai, but the formal and clear division caused by the Suez Canal led to not only the final shift towards the name Sinai, but also the perceptions of the regions as a distinction region separate from Arabia or Egypt.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the usage of the Torrent of Egypt as a stand-in boundary on the part of Western cartographer was due to an innate unfamiliarity with the region. People will fall back upon the knowledge they have at hand if no other new information comes in. Hence why the Torrent was the site of Egypt’s boundary with Palestine for so many maps, contemporary and ancient. So in much the same way a physical boundary can be used to mask ignorance of a region, then a name can be used to mask that ignorance. We will now examine the political situation on the ground in the Sinai before 1882, and then move onto depictions of Arabia Petraea, the Sinai before the Sinai.

Politics of the Sinai, Pre-1882

Interpretations differ as to the nature of the Egyptian administration of the Sinai before 1882. According to Bernard Lewis, the Sinai served as a “no-man’s-land” between Egypt and Palestine, where no formal definition was provided between the two regions, much less any two
powers on opposite ends of the peninsula (as seen in Figure 8). The region was either attached to Palestine or Egypt, but often to neither. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of the Sinai’s population consisted of nomadic Bedouin tribes, given that the Sinai had no significant population centers as those of Palestine or Egypt. Lewis notes that the formal delineation of the Sinai began only during the reign of Muhammad Ali. Prior to this, the Sinai was ill defined and barely administered by any party whatsoever.

In contrast, Yitzhak Gil-Har argues that de facto administration of the Sinai and the northern Hejaz (referred to as “Midian”) was for centuries under the purview of the ruler or governor in Cairo, which would eventually include the Mamelukes (under nominal Ottoman suzerainty) and Muhammad Ali’s reign (see Figure 8). Under this arrangement, the security of Hajj pilgrimage caravans to and from the Hejaz was entrusted to the wali of Egypt. In addition, the Ottoman privileges conferred on Saint Catherine’s Monastery, sitting on the foot of Mount Sinai, were carried out by the Egyptian wali on behalf of the Sultan in Constantinople. This state of affairs – having its hazy origins under the Fatimids of the ninth-century – was never challenged by the Ottoman Sultans, who preferred to consolidate their control over the remainder of the Hejaz and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, content to leave the northern Hejaz and the Sinai under continued Egyptian administration.

In both these interpretations of Egypt’s political relationship with the Sinai, the reign of Muhammad Ali serves as an accelerant in increasing the bureaucratization of Cairene administration over the Sinai to serve functions other than furnishing supplies and security for

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97 Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 159.
Hajj pilgrims. In other words, the increased demands from Cairo over the administration of the Sinai outside that consented by the Porte led both parties into a collision course.

As mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 3, there were a series of conflicts that erupted between the Ottomans and Muhammad Ali’s Egypt. The Firman of Investiture of 1841 ended the war and assured the heredity of Muhammad Ali’s position to his family.\textsuperscript{102} What makes this firman noteworthy is the purposeful enunciation over the geographical extent of Ali’s rule in both Egypt and areas outside of Egypt. The firman explicitly defined the boundaries of Egypt as being both “known” and “ancient.”\textsuperscript{103} In return for withdrawing from his Ionian, Cretan, and Levantine possessions, Muhammad Ali was allowed to continue his preexisting administration over the Sinai and Midian. The security of pilgrims between the Nile Valley and to region of the Hejaz north of Medina was still the Egyptian wali’s (and later the Khedive’s) responsibility.

More importantly, a map accompanied the firman delineated the boundaries of Muhammad Ali’s dominion including those areas outside of Egypt proper. Two copies were produced of the map; one sent to Muhammad Ali, the other kept by the Ottomans. While the Egyptian copy of the map disappeared, the Ottoman map resurfaced in the 1920s, fortuitously photographed. While the entirety of the map is not shown in the photograph, the 1841 Firman map shows the border of Egypt with the Sinai follows the Suez-Rafah/El Arish trajectory. The remainder of the Sinai is shown to be distinct from both Palestine and Egypt and seems to include the northern Hejaz (Midian).

If we go back further, we can compare the reality of Ottoman rule over Egypt and the Levant with later maps during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his \textit{An Historical Study}

\textsuperscript{102} A firman was edict issued by the Ottoman Sultan. In the case of Muhammad Ali, it recognized his right to rule Egypt as the wali of Egypt.

\textsuperscript{103} Gil-Har, “Egypt’s North-Eastern Boundary,” 136.
of the Ottoman Empire (1972), Donald E. Pitcher provides a detailed history of the Ottoman Empire’s conquests and growth up to the end of the 1500s (see Figure 9 below). Curiously, and amazingly, Pitcher demarcates the boundary between the Egyptian and Damascus elayets at El Arish, despite not giving a reason. Also of note is that Pitcher ditches the notion of a contiguous Ottoman realm. Instead, the elayets of the Arabian Peninsula were isolated, connected by winding trade routes. With regards to the Sinai, Pitcher notes that the Egyptian Elayet was bounded to the southern shore of the peninsula, and incorporating al-Aqaba. This allocation to Egypt would jibe with both Lewis and Gil-Har’s suggestions that the Egyptian wali would be tasked with protecting the Hajj routes heading south from Egypt and Syria towards Mecca and Medina, given the town’s location at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba and on the intersection of many a trade route. In any case, the manner by which the Pitcher defines the Elayet of Egypt is markedly different than those nineteenth century maps evaluated later on in this chapter, with the certainty of contiguous areas of control.  

104 The key take away here is that the region of the Sinai, given its sparse population, could not be bounded to any specific territory. Any truthful representation of the region needs to account for the unique terrain of the land, and the unique way Ottomans and Arabs navigated the boundaries of the region they inhabited. In other words, there is a fundamental disconnect between the reality on the ground and the imagery depicted on maps.

