

An Eye for Prices, an Eye for Souls: American Merchants and Missionaries in the Indian Subcontinent, 1784–1838

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Benjamin Crowninshield was dreaming about his youth. “I dream about home, about India, & indeed about any thing *but Washington*,” he wrote his wife from the national capital in November of 1816. Appointed Madison’s Secretary of the Navy two years before, Crowninshield found himself longing for his days as a young merchant-mariner in the Indian Ocean. To the desk-bound former captain, the East Indies remained a fresh and exotic world where skillful young men could hone their honor and engineer their fortunes. In his travels, he had found that the genteel native population of India had included rational, like-minded individuals with whom American merchants could deal on a more or less equal footing. Crowninshield had even gone so far as to once give a speech against the sending of American missionaries to India. As a member of the Massachusetts State House of Representatives, he had vehemently argued against extending a charter to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1812. Drawing on his lengthy experiences in Indian ports where he “had become acquainted with the amiable manners of that

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mild, much misrepresented people,” Crowninshield proclaimed that Indians were “perfectly satisfied with their own religion, + wanted no change.” Striking a surprisingly modern pose of intercultural respect, Crowninshield had found that “the manners, the address + the learning of the principal men among the Hindoos” was comparable to “those who it was contemplated to send out to instruct them.” What was more, “there were those among them who had examined our religion + were familiar with its doctrines.”¹

Crowninshield may have been one of the more tolerant men of his generation, but he was not alone; many other American merchants who made landfall in distant locales in the first twenty years of independence managed to disentangle themselves from prejudice, at least enough to do business. This was especially the case in South Asia, where the officers of American merchantmen dealt extensively with upper-class native Indians. Desirous of enjoying financial success, American sea officers arrived at Indian ports with a willingness to set aside cultural, religious, and racial differences. While not all American merchants readily relinquished their suspicions when dealing with native Indians, all of them needed to build up a personal rapport with Indian businessmen in order to be successful. Although these relationships ranged from friendly and respectful to condescending and patronizing, all were constructed out of varying degrees of trust, familiarity, and cultural sensitivity.²

The golden age of the American India trade lasted only a few decades; after the War of 1812, a shifting domestic economy and new legislation jettisoned all but the most persistent merchants from the business. In the 1810s, America’s reigning vision of India and its denizens began to change as missionaries gradually came to replace merchants as the dominant American travelers to the subcontinent in the Early Republic. Their characterization of Indian civilization as dark, diabolic, and barbaric differed dramatically from those of their mercantile predecessors. By casting themselves as the spiritual saviors of pagan Indians in a prolific missionary press, American evangelicals forged a new, supercilious paradigm of the non-Christian world for antebellum Americans.³

The few historians who have followed Americans venturing into British India have missed this crucial transformation. Most of these have dwelt on either merchant-mariners or missionaries, but not both. G. Bhagat, in his pioneering work *Americans in India: 1784–1860*, combined both commercial and cultural analysis. Yet by focusing mainly on sea captains, Bhagat also explicitly left missionaries out of the story,

finding that a “discussion of these contacts would require a separate volume.” Susan S. Bean carried Bhagat’s work further, arguing in her work *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail, 1784–1860* that merchant-mariners abroad in the subcontinent formed their own, uniquely American vision of India, one that reflected American values as well as Indian realities. While Bean acknowledged that the “experiences of East India merchants instilled a more complex, sometimes more liberal view of Hinduism” than those of missionaries, she engages almost solely with the perspectives of gentlemen merchants, largely leaving out the perspectives of missionaries who rewrote America’s relationship with the Indian world. Likewise, monographs that address American missionaries in India during the early republic pay little attention to the mariners who made their subjects’ missions possible. While the study of Indo-American relations in the era of the Early Republic may be heading into a revival, a holistic view of American relations with India—one that can keep in perspective all the disparate parts of that historically rich interaction—remains elusive. By glossing over the contrast in perspective between merchants and missionaries, historians have fallen short of bringing about an important shift in how Americans perceived themselves, the world, and their place in global affairs.⁴

Whether as merchant-mariners or missionaries, Americans wrote of their interactions with South Asian peoples and cultures for different reasons. American merchants may have had a professional interest in mustering written evidence of friendly relations with South Asian partners. This was largely because sea officers’ present and future employers might scrutinize their ships’ journals or logbooks when weighing hiring decisions and vessel destinations. Such scrutiny may have guided merchant-mariners to treat their logs and journals as *de facto* résumés as well as reports encouraging the next investor. Missionaries, by contrast, understood the power of the press, and they wrote home missives intended for public consumption. Missionary societies routinely published these letters to satisfy the interest of wealthy benefactors, to recruit new donors, and to advertise both their accomplishments and the necessity of their activities. By highlighting the ignorance and suffering of South Asians in their publications, Christian proselytizers hoped to advance their faith both abroad and at home by stirring readers to partake in their cause. While American commercial and evangelical writings about native India

were guided by occupational pressures, both remain useful as the products of very different professional lenses.⁵

Before the American Revolution, the monopoly of the British East India Company (BEIC) excluded private American merchants from trading with Asia. Yet while individual American colonists rarely visited the subcontinent, India was quite active in their imaginations. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Anglo-American press churned out rumors and reports on the military tumult in India as Persians, Afghanis, South Asians, and Europeans jostled to take advantage of the decay in Mughal power. Britain's chronic warfare with eighteenth-century France, moreover, spilled over into India. Popular colonial newspapers closely followed the martial exploits of men like Sir Robert Clive against native potentates and the French in India in the middle of the century, as well as the moral controversies that seemed to haunt the BEIC as it grew in influence, treasure, and power. As the crisis of the British North American colonies came to a boil, Thomas Paine took a keen interest in Indian affairs and may have turned to radical politics in part because he saw the BEIC's abuse of native peoples as an ominous prelude to what Parliament would do elsewhere in the empire.⁶

After the American Revolution, American publishers and newspaper editors continued to satiate their readers' taste for events in South Asia. Capitalizing on the popularity of travel literature, American newspapers and magazines printed accounts of foreign jaunts. Metropolitan and private libraries stacked their shelves with tomes about world tours, foreign captivities, martial contests, and ocean voyages. Upwardly mobile young men, who hoped to pass for gentlemen partly by being knowledgeable of worldly affairs, especially prized travel accounts. In major American ports along the Atlantic, blue-water merchants like Benjamin Crowninshield had a practical impetus to peruse them. Whatever they could not extract from colleagues and ships' journals housed at various New England marine societies, merchants could turn to books. Indeed, publishers churned out titles such as *The Merchants' Unerring Guide to the East India and China Trade*, published in Philadelphia in 1807, to satisfy merchants' desires for pragmatic knowledge.⁷

Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries perceived the Indian subcontinent as one feature in a vast oceanic terrain they termed the "East Indies," a rough region that included any Asian

port east of the Cape of Good Hope. Oftentimes, an American commercial voyage to India would include stops in South Africa, Indonesia, and Canton. For Americans, as historian James Fichter writes, “however far Calcutta and Canton were from each other they seemed still infinitely closer to each other than to home.” Thus, they conceived of India and the subcontinent’s East Indian satellites as parts of a natural whole stitched together by empires, religion, language, and trade. They sometimes even used the terms “India” and “East Indies” interchangeably; in 1831, for example, the Secretary of the Navy ordered a captain to “sail directly for India,” when his more detailed instructions were to visit Sumatra and not stop at the subcontinent at all.⁸ Most importantly, Americans saw the region as an exotic realm where the fortunes of English-speaking peoples could be won or lost.⁹

The merchant officers who would do business in Indian ports came from varied backgrounds. While they were often upper- or middle-class young men, some had risen up through the ranks over years of service at sea. Salem, in particular, was privy to a long tradition of forecandle lads who eventually attained the positions of shipmaster and officer. Yet while nineteenth-century sailors liked to say that the best seamen “should enter on board through the hawse-holes (or forecandle), and not by the cabin windows,” many of the officers of American East Indiamen entered the profession by the latter. Many were also well educated. For example, two future India traders, Henry Lee and William Augustus Rogers, studied at private boarding schools. After graduation, well-connected fathers might find employment for their sons at the customs and counting houses, shipyards, and law firms of the booming maritime trade towns of New England. The future India trader Dudley Leavitt Pickman, for instance, started his salty career through the patronage of his father, who took him to work with him at the Salem Custom House. R. J. Cleveland, for his part, entered the profession at the age of fourteen, when he had signed on as an apprentice in the counting house of a Salem merchant.¹⁰

Regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds, America’s first India traders dreamt of building personal fortunes through trade with the East. In doing so, they would also prove their own masculine competence and business acumen. In 1843, one old retired seaman described New England men as being “obliged to seek their own fortunes,” possessed of “industrious and frugal habits,” and wanting “that independence of which all are more or less desirous.” Some ambitious American men sought renown as well as riches. In November of 1795, Jacob

Crowninshield wrote to his brothers George and John from Calcutta that he had loaded “a fine young Elephant 3 years old” into the hold of his ship. “I dare say we shall get him home safe,” he declared to his brothers, estimating that “he’ll bring at 5000 dollars” in the States. “I suppose you both laugh at the Scheme,” Crowninshield ventured, “but I do not mind that ... if it succeeds I ought to have the whole Credit, + the honor too, of course, for you know ‘twill be a great thing to carry the first Elephant to America.” Literate, tending toward cultural cosmopolitanism, and aspiring to fortune if not fame—these were the qualities of the men who would write the first chapters of national America’s encounter with the Indian world.¹¹

The Treaty of Paris cut Yankee merchants free from restrictions on trade with Asia. With Europe and much of the world set aflame by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, risk-taking American merchants prospered by negotiating the booms and busts of neutral trade. Their commercial success was also aided by the nearly unregulated nature of American maritime commerce, which allowed U.S. citizens to take advantage of global opportunities that European merchants could not. Elias Hasket Derby, Jr., for example, became the first millionaire in the U.S. by exploiting the demand for neutral traders to carry goods between British India, the Danish colony of Tranquebar, the French Mauritius, the Malabar Coast, and Indonesia.¹² This lucrative employment of porting goods between European colonies in the East Indies became known as the carrying trade.

The first American merchantmen reached India in the last month of 1784. Bound out from Philadelphia, *The United States* bypassed British Madras to trade at French Pondicherry. Other American merchantmen followed in the wake of the *United States*, but these vessels favored Anglo-Indian ports. The BEIC, however, vacillated when trying to decide whether or not to let Americans have a piece of the Indian pie. Instinctively protective of its monopoly, the BEIC also distrusted the permanency of American neutrality in the face of European wars, and the Company was unsettled by the U.S.’s inability to deal with North African corsairs. “So suspicious are they here now of Americans,” the first American consul for Calcutta, Benjamin Joy explained, to some business partners in Bombay in 1794, “that a person must be known before they will ship with him, or have some one here that will be answerable for him.”¹³

Yet the British could also be welcoming toward American traders in India; Americans offered to open up new markets for Indian goods, and they also largely traded in silver, a resource that the BEIC desperately needed. Anglo-Indian sentiment appeared to be pro-American; as Bhagat writes, "Praise for America in general [amongst the English residents of Calcutta] was very high." Indeed, official British policy toward American traders in India was so conflicted that American merchants paid the same tariff rate as British subjects. Lord Cornwallis, who acceded to the post of Governor-General of India in 1786 after his surrender at Yorktown, proclaimed that "the vessels belonging to the citizens of the United States of America shall be admitted and hospitably received, in all the sea ports and harbors of the British territories in the East Indies." Even Jay's Treaty of 1794, which ostensibly closed the lucrative carrying trade in the British East Indies to American bottoms, also legalized American commerce in the British East Indies and promised that American shipmasters would pay no more duties than British ones. In the early years of Indo-American commerce, moreover, some BEIC merchants took advantage of Yankee ships to send home property and to avoid the scrutiny of their employers.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the relationships between American and British merchants in India tended toward competition and isolation. The official stance of the BEIC was to treat with its own merchants first, and private British merchants were furious that Americans could have access to markets that they could not. Anglo-American diplomacy in India faltered, moreover, with the brief consulate of Benjamin Joy explained. A Newburyport merchant, Joy had served as the first American consul in Calcutta from 1792 to 1796, though he was never officially recognized as such by British authorities. Joy, frustrated by the "jealousy here, among the British merchants in this Country of the rising Commerce of the Americans in this quarter of the world" (and also perhaps feigning illness), asked to be relieved of duty in the winter of 1796. With no official American presence on shore, American merchants in Indian ports tended to fraternize among themselves. When the Fourth of July rolled around in 1807, for example, the American merchantman *Restitution* was resting at anchor in Calcutta's Hugli River. Its captain, David Dunn Pulsifer, recorded that while Fort William fired a salute "to Honour the Day," the "Captains of American ships dined together at one house while the Mattes [were] all on board the Ship James of Salem."¹⁵

Limited commercial relations with the BEIC afforded Americans a unique opportunity to forge business ties with the native community. American merchants in Anglo-Indian metropolises interacted daily with indigenous peoples. Many would rent houses in the city while their ships were in port, hiring native servants to help with household chores. On the city's maritime edge, they were also obliged to rent a *godown*, or warehouse. A contract with an Indian merchant would bring *sircars*, or clerks, as well as regiments of "coolies," strong-backs accustomed to the rigors of stevedore labor. When their sailors fell ill, American captains sometimes replaced them with *lascars*, South Asian seamen frequently used in the Royal Navy. On August 5, 1793, for example, a native Bengali named G. Manuel joined the crew of Benjamin Carpenter's ship *Hercules*. This sort of employment was rare, however; more common was the use of the lascar for loading purposes while in port. In the spring of 1833, for instance, James B. Briggs, master of the Salem merchantman *Apthorp*, recorded in the ship's journal that "11 lascars and one serang came on board to assist discharging ballast." By day, American merchants would journey to the bazaars. There, they would spend hours examining prices and cloths and breathing the hot, dusty, spice-laden air of the open market where the voices of Armenian, Muslim, Hindu, Portuguese, Persian, and British vendors haggled and bargained.¹⁶

Most important, however, was the native merchant with whom an American supercargo or sea captain did business. These men were called *banians* in Calcutta and *dubashes* in Madras, and a few of them made the American trade their specialty. Dubashes and banians were often descended from the ranks of the *kayasthas*, or scribes in the Hindu caste system. Historian Kenneth W. Porter described them as members "of a Hindu caste of traders and merchants who frequently acted as bankers and brokers in foreign commerce."¹⁷

Wealthy kayasthas were well equipped to suit the needs of Western merchants; their education, linguistic skills, penmanship, and exactitude were easily carried over into successful careers as businessmen in Anglo-Indian metropolises. Many even adopted some Western ways; as R. J. Cleveland commented, "the native merchants [in Calcutta] possess large fortunes, and some of them have apartments fitted up in the European style." The station and upbringing of these men made it easier for Boston and Salem sea officers to shed their negative preconceptions about Indians and to form close commercial relationships with their foreign partners. While some niggardly American merchants looked upon their Indian partners with suspicion and addressed them

with condescension, many Americans managed to keep their prejudices in check and form respectful and lucrative relationships (and sometimes friendships) with the native Indian merchants with whom they dealt.¹⁸

