


The Beginnings of Colonization


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Abstract

Most colonialism-related studies in the world have primarily focused on the 15th century onward when some European countries embarked on their conquests and colonialism and established colonial empires. The powerful naval forces of Portugal and Spain in the 15th century began identifying new lands and then colonizing and enslaving the people there. Few studies have deeply investigated colonialism but if there are studies available in this field, there are two separate trends with no association with each other. In addition, most of these studies have focused on the past centuries i.e. British colonialism. The present study investigates the old colonial perspective and its influence on colonialism in the modern era.

Keywords: Colonization; Persian Gulf; Ancient Greek.



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Introduction

Most colonialism-related studies in the world have primarily focused on the 15th century onward when some European countries embarked on their conquests and colonialism and established colonial empires. Few studies have deeply investigated colonialism but if there are studies available in this field, there are two separate trends with no association with each other.

Ancient Greek Colonization

With economic growth and increase in population, Greek rulers invaded other fertile lands in order to expand their territories. Other than the fertility that attracted the invaders, such countries had numerous mineral raw materials that were plundered by the Greeks (Descœudres, 2013). Such colonization was organized by the metropolis that benefited from the huge wealth it obtained from colonies. Greeks colonies on other lands were called apoikia (In ancient Greek, ἀποικίε meant home away from home) and overseas colonies were Greek city-states. The term “colony” emanates from the ancient Roman word “colonia”, which means a kind of Roman settlement derived from colon-us, meaning farmer or resident (Nayar, 2008: 1-2). The Greeks began their colonization at the beginning of the 8th century BC. The first Greek colonies were founded by the Euboeans in southern Italy and Chalcidice, and then other colonies were gradually established (Descœudres, 2013; Graham, 2008). Such colonies can be called regional colonies which were not far from the metropolis and had numerous close links with the metropolis.

Euboia collapsed with the start of the Lelantine War, at the end of the 8th century BC when other Greeks such as the Ionians and the Corinthians followed Euboia (Descœudres, 2013). The Ionians began to colonize the Mediterranean region around the 7th century BC, as their first colonies were established in southern Italy, Terrasse, and the Black Sea. Furthermore, they established other Greek states such as Thera, Cyrene, and Andros, and Samos founded some colonies in the Aegean Sea (Descœudres, 2013). Moreover, the Greeks ruled throughout the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea during the 6th and 8th centuries BC. Such colonies can be called extra-regional ones which were far away from the metropolis and their administration was more complex compared to the regional colonies. This was the beginning of colonization and the Greeks, who gained huge wealth from colonization, aimed to conquer more lands in order to found new colonies.

Nevertheless, many Greek cities and islands in Asia Minor were ruled by the Persians upon the rise of the Achaemenids in Iran. The Greeks, who had penetrated such lands before and founded colonies, were highly infuriated since they had lost whatever they had gained over the years and the wealth these overseas lands had been sending to their metropolis, Athens.

In the meantime, Herodotus from the Greek city of Halicarnassus appeared. Herodotus can be considered the first theorist and political discourse creator of the Greeks although he has always been known as the Greek historian or the world's first historian.

According to Amir Mehdi Badi, the Greeks used the term “barbarian” for those coming from other lands and had different morals and habits. This word has the same meaning in every language, nothing but a foreigner (Badi, Vol. 1, 2008: 13). Nevertheless, the Greeks changed its meaning and likened it to the absence of any real culture due to the extreme contempt, partiality, ignorance, and short-sightedness of those who see themselves as inheritors of the Greek culture under complete prejudice (Badi, Vol. 1, 2008: 13-14). As a result, Herodotus formulated the thoughts of his fellow Greeks, considering the world two poles of Europe and Asia. In this manner, Greece was a symbol of Europe and freedom to the leadership of Athens while Asia was a symbol of slavery to the leadership of the Persians (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 27). Herodotus developed the polarized worldview and such attitude emerged during the Greek wars in the 5th century BC and also shown in the writings of Asichylos and Herodotus. From this standpoint, the Greek civilization was highly praised due to its so-called confrontation with the “barbarians”. There was good on one side and bad on the other and there was also civilization on one side and barbarism on the other (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 29). Unlike others who considered the world to be three parts of Asia, Europe and Africa, Herodotus regarded the world as two parts of Asia and Africa-Asia (Bichler, 2001: 11-21, cited in Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 37).