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104 By this I mean that territories are drawn to be continuously together. For example, Arabia Petraea being drawn to fill an area adjacent to other territories. There is no space depicted that isn’t a part of a polity. Modern cartography has filled up the world with national borders regardless of habitation. But this is a modern convention of the twentieth century. Pitcher’s map is more in keeping with the reality of the time.
Figure 8: Bernard Lewis’s Map in *Islam in History* (p. 162)
Figure 9: Map of the 1841 Firman
Arabia Petraea

Arabia Petraea is a region encompassing areas in and around the Sinai Peninsula, including territories now part of modern-day Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. The region itself has been home to numerous polities, including the biblical Edomite Kingdom and the later Nabataean state.\(^{105}\) In turn, this Nabataean state would become a client kingdom to the Roman

Republic with Pompey’s march across the Levant in 64-64 BCE, becoming the core of the Roman province of Arabia Petraea under the Emperor Trajan in 106 CE.  

Arabia Petraea was one third of the whole of Arabia. In describing “Arabia” in his *Dictionnaire Géographique Portatif* (1748), Laurence Echard provided the following entry:

Arabie…On la divifie, en trois parties, la pé-trée [sic], la deferte, & la l’heureufe. I. L’Arabie pétrée, qui eft la plus pet. des trois, dans fa partie fépt. eft pleine de mont., & peu habitée à caufe de fa féerilité.  

Essentially, Echard divides Arabia into three regions, while giving a brief synopsis to the terrain of Arabia Petraea. In English/Latin, the names are: Arabia Petraea, Arabia Felix, and Arabia Deserta. Arabia Felix is located in modern Yemen, whereas Arabia Deserta refers to the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. The three divisions were known by the time of the Roman geographer Ptolemy, whose *Geographia* and astronomical observations would dominate the Western method of both fields until the Renaissance. Arabia Petraea itself was the region closest to the Mediterranean, situated south of Palestine and east of Egypt. Arabia Petraea was analogous to the territory of Paran, as well as being on both sides of the Gulf of Aqaba, in the Sinai and in what is now southern Jordan and northwestern Saudi Arabia.

Betraying the perception of continuity as depicted in maps, the boundaries of Arabia Petraea were not constant throughout history. And even within the timeframe of Roman imperial

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106 Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106-48 BCE) was a Roman statesman and general whose conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean brought Roman power to the Middle East, where it would remain dominant until the rise of Islam; Marcus Ulpius Traianus (98-117 CE), also known as Trajan, was a Roman Emperor; Darvill, Timothy. "Nabataeans." In The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology. : Oxford University Press, 2008. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199534043.001.0001/acref-9780199534043-e-2676.

107 Laurence Echard, *Dictionnaire Géographique Portatif*, 48-49.

108 Echard’s book, a geographic dictionary, is terse on definition length. But it is an early authoritative source on the understanding of eighteenth century understanding of geography.


rule over the region did these boundaries breakdown. In his study of papyrus fragments and primary sources, Philip Mayerson demonstrates that a profound confusion emerges over the placement of provincial cities during late antiquity. In the case of Arabia Petraea, Mayerson describes how Eusebius’s *Onomasticon* places the city of Petra within both Arabia and Palestine, two separate regions.¹¹¹ Given the fluidity of the boundaries of Arabia Petraea during the Roman era, why is it that these initial borders depicted in the nineteenth century are instead rigid?

To give one example, Delarochette and Faden’s map of Lower Egypt, southern Palestine, and Arabia Petraea from 1802 gives an early look into the perceived boundaries of these three regions.¹¹² “Lower Egypt” depicts the convergence of the Arabia Petraea-Egyptian-Palestinian boundaries south of Khan Yunis. What makes this particular map novel is that it differs in the placement of the Torrent of Egypt as the border. The Torrent is prominently labeled in the map, but it is not the border of Egypt and Palestine. Further, while the map itself lacks the modern shading of elevation, “Lower Egypt and the adjacent deserts” does have shading to denote valleys, wadis, and hills. The map does bare an uncanny resemblance to modern maps in this regard. But essentially, Delarochette’s map is a zoomed-in view of only a small portion of the northern Sinai. However that the region is entitled “Arabia Petraea” signifies that both cartographers were drawing upon this classical name as a lodestar in order to make sense of the region.


In a later example, R.M. Martin and J. Tallis’s 1851 map on Egypt and Arabia Petraea was published some forty-nine years after Delarochette and Faden’s map.\textsuperscript{113} Framed by ancient Egyptian motifs of obelisks and sphinxes, and the idyllic Egyptian scenes of Karnack, Giza, and the Cairene skyline, the map is not subtle in conveying orientalist tropes. Regardless of the intent or purpose of such imagery, there is an undeniable demarcation between the regions of Lower Egypt and Arabia Petraea and Palestine, denoted by the colored boundaries used in the map. Martin and Tallis purposely select El Arish as the convergence point between all three regions. Like the Delarochette/Faden map, the use of shading is used to denote elevation. But more crucially, is the geographic bounds of Arabia Petraea.

Modern maps seem to take the Gulf of Aqaba as a breaking point, separating the Sinai Peninsula from the Hejaz and the rest of Arabia. And yet, the Gulf of Aqaba is simply incidental

in this map. It juts into Arabia Petraea, but the areas west and east of the gulf (the Sinai and Hejaz respectively), are simply the same region: Arabia Petraea. In other words, the mental separation made today dividing the Sinai from the rest of Arabia was not evidenced in Martin and Tallis’s map. If a sufficient number of maps are analyzed, might there not be a pattern that emerges detailing a shift in how the Sinai was viewed?

Figure 12: Martin and Tallis’s “Egypt, and Arabia Petraea,” 1851
Classical Maps

In the examples above, we have seen maps that are set in an analogous timeframe to when the cartographer lived. These maps were meant to portray the present-day reality, even if they failed to present any meaningful reality. In contrast, there were also maps, created at the same time period, illustrating the extent of classical empires, such as Rome. This in itself is not noteworthy, other than to show a comparison between how cartographers viewed the Sinai in their day, versus the Sinai during the rule of the Caesars. If there is an analogous usage of boundaries, we can determine that the use of classical names and boundaries were used to imagine the region both then and contemporaneously. After all, in the Delarochette and Martin maps, the Torrent of Egypt was depicted, continuing the theme studied in Chapter 2. If these maps continue to show this Biblical motif, would the classical be evident in both contemporary and ancient maps.