The confluence of American sea captains and Indian indigenous elites was a business necessity; as Jacob Crowninshield, the older brother of Benjamin and Richard, explained to Secretary of State James Madison in 1806 in a report on Indo-American commerce, “[We] buy our cargoes of the native merchants and not of the English residents because they come to us at a lower price through this channel.” Likewise, in 1804 Dudley Leavitt Pickman confessed that his countrymen “have very little to do with the English at Calcutta.” Rather, “they employ native banians, as brokers or agents, and through them make all their purchases.”¹⁹

American merchants turned to banians because they offered essential economic services. “He signed the customhouse bonds,” historian Kenneth Porter writes of them, “and apparently guaranteed payment for goods purchased through him.” Salem merchant Benjamin Carpenter advised the readers of his journal in 1790 to procure a dubash upon their arrival at Madras, as he was “useful when you are at a loss for a market and will frequently dispose of your articles, when you have made every effort without success.” Bean similarly stresses the importance of native merchants in the American India trade: “The banian was essential,” she writes: “he spoke English; he knew the market; he knew where to procure commodities and sell imports; and sometimes he supplied capital as well ... Such dependency,” she continues, “nurtured trust when the transactions were successful and suspicion when they failed. The success often led to relationships that transcended pure commerce.”²⁰

American merchants tended to see India and the East Indies as stepping stones to wealth, honor, and comfort. That perspective likely influenced their perceptions of the country and their indigenous business partners. Some Indo-American mercantile relationships would even verge on friendship. One Salem businessman, George Nichols, for example, entered into business relations with a native merchant named Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia when he anchored outside Bombay in 1800. When Wadia learned that Nichols was engaged to a young woman in Salem, he procured an Indian muslin dress for the wedding and sold it to him for five dollars per yard. Sometime later, Wadia gave Nichols a “camel’s-hair shawl” to accompany it. In exchange, Nichols offered Wadia a treasured book from his ship’s library, William Mavor’s *Voyages and Travels*, a historical survey of notable explorers.²¹

Meanwhile, across the subcontinent in Calcutta, another form of gift giving had evolved. There, banians were accustomed to commissioning self-portraits as presents for their American counterparts. Americans returned the favor; in 1801, for example, several American merchants joined together to present an oil-on-canvas portrait of President George Washington to Ramdulal Dey, a prosperous banian who specialized in the city's American trade. In true appropriateness to the occasion, Washington has his arm extended in a gesture of generosity. Today, numerous portraits of Indian merchants grace the collections of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, each representing a personal memory of America's forgotten India trade.²²

When Richard Crowninshield of Salem arrived in Calcutta in the early spring of 1796, he was met by a banian named Ramsoonder Mitter. Mitter handed him a letter of introduction and recommendation from a friend of Crowninshield's, J. Hodges. In it, Hodges called Mitter "one of the best Banyans in Calcutta." While observing that "it is customary for them [banians] all to apply for recompense when their Masters leave them," Hodges promised that "what I have seen of this Banyan is from the purest motives of friendship..."²³

As Hodges' use of the term "master" in his letter reveals, the Indo-American commercial relationship was complex. Many parsimonious Yankees, jealous of their future fortunes, were suspicious of their Indian partners. "American merchants," Porter has described, "regarded the banian as of low commercial morality." When Benjamin Carpenter noted the necessity of working with dubashes in Madras, he also urged his readers to be cautious: Indians, he noted, were a sort of "artful men and require well looking after." Likewise, one contemporary American treatise on Asian trade warned its readers to beware the "cunning of the natives" lest they "inevitably become their dupe." Dudley Leavitt Pickman, who first sailed to India as a supercargo in 1799, found members of the Brahmin caste to be the most dependable. "But even these are not worthy of implicit confidence," he wrote, observing that "even among the richest and most respectable of the natives...very few are seen in whose honor and integrity great confidence can be placed." "Almost every native," Pickman concluded later, "may be considered a beggar..."²⁴

The correspondence of Henry Lee reveals some of the complexities of the relationships forged between American and Indian merchants.

A lifelong India trader, Lee was not afraid to use both the carrot and the stick to get favorable results from his banians. In 1807, anxiously waiting word from a Calcuttan associate, Lee scribbled a letter from Boston that closed with a hint of a threat: "We shall continue to speak well of you," he wrote, "& hope you will continue to deserve the good Character you now sustain." Nine years later, Lee wrote to two banians, Goluck Chunder Day and Ramdon Bonarjia, promising them that they would all rise together if they performed well. "You know very well what I have done for others," Lee's missive ended, "& that it is in my power to serve you also, if you are worthy of it." Yet he also signed this same letter as "Your friend & Sev^t". An astute judge of character, Lee gave credit where it was due. In 1812, he wrote to his fellow India trader Andrew Cabot, addressing his dealings with two banians, Tillock and Ramdon: "I think them much more capable in their business than any of the others," he reported, "& they have every motive that can operate upon men desirous of establishing a reputation & acquiring wealth..." Scrupulous and constant, condescending and rewarding, at times master, friend, and servant, Henry Lee knew how to navigate men as well as markets in colonial Calcutta.²⁵

A small dose of suspicion may have been natural and even appropriate for the kinds of long-term business relationships that formed between Indian banians and New England merchants. To be successful, both parties had to exercise discretion and be good judges of character. They also had to nurture a mutual trust, each knowing that the other offered services that they could not provide alone. Banians sought to make a good impression so as to win the recommendations required to attract a new American partner. Threatening a banian with a bad rap, then, was one of the more powerful means that an American could get what he wanted. At the same time, Indian merchants could simply make off with a Yankee's investment, spoiling an American's voyage and damaging his career.

What is less clear is the role that race played in early Indo-American commercial relations. Europeans in India had divided many of their coastal cities into "white towns," comprising Company agents and support staff, and "black towns," consisting of native Indians, Portuguese Catholics, and Armenians. The surgeon of the *United States*, for instance, Thomas Redman, wrote of the segregation that divided non-whites from whites in Pondicherry in 1784. "The white Town is separated from the black by a Canal," he recorded, "which extends along

the back of it, with Bridges thrown over every Street to keep up the Communication.” By midday, Redman noticed that the heat kept all whites indoors but for those in palanquins, “which are carried by the black boys on their Shoulders.” “The B[l]acks here,” Redman concluded, “are in the most abject State of Slavery, & Bondage to the Europeans...”²⁶

Redman was one of the first American citizens to see India. Later observers in the mercantile period were not as pithy on the subject of race as he was. Skin color was not likely meaningless to American merchant-mariners, and it may have added to the sense of difference and suspicion within partnerships. Many Americans also expressed bewilderment at the racially tinged Hindu caste system. “Amongst themselves [Indians] are arbitrary and tyrannical, one to the other,” Redman wrote in the ship’s journal. Similarly, when trading in Madras in 1799, Dudley Leavitt Pickman was surprised when his high-caste native guide “refused to ask information, even as interpreter,” from a lower caste member. A rough brand of racism may have allowed some India traders, including Henry Lee of Boston, to assume patronizing airs when dealing with his banians. Even so, race seems to have been a category that was also easily transcended when American ship officers interacted with their wealthy business partners: profits were simply too important to let pigmentation—let alone culture—get in the way.²⁷

While not all Americans could entirely divorce themselves from the assumptions of their societies, many also demonstrated a surprising ability to abandon prejudice in the pursuit of profit across the East Indies. Few American merchant families possessed more of that cultural tact than the Crowninshields of Salem. In 1790, George Crowninshield joined with his five sons in forming the merchant firm George Crowninshield and Sons in Salem, Massachusetts. They may have owed the inspiration, at least in part, to the success of their cousin Benjamin Crowninshield, who was a generation older than the future Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Williams Crowninshield. Born in 1758, Crowninshield had risen through the ranks of Salem’s merchant-mariners, such that by December of 1788, he had won command of the brig *Henry* as an employee of the Derby family. Skirting South Africa, dabbling in the ports of Île de France, Madras, and Calcutta, Crowninshield returned to Salem in the last month of 1790 having helped win his employers a windfall profit of \$100,000.²⁸

The people of India made a deep impression on Crowninshield. One Calcutta scene in particular occupied a chunk of the log of the *Henry*: in November of 1789, he had witnessed a *sati*, the ritual burning of a widow alongside a deceased husband. Indians understood the *sati* tradition as an act of ideal love with ancient roots, though the British would later use it to justify their civilizing mission in India. Having received word “of the barbarous operation to be performed,” Crowninshield, Elias Hasket Derby, Jr., and “two Irish gentlemen” set out to witness the event. The widow was deferential to the white newcomers, paying “her obeisance to us then order[ing] her two little sons to step forward and do the same.” When the fire was stacked and the husband’s corpse properly positioned, the widow lay beside and embraced him. A party of “four men stood by with green bamboo rods to hold her down in case she should not be able to stand the flames.” The couple’s sons set the wood afire. Through the heat and smoke Crowninshield could make out the figure of the widow, encased in flames and lying on her back. “I did not think it was in the power of a human person to meet death in such a manner,” he penned. While calling it “a most horrid sight,” the young captain also acknowledged that the ritual “appeared very solemn to me.” “Whether it is right or wrong,” he mused, “I leave it for other people to determine.”²⁹

Not all American merchants reacted with as much open-mindedness to Indian cultures as Crowninshield; many others found native rites to be troubling and perturbing. When Captain David Dunn Pulsifer arrived in Calcutta in 1807, for example, he was sufficiently repulsed by one Hindu tradition that he recorded it in his log. “It is not uncommon,” he wrote, “to see Dead Bodys Go past Every Day, More or Less,” referring to the corpses that he saw bobbing in the waters around his vessel. Pulsifer may have known that rivers formed sacred depositions for the dead in Hindu tradition, but nevertheless he began to record the number of cadavers that floated past almost as carefully as he did bags of sugar carried below deck. “4 Dead Body’s Went By to Day,” he wrote on August 9. Similarly, during his visit to India in the late 1790s, Major Shaw regurgitated British stories of Indian religious austerities in his journal. One of them described a Hindu man who crawled on his belly by the banks of the Ganges from source to sea and another recounted a devotee who pledged to keep his hands together and “suffer[ed] the nails of each to penetrate the back of the other, and in that manner rivet

them inseparably.” Shaw also related his impression of the Hindu ritual of “hooking,” in which “a large hook” would be forced through the fleshy parts of the devotee’s back,” who is subsequently lifted into the air “amidst the acclamations of his countrymen.” After watching four men undergo the process, Shaw concluded that Hindus “place the point of honor in the firmness with which they will bear pain.” Pickman witnessed the same ritual in Calcutta when he visited the city as supercargo of the *Derby* in 1803. “It is surprising,” he wrote, “that among a people whose religion and manners are so mild as the Hindoos, such customs should exist.”³⁰

Even if they found some local customs repulsive, many American merchants also managed to transcend cultural barriers. The Crowninshield brothers especially benefited from their intercultural tact when dealing with foreign societies. While on a voyage to Sumatra aboard the *America III*, Benjamin William Crowninshield’s older brother John had characterized the Sumatrans as “much more indolent than the natives of Bengall” (though “equally as harmless”). Nevertheless, he also found them civilized enough to do business with. In the length of one conference with a band of Pegu chiefs, Crowninshield explained that “the reason [we] had not traded largely with them before” was due to “the bad character we had heard of them...” The natives expressed surprise and hoped that Crowninshield would not perpetuate that perspective when he returned home. After all, “between nations thinking so different as we do there always must be great misunderstanding,” they explained. They added that the language barrier further separated Sumatrans from Americans. Crowninshield assured his commercial partners that he “thought very favourable indeed of them.” Though he acknowledged that “our manners & customs were quite different...” Crowninshield then clarified to them that he was a very different breed of American: “...but then I was used to [it] having been almost all over India & that a traveling merchant after seeing a few different nations would soon learn to accommodate himself to the customs of the people who he came to trade amongst... I had no prejudice against any Nation or religion at all,” he concluded, and promised to return to Sumatra to trade.³¹

Diplomatic and domestic factors had impacted Americans’ trade with India several times: Jefferson’s Embargo of 1807–1809 froze business entirely while the British capture of the Île de France in Mauritius

in 1810 drew the curtain on America's lucrative, transcolonial trafficking with that island. The next year, Great Britain decreed illegal all Indo-American commercial traffic except for that which sailed directly between Anglo-Indian and American ports. While the impact of this latter action is dubious, the war of the following year brought the India trade to a standstill. The War of 1812 especially undermined American commerce with India as New England merchants, land-locked by the British naval blockade, began to invest in the nascent American textile industry.³²

The war was barely over before America's India traders had another reason to find a different profession. In April of 1816, Congress passed a new tariff law. The bill, slated to go into effect later that June, was designed to promote domestic cloth manufactures by chasing international products out of the market. It raised duties on foreign cloth, articles that had previously formed the mainstay of a profitable Indian venture. In the end, it was neither wars nor treaties alone that strangled the India trade in the early republic, but the rise of the American textile industry and Congress' enthusiasm to support it.³³

Boston India traders like Henry Lee knew that the tariff increases were game changers; as Lee wrote in 1817, "The trade to Calcutta is now almost confined to Sugar & Cotton, and no longer affords those advantages to me which it would have done had not the duties on Piece Goods been increased..." Indo-American commerce would experience a partial revival in the late 1830s with Frederick Tudor's global ice business, but the 1816 legislation nearly killed it. Now, between congressional regulation and domestic industrialization, only veteran, knowledgeable, and determined businessmen could afford to stay in the trade.³⁴

As merchants reeled from their government's new economic policies, other Americans found India more accessible than ever before. Beginning in the 1810s, American missionaries began to brave the seas to work in India. Their stay depended on a change in domestic policy among the country's British rulers. BEIC administrators had long been wary of missionary work among their nonwhite subjects, fearing that it might spark an uprising if the pressure to convert proved too oppressive. Memories of the Black Hole of Calcutta prompted BEIC officials to keep zealous missionaries at arm's length.³⁵

The BEIC's resistance to proselytizing in India did not prevent devout English-speaking Christians from trying, however. At the turn of the century, the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening

was sweeping through the Anglophonic world. While the American Revolution's emphasis on secular affairs seemed to suggest that religion had taken a back seat to politics in the first decades of the early republic, in reality American Christianity was undergoing a resurgence. "Religion was not displaced by the politics of the Revolution," one historian explains; "instead, like much of American life, it was radically transformed." The old religious regions of colonial days gave way to new ones as the Congregationalist, Baptist, Episcopal, and Methodist faiths expanded or tried to hold their ground. "By 1815," Gordon Wood writes, "America had become the most evangelically Christian nation in the world." In America as in England, pious evangelicals became interested in establishing missions in foreign lands.³⁶

The first missionary to work in India and achieve widespread fame was a British Baptist named William Carey. Carey had the blessing and patronage of the governor-general of India, Richard Wellesley. He also enjoyed substantial support in the U.S., where the editors of evangelical American periodicals reprinted his letters for their readers. A few American congregations even supported Carey financially, raising some \$6000 in 1806–1807, and \$4650 in 1810. In 1812, American Baptists founded the Salem Bible Translation and Foreign Mission Society in Massachusetts to help fund Carey's translations in Serampore. Prominent American Baptists such as Thomas Baldwin kept regular correspondence with Carey while he was in India. Likewise, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the American press rolled off multiple editions of the work of Claudius Buchanan, a Scottish Anglican who devoted his life to Christianizing the Indian subcontinent. Even the library of the religious liberal Thomas Jefferson included a copy of Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia and Eras of Light*.³⁷

The efforts of British evangelicals ignited the imaginations of American Christians. With British missionaries setting off for South Asian towns and villages, many American Christians sensed that "the greatest age in the world's history since the days of the apostles had arrived." Inspired by the example of men like Carey and Buchanan, Americans established the New York Missionary Society in 1796, the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799, and the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in 1802.³⁸

Most of the early American missionary societies focused on converting Native American tribes and French Canadian *habitants*. In 1810, however, a new organization arrived on the scene with a more ambitious

agenda: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), founded to propagate the Gospel in lands beyond the sea. “For the next half century,” as one historian notes, the ABCFM would become “the largest organization devoted to sending benevolent workers abroad.” With no American competitors, the ABCFM took the lead in dispatching foreign missionaries.³⁹

The destination of their first party was British India. Gordon Hall, Samuel Nott, and Adoniram Judson (all graduates of Andover Divinity College), together with Samuel Newell, James Richards, and Luther Rice, arrived in Calcutta in 1812 expecting providential support. Instead, the BEIC threw them out of the city on the suspicion of being American spies. The party scattered. Hall and Nott proceeded to Bombay, where the local authorities were more welcoming, while Newell and Richards relocated to Ceylon. Judson and his wife had become Baptists while en route to India (as did Rice after his arrival in Calcutta), and they joined some British Baptist missionaries in Madras soon after their arrival. The following year, missionary fortunes changed with Parliament’s Charter Act of 1813, which contained a clause that cracked the door open to missions in India. As Nott would later explain to a congregation in Connecticut in 1814, “Missionaries may now, by the new charter of the BEIC, go anywhere in their dominions, to persuade sinners to be reconciled to God through the great Redeemer, and to promote the morality of the gospel.”⁴⁰

India was attractive to the ABCFM for several reasons. First, the expansion of the BEIC insured that missionaries would benefit from the close proximity of a population that shared their language, customs, and Christian faith. With the Company’s armed forces and its network of alliances with local potentates, missionaries could hope for some physical protection in the event of a native uprising.

Second, like the American India traders who preceded them, the board was relatively well-read concerning India. Printed British sources, whether the missives of William Carey, the sermons of Claudius Buchanan, or evangelical books printed in the U.S., emphasized Indians’ poor spiritual health and their great need for Christianity. In 1811, for example, a pair of printers in Philadelphia published *The Baptist Mission in India*. Hoping that “an holy ardour may be excited and vigorous efforts employed for the conversion of the heathen and the consequent diffusion of the great Saviour’s empire,” the author pleaded with his American audience to take part in missionary activities. “The moral state

of the heathen calls aloud for our piety, our labours, and our prayers,” they wrote, affirming that the responsibility “to seek the spread of the gospel rest alike on all the disciples of the Lord Jesus.” Finally, the teeming population of India (by 1800, the BEIC alone managed lands that contained twenty-four million souls) also encouraged the board to think of the subcontinent as a realm where God would need as many religious workers as He could get.⁴¹

While American missionaries witnessed the diversity of the Indian religious scene through encounters with Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Armenian and Portuguese Christians, they paid the most attention to Hinduism. A product of thousands of years of regional indigenous worship, Hinduism was (and remains) a diverse faith that included hundreds of thousands of deities in its pantheon. As the largest and the most visible religion in the subcontinent and with an emphasis on divine form—especially though imagery, statues, or sculpture, Hinduism seemed to precisely embody the ultimate pantheistic, sensual, and idolatrous religion that American missionaries had set out to overthrow. As one ABCFM missionary wrote from Calcutta, “No pen can describe the deathlike influence of their senseless, stupid idolatries. It is no libel upon them,” he continued, “to say that they have no morality...” Likewise, Mrs. Newell was horrified when she glimpsed the god Jagannatha (which entered the English language as “Juggernaut”) in Calcutta in July of 1812. Out on a stroll around the city, Newell came across the cart that had carried the god in a procession the month before. It was, she wrote, “a huge building five stories high—images painted all over it—two large horses with a charioteer made of wood in front—with many wheels drawn by the natives with large cables.” After viewing the cart, Newell went to the local temple, “where the great god of the Hindoos is now residing—a horrid object indeed!” While she was not permitted to go into the complex, she “could see him plainly—a log of wood painted red with large hideous eyes.”⁴²

The first ABCFM missionaries set out for India with a common heartfelt purpose: to convert scores of lost human beings who would otherwise be hell-bound. For many contemporaries, it was a divinely compassionate stance. For people who literally believed in an eternal hell of soul-consuming fire, evangelizing was more than an ordinary humane action. Stationed at Bombay, Nott wrote that the area “contains 220,000 inhabitants,—all buried in gross ignorance and stupidity: surely a number worthy of our exertions and prayers,” he penned,

“if souls are truly valuable.” Missionaries also saw themselves as replicating the devotion, love, and faith of earlier generations of Christian martyrs and proselytizers. In 1818, ABCFM missionary James Richards wrote home in a state of broken health from Cape Town, South Africa. In his epistle, he reflected on his experience as a missionary on the island of Sri Lanka: “When the pious missionary arrives in a pagan land,” he wrote, “and sees the people wholly given to idolatry, his spirit is stirred within him; and, like Paul, he endeavors to bring them to the knowledge of the truth.”⁴³

To American Christians, proselytizing to non-Christian peoples was even more heroic because missionaries had to cross into realms ruled by Lucifer himself. “Almost everything which the missionary sees in a heathen country,” James Richards noted, “is sadly calculated to draw away his heart from God.” After witnessing a parade in honor of Jagannatha in Calcutta in June of 1812, Mrs. Newell penned a letter to a friend in Boston. Lamenting that more Americans were not engaged in missionary activity, Newell wished that “the friends of Immanuel in my Christian country would shake off their criminal slothfulness” and join the efforts of her and her husband in “lands where the prince of darkness has long been adored ... In this land of darkness,” she went on, “where the enemy of souls reigns triumphant, I see the blessedness, the superior excellency of the Christian religion.”⁴⁴

Many missionaries also suffered from homesickness; unlike merchants, they tended to spend far more time among native peoples and had less contact with other whites. Many studied Indian languages and labored carefully to translate the Bible and religious tracts into the local tongue. Samuel Nott, for instance, worked with a local Brahmin to learn the Mahratta language while in Bombay. Across the subcontinent, missionaries found themselves surrounded by very different cultures and geographies, mystified by Indian religions, and repulsed by native rituals and worship. Some began to yearn for the comforts and company of home. “Let no one think of being a missionary,” Richards wrote, “unless he is willing to encounter trials...which result from a want of Christian society and example.” ABCFM missionary Miron Winslow, who served on the island of Ceylon shortly after Richards’ tenure, was also struck by the contrast between India and the West. “On a first arrival here,” he penned, “one finds himself so completely in a new world, that he is bewildered...If the moon should fall from heaven, he would not be surprised, but think it the way with the Bengal moons.”⁴⁵

The Indian landscape also displeased American missionaries. For many, the journey up the Hugli River to Calcutta formed their first taste of the subcontinent. “No scenery in nature can afford less pleasure,” one American student wrote on his way to study at Fort William College, Calcutta, in 1811, “than the shores of the Hooghly.” Over twenty years later, an incoming agent of the American Missionary Societies, Howard Malcolm, was similarly disgusted by the Hugli when he visited Calcutta in the 1830s: “When the shores are at length discerned,” he wrote, “their dead level and unbroken jungle, without any sign of population, and the great breadth of the river, gives the whole an aspect excessively dreary, well suiting to one’s first emotions on beholding a land of idolatry.” To Malcolm, the riparian landscape of the Hugli was also tainted by false religious practices. When passing Saugor Island, he noted its infamy “for being the spot where many infants and others are annually immolated.”⁴⁶

Yet if missionaries were more apt to degrade the religious culture of Hindus, they also allowed them the potential of achieving full spiritual equality through Christ. While *The Memoir of Krishna-Pal* was composed by the British General Tract Society, it closely paralleled the views of American Baptists, who reprinted it in Philadelphia. The tract recounted the conversion and trials of a Hindu man. Suffering persecution at the hands of Hindus who feared conversion for its upending of the caste system, Krishna-Pal eventually succumbed to illness, but not before converting to Christianity and doing a bit of proselytizing himself. Baptist publishers settled on Krishna-Pal as a sort of early mascot, using his example as a means of garnering funds and encouraging missionary work. “Look at heathen Krishna,” they wrote, “receiving his idolatrous teacher, washing his feet, and anointing his head with the dirty water, and look at the same man sitting with his Christian pastor, or delivering a sermon from the pulpit.”⁴⁷

In 1816, the veteran ABCFM missionary Samuel Nott reflected on his experience in India before a congregation in Franklin, Connecticut. He described Hindus as slothful, idol-worshipping, sensual, and dirty: “Some of the means of attaining the spiritual state,” he recounted, “are an entire separation from business, and living by beggary, allowing the hair and nails to grow untrimmed.” Nott found some hope, however, in the global increase of missionary activities, prophesying that “the present, may be the times, in which God designs, the darkness of paganism, to begin effectually, to dissipate.” In the climax of his sermon, Nott called on farmers and mechanics to become coworkers “in accomplishing

an object, as momentous as the earth can possibly witness,—the turning of idolatrous nations to the love and favor of God their Maker.”⁴⁸

Some Americans heard Nott’s call and fashioned their country as a key earthly player in the fulfillment of God’s divine plan. By the 1820s, members and donors had lifted the income of the ABCFM to \$40,000, three times that of the American Temperance Society during the same period. In New York in May of 1836, the American Tract Society claimed that it had dispatched over one hundred thousand tracts to India and Sri Lanka. Inspired by the Congregationalists, other denominations began sending missionaries to India. News of the Judsons’ conversion prodded American Baptists to found the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions at a national convention in Philadelphia in 1814. They appointed Adoniram Judson their first missionary. Likewise, in 1817, Presbyterians in the American Midwest founded the United Foreign Mission Society with the goal of propagating the “gospel among the Indians of North America, the inhabitants of Mexico and South America, and in other portions of the heathen and anti-Christian world.” The Unitarians were among the last of the major American Christian denominations to send a missionary to India, dispatching their first in 1855. The ABCFM had lifted the vision of American evangelicals to new horizons.⁴⁹

American missionary societies were successful in part because they had mastered the antebellum American press. Replicating the strategies developed earlier by Britons, American evangelicals understood that the continuation of their efforts overseas depended on keeping American congregations abreast of the need and progress of their foreign activities. They also believed that supporting mission work abroad would help enliven Christian religion at home. Their books, magazines, and periodicals—publications like the popular *Baptist Missionary Magazine*—flooded the reading public, heralding both their successes as well as the dire spiritual need of benighted non-Christians. The publication process began with the missionaries themselves, who wrote letters home intended for the press. Affective, compassionate, and descriptive, missionaries’ correspondence tended to feature experiences, anecdotes, and stories that were most likely to move an American reading them at home. These missives often drew sharp contrasts between the light of Christian knowledge and the darkness of South Asian paganism. Ideally, they inspired readers to donate generously or moved them toward a fuller relationship with Christ. The missionaries’ strategies paid off; expert advertisers, missionaries and their societies won the admiration, praise, and financial contributions of their neighbors, congregants, and American society at large.⁵⁰

By supporting the foreign missionary movement, Americans helped refashion their nation's perception of India and its denizens. No longer a rich and exotic land, India increasingly became a dark place of superstition and its natives an ignorant people in need of Western redemptive religion. A small cadre of devout missionaries had succeeded in relaying their vision of native India to a larger American audience. "No European can ever comprehend an Asiatic," commented one American traveler who visited New Delhi in the 1850s, "and that the more their peculiarities are studied, the more inconsistent they appear." When a European immigrant landed in New York City in the 1830s, an American missionary handed him a Bible. Perhaps hungry, the immigrant asked him of its worth. He "asked me if I knew the value of it," the missionary remembered, to which "I said no; but I would not exchange it for the riches of India."⁵¹

Malcolm, in his 1838 account of his travels to the Orient, contrasted the departure of the "regular packet, crowded with passengers" and the merchantman with the missionary. "Over all the wharf is one dense mass of grave and silent spectators," he wrote, while "the full harmony of a thousand voices wafts to Heaven the touching hymn...[The missionary] awakens the sympathy of every believer. Stranger though he be, all press to grasp his hand, and, when gone, all intercede for him with God. Even denominational preferences are forgotten," climaxed Malcolm, "and every sect mingles in the throng, exulting in a common joy."⁵²

The dispatch of Malcolm's missionary was precisely the event that Benjamin Williams Crowninshield had once railed against in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives. Nearly fifty years later, former state representative Oliver B. Morris recalled the debate on a petition by the ABCFM for a state charter. It had "occurred in the evening," Morris remembered, and "a good many members participated in it." "Some of them," he thought, "exhibited an illiberal spirit." One representative in particular was distasteful to Morris: "a member from Salem, who had been a ship master trading to India, ridiculed the idea of attempting to carry the gospel to that portion of the heathen world, and said that all efforts of that kind would be worse than vain." The individual in question was Crowninshield, a man who spoke with an intimate knowledge of what India was and who populated it. His view of Indians, cultivated through numerous business relationships with talented native merchants, could not have been more different from the position of the ABCFM.⁵³

The American missionary movement in India had been built on the foundations laid down by the merchant-mariners who had preceded it.

As missions gained steam, they benefited from continued (though diminished) Indo-American commerce; missionaries relied on American and British merchantmen for transportation, communication, and mail service to and from India. Some merchants even supported missions financially, such as the Salem India trader John Norris, who donated \$10,000 in silver to the Andover Divinity School, an institution founded to train missionaries for overseas duty. In donating that amount of specie, Norris revealed his commitment to global proselytizing. Yet many American merchants did not take to missionaries so easily; when Henry Lee met Gordon Hall and Samuel Nott in Calcutta in 1812, he described them as “mad.” “All of them,” he wrote, “seemed ignorant of the world, and extremely ill-informed of the country and inhabitants which they came to convert.” Other merchants sounded similar opinions and were skeptical that American missionaries could be effective in converting native Indians. “They never have yet made a convert,” William Rogers wrote of the Bombay missionaries in 1817, “nor will they by the means now used.”⁵⁴

Nevertheless, by the late 1830s, a new kind of American traveler had largely replaced the Salem and Boston merchant-mariners as the predominant intermediaries between the U.S. and native India; whereas merchant-mariners had once returned to America with stories of “the amiable manners of that mild, much misrepresented people,” missionaries wrote home of the ignorant condition of native Indians and implored Christian assistance. Far from denying aid to missionaries, Americans were now crowding docks and quays to see such men depart.⁵⁵

The merchant-missionary divergence may be partly attributed to the differing professional impulses that pushed members of each group to voyage to India. While neither occupation was entirely monolithic, American merchant-mariners and missionaries journeyed abroad with markedly different motivations and agendas. Their experiences in the subcontinent varied by individual, but they also differed by profession. Generational factors may have played a role as well; America’s early India traders were products of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, while the nation’s missionary pioneers were the children of the Second Great Awakening. As the years progressed, they and their successors would come to view native India through a Jacksonian lens colored by biological racialism, Westward expansion, and the development of the Old South. In the end, Benjamin W. Crowninshield’s and Samuel Nott’s encounters with native India may have had as much to do with what they brought to the subcontinent as to what was actually there.

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NOTES

1. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1861), 71–74, PDF e-book, Google Books; Benjamin Crowninshield quoted in G. Bhagat, *Americans in India: 1764–1860* (New York, 1970), 115; C. Sumner to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, April 3, 1819, Crowninshield Family Papers, MH-15, Box 15, Folder 6, Phillips Library (PL), Salem, Massachusetts.
2. The merchant-mariners examined in this chapter represent a minority of Americans visiting India in the early republic. Scores of common sailors accompanied every supercargo and sea captain who traded abroad. Ship logs and journals and consular and British court records hold clues to the experiences of ordinary seamen in British India. Yet, unfortunately, in contrast to the men who commanded them, the Jack tars who visited India have left very few written documents for posterity. Resurrecting the lives and experiences of these men while engaged in the American India trade would be a fruitful but difficult enterprise.
3. For scholarly research on the early American missionary enterprise in India, the interested reader may consult Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism: A Study of Their Contacts from 1813 to 1910* (Delhi, 1967); H. K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North-East India: 1836–1900 A.D.* (Delhi, 1986); R.K. Gupta, *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-American Literary and Cultural Relations* (Maryland, 1987), and Emily Conroy-Krutz, “‘Engaged in the Same Glorious Cause’: Anglo-American Connections in the American Missionary Entrance into India, 1790–1815,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34 (Spring 2014): 21–44, and Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic (Ithaca, New York, 2015).
4. Bhagat, *Americans in India*, vii; Bean, *Yankee India* (Salem, Massachusetts, 2001), 133. Historians have rediscovered Indo-American relations as an exciting means of internationalizing early American history. For innovative studies that have made important inroads into the field, see James Fichter, *So Great a Profit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 2010); Elizabeth Kelly Gray, “Whisper to Him the Word

- 'India': Trans-Atlantic Critics and American Slavery, 1830–1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (Fall 2008): 379–406; J. M. Opal, “Common Sense and Imperial Atrocity: How Thomas Paine Saw South Asia in North America,” *Common-Place* 9 (July 2009), accessed July 30, 2011, <http://www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-04/forum/opal.shtml>; Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,” *American Historical Review*, 109 (December 2004): 1405–1438, and Conroy-Krutz, “‘Engaged in the Same Glorious Cause’.” For a synthesis and overview of the many connections shared by the United States and British India between 1783–1860, see Rosemarie Zagarri, “The Significance of the ‘Global Turn’ for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011): 1–37.
5. Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, 2006), 3; Helen Rozwadowski, *Fathoming the Ocean: The Discovery and Exploration of the Deep Sea* (Cambridge and London, 2005), 18; William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago and London, 1987), 7.
 6. Opal, “Common Sense and Imperial Atrocity.”
 7. Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860* (Boston, 1921), 116–117. In *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York, 1995), Alan Taylor eloquently captured young men’s tendency to turn to travelogues while charting how William Cooper used the Library Company of Burlington, Pennsylvania, to establish a claim to gentility in the 1780s.
 8. Levi Woodbury to John Downes, Washington, August 6, 1831, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, 1798–1868, RG 45, M 149, roll 20, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
 9. Fichter, *So Great a Profit*, 3; for the purposes of this paper, “India” is defined as something of an intermediary between our modern sense of India as a nation and the more expansive, turn of the nineteenth century-understanding of the subcontinent.
 10. Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven and London, 2005), 112; R. J. Cleveland, *A Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises* (2 vols., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1843), 1: xvii, PDF e-book, Google Books; Bean, *Yankee India*, 137; *Ibid.*, 87; Cleveland, *Narrative of Voyages*, 1:1. For social histories of early national American sea officers see Vickers and Walsh, *Young*

- Men and the Sea*, especially Chap. 4, "Sailors' Careers"; Christopher McKee's *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Navy Officer Corps, 1794–1815* (Annapolis, 1991), especially Part Two, "A Corps of Young Gentlemen;" Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860* (Boston, 1921), Chap. 8, "Ships and Seamen."
11. Cleveland, *A Narrative of Voyages*, 1: iii; Jacob Crowninshield to George and John Crowninshield, Calcutta, November 20, 1795, Crowninshield Family Papers, MSS 4, Box 4, f. 1, PL. Crowninshield succeeded in his enterprise, selling the elephant in New York in 1797 for \$10,000 (Bean, *Yankee India*, 78).
 12. In "*Boston Men*" on the Northwest Coast: *The American Maritime Fur Trade, 1784–1844* (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks, Alaska, 1998), Mary Malloy points out that chartered British monopolies prevented their merchants from taking full advantage of the profitable trade between the American Northwest Coast and China; Bean, *Yankee India*, 37.
 13. Bhagat, *Americans in India*, viii; Benjamin Joy to Delano + Stewart, July 24, 1794, Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS), Boston.
 14. Susan Bean, *Yankee India*, 36; G. Bhagat, "Americans and American Trade in India, 1784–1814," *American Neptune*, 46 (Winter 1986), 12; Fichter, *So Great a Profitt*, 74; Cornwallis quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 35; "The Jay Treaty, November 19, 1794," Article XIII, from *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School (2008), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jay.asp. The treaty did not entirely lock American merchants out of the Indian coasting trade, and it expired in 1803 (Bean, *Yankee India*, 70); *Ibid.*, 36–37.
 15. Bhagat, "Americans and American Trade in India," 11; Benjamin Joy to Edmund Randolph, November 24, 1794, "Despatches from the U.S. Consuls in Calcutta, India, 1792–1906," vol. 1, Dec. 9, 1792–Dec. 12, 1850, NARA I, Washington, DC; Seward W. Livermore, "Early Commercial and Consular Relations with the East Indies," *The Pacific Historical Review* 15, (Mar., 1946): 36; Susan S. Bean, "Calcutta Banians for the American Trade: Portraits of Early Nineteenth-Century Bengali Merchants in the Collections of the Peabody Museum, Salem and the Essex Institute," in *Changing Visions, Lasting Images: Calcutta through 300 years*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Bombay, 1990), 70; Logbook of the *Restitution*, July 4, 1807, David Dunn Pulsifer Logbooks, MHS.
 16. Glenn S. Gordinier, "Early Trade with India: Taking an Observation," *American Neptune*, 45 (Summer 1985): 155–157; Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees: Two Generations of Massachusetts*

- Merchants, 1765–1844* (2 vols., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937), 1:57; Benjamin Carpenter, August 5, 1793, Log 1632, Ship Hercules, PL; James Briggs quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 199; Gordinier, “Early Trade with India,” 156.
17. Bean, *Yankee India*, 39 and 215; Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, 2: 797.
 18. Bean, *Yankee India*, 215; Cleveland, *A Narrative of Voyages*, 1: 117.
 19. Crowninshield quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 70; Pickman quoted in *Ibid.*, 111.
 20. Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, 1:57; Carpenter quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 51; Bean, “Calcutta Banians for the American Trade,” 70.
 21. Bean, *Yankee India*, 72; *Ibid.*, 71–72; Nichols’ shawl was pashmina, a fabric normally consisting of goat wool.
 22. *Ibid.*, 75.
 23. J. Hodges to Richard Crowninshield, February 20, 1796, Crowninshield Family Papers, MSS 4, box 4, folder 1, PL.
 24. Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, 1:59; Carpenter quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 51; Pierre Blancard, *The Merchants’ Unerring Guide to the East India and China Trade* (Philadelphia, 1807), 8; Pickman quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 98 and 96; some American merchants shared similar opinions of South Asian merchants with Britons. The British *Dictionary of Words Used in the East Indies* defined “Banyan,” as “a set of people who have brought disgrace upon themselves by their chicaneries... these deceitful interpreters...not infrequently agreed with the native merchants to divide what they could to cheat the stranger...” (Amal Chatterjee, *Representations of India, 1740–1840: The Creation of India in the Colonial Imagination* (New York, 1999), 155).
 25. Henry and Joseph Lee, Jr., Boston, to Ram Lochun Benorgee, Calcutta, Dec. 5, 1807, in Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, 2: 825; Henry Lee to Goluck Chunder Day & Ramdon Bonarjia, Calcutta, May 14, 1816, *Ibid.*, 2: 1170–1171; Henry Lee to Andrew Cabot, Oct. 1, 12, and 21st, 1812, *Ibid.*, 2: 1061.
 26. Samuel Woodhouse, Jr., “Log and Journal of the Ship ‘United States’ on a Voyage to China in 1784,” *The Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 55, no. 3 (1931), 252.
 27. *Ibid.*, 252; Pickman quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 96; Categories of race appear to have been more fluid in American society in the eighteenth century than in the nineteenth. For more on the subject, the interested reader should look to W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African-American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997); J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man’s Encounter with Liberty* (New Haven, 2009); Peter H. Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York and London,

- 2008) and Carl H. Nightingale, "Before Race Mattered: Geographies of the Color Line in Early Colonial Madras and New York," *American Historical Review*, 113 (Feb. 2008): 48–71.
28. Bean, *Yankee India*, 37.
 29. Ibid., 190. British perspectives of native Indians and their cultures, like those of the Americans, shifted away from tolerance and towards reform in the early nineteenth century. In 1829, Governor-General Lord William Bentinck banned the sati ritual (Alex Michaels, *Hinduism: Past and Present*, transl., Barbara Harshav (Princeton and Oxford, 2004), 149–150). Interested readers may also consult Andrea Major, *Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati, 1500–1830* (Oxford, New York, and New Delhi: 2006); Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Log of the *Henry*, reprinted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 41–43.
 30. Logbook of the *Restitution*, August 9, 1807, David Dunn Pulsifer Logbooks, MHS; Samuel Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton, with a Life of the Author, by Josiah Quincy* (1847; rep., Taipei, 1968), 287; Ibid., 287; Pickman quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 117.
 31. John Crowninshield, typescript from the log of the *America III*, Sumatra, 1801, Crowninshield Family Papers, MH-15, Box 4, pp. 19–20, PL.
 32. Bhagat, *Americans in India*, 102; Timothy Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America* (New York, 1817), 208–209; Bean, *Yankee India*, 17.
 33. Bean, *Yankee India*, 124.
 34. Ibid., 179–180; Henry Lee, quoted in Porter, *The Jacksons and the Lees*, 1: 40.
 35. Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, 8.
 36. Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (Oxford and New York, 2009), 580; Ibid., 3.
 37. Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, 17; Oliver Wendell Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790–1815* (1928; Philadelphia, 1980), 77; Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, 33; Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 115; *The Memoirs of Claudius Buchanan* was first published in America in 1811 (Elsbree, *Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America*, 101); according to the collections of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) in Worcester, Massachusetts, Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia* went through at least seven editions in America between 1811 and 1816. His most famous sermon, however, *A Star in the East*, was already in its ninth American edition by 1809; James Gilreath and Douglas L. Wilson, eds., "Table of Contents of *Thomas Jefferson's Library: A Catalog with the Entries in His Own Order*" (1989; rep. online, Library of Congress, 2001) http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/becites/main/jefferson/88607928_ch2.html.

38. Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 47; Ibid., 47–48, 63, 77.
39. Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India*, xiii; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 491. For a useful overview of the global imperial activities of the ABCFM, see Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, 2015).
40. Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 113–114; Barpujari, *American Missionaries and North-East India*, xiii; Samuel Nott, *Reasons Why We Should Pray for the Prosperity of the Redeemer's Kingdom on Earth: A Sermon at Norwich, First Society, before the Foreign Mission Society for Norwich and its Vicinity, May 17, 1814, at the Annual Meeting by Samuel Nott* (Connecticut, 1814), 20. Norwich, Connecticut, 1814. Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801–1819.
41. W. Staughton, *The Baptist Mission in India, Containing a Narrative of Its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition. A Statement of the Physical and Moral Character of the Hindoos, their Cruelties, Tortures and Burnings, with a Very Interesting Description of Bengal, Intended to animate to Missionary co-operation* (Philadelphia, 1811), iv–v; Zagarri, “Global Turn,” 27.
42. Miron Winslow to the ABCFM, Oodooville, Jaffna, July 25, 1820, reprinted in *Memoirs of American Missionaries, Formerly Connected with the Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions, in the Andover Theological Seminary: Embracing A History of the Society*, etc. (Boston, 1833), 225, PDF e-book, Google Books; “Journal of Mrs. Samuel Newell,” *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine & Religious Intelligence* 6, no. 6 (1813): 236–237. Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 1, 1693–1820, American Antiquarian Society (AAS), Worcester, Massachusetts.
43. Samuel Nott to his father, Bombay, July 23, 1813, reprinted in *Utica Christian Magazine* 2, no. 5 (November 1814): 158, Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 1, 1693–1820, AAS; James Richards to the Society of Inquiry, Cape town, South Africa, November 18, 1818, reprinted in *Memoirs of American Missionaries*, 220.
44. Ibid., 220; Mrs. Newell “to a Lady in Boston,” Calcutta, June 1812, reprinted in *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine & Religious Intelligence* 6, no. 6 (1813), 6: 235, Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 1, 1693–1820, AAS; Ibid., 236.
45. Samuel Nott to his father, Bombay, July 23, 1813, reprinted in *Utica Christian Magazine*, November 1814, 2, No. 5, 158, Historical Periodicals Collection: Series 1, 1693–1820, AAS; James Richards to the Society of Inquiry, Cape Town, South Africa, November 18, 1818, reprinted in *Memoirs of American Missionaries*, 220; Miron Winslow to the Society of Inquiry, Oodooville, Jaffna, July 25, 1820, reprinted in *Memoirs of American Missionaries*, 222.

46. [William Scollay] diary entry, June 13, 1811, Journal attributed to William Scallo, ca 1811–1812, Jacob Bigelow Papers, MHS; Ibid.; Howard Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia, Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam, and China; with notices of Numerous Missionary Stations, and a Full Account of the Burman Empire; with Dissertations, Tables, etc.* (2 vols., Boston, 1839), 2: 8.
47. Baptist General Tract Society, *The Memoir of Krishna-Pal, the first Hindoo, in Bengal, who broke the chain of the Cast, by embracing the Gospel*, Philadelphia: Baptist General Tract Society, n.d. The Tracts of the Baptist General Tract Society, no. 22, AAS.
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49. Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 117; Ibid, 114; *Annual Report of the American Tract Society, Presented at New-York, May, 1836* (New York, 1836), 21, PDF e-book, Google Books; Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 114; Biographical note, Charles Henry Appleton Dall Papers, 1836–1885, bMS 483, Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, accessed October 15, 2010, <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/library/bms/bms00483.html>.
50. Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 7.
51. Robert B. Minturn, Jr., *From New York to New Delhi, by Way of Rio de Janeiro, Australia, and China* (New York, 1858), iii–iv; *Eleventh Annual Report of the American Tract Society*, 99.
52. Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, 1: 13–14.
53. The bill did not pass in 1812. Reintroduced in May of 1813, it made its way through the House only to meet new controversy in the state senate, where it again drew the criticism of Benjamin Crowninshield, now a newly elected state senator. Despite his opposition, the state legislature chartered the ABCFM on June 20, 1813 (ABCFM, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years*, 73–78).
54. Elsbree, *Missionary Spirit*, 96; Henry Lee quoted in Bean, *Yankee India*, 132; Rogers quoted in Ibid., 133.
55. C. Sumner to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, April 3, 1819, PL.
56. For an account of how the shift between the Revolutionary and Jacksonian generations affected the way American merchants viewed foreign peoples, see Dane Anthony Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).

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