The Greeks, who saw everything getting out of control, aimed to regain them all, which culminated during the time of

Alexander the Great. Alexander’s campaign to the East in the 4th century BC was due to anti-Orientalism discourse, particularly anti-Persian discourse prevailing mostly among the Greeks. Herodotus has elaborated on this issue well in his book. As Alexander entered the East and conquered the Achaemenid territory, the colonization process began yet again. Alexander used the dominant discourse and established numerous colonies in the territory of Achaemenid Iran. In addition, he encouraged the Macedonian and Greek people to migrate to that land by giving them some advantages. Moreover, Alexander’s incentives also included awarding fertile lands and exempting from taxes as he intended to repel the uprising of the indigenous people.

Some archeological researchers such as Olbrycht stated that Alexander did not intend to earn economic benefits in his early colonization but sought security and military goals (Olbrycht, 2004: 128-148). In addition, colonization in Greek thoughts was monitoring the borders and establishing a military belt in a country from trustworthy forces and building bases with loyal people (Koester, 1995: 44). The main goal of Alexander and the Greeks was to increase security and dominate militarily over the east following Anti-Orientalism and Xenophobia discourses of the Greeks, as well as other economic interests.

Iran came under the rule of Seleucus after Alexander’s death and consequently there were the division of the conquered lands among three of his generals. The colonization of Seleucus and the Seleucids was due to the continuation of Alexander’s policies. The Seleucids

succeeded in this way while death did not let Alexander finish his colonization. The immigrants who had settled in those colonies were both soldiers and citizens. This military-citizen concept was a kind of political and economic dependence on the government (Briant, 1978: 61).

The Seleucid government encouraged Macedonians and Greeks to settle in the colonies throughout its territory, and awarded them with lands and privileges. The Greeks were considered the backbone of the Seleucid government. First of all, the Seleucids founded their colonies in West Asia up to Balkh and a large part of Asia Minor was ruled by them but after the defeat and the death of Lysimachus in the battle of Battle of Corupedium in 281 BC. The process of colonization intensified significantly during the time of the first two Seleucid kings. Then, it decreased due to different reasons such as territorial losses and consolidation of control over a certain region probably after the reign of Antiochus IV (Coloru, 2013).

Colonies were established in the vicinity of Ecbatana, particularly in the fertile Nisaeen plain that was famous for breeding war horses where there was another Seleucid colony called Laodicea. The main fortresses of the Seleucids were near present-day Tehran and Hecatompylos. In the Fars plain, Antioch in Persia was founded by Antiochus I who had a distinct Greek identity until the reign of Antiochus III (Strootman, 2015). In addition, the early Hellenistic remains of Afrasiab in Sogdia show the Seleucid military colony in Marakanda (Samarkand). In fact, it shows the continuous

control of Macedonian Greeks over Sogdia during the 3rd century BC (Kuhrt and Sherwin-White, 1993: 106; Strootman, 2015). The colonies founded by Alexander and his successors in the east can be called global colonies. Such colonies were more extensive than regional and extra-regional ones and had emerged far away from the metropolis.

Ancient Roman Colonization

With the rise of the Parthians in Iran, the Seleucid government gradually declined and lost the lands they had captured. Finally, they were overthrown and the Greek colonization in this region came to an end. Nevertheless, the Romans used the polarization attitude to justify the superiority of European civilization and their colonial policy was based on the Greeks' anti-orientalism and xenophobia (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 46) which became the fundamental pillars of political and philosophical thoughts of the Romans (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 46). In addition, they were trying hard to attack others, especially the Persians by developing that discourse, like their predecessors. In fact, they aimed to seize lands and found colonies once again while the Parthian and Sasanian governments in Iran were always a precious and solid shield against the Roman expansionism and colonization. Plutarch played a key role in this anti-orientalism of the Romans by going beyond the polarization attitude of Herodotus and Aeschylus in Greece. Plutarch claimed absolute civilization for the Greeks and absolute barbarism for the Persians. According to his bipolar attitude, Greece and Rome were

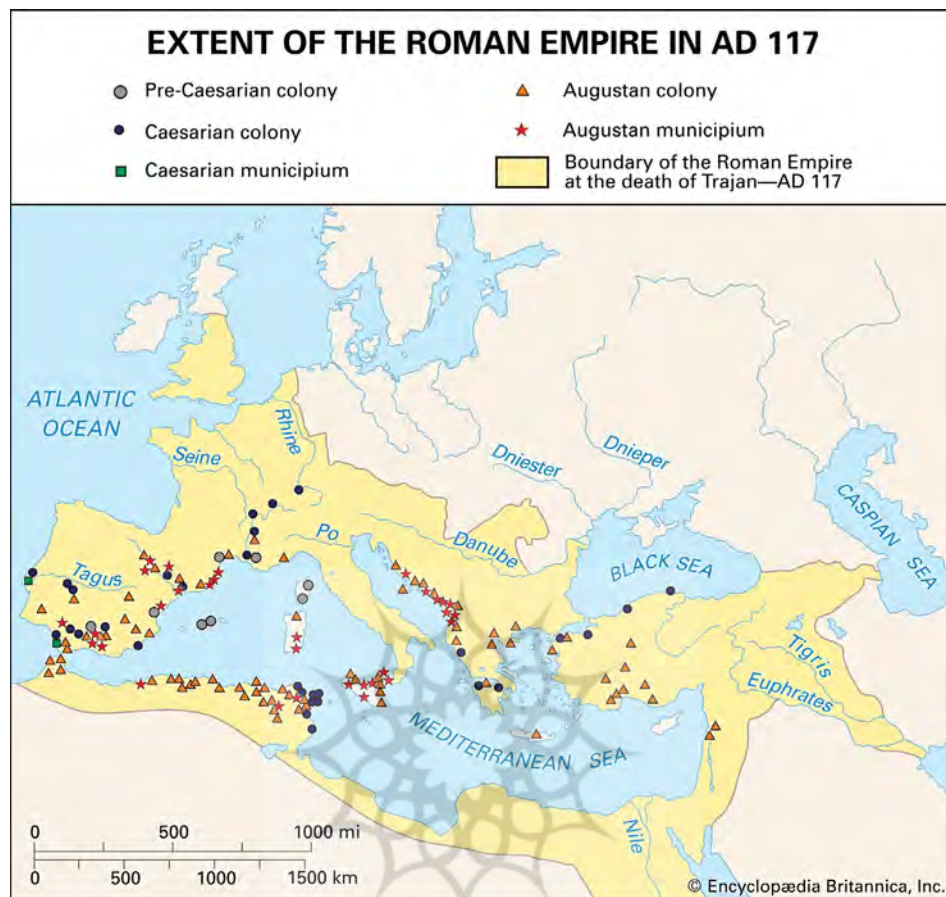


Fig. 1. Roman Colonies (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Roman-Empire>)

a symbol of civilization and beauty while their great enemy, the Parthians, was a symbol of brutality (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 50-52).

The Romans, who sometimes marched to Iran, always regarded Parthian and Sasanian Iran as an obstacle to their colonization but failed to confront the Iranians. Thus, they paid attention to other lands as the Roman colonies outside Italy were probably Italica in Hispania that was founded in 206 BC by Publius Cornelius Scipio during the Second Carthage War (Livy, 2009).

Augustus had to settle more than a hundred thousand of his veterans after the end of his civil wars. For this reason, he chalked a plan to establish new colonies across his empire. During that time, most of those colonies were the settlements which were previously occupied and were in the process of re-colonization (Rodgers, 2006).

Furthermore, 30000 Italian immigrants crossed the sea when Carthage was established as a Roman colony in 29 BC. Further, the third legion was settled in North Africa in 23 BC and numerous

veteran immigrants founded the settlements such as Diana Veteranorum, Tingad, Thurburbo Maius and Djemila (Heather, 2006: 519; Note 40).

Modern Colonization

Eastern Rome began to confront the Islamic government due to the emergence of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula and the advance of Muslims to other lands.

Although Eastern Rome stood against Muslims at the beginning, it slowly lost the battles to the Islamic government so Uqba ibn Nafi advanced to the Atlantic Ocean with his troops and took whole of North Africa (Kazemi Shirazi, 1992: 56-57). Then, Carthage that was one of the Roman colonies for many years was conquered by Muslims. The conquest of Carthage paved the way for Muslims to enter Europe and Tariq ibn Ziyad, who was one of Musa bin Nasir's commanders, crossed the water with 7000 troops. Moreover, he advanced in the Spanish territory and could conquer Toledo, the capital of Spain (Kazemi Shirazi, 1992: 57).

During that time, the anti-orientalism discourse of Westerners entered a new stage as they depicted Muslims as barbarians who had to be confronted, destroyed, and taken as slaves. That is why Pope Nicholas V issued an official decree entitled *Dum Diversas* in 1452. Accordingly, the kings of Portugal could attack infidels, namely Muslims, take their lands, seize their property, and enslave their people (Boxer, 1977: 21; Hobson, 2004: 136). Pope Nicholas V went even further and issued another decree entitled *Romanous Pontifex* in 1455. He called Portuguese prince Heinrich, who used to conduct sailing, the knight of

Christ and defender of the Christian faith (Hobson, 2004: 136). The Pope issued another decree titled *Inter Caetera* in 1456 and legitimized Portuguese colonialism in other lands even up to the Indian Ocean. In fact, he considered all the lands conquered by Portuguese from the Cape Bojador on the northwest coast of Africa, Nun to the Guinea route, and even the southern route to East Asia as part of the spiritual and legal territory of this government (Hobson, 2004: 136-137; Boxer, 1977: 22-23).

In addition, such a discourse had also emerged in Spain. A powerful government emerged in Spain when Fernando II of Aragon and Leon married Isabella I, daughter of Juan II of Castile. For this reason, the confrontation between Westerners and Easterners entered a more difficult phase.

The Catholic government of Spain, that was now highly powerful, aimed to spread Catholic Christianity. Thus, they fought against the Muslim kingdom of Granada and eventually won over Muslims in 1492 and forced them to accept Christianity. In addition, they expelled those refusing to accept Christianity and baptism and sent them to Spain. Isabella and Fernando's hatred toward Islam was so strong that the following was written on their tombstones after their death:

"The destroyer of the religion of Muhammad and false claims. Ferdinand from Aragon and Isabella from Castile, the Catholic kings" (Mofidi Nasrabadi, 2019: 69).

In addition to the Spanish government, that aimed to expel Muslims and spread

Christianity, the Portuguese government founded by Afonso Henriques in 1139 followed the same strategy. After several years, John I opened the African region of Ceuta in the south of Gibraltar in 1415. Then, his son Prince Henry the Navigator founded the first seafaring school with religious and national motives. He conducted studies about seafaring and the possibility of voyaging to various parts of Africa from the sea and the desert (Kazemi Shirazi, 1992: 170 and Kramers, 1931: 108) and raised the idea of reaching other lands.

At that time, Mediterranean cargo ships were too slow and heavy to voyage long distances. Thus, a new, lighter but faster ship named Caravel was built with the guidance of Henry (Merson, 1990: 92). The Portuguese sailors could navigate the waters and seas more easily than before with this ship (Boorstin, 1985: 64-156). Henry's school was the onset of global colonization in the new era and Portugal was the pioneer in this regard.

At that time, Portugal identified the Atlantic Ocean, the Azores, Madeira, as well as Cape Verde archipelagos (Garfield, 2015) and colonized parts of Africa by examining its coasts. In addition, he identified an eastern route to India through the Cape of Good Hope that could reach India and its spices and other valuable goods (Parry, 2010: 57-58).

Thus, the Portuguese voyages in the 15th century led not only to more familiarity with the African coastline, but to an increase in the awareness of different archipelagos such as Cape Verde and the Azores. This group of islands in

the Atlantic Ocean became critical for Portugal and Spain that were dreaming for world empires. Furthermore, they created patterns of occupation and colonization which were later followed in the Americas and other places (Parry, 2010: 65-175).

For instance, the Portuguese slowly established colonies in the uninhabited archipelago of Madeira in the middle of the 15th century. In this regard, such colonies were economically focused on sugar production. Portuguese sugar plantations in Madeira significantly required imported African slave labor. This was the onset of the colonial slave trade that would take millions of Africans from their homes to distant lands in the following centuries where they were entrusted to forced labor in the emerging empires of European countries (Parry, 2010: 320-330).

The Kingdom of Portugal sought to reach the southern tip of the African continent and that is why it sent some sailors on such a mission. However, the sailors failed again in reaching South Africa until King John II of Portugal Bartolomeo Diaz ordered another sailor to accomplish the same mission in 1486. As a result, Bartolomeo Diaz began sailing and could identify a cape in South Africa on March 12, 1488, which he called Cabo das Tormentas. Later, King John II of Portugal who was highly pleased with this achievement and hoped to open a sea route to India and the East, named it Cabo da Boa Esperança (Oakley, 2003; Crowley, 2015: 17-19; 21-23; Ravenstein, 1900: 644-645). The king of Portugal had predicted correctly and later, other Portuguese

sailors took their ships to the East and India and founded a colonial empire for the first time.

After Bartolomeo Diaz, Vasco da Gama once again went to Cabo da Boa Esperança in the south of the African continent. He realized the dream of the Portuguese that was to reach India from there and connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. His voyage is regarded as a turning point in history because it was the onset of sea-based global multiculturalism (Cliff, 2011).

The discovery of the sea route to India opened the way for the global imperialism era and enabled the Portuguese to create a long-term colonial empire on the water route from Africa to Asia. Da Gama and his followers brought the Portuguese a brutal reputation among Indian kingdoms, serving as a model for Western colonialism in the Age of Discovery (Narayanan, 2006).

Then, Afonso de Albuquerque advanced the Portuguese grand plan using the triple fight against Islam, spreading Christianity, and guaranteeing the spice trade by creating a Portuguese Asian empire (Ooi, 2004: 17). He was considered the first European of the Renaissance era who entered the Persian Gulf and led his fleet to the Red Sea (Stevens, 1711: 113). Afonso de Albuquerque took seven ships and 500 men to Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, one of the major trading centers. On his way, he conquered the cities of Muscat in July 1507 and Khor Fakkan and then reached Hormuz on September 25, the same year. In this way, he captured Hormuz and made it a tributary of the Kingdom of Portugal (Crowley, 2015: 195–199). Hormuz was

ruled by the Portuguese for more or less a century. Eventually, the Iranians accompanied by British forces, under the leadership of Imam Quli Khan, Safavid governor, besieged the island fort for 10 weeks during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great in 1622. By surrendering the Portuguese, they recaptured Hormuz and expelled the Portuguese from that place (Chaudhuri, 2002: 64).

Moreover, the Spaniards who were thinking of expelling Muslims, spreading Christianity, and reaching India began their voyage to identify and capture other lands. In this regard, they had claims over the Canary Islands during the early 1400s while the native islanders resisted the Spanish invasions. Finally, Spanish sailors could seize these islands with more aggressive raids during the early 1470s. In addition, they could establish some colonies there and enslave the natives who resisted as they later did with the native populations of the Americas (Parry, 2010: 65, 285).

Nevertheless, this was not the end but the beginning of the story when in 1474, Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli, a Florentine astronomer, recommended to King Afonso V of Portugal that crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the West is a faster way to arrive in China, Japan and India than South Africa, but Afonso refused to accept his suggestion (Phillips & Phillips, 1992: 108; Boxer, 1967). In addition, Christopher Columbus and his brother presented a plan to reach East Indies in the 1480s. He wrote a letter to Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli, who encouraged Columbus by sending him a copy of a map he had already given to Afonso V (Phillips & Phillips, 1992: 227).



Fig. 2. Portuguese Voyage in the Age of Discovery, the Major Spice Trade Route in the Indian Ocean, and the Territories of the Portuguese Empire during the Reign of King John III (1557-1521)
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Columbus proposed his seafaring plan to King John II of Portugal in around 1484 (Rickey, 1992). However, this proposal was not accepted (Mori-son, 1991: 68-70) and in 1488, he re-proposed but was not accepted by the king's advisors when Bartolomeo Diaz had successfully returned to Portugal after the discovery of Cabo da Boa Esperança (Pinheiro-Marques, 2016: 97; Symcox and Blair, 2016: 11-12).

Since Columbus's proposal was not accepted by the Portuguese court, he took his proposal to the court of Fernando II and Isabella I in Spain. After considering his proposal, Isabella agreed with this proposal (Dyson, 1991: 84) and supported Columbus's voyages of discovery in 1492. The anti-orientalism discourse of Europeans became different, moved beyond anti-orientalism and transformed into xenophobia with the identification of new lands. Abbas Hamdani believes that Columbus was motivated by the hope of "[freedom] of Jerusalem from Muslims" by "using the resources of newly discovered lands" (Hamdani, 1979). According to Carol Delaney, Columbus was a Christian apocalyptic who was looking for a way to Asia (Delaney, 2006). His religious beliefs are reflected in the daily notes of Columbus such as: "I hope to find so much gold that the kings [of Spain] can prepare themselves to win the battle for the Holy Land in three years" (Hobson, 2004: 163). Columbus, like Vasco da Gama, was highly influenced by the belief of the crusade against Islam (Hobson, 2004: 163).

The maritime colonization of Spain and Portugal and huge wealth which

was brought to these countries inspired France, England and the Netherlands to establish colonies in Asia and the newly identified America (Ferguson, 2004, 2; Russo, 2012: 15).

Henry VII of England ordered John Cabot to discover the Northwest Passage of Asia through the North Atlantic Ocean in 1496, following the success of Spain and Portugal in their maritime explorations (Ferguson, 2004, 3) and he could reach the island of Newfoundland while he thought he had reached Asia (Andrews, 1985: 45). Then, Britain formed in the early 17th century with the settlement of the British in North America and the smaller Caribbean islands, as well as the East India Company to manage the colonies and trade abroad (Canny, 1998: 34 and also about other kinds of British colonization see Andrews, 1984: 316, 324-326). In the era of colonial empires, each colonialist country attempted to obtain a greater share of the vast wealth of other lands. One of them colonized Africa while the other one colonized Asia; one went to the Caribbean and the other to Bali in Indonesia. Such colonists made their best efforts to achieve this goal and Herodotus formulated the dichotomy of civilized and savage. During the times of the Roman Empire, Plutarch justified the superiority of European civilization and the rightness of their colonial policy. In the new era, John Locke wrote a book entitled *Two Treatises of Government* and dealt with political theory. He defended England's colonial policies in the New World against the natives and other European powers in America. Furthermore,

he supported England's claim of "superiority" over taking native land during the 17th century (Arneil, 1998: 2). In addition to John Locke, the Catholic Church had signs of British colonial and imperial discourse during and after the 18th century. Such a European thought in the 18th century when civilization was only a characteristic of the West was considered a secularized reading of the proposition of Christianity. In fact, there was no way of salvation other than the Western Catholic Church was for the natives to either accept the rule of Christianity or be ready to fight (Hobson, 2004: 166). The political thought of the Catholic Church and John Locke was not only about the New World, i.e. Native Americans but about all the lands which are wild and barbaric according to Westerners as the continuation of what happened before in ancient Greece and Rome.

Identification, De-identification and Neo-colonialism

Identification and de-identification were created by colonizers to achieve their intended goals. In addition, they created languages and destroyed some languages, and many examples of this can be observed in their colonies. In India, colonialism aimed to de-language and break their ties with other lands which were close to each other culturally and religiously. British colonialism removed the Persian language that was the official language of India in the 16th century. British army officers and colonial masters forced Indian princes to conduct their businesses in English language in 1832 (Clawson, Rubin, 2005: 6).

Although some countries could gain independence, the colonialist countries attempted to dominate them and aimed to control their thought, religion, culture, economy and things like that. At the meeting of non-aligned countries in Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955, Indonesian President Ahmad Sukarno stated that colonialism renewed its coverage in controlling thought, economy, etc. (Hodder-Williams, 2001).

De-language and de-identification were among the attractive procedures for the colonialists, as Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union adopted the same. De-identification and de-language, followed by identification, became an inclusive policy after the advance of Tsarist Russia to Iran and the separation of some parts of this land. After the fall of Tsarist and the rise of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin established a separate existence and identity from Iran to stabilize the political boundaries of the separated territories. Thus, they established this new identity with the help of the statesmen by emphasizing ethnicity and changing the Persian to another script. In addition, they attempted to cut off their cultural ties with Iran by neglecting the Iranian figures and works and highlighting their ethnic characters and works. Soon enough, they realized that not only the people of these lands are loyal to Iran, but remain like yellow leaves that have no roots by erasing the cultural heritage of Iran. As a result, the statesmen of the emerging countries with big powers made a new plan and looked for the root to be cut with an ax. Furthermore, they aimed to label such cultural figures and spiritual heritage as

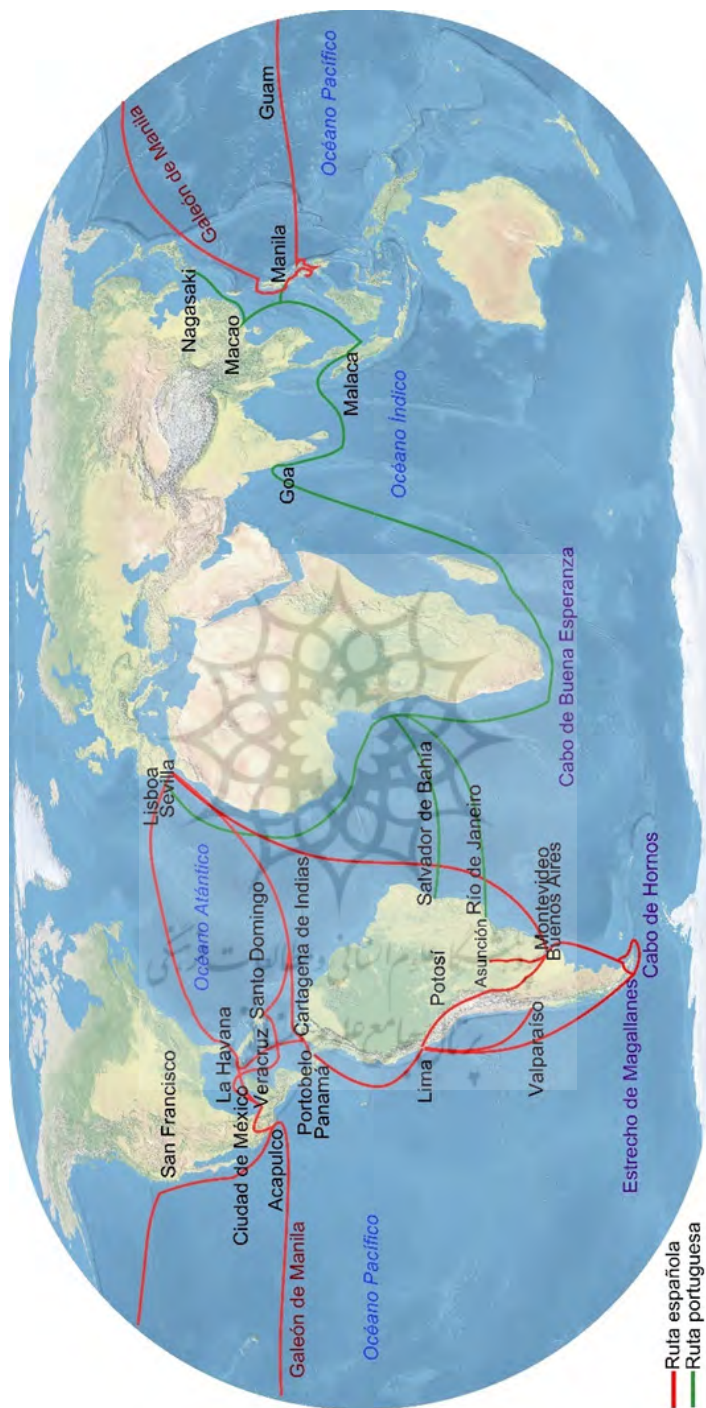


Fig. 3. Spanish Seafaring Is Shown with Red Lines
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non-Iranian and rob them off their Iranian origin.

Conclusion

According to the literature, the West had a violent attitude towards Orientals since ancient times and considered them barbaric and uncivilized always attempting to spread their civilization that was superior to other lands. In addition, they aimed to civilize the so-called wild and barbaric East such as the global colonization of Alexander and the Seleucids, followed by the Romans, etc. The bipolar and anti-oriental discourse of Herodotus in ancient Greece was expanded by Plutarch during the Roman Empire to be used as a political thought among the Romans. This anti-orientalism discourse of Westerners was transformed during the rise of Islam when the anti-orientalism discourse was combined with the fight against Islam and the spread of Christianity. Furthermore, the issuing of successive decrees by Pope Nicholas V in 1452, 1455 and 1456 encouraged Europeans to colonize. In addition, it could legitimize Portuguese colonization in other lands even up to the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese and Spanish seafaring can be regarded

to expel Muslims from Jerusalem, as well as Christian apocalyptic beliefs.

Religious beliefs accompanied by colonialism in India and other eastern lands, the discovery of new lands in Western Europe, as well as John Locke's political thought could expand anti-orientalism and turn into Xenophobia, anti-European and anti-Christian. During that time, the colonial empires attempted to outdo each other in colonization to establish colonies more dependent on their metropolises. As the de-identification of the natives of the conquered lands and then identification for them, the elimination of the common languages in these lands and the removal of other languages which were not used in the same land, were all in line with the establishment of colonialism. The British colonization of India adopted such a procedure and slowly put aside Persian language that was the official language in India, in 1832. This de-identification and identification continued and colonialism attempted to influence other lands in different forms. In addition, it still copes with anti-orientalism, xenophobia, and de-identification in the form of neo-colonialism.

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