To give one example, let us examine a school textbook’s map of the Roman Empire. Created by Matthew Carey and M. Lavoisne, this particular map of the Roman Empire is not set in a specific timeframe. Indeed, the map is embedded within two pages of columns and timelines that seek to contextualize Roman history and administration to the reader’s comprehension. The major regions of the Roman Empire (and environs) are demarcated by specific color schemes, with Italia being pink, Syria being blue, and North Africa in yellow.

Yet, for the purposes of our study, one thing is evident: how Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia Petraea are demarcated is exactly the same as that in the Martin and Tallis map. Despite the fact that both maps are covering two separate polities (Rome and the Ottoman Empire), separated by

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two millennia. If the history of the Sinai had no major cities or boundaries, why are the borders the same? Why does the Egyptian border move from Suez northeasterly to an area very near El Arish? Further, in same fashion as the contemporary maps, Arabia Petraea is specified as existing to the south and east of Palestine and Egypt, respectively. If nothing else, we can determine that both these maps were basing a lot of their information non-sources that considered the existence and boundary of Arabia Petraea to true and relevant for their respective maps. Given the similarities, we can conclude that the usage of classical texts (which the Carry/Lavoisne map was supposedly depended on) was prioritized.

![Figure 13: Carry and Lavoisne, “Geographical and Historical Map of the Roman Empire” (1820)](image-url)
The next example is dated to about forty years after Carry and Lavoisne’s map. A.J. Johnson’s 1860 map of the Roman Empire (under Trajan) depicts Arabia Petraea as a constituent province of the imperium.\(^{115}\) Unlike the prior map, there is much greater degree of detail in the Johnson map. Provinces are clearly demarcated; cities are more numerous; and there is actually a specific time frame the map is supposed to represent, instead of the vagueness of the Carry-Lavoisne map. Both maps share the similarity in that the Sinai, the northern Hejaz, and southern regions of modern-day Jordan and Israel are all depicted as being part of Arabia Petraea. That is to say, similar to the contemporary map of Martin and Tallis map. Likewise, the depiction of Arabia Petraea in geographical extent is the nearly as those depictions on then-contemporary geography. It does differ from the Carry-Lavoisne map in that the northern portion of the Hejaz is included in Arabia Petraea. But this difference does not change the fact that usage of toponyms remains the same in the 1860s.

\(^{115}\) While the map itself does not specify the year the map seeks to describe, the fact that Mesopotamia and Dacia are included suggests that this map depicts the territorial maximum of Rome under Trajan, as he conquered both regions; A.J. Johnson, “Johnson's Roman Empire, Imperium Roman,” map, *Johnson's New Illustrated (Steel Plate) Family Atlas*, David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, 1860, http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/w9bym2.
Figure 14: “Johnson’s Roman Empire, Imperium Roman,” 1860
From Arabia Petraea to Sinai

W.A.K. Johnston’s map, more than any, exemplifies the shift in nomenclature for the area, in that it uses both the old and new terms. The map itself depicts Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and Nubia (Sudan) in the aftermath of the Aqaba Crisis. The Sinai-Palestine border delineated in this map (from Rafah to Taba) is the same as the current Egyptian-Israeli border. In contrast with the maps of the early nineteenth-century, there are no orientalist visages or imagery framing the map. No obelisks or sphinxes to be seen. While ancient landmarks of Egypt are still noted (e.g. The Great Pyramids of Giza), these notes are in the background of the rest of the map, including the cities, roads, and geological features of the land. In contrast with other earlier

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117 Excepting the Israeli occupation after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.
maps, there is no equal elevation of ancient cities with their modern contemporaries. While the map depicts regional boundaries within Egypt, the map does not specify Egypt’s political status, only differentiating Egypt and Sudan from the rest of the Ottoman Empire in Asia. Despite being drafted in the first decade of the twentieth century, the map retains vestiges from the nineteenth century. This map serves as a sort of “transitional fossil” that marks a change has occurred in cartography. Arabia Petraea makes an appearance as being a regional name for the Sinai Peninsula, the southern portions of Palestine, and the northern Hejaz. While retaining this traditional definition, Arabia Petraea itself is no longer a region with its own borders, but a region that still exists in spite of borders. Arabia Petraea is not a meta-region, a region that is not specific to a singular place, but a vague area, undefined and unmarked. More importantly, we see a name of the Sinai: the Peninsula of Sinai. The boundaries of the peninsula, unlike Arabia Petraea, are clear. The newly created border between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire bound the Sinai’s eastern border. To the east, the Suez Canal (unlike the Torrent of Egypt) is the new boundary between Africa and Asia. And in the middle, Mount Sinai’s fame dominates the identity of the peninsula.

Shift in Nomenclature

In tracing this change in toponyms, the difficulty lies in demonstrating that such a shift was real. It is one thing to simply assert that there was a shift. It is quite another to prove it. But how? Given the exponential growth of the printed work throughout the nineteenth century, there was no way to read every single work and analyze the usage of terms throughout the century. But there is a method that can assist in ascertaining such a shift.

\[118\] A transitional fossil, in paleontology, is a fossil used to demonstrate a major evolutionary change. For example, early hominids indicate an evolutionary path towards modern humanity.
The early-2010s saw the rise of a new movement in the digital humanities known as *Culturomics*. Coined in a 2011 study published in the journal *Science*, the proponents of Culturomics believe this new concept would extend “the boundaries of rigorous quantitative inquiry to a wide array of new phenomena spanning the social sciences and the humanities.”\(^{119}\) More importantly, the focus of this study was to highlight a new methodology for humanities scholars to utilize as a consequence of the mass digitization of books initiated by Google in the mid-2000s.\(^{120}\) The result was the ability to analyze the rise and fall of words and terms through time. How and why this would be used is not answered.

Nonetheless, the potential of such a tool for this study is obvious. Given that Google has scanned over twenty million books as of 2012, there could be a way to prove an aspect of this thesis: that there was a change in how the Sinai Peninsula was called: that the nomenclature shifted throughout the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century.\(^{121}\)

Below are the English-language results of the Google NGram. I utilized the three names most used in English-language works that I could find that served as toponyms for the region: Arabia Petraea; Sinai Peninsula; and Peninsula of Mount Sinai.\(^{122}\) The goal here was to see the frequency these names were used from 1800 to 1920. As seen below in Figure 16, there is a noticeable shift in not only the frequency of the terms used, but what terms are used.

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\(^{120}\) The initiative is in the Google Books NGram site, where users can input different terms to see the frequency of the usage of the words and terms as a percentage of all words of that particular language used in printed works scanned by Google.


\(^{122}\) Google Books NGram Result, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Arabia+Petraea%2CPeninsula+of+Mount+Sinai%2CSinai+Peninsula&year_start=1800&year_end=1920&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2CArabia%20Petraea%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CPeninsula%20of%20Mount%2CSinai%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CSinai%20Peninsula%3B%2Cc0
Figure 16: Google NGram analysis of the usage “Sinai Peninsula,” “Arabia Petraea,” and “Peninsula of Mount Sinai,” between 1800 and 1920.

We see a precipitous decline in the usage of “Arabia Petraea” from about 1820 to 1920. In contrast, “Sinai Peninsula” was rarely used until a sudden appearance in the 1860s, only to become the dominant name used to describe the region by 1910. In the meantime, “Peninsula of Mount Sinai” was the second most common term used for the region until the 1860s saw the much more succinct “Sinai Peninsula” take precedence.

The NGram results cannot provide any context as to the reason behind why the frequency in the toponyms usage changed. Nor cannot such results replace any textual or critical analysis of the source material. Further, we cannot discern the individual texts that comprise the entirety of Google’s database. But we are not concerned with taking a larger metanarrative from the NGram results. Rather, the only thing that can be take from this result is that the term “Sinai Peninsula” has predominated as the term of the region by the early twentieth century.

What this study will say is that given the geopolitical shift occurring throughout the nineteenth century, whereby Britain and France increased their influence on Egypt in tandem with the weakening of Khedival powers, the shift in nomenclature occurred because of increased
familiarity on the part of Westerners towards Egypt and the world-at-large. But given that Egypt became a de facto portion of the British Empire after 1882, British geopolitical priorities took center stage in how British policymakers viewed Egypt. It was no longer an exotic region far away from the British Isle. With the Suez Canal, Egypt was now essential for the maintenance of the British Empire in general.

In the final chapter we will examine the political turmoil that would engulf Egypt in 1882 and usher in British rule. From 1882 to the 1906 Al-Aqaba Crisis, British administrators ruled Egypt in all but name. We will examine the political situation on the ground in Egypt. And analyze the final shaping of the borders of Egypt, along the Nile and along the Sinai.
CHAPTER 5
NEW BORDERS: BRITISH EGYPT AND POLITICAL REALITIES

In dismissing Italian nationalism, the Austrian Chancellor Klemens von Metternich famously said that Italy was nothing more than a “geographical expression.” In a sense, Metternich is absolutely right. How people define and think of a region is highly dependent on myriad reasons. Where Metternich was wrong was in believing that ideas could not over turn reality, or at least perceived realities. In the end, there was an Italy. It may not have been real, but the beliefs of millions would actualize it to reality. Ideas are powerful. And while the question of Egypt’s periphery does not compare to the fate of Italy or any major nation itself, the question over how people view lands and borders operates under the same principles.

Thus far we have looked into the classical and biblical influences that played a major role of how British and Western cartographers imagined Egypt to be. These conceptions based on imaginings did not reflect the political reality on the ground in Egypt. By the early twentieth-century, the solidification of the Sinai border showed how political realities finally were reflected in maps. This chapter will analyze the modern foundations of Egypt’s borders.

It is to understand the political evolution of Egypt. Pre-Muhammad Ali Egypt was a region of competing power centers and autonomous (and de facto independent) states all nominally under Ottoman suzerainty. Indeed, this Egypt was dominated by an alliance between Mamelukes and merchants, where income derived from both the land and long distance trade, as well as the demarcation of regional agrarian wealth.\(^\text{123}\) Far from being unified, Egypt was instead

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filled where regions (e.g. Qina) that were, for all intents and purposes, independent from either Cairo or Istanbul.\textsuperscript{124}

The reasons given for the state centralization project undertaken by Muhammad Ali in the early nineteenth-century are many. According to Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, the trade routes between Lower Egypt and Cairo with Sudan were compromised as independent Mamluk states existed in Upper Egypt, intensely hostile to Muhammad Ali.\textsuperscript{125} With the land providing little in the way of revenue, Muhammad Ali embarked on both the state monopolization of the awqaf as well as the pacification of these recalcitrant Upper Egyptian rivals.\textsuperscript{126} The troubles at Qina and elsewhere in Upper Egypt that forced Muhammad Ali to pacify points led to a larger issue regarding the cartography of Egypt. From the very beginning of modern cartography, the depictions of Egypt on maps did not reflect any political reality of Egypt in the real world. As we saw in both chapter 2 and 3, the boundaries of Egypt were drawn with classical and biblical influences in mind.\textsuperscript{127}

Quelling the opposition in Upper Egypt, Muhammad Ali then focused his attention to Sudan. Egyptian expansion into Sudan had numerous causes. Marsot views the Egyptian conquest of Sudan as a step in Muhammad Ali’s imitation of Western European mercantilist policies, where the need for bullion and the need to pay off Albanian and Ottoman soldiers inadvertently led to a positive feedback loop where agrarian infrastructure projects and land reforms necessitated an increased market.\textsuperscript{128} For this very reason, the 1820-1822 Sudanese

\textsuperscript{125} al-Sayyid Marsot, Reign of Muhammad Ali, 66.
\textsuperscript{126} al-Sayyid Marsot, Reign of Muhammad Ali, 66.
\textsuperscript{127} The Torrent of Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Cataracts.
\textsuperscript{128} al-Sayyid Marsot, Reign of Muhammad Ali, 97-99.
invasion was an extension of this mercantile desire.\textsuperscript{129} In contrast, Khaled Fahmy contends that the primary motivation for the conquest of Sudan lay with the desire to lose his rebellious Albanian soldiery still living after the Hejaz campaigns and replace them with acquired slaves from the Sudan.\textsuperscript{130} Regardless of the reason for the invasion of Sudan, the conquests brought the upper Nile valley into access for Western explorers, specifically those of the Royal Geographical Society. Despite of the differing opinions of both Fahmy and Marsot, the maps in Chapters 3 did not reflect the invasions in Sudan. Egyptian dominion over Sudan did not later the absolute power of the cataracts as the determining guide of Egypt’s territorial domain.

The Ottoman-Egyptian Wars and the subsequent conquest and withdrawal from these territories are interesting in the cartography of Egypt for numerous reasons. There are no British or European maps that depict this brief Egyptian empire in Asia.\textsuperscript{131} Maps from this period, as shown with the maps of John Arrowsmith, do not reflect these territorial changes. Egypt is most often depicted as a territory separate from the rest of the Ottoman Empire, but the boundaries of Egypt only depict Egypt in Africa from the Mediterranean to the First Cataract, and occasionally into the Sudan. The internationally brokered deal between the Sultan and Muhammad Ali ensured the hereditary rule of the Pasha’s family in return for those territories. But given what we saw with Arrowsmith’s 1844 map “Egypt,” there is little recognition of such domains in Western maps.\textsuperscript{132} For example, why does Arrowsmith’s “Egypt” not included Egyptian-ruled territories in Sudan? As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, Samuel Baker’s exploration of the Sudan

\textsuperscript{129} al-Sayyid Marsot, \textit{Reign of Muhammad Ali}, 205.
\textsuperscript{130} Khaled Fahmy, \textit{All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt} (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 40.
\textsuperscript{131} Rather, there are no maps that could be found, nor does the Royal Geographic Society anything relating to these conquests in contrast to their reports in Sudan.
\textsuperscript{132} See Figure 5.
under the Khedive Ismail in the 1860s showed that conquests did not end with Muhammad Ali’s peace with the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{133}

The Urabi Revolt of 1882

Throughout this study, the year 1882 has figured prominently in the narrative. The year 1882 was the year of the Urabi Revolt, a nationalist movement among Egyptians to remove both the Khedive Tewfik and the British from power.\textsuperscript{134} As discussed in Chapter 2, the fall of Ismail Pasha in 1879 was due to the perceived mismanagement of Egyptian finances as a result of the construction of the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{135} Led by Ahmed Urabi and other indigenous military officers, the revolt collapsed due to the military intervention of Great Britain.\textsuperscript{136} The failure of the revolt can be seen in two lights. On the one hand, it was the first of many attempts by indigenous Arabic-speaking Egyptians at gaining political power at the expense of the Muhammad Ali dynasty and Great Britain. These revolutionary attempts would ultimately culminate in the Free Officer Movement’s coup against the monarchy in 1952. But on the other hand, it was the solidification of British de facto rule over Egypt that would extend past World War II. As the focus of this study has been exclusively on the Western portion of the equation, we will focus on that aspect.\textsuperscript{137}

The Urabi Revolt and the subsequent British administration of Egypt saw an odd situation arise. The political realities on the ground included the dual failure of the Urabi Revolt

\textsuperscript{133} See page 31-35 of this study.
\textsuperscript{135} See pages 32-33 for more about the fall of Ismail Pasha.
\textsuperscript{137} This is not to say that the Egyptian side of the fallout of the Urabi Revolt is to be neglected. Only that this study is not about the emergence of Egyptian nationalism, but the cartographical perceptions of Egypt by Westerners.
and Lord Cromer’s elevation as Consul-General. After 1882, Egypt became part of the British Empire. However, up until the First World War, Egypt was nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire. The political reality of the ground differed from the legal ideal, as was the case in the decentralized Egypt before 1805 and the de facto independent Egypt under Muhammad Ali and his immediate successors. The divergent situation between the visual representation of political authority and the actual political reality of Egypt throughout the nineteenth century remains constant. What was different after 1882 is that Egypt was no longer a collection of autonomous Mamluk fiefdoms or an independent state under the guise of an Ottoman province. Rather, Egypt was now merely a subject territory of an imperial power. More importantly, Western cartography of Egypt began to emphasize the political reality as Britain now administered Egypt. No longer would Western mapmakers have the luxury to imagine the Egyptian space or spatial boundaries; they were now committed to depict Egypt, as it really existed. But what would be depicted?

Two sets of cartography epitomized this divergent perspective of Egypt. Samuel Augustus Mitchell Jr. represents the first perspective as drawn in maps of Africa and Egypt. In a series of five maps drawn between 1860 and 1890, Mitchell draws the territorial boundaries of Africa with the “most recent discoveries” in mind (Figures 17 and 18, respectively). Of particular note is the 1886 map. Drawn four years after the Urabi Revolt and the de facto beginning of British administrative rule over Egypt, the map deviates strongly from this new political reality. As the map itself was published in the United States and not Britain, we can speculate if American attitudes to British colonialism colored the creation of the map. Then

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again, the 1886 map of Samuel Mitchell does not significantly differ with Mitchell’s prior maps of Africa. In either case, the map depicts an Egyptian state that exists beyond the confines of the nation as traditionally illustrated on all prior British maps. This map depicts an Egyptian “empire” that reflects the territorial claims of Ismail Pasha. While Mitchell does denote regional administrative boundaries, all these are bounded together under the same polity of Egypt.

Figure 17: Samuel Mitchell, “Map Of Africa, Showing Its Most Recent Discoveries,” 1865
Figure 18: Samuel Mitchell, “Africa,” 1886

The eastern border of the Sinai differs from most of the non-Mitchell maps in that the entirety of the Sinai Peninsula is under Egyptian control. The border between Egypt and
Palestine lies north of El Arish and extends in a southeasterly direction towards Aqaba, encompassing both Aqaba and the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. The northern portions of the Hejaz are included in the confines of Egypt. In the west, the town of Matar,\textsuperscript{140} is the westernmost Egyptian town on the Mediterranean coast, over 200 km to the east of the modern Egyptian-Libyan border.

But more significant is the southern border. Unlike prior cartographers, Mitchell shifts the borders of Egypt proper from the First Cataract to the Second Cataract. This new delineation of the border is important as the current borders of the Egyptian state passes close Second Cataract, currently submerged under Lake Nasser. The significance lies with the fact that this is the current border of Egypt with Sudan.

In stark contrast to the depiction of Egypt as an independent North African empire, there is a map included in an atlas published by the London daily \textit{The Times} in 1895 (Figure 19).\textsuperscript{141} The legal fiction of Egypt as a province of the Ottoman Empire was depicted in this map, some thirteen years after the Urabi revolt and the imposition of British rule. Noticeably titled “El Misr,” Egypt is bounded to the east by a separately demarcated Sinai Peninsula and Palestine. To the west, the border with Libya is demarcated at the Gulf of Solum.\textsuperscript{142} The only international boundary depicted was the Egyptian-Abyssinian border. Interestingly enough, the use of the term “Egypt” is placed right next to the First Cataract of the Nile at Aswan. This suggest the use of El Misr to depict Egyptian territory north of the First Cataract, while the more familiar “Egypt” was used to depict the entirety of Egyptian possessions in modern-day Egypt and Sudan.

\textsuperscript{140} Modern Mersa Matruh.
\textsuperscript{142} The same vicinity where the modern Egyptian-Libyan border is demarcated.
Further, the aftermath of the construction of the Suez Canal in the mid-1860s saw new geographical boundary that could be used in demarcating the separation between Egypt from the Sinai, and Africa from Asia. Both the aforementioned maps of Mitchell and The Times no longer had to rely on Roman and Biblical boundaries to rationalize any delineation of the region. Rather, the creation of the canal provided a fairly obvious border that has continued to color
modern perceptions of where Africa ends and Asia begins. What was once an arbitrary line in the sand became an international waterway vital for global commerce.

While the maps of Mitchell and *The Times* differ significantly in depicting two separate interpretations of reality, both share a fundamental commonality: maps crafted after the Urabi Revolt increasingly express Biblical and Classical themes and motifs as they did before 1882. While the political reality on the ground was one of British domination over Egypt, and while the maps of Mitchell and *The Times* reflected a spatial fiction in terms of the Egyptian borders, what lay inside those borders increasingly reflected the real situation. The Orientalist and ancient Egyptian tropes of prior maps, of pyramids, sphinxes, and Biblical names of landmarks of region were increasingly abandoned in favor of reflecting political borders, roads, cities, and geographical landmarks such as mountains, rivers, deserts, and so on. The movement towards more “realistic” and “objective” depictions of Egypt did not mean an end to the bias in British and Western cartography. Rather, the shift signifies a reprioritization of biases. As attention of British administrators and the general public focused towards political and geopolitical concerns with regards to Egypt, cartographers reflected these concerns by emphasizing the political and logistical spaces of the region instead of the classical or biblical spaces. This is not to say that this shift “ended” Orientalist biases in the cartography of Egypt. But these concerns took a backseat to more immediate concerns.

The Aqaba Crisis of 1906

Above all other crises between the Ottoman Empire and Britain, the Aqaba Crisis of 1906 delineated the borders of Egypt with that of Ottoman Syria once and for all. The borders established as a result of Aqaba are the current borders between modern Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. The crises had antecedents to numerous issues that had been driving a wedge between
the Porte and Britain in the intervening years between the Urabi Revolt and the Aqaba Crisis. Despite the fact that the Ottomans had ceased to have direct control over Egypt long before 1882, the Ottomans never acknowledged Egypt’s separation from the empire. Even as Egypt fell within the confines of Britain, the Porte still referred to the region as an Ottoman province into the twentieth century.143 The orientalist Arminius Vámbéry recorded Sultan Abdülhamid II as saying that the notion of “England” as the Ottoman’s closest allies was a part of his upbringing, but that this sentiment was replaced by disillusionment by British activities in the intervening years.144

The disillusionment and tension were only compounded as the Sultan felt himself to be tricked into accepting the occupation of Egypt after 1882.145 The tension only increased as the Sultan perceived inaction on the part of the Anglo-Egyptian administration in quashing the Young Turkish press in the 1890s, and the subsequent British intervention to Ottoman border disputes elsewhere146. Perceived British meddling in Kuwait (ensuring Kuwaiti independence from Ottoman Basra and the Saudis) and the British support for Persia in its dispute over the Iraq-Iran border only added to the tension147. Finally, Britain’s monopoly over the Suez Canal may have been threatened with the construction of a railway from Syria to the Hejaz, providing an alternate route for the Ottomans or any other power from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Red Sea. In the words of Lord Cromer, “the construction of a railway down to the banks of the Suez Canal cannot be regarded as a menace to the liberty of Egypt” and would constitute a threat

144 Burman, “British Strategic Interests,” 276.
145 Burman, “British Strategic Interests,” 276-77.
146 Burman, “British Strategic Interests,” 278.
to the “freedom of transit through the Canal.” Likewise, the control the Ottomans nominally had over the Hejaz was tenuous, at best, and suspicion over British activities so close to the region only stoked Ottoman animosity towards the British.

Further, the Porte would react to the unfolding of the Aqaba Crisis with legal standing. In the context of the Aqaba Crisis, the firman of investiture granted by the Sultan to the Khedive Abbas II specified that the Ottoman-Egyptian borders would revert from the Rafah-Aqaba boundary to the Rafah-Suez boundary, effectively removing the Sinai from Egyptian control. While having the theoretical power of force, the Egyptians and British ignored this stipulation and continued with the status quo before 1892, with the Sinai continuing to be administered as a constituent part of Egypt, under British domination.

It is in this context that the Aqaba Crisis unfolded, resulting from a standoff between the Turks and the British over the proper boundaries of the Sinai. In January 1906 there was an attempt by the Anglo-Egyptians to build a police fort in the vicinity of Aqaba. Initial confusion between both sides as to the location of the Egyptian-Ottoman border led to the Ottoman governor of Syria ordering the withdrawal of the British force tasked to build the fort. Tensions between the two sides escalated with the deployment of the *HMS Diana* to the Gulf of Aqaba to demonstrate British resolve in backing up their positions. This escalation nearly brought both sides to the brink of war. But ultimately, the Ottomans blinked first and gave into Britain’s demands. According to Warburg, this was in recognition of their inability to resist any

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149 Burman, “British Strategic Interests.” 281.
150 Burman, “British Strategic Interests,” 279.
152 Burman, “British Strategic Interests,” 281.
British threats without German, French, or Russian diplomatic support. On 3 May 1906, Sultan Abdülhamid II gave into British demands and relented. On 1 October 1906, the Aqaba Crisis was resolved with the formal administrative boundaries sent to divide the Sinai from Ottoman Hejaz and Syria. This deal resulted in the establishment of the borders between Egypt and Ottoman Syria, now the current borders between Egypt and Israel. The dispute itself can be visualized in a map provided by Warburg, delineating the various administrative boundaries demarcating Egypt and Ottoman control over the Sinai (Figure 20 below).

Figure 20: “The Sinai Peninsula proposed borders” as shown in Warburg’s article “The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47”
Warburg maps exemplifies a much more current stance on the borders of Egypt in accounting for the realities on the ground. The 1841 lines of controls follow a similar northeastern trajectory as the borders of British cartographers in the nineteenth century, but instead of El Arish, the borders extend to Rafah. The other lines were attempts by the Ottomans to maintain as much control over the Sinai as possible. If they were operating out of the assumption that the 1841 borders were still valid, then the entire peninsula belonged to the Ottomans. Instead, the desire to provide a buffer for the Suez Canal and British interests within Egypt created a new situation. The British would continue to draw the borders of Egypt. Instead of using classical and biblical motifs as inspiration, the British instead would use geopolitical self-interest to drive their desire. The Sinai was too useful as a buffer to give up. Because of that, the Sinai became Egyptian and are Egyptian today.

The Aqaba Crisis was the death knell to the use of these particular orientalist tropes in determining Egypt’s borders. This is not to say that orientalism ceased to be a force elsewhere. Indeed, Orientalist tropes of any kind are pervasive today. But the geopolitical concerns of the British state were too much to resist. When Egypt was on the periphery of Western interest, scholars and cartographers, ignorant of the realities on the ground, made due with the collective wisdom of classical and biblical scholarship. But as the trickle of Westerners into Egypt became a flood, the exponential growth in travel literature, geographical surveys, and military missions made the region all too familiar. The construction of the Suez Canal ultimately turned the Sinai from a backwater to the most important conduit to global trade. Further, as British control of India depended on the control of the Suez Canal, any political realities created by British policymakers would trump the old tropes.
Orientalism did not die. Not in the least. But the borders of Egypt's were finally drawn when the imaginative colonialism of the West became real. Imaginatively, Westerners unknowingly colonized Egypt when they imposed their spatial reality on the land. Indigenous power and control were ignored and subsumed by Western cartographers and scholars attempting to do their best in describing Egypt to a home audience. Sincere and earnest, there is no indication these cartographers, explorers, or scholars sought to impose anything on Egyptians. There is no reason but to think that they wanted to simply share their knowledge to others. But colonialism is not simply the political and physical control exacted on a people. It is a psychic conquest. Unbeknownst to the cartographers drawing Egypt, they ushered in Egypt’s eventual colonization decades earlier.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It is my hope this study, however brief, demonstrated the waxing and waning influence classical and biblical texts had in influence how the borders of Egypt were imagined. Further, I hope that this study adequately showed that the correlation between increased British and Western involvement within Egypt as the nineteenth century progressed was not coincidental in origin. Rather, the correlation is the product of first-hand information superseding the monopoly biblical and classical knowledge once had in the presentation of the region to audiences in Britain and the West. The collective works of explorers, geographers, cartographers, and rapid telecommunications resulted in the definable and malleable “Egypt” that did not fit with the realities on the ground. Nonetheless, there may be lingering questions even after this study, especially on the methodology of this study. As a result, this conclusion will address these questions, before contemplating the meaning of the findings presented here.

The first probable complaint regarding this study is the Eurocentric nature of the sources and the evidence. Why did this study exclude Arabic and Turkish sources in favor of heavily Western sources? As mentioned in the introduction, the study’s focus has centered on the depictions created by Westerners for a Western audience. This study has forgone analyzing the indigenous depictions of Egyptian geography (or self-conception of their geography) due to practical and thematic reasons.\textsuperscript{157} Thematically, the reasons are centered on the premise that both biblical and classical influences are interwoven into the structural web of Orientalism. Because Orientalism is a systemic and self-perpetuating series of tropes of the “East” by Westerners, the focus of this study will inherently be focused on these same westerners. This is not to say that

\textsuperscript{157} Practical since this writer does not have knowledge of Ottoman Turkish or Arabic.
any study on indigenous perceptions of space is not worthy of further examination. In the context of this study, the map included in the 1841 Firman is indicative of how the Suez-El Arish boundary found its way into Ottoman cartography. But even this does not tell us what the average Egyptian viewed as what constituted Misr. Given the illiteracy of the average Egyptian fellah and the late emergence of Egyptian nationalism outside the Ottoman-Turkish elites, the question of what Egyptians thought constituted Egypt in the early nineteenth century (much less earlier) may not have made sense. After all, did they even conceive of an Egypt in a nationalistic sense? And would these people have recognized the inhabitants of Siwa or the Sinai as being members of the same imaginary community? Or would any conception of Egypt be bounded by the common cultures on the Nile’s banks? This is all idle speculation, but such questions make it difficult to even approach the study of Egypt’s shifting perspectives on Egypt’s boundaries. For any studies to be viable, they will need to be based on the rise of native Egyptian print media in the latter nineteenth century, as Egyptian identity emerged in the context of faltering Turkish dominance and British ascendancy in Cairo.

A further criticism that can be leveled the number of sources cited. Admittedly, the number of maps used in this study is not numerous. First, I have a clear desire to avoid repetition in this study. Describing each map necessitates the narration of the borders depicted, be it the border between Egypt and Palestine or the border with Sudan. The trouble is that such narrations can easily become repetitive, devolving into a dull listing of details. The maps available to study tend to present the exact same region and highlight the same tropes. As a result, this fact informed my decision to instead present maps that were noteworthy and representative of these

158 The Romanized Arabic name of Egypt.
tropes. By “noteworthy,” I mean maps that were created by members of the Royal Geographical Society, were sponsored by prominent newspapers, or maps cited in journals. The goal here is to present maps that would be indicative of the scholarly and popular representations of Egypt’s borders.

But the question on the number of maps utilized for this study elides the question of selection bias. That is to say that I simply chose the thesis and then selected the evidence to fit that thesis. Such shoddy scholarship should be condemned. But how do I prove that this study is not selectively biased? That the evidence and arguments presented here are a good faith effort on my part to show the influences biblical and classical texts had on cartographers? Ultimately, I cannot claim to have read every text, map, or document concerning Egypt’s borders throughout the nineteenth century. No doubt that many documents were left undiscovered during my long search, and no doubt many documents were simply inaccessible geographically or digitally from my grasp. These are issues that could not be resolved on my end. However, as evidenced in the use of so-called Culturomics in determining that there was a shift in the nomenclature of the Sinai Peninsula, the are methods to address the question of selection bias. Such methods cannot and will not replace the textual analysis or the contextualization of any given source. But it does provide at least an objective method to show that something is there. And this study’s goal has to been to analyze why.

Lastly, there is the omission from this study of Egypt’s border in the west with modern Libya. As mentioned repeatedly, the study’s focus has been exclusively with the shifting boundaries in the south and the northeast. To the south, the Nile River continues for many hundreds of kilometers towards Equatorial Africa. Given the expansion of Egyptian control up the river throughout the nineteenth century, the question of why and how the current border was
placed at the Second Cataract is worth investigating. In the case of the border in the Sinai, the juxtaposition of the region’s Biblical history with its modern political history makes it an ideal candidate for further study.

But the Western Border does not have a long political history of consistent control by Cairo, nor much in the way of Biblical or Classical references to the degree the other two borders have. The dominant feature across the Western Border is the Sahara Desert, a sparsely inhabited expanse of wilderness. Apart from the oasis of Siwa and coastal communities along the Mediterranean, there are no centers of populations within the expanse of the Sahara apart from the occasional nomads or travellers. From my own reading of the sources, there is sparse mention of the region by Westerners in the period studied here. The Sinai and the Nile Valley understandably took the limelight away from the Egyptian-Libyan border.

But apart from textual sources, what about the maps themselves? Surely there is something to glean there, right? The problem is one of inconsistencies cropping up throughout the century in the depiction of the border. Let us take Siwa as an example of this inconsistency. Siwa is an oasis town surrounded by the Sahara, figured prominently historical as the site of the Temple of Ammon, where Alexander the Great famously visited to consult the gods on his conquest of the Persian Empire. While prominent in antiquity, many maps had the western border of Egypt taper off into the desert without reaching Siwa. Maps of Africa such as 1787 Sawyer and Bennett map depict a western border of Egypt, but one where Siwa exists outside the border. The placement of Siwa within the Egyptian fold was only consistently applied after 1882 once British administration took hold of Egypt. Even then, the antecedents to the placement of

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Siwa within Egypt had already existed, so the Urabi Revolt is a rough guidepost delineating the acceleration of a trend that may have occurred even earlier while Egypt was simply heavily indebted to Britain and France, as in the 1870s.

Through this brief survey, a representative sample of maps, reports, references, and guides were analyzed under the gaze of classical and biblical influences. Regions where cartographers had no intimate familiarity were cast as continuation of long moribund Roman provinces. The appropriation of Greek and Biblical boundaries in place of understanding was widespread in the maps of the nineteenth century and prior. However, as this survey also demonstrates, these influences began to recede as British involvement in Egyptian political affair began to intensify in the latter nineteenth-century. As British interests were increasingly tied with those of Egypt, the concerns among cartographers shifted to denote political realities. Once Britain actually controlled Egypt after 1882, these political realities were intertwined with British political interests. At a glance, it may seem as if the classical influences on Egypt’s borders had a negligible effect on the future delineation of the current borders. However, the placement of the borders in the Sinai or at the First Cataract based on Biblical and Classical interpretations did not change significantly after the formalization of the borders. Yes, the borders of Egypt may be at the Second Cataract, but it is still on a Cataract that was known to the ancients. Likewise, while El Arish is no longer a border town between Egypt and Palestine, the current borders of Egypt at Rafah is not far away from the old Torrent of Egypt. These adjustments to denote the political reality began at these sites that cartographers imagined as being actual borders. These starting points fixed malleable borders that political pressures would then shape into something new. It is within these borders that define Egypt’s current borders. The vestigial influences of the Bible and the Greco-Roman past may not be self-evident, but they nevertheless exist. The borders of
Egypt at the birth of Egyptian nationalism in the nineteenth century were changing towards their current configuration from these baselines.

Given the role Egypt has played as the center of the so-called Arab World, the borders imagined and imposed on Egypt plays an indelible role in the formation of Egyptian self-consciousness and nationalism. In understanding the influences in this one small aspect of Egyptian identity, we may come to realize that all nationalism is never developed in a vacuum. Nationalism is the amalgamation of different cultural and political artifacts through centuries of contact and interactions.


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