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Robert Knox: Racial Imagination, Transcendental Anatomy and Western Colonial Expansion

Abstract

*The main purpose of this study is to discuss the nature of racial imagination in the work of Robert Knox, one of the founders of modern comparative anatomy and the author of *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations* (1850), in the intellectual context of development of philosophic or transcendental anatomy and in the political context of colonial and imperial expansion of West in the nineteenth century. Robert Knox belonged to the intellectual influential group of Scottish political radicals and scientific materialists who played an important role in British academic life in 1820s and 1830s. These scholars shared the belief that new vision of Nature derived from continental German and French anatomical school should paved way for crucial social and political reforms aimed against interests of landed nobility and Church. However, in the 1840s the disillusionment came and the academic status of the above mentioned group was seriously shaken. The pessimistic racial teaching of Robert Knox was a fruit of this frustration and loss of scientific prestige.*

Key words: Robert Knox, race, racism, philosophic and transcendental anatomy, colonialism, imperialism, Eurasian revolution

Eminent Scottish anatomist Robert Knox contributed very significantly to the development of Western racial thinking. He coined the term "race war" two decades before

the emergence of Social Darwinism, and his attempt to present race as an epistemological basis for the understanding of the history of the world provides a very interesting testimony of the early Victorian concept of international relations in the period of so-called Eurasian revolution.¹

Robert Knox² was born in Edinburgh on 4 September 1793. Robert Knox senior, father of Robert Knox, was a son of a tenant farmer and he also claimed kinship with John Knox, the famous Scottish reformer. He was employed as a teacher of natural philosophy, and mathematics at George Heriot's School in Edinburgh.³ His son was educated at the Royal High School of Edinburgh.⁴ In November 1810, Robert Knox signed up at the Medical School in Edinburgh.⁵ The Medical Faculty of the Edinburgh University was set up in 1726 (imitating the model of the Leiden Medical School). Between 1720 and 1790, about 12,800 passed through it and the Edinburgh Medical School gained the reputation of the leading medical academic institution in the Old World.⁶

After obtaining his degree in 1814 (his thesis written in Latin was entitled *De Viribus Stimulantium et Narcoticorum in corpore sano*)⁷ Robert Knox moved south in order to complete his medical education with the surgeon John Abernethy at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, where he attended Abernethy's illustrious lectures on surgery and physiology.⁸ When Napoleon escaped from Elba, Robert Knox (who received his commission as assistant-surgeon in the army) joined the British military forces as hospital-assistant on 16 June, 1815.⁹ Few days after the battle of Waterloo, he was sent directly to Brussels to render medical aid to the wounded.¹⁰ The casualties at Waterloo were very high (over 7,000 wounded) and the British military lacked experiences, skill and facilities to cope with the dramatic situation. The renowned surgeon Charles Bell admitted that despite his experience gained during the Peninsular War,

he felt almost helpless facing such calamity.¹¹ Professor John Thomson, arriving from Edinburgh, wrote that in Brussels "on the day after the battle [...] the shops were shut, the people were at their doors administering cordials, and offering dressing to the wounded, taking the tender care of them [...] Hundreds of wounded were to be seen in the streets, and some were to be found in every home. Even after the hospitals were fully established, several hundreds of privates, beside the officers, were voluntarily received and taken care of by the inhabitants during their cure".¹²

After three weeks of intensive medical work in Brussels (he was attached to the *hôpital de la gendarmerie*, a converted barracks filled with French wounded soldiers), Robert Knox was sent from Ostende to the Haslar Hospital in charge of a group of ninety wounded soldiers.¹³ He spent a year in Melsea Hospital in Hampshire.¹⁴

In April 1817, Robert Knox was redeployed to the 72nd Regiment (later the Seaforth Highlanders) and set sail for the British colony of the Cape.¹⁵ In South Africa, Robert Knox – besides his professional duties – became one of the earliest explorers of the African interior.¹⁶ He was interested both in the local fauna and in the ethnology and comparative anatomy of local indigenous peoples.¹⁷ Robert Knox described the "Hottentot" (Khoi) and "Bushmen" (San) as the "yellow race", different from the "warlike, bold and active" "Kaffirs" (Xhosa) and "Amakosos" (Zulu).¹⁸ Knox personally participated in the punitive military expedition against Xhosa raiders ("Kaffirs") who crossed the Great Fish River in December 1818. An army of ten thousand warriors under the command of Chief Ndlambe believed in a prophecy of the "witch-doctor" Nx-ele, promising the British bullets would be turned into water.¹⁹ However, when they attacked Graham's Town, they were repulsed with heavy damages.²⁰ Despite the offer

1) Darwin 2007.

2) Bates 2010; Lonsdale 1870; Rae 1964.

3) Lonsdale 1870, 2–3; Bates 2010, 13.

4) Bates 2010, 16.

5) Lonsdale 1870, 5; Bates 2010, 20.

6) Sowell 1998, 58.

7) Robert Knox used the results of his thesis for the study "on the relations subsisting between the time of the day and various functions of the human body, and on the manner in which the pulsation of the heart and arteries are affected by muscular exertion published in Edinburgh medical and surgical journal" (Lonsdale 1870, 6–7).

8) Rae 1964, 8–9; Bates 2010, 29.

9) Bates 2010, 30–31.

10) Rae 1964, 9.

11) "Only one of sir Charles Bell's secondary amputations survived" and "the people of Brussels did not think very much of the English Medical Department" (Rae 1964, 11; Lonsdale 1870, 9).

12) Rae 1964, 10.

13) Lonsdale 1870, 9–10; Rae 1964, 12; Bates 2010, 31.

14) Bates 2010, 32.

15) Lonsdale 1870, 13; Rae 1964, 12; Bates 2010, 32.

16) Rae 1870, 17.

17) One of the scientific outcomes of Knox stay in South Africa was the paper *Observations on the temperature of the North Atlantic Ocean and the superincumbent atmosphere between the latitudes of 50° 2' and 20° 24' N*.

18) Bates 2010, 36.

19) Bates, 37.

20) Bates, 37.

of the Dutch settlers to be appointed the chief surgeon to the Dutch Free States, Knox left the Cape for England on the brig *Brilliant* on 22 October 1820.²¹

Robert Knox settled down as an officer on half-pay in Edinburgh early in 1821. He published several scientific articles on ethnology and comparative anatomy in *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*.²² In September 1821, Robert Knox asked the Director-General for the permission to leave the Great Britain for the period of one year. He wanted to continue his studies in Paris, which was still considered to be the capital and centre of the Western scientific life. Robert Knox admired Napoleon and later remarked that “civilized man may perhaps proceed higher even than in Paris, but of this I am not quite sure”.²³ In Paris, Knox worked at the hospital of La Charité, under Professors Alexis Boyer and Philibert Joseph Roux.²⁴ Robert Knox admired very much two leading persons and rivals in French comparative anatomy: Georges Cuvier and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Especially Georges Cuvier gained a reputation of the most respected European naturalist. In the United Kingdom, Richard Owen was labelled “British Cuvier”, Johann Friedrich Meckel was “German Cuvier”, and Louis Agassiz “American Cuvier”.²⁵

Robert Knox highly appreciated the French contribution to the emergence of modern natural sciences.²⁶ For Robert Knox, Georges Cuvier was “the first of all

descriptive anatomists, and the scientific man who first, after Aristotle, applied the art of anatomy to general science”.²⁷ Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire was forty-nine when he met the young anatomist from Edinburgh, who was deeply impressed by his ideas. Originally, Saint-Hilaire was trained as mineralogist, but he obtained the Chair of Zoology in the Museum of Natural History. In 1798, Saint-Hilaire joined, as a scientific adviser, the French military expedition led by Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt (Georges Cuvier refused the invitation to participate).²⁸ As the first Professor of Zoology at the Faculty of Science at the University of Paris, he delivered lectures on “transcendental anatomy” (*anatomie transcendante*) influenced by the German teaching of *Naturphilosophie*, propagated by Johann Wolfgang Goethe,²⁹ Lorenz Oken, Johann Friedrich Meckel, Karl Friedrich Kiemeyer, Johann Baptist von Spix, Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius or Carl Gustav Carus.³⁰

This notion of transcendentalism, that Robert Knox (“the earliest and most outspoken proponent of idealism in British natural history”)³¹ acquired through Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in Paris, emphasized form rather than function. The British followers of Saint-Hilaire (including Robert Knox, Edward Forbes, Richard Owen, Robert Edmond Grant, William Sharpey, Martin Barry, W. B. Carpenter, Joseph Henry Green and Robert Chambers, some of them were eminent Scottish radicals) were convinced that the animal morphology, or organic reality in general, could be explained by the idealistic epistemology of the transcendental logic of form, rather than by the functional adaptation advocated for instance by Georges Cuvier from *Musée d’histoire naturelle* and his own students.³² Robert Knox compared the historical significance of Geoffroy’s transcendental anatomy to Newtonian physics.³³

The transcendental anatomy or transcendentalism, proposed by German idealists and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, was challenged by the functionalist and

21) Lonsdale 1870, 16.

22) According to the *Medical Times*. Robert Knox “Gave to the scientific world the first account of the Kaffirs” (Rae 1964, 21–22).

23) Knox 1862, 325.

24) Rae 1964, 23.

25) Rupke 1994, 117.

26) “Bichat was the founder and discoverer of true descriptive anatomy [...] Cuvier [...] extended his mode of research to all other animals, and thus he made of zoology a science. But, above all, by this method, by this new element of knowledge, was he enabled to read the true character of the fossil remains of all epochs, and, for the first time, to present man with a ‘History of the Earth,’ not founded on fables, but on facts. From the beginning to the end of his career, the nature of his inquiries was either mistaken or misrepresented in Britain. His philosophic discourse on the changes which the surface of the globe and its living inhabitants had undergone ‘in time,’ was presented to the British public as a ‘Theory of the Earth,’ a ‘New Theory of the Earth!’ he gave us instead a ‘History of the Earth,’ whereon to build a theory. It was the old mistake of Bolingbroke, who called history, philosophy teaching by examples. But history is not philosophy. Cuvier gave us a history of the world, the philosophy of that history he never attempted. Prior to Cuvier, geology, paleontology, cosmogony, had really no existence; what passed for such were dreams” (Knox 1852, 2–3).

27) Knox 1852, 18.

28) Rae 1964, 25–26, 28.

29) Johann Wolfgang Goethe was convinced that “All the parts of an animal, taken together or separately, ought to be found in all animals” (Bates 2010, 23).

30) Heinrich Heine emphasized in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1834) the influence of pantheism and the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza on Johann Wolfgang Goethe and *Naturphilosophie*: „Goethe war der Spinoza der Poesie [...] das Goethe ganzlich der Lehre des Spinoza huldigte, ist keinem Zweifel unterworfen [...] denn die Idee der Naturphilosophie ist ja im grunde nichts anders als die Idee des Spinoza, der Pantheismus” (Rupke 1994, 200–201).

31) Rupke 1994, 64.

32) Rupke 1994, 64.

33) Desmond 1989, 58.

teleologist approach of Georges Cuvier which initiated the famous Cuvier-Geoffrey conflict observed and commented on by the whole academic world in 1831 (Cuvier insisted that “every part of the animal economy must have its use”).³⁴ British members of the *Royal College of Surgeons* and the *Royal College of Physicians*, established at the University of London, sided with Cuvier (for instance, William Buckland, Joseph Pentland and David Brewster).³⁵ Robert Knox despite his personal respect and admiration for Cuvier criticized severely his “imaginative and fantastic” claims: “Had the Cuvierian mania and party become in this country, that to doubt the correctness of any of the views of Cuvier amounted to a personal attack upon thousands of his satellites, who [...] placed him precisely in the same position as the Monkish writers of the middle ages placed Aristotle.”³⁶

Robert Knox, following the theory of transcendentalism, stressed that structures in the human embryo pass through forms representing the permanent forms of other adult beings, not human, but “bestial”, of whom some belong to the recent world, whilst others may represent forms which became extinct, or forms which might yet appear in the future: “Thus in the embryonic changes or metamorphoses of man and other animals, are shadowed forth, more or less completely, all other organic forms [...] This is man linked by structure and by plan to all that has lived or may yet live. One plan, one grand scheme of nature; unity of organization; unity in time and space.”³⁷ Knox shared Geoffroy’s idea that “unity of composition” could have explained the structural similarity of all vertebrates.³⁸

Transcendentalists assumed that physical changes in the environment cause changes in the organism during its embryonic development. These embryonic metamorphoses could be propagated by inheritance and could eventually induce the transmutation of species.³⁹ Robert Chambers,⁴⁰ one of the leading proponents of transcendentalism in the United Kingdom, applied this concept of embryonic development

to the human racial diversity in his notorious evolutionary book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*,⁴¹ published anonymously in 1844.⁴²

41) *Queen Victoria, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Abraham Lincoln, William Ewart Gladstone, Arthur Schopenhauer, Francis Newman, John Stuart Mill, William Stanley Jevons, Florence Nightingale, Alfred Tennyson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Eliot, Alfred Russel Wallace and naturally, Charles Darwin were among numerous readers of Chambers’ works.*

42) “Our brain goes through the various stages of fish’s, a reptile’s, and a mammifer’s brain, and finally becomes human. There is more than this, for, after completing the animal transformations, it passes through the characters in which it appears, in the Negro, Malay, American, and Mongolian nations, and finally is caucasian. The face partakes of these alterations.” [...] Lord’s popular physiology, explaining observations by m. Serres: “One of the earliest points in which ossification commences is the lower jaw. This bone is consequently sooner completed than the other bones of the head, and acquires a predominance, which, as is well known, it never loses in the Negro. During the soft pliant state of the bones of the skull, the oblong form which they naturally assume, approaches nearly the permanent shape of the Americans. At birth, the flattened face, and broad smooth forehead of the infant, the position of the eyes rather towards the side of the head, and the widened space between, represent the Mongolian form; while it is only as the child advances to maturity, that the oval face, the arched forehead, and the marked features of the true Caucasian, become perfectly developed.” [...] “the leading characters, in short, of the various races of mankind, are simply representations of particular stages in the development of the highest or Caucasian type. The Negro exhibits permanently the imperfect brain, projecting lower jaw, and slender bent limbs, of a Caucasian child, some considerable time before the period of its birth. The aboriginal American represents the same child nearer birth. The Mongolian is an arrested infant newly born” (Chambers, Robert 1994, 306–307); If it be admitted as true, there can be no difficulty in accounting for all varieties of mankind. They are simply the result of so many advances and retrogressions in the developing power of the human mothers, these advances and retrogressions being, as we have formerly seen, the immediate effect of external conditions in nutrition, hardship, &c., and also, perhaps, to some extent, of the suitability and unsuitability of marriages, for it is found that parents too nearly related tend to produce offspring of the Mongolian type, – that is, persons who in maturity still are a kind of children. According to this view, the greater part of the human race must be considered as having lapsed or declined from the original type. In the Caucasian or Indo-European family alone has the primitive organization been improved upon. The Mongolian, Malay, American, and Negro, comprehending perhaps five-sixths of mankind, are degenerate” (Chambers 1994, 309).

34) Appel 1987, 125–136; Bates 2010, 87.

35) Richards 1994, 382.

36) Desmond 1989, 59.

37) Knox 1862, 29–30.

38) Desmond 1989, 59.

39) Richards 1994, 381.

40) De Beer 1969; Millhauser 1959.

Knox's himself gradually abandoned the theory of recapitulation, arrested developments,⁴³ and an idea of progressive development of species. He underlined the "deforming powers" of nature operated on the "generic embryo," which he interpreted as a "reservoir" of newly emerged species.⁴⁴ These species should have been immutable and did not emerge in a necessarily progressive way. Thus, Knox rejected Lamarck's progressive and environmentalist approach.⁴⁵ Despite his radical political views Robert Knox did not share the Lamarckian idea (inherited from the Enlightenment and taken over by radical socialists and atheists) of benefit of social conditioning and human perfectibility.⁴⁶ His rebuff of environmentalism was linked to his belief on the permanence of human races and his historical and moral pessimism (Evelleen Richards related Knox's pessimistic worldview to his professional setbacks).⁴⁷

Isobel Rae was convinced that Knox's ambition might well have been "to make of Edinburgh another Paris and himself its Baron Cuvier".⁴⁸ In 1824, Robert Knox initiated the establishment of the first Museum of Comparative Anatomy (he saw such a one in Paris) in Edinburgh. Two years later, Knox was elected conservator of the Museum.⁴⁹ On 2 March 1825, he started his famous lectures on anatomy in the private, "extramural" anatomical school (first as the partner and later as the successor of its founder, John Barclay) on Surgeons' Square 10 in Edinburgh.⁵⁰ Robert Knox changed the school into the "Geoffroyan citadel".⁵¹

At that time, anatomy was considered to be the "foundation of medical science". Students should devote nine hours a day, five days a week, for nine months to dissection; it was generally believed that "who dissects most assiduously will be the

most expert operator".⁵² In 1826, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh made dissection compulsory for all medical students.⁵³

Knox ("*primus et incomparabilis*") became an extremely successful teacher ("*the best lecturer in the city*"), attracting thousands of students disappointed by the mediocre courses of anatomy taught at the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh.⁵⁴ For instance, in the winter session 1828-1829, 504 students attended his classes. It is estimated that about two-thirds of all the medical students in Edinburgh participated in the lectures of Robert Knox in Surgeons' Square 10.⁵⁵ William Fergusson, who was later to become Sergeant-Surgeon to the Queen and President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, was one of his assistants.⁵⁶ Charles Darwin, who studied in Edinburgh in 1826/1827, might have attended some of Knox's lectures on ethnology.⁵⁷ In his presentations, Robert Knox was trying to explain the importance of Cuvier's contributions to the natural history and Saint-Hilaire's transcendental anatomy. He impressed the audience by his rhetoric skill and the extent of his interdisciplinary knowledge. Richard Owen, who would later be known as the "English Cuvier" and considered to be the most eminent British scientist before Darwin, recalled Knox's lectures as "*the most brilliant ever delivered on anatomy*".⁵⁸ Knox published eleven scientific articles on various issues of comparative anatomy in 1823 alone.⁵⁹ Between 1826 and 1834, the average number of students in Knox's class was 335, and the maximum was over five hundred.⁶⁰

Politically, Robert Knox was notorious for his "cynical radicalism" and anticlericalism. He was considered to be a "scourge of Oxford and orthodoxy".⁶¹ He was not alone. Edinburgh produced many radical theorists who were quite influential in British intellectual and political life in the first half of the nineteenth century (Robert Grant, Patrick Matthew, or Hewett Watson). The city had a strong radical subcultures among local middle classed artisans and shopkeepers.⁶² However, some students of Robert Knox did not share radical ideas of their master. For instance, John Goodsir (professor of anatomy in Edinburgh from 1846), Manxman Edward Forbes, or Richard

43) Geoffrey explained the cases of monstrosity as arrested developments and potential causes for evolutionary changes of species.

44) Desmond 1989, 73.

45) Desmond 1989, 73–74.

46) Desmond 1989, 74.

47) Desmond 1989, 388. In a similar vein Robert Grant after his own academic disillusionment predicted the extinction of human race because of a refrigerating globe. Robert Grant coined the term "Metazoic Period", the next geological era without men (Desmond 1989, 395–397).

48) Rae 1964, 29.

49) Rae 1964, 35.

50) Rae 1964, 37.

51) Desmond 1989, 58.

52) Bates 2010, 58.

53) Bates 2010, 61.

54) Rae 1964, 43.

55) Rae 1964, 44–45.

56) Rae 1964, 56.

57) Bates 2010, 64.

58) Bates 2010, 56.

59) Bates 2010, 56.

60) Bates 2010, 61.

61) Desmond 1989, 5.

62) Bates 2010, 62.

Owen (the most notorious British naturalist before Charles Darwin) expressed more conservative and religious views close to the tradition of German *Naturphilosophie*.⁶³

Unfortunately, the academic career, reputation and moral integrity of Robert Knox were seriously damaged by his association with the case of the West Port murders.⁶⁴ Moores Ball remarked: "*Robert Knox – a great, strong, outstanding and valiant character; the most eloquent, the most versatile, and the most thorough teacher of anatomy that Scotland, a country which long has been noted for the excellence of its anatomical instruction, ever has produced: Robert Knox – he who was designated as 'Knox, primus et incomparabilis,' had his life wrecked, ruined, and embittered by the fortuitous circumstances which caused the murderers, Burke and Hare, to cross his path.*"⁶⁵

The demand for bodies for dissection in the anatomical schools of Edinburgh far exceeded the legal supply. Therefore, the traffic with dead bodies (and the activities of so-called body snatchers who carried the bodies into dissection rooms at night under the cover of darkness) was not a secret to any member of the medical community.⁶⁶ Teachers of anatomy obtained the corpses clandestinely from infirmaries, workhouses or churchyards. The violation of fresh graves became a serious public problem.⁶⁷

Between 29 November 1827 and 1 November 1828, William Burke and William Hare, two poor Irish immigrants and labourers, delivered to the Surgeons' Square at least seventeen bodies for Knox's dissecting rooms; sixteen of them were deliberately murdered victims. On 25 December 1828, Burke was sentenced by the court to be hanged.⁶⁸ His execution on the Lawnmarket on 28 January 1829 was attended by a large crowd consisting of 25,000 people.⁶⁹ Hare was released because of the crucial testimony he gave against his companion William Burke.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that William Burke swore in his confession that Robert Knox had known nothing about the criminal origin

of the cadavers,⁷¹ the public opinion turned against him.⁷² On 12 February 1829, a large mob burned a life-size effigy of Knox and stoned his residence at Newington Place 4. Robert Knox was not called as a witness at the trial and decided for a policy of silence.⁷³ Thomas Wright, Knox's former student, wrote that "*the unprofessional part of the community is by the very nature of the system inadequate judges of occurrences in a dissecting-room*".⁷⁴ As Alan Bates remarked, "*Knox was probably not the first anatomist to buy the corpse of a murder victim, and he would not be the last.*"⁷⁵

Robert Knox continued to deliver his lectures at the Surgeons' Square and his class prospered. In 1829/1830 he had 504 students, the largest anatomy class ever assembled in the United Kingdom.⁷⁶ He took less interest in human anatomy and enlarged his research of the comparative anatomy of mammals. For instance, in December 1829, he lectured in the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the anatomy of the dugong.⁷⁷ However, literary attacks and quarrels with some colleagues damaged his future career. In June 1831, he lost his position of the Conservator of the Museum of Comparative Anatomy.⁷⁸ On 15 December 1831, a "Bill for Regulating Schools of Anatomy" was introduced into the House of Commons. It received the royal assent on 1 August 1832. Robert Knox played an important role in the debate concerning the preparation of the new law that brought the antiquated British practice into line with the Continent.⁷⁹ However, despite his achievements and his reputation of a brilliant lecturer, Robert Knox was not able to gain – in the critical moment of his career – an official academic appointment. He did not hesitate to ask for a Chair of Pathology at the University of Edinburgh, but wit-

63) Bates 2010, 79.

64) Robert Knox "became the anti-hero of a Faustian morality play in which his noble, scientific ideals were perverted by an immoderate passion for knowledge that drew him into the company of the most repulsive of criminals"; however Knox is now "restored as one of the most distinguished surgical anatomists in the history of Edinburgh surgery" (Bates 2010, I, Viii).

65) Rae 1964, 57.

66) Bates 2010, 58.

67) Bates 2010, 58.

68) Bates 2010, 69.

69) Bates 2010, 71.

70) Rae 1964, 68–69.

71) "Burke declares that dr. Knox never encouraged him, neither taught him or encouraged him to murder any person, neither any of his assistants, and worthy gentleman, mr. Fergusson, was the only man that ever mentioned anything about the bodies. He enquired where we got the young woman Paterson" (Rae 1964, 89; Bates 2010, 72).

72) For Instance, Some Popular Ballads Appeared:

Up the close and doon the stair,

Ben the hoose wi' burke and hare,

Burke's the butcher, hare's the thief,

Knox the boy who buys the beef (Rae 1964, 65).

73) Rae 1964, 93–94; Bates 2010, 66.

74) Bates 2010, 74.

75) Bates 2010, 76.

76) Bates 2010, 74.

77) Bates 2010, 85.

78) Rae 1964, 108–109.

79) Rae 1964, 113.

hout success.⁸⁰ The fact that Robert Knox was elected a Corresponding Member of the French Academy of Medicine (“an honor bestowed on few foreigners”) did not impress the Lord Provost and the Town Council responsible for all University appointments. His political radicalism and attacks on “canting provosts” and “whining town-councillors” made him the “subject of intense hatred” among members of religious, council and academic establishment.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the University of Edinburgh was in decline and the British center of medical education moved to London.

After the 1835/1836 session, Knox stopped to offer “practical” and descriptive anatomy, most probably due to the lack of subjects for dissection.⁸² In 1837, Robert Knox had seventy-one enrolled students only,⁸³ and at this time the total number of medical students in Edinburgh dropped to 356.⁸⁴ He might have suffered some financial embarrassment as well (he had a wife and five children to support).⁸⁵ After the death of his wife in 1841, his professional isolation augmented and forced him to leave Edinburgh for London at the age of forty-nine. However, he was not able to find a suitable position there.⁸⁶ Robert Knox abandoned the effort to become the university teacher and started a new career through popular anatomical and ethnological lectures, books, articles and shows. His theory of human races based on the approach of transcendental anatomy⁸⁷

80) Rae 1964, 115.

81) Desmond 1989, 80.

82) Bates 2010, 97.

83) Bates 2010, 98.

84) Rae 1964, 123.

85) Rae 1964, 119.

86) Rae 1964, 126.

87) “Look more narrowly into the races of men, and you will find them to be subject to diseases peculiar to each; that the very essence of their language is distinct; their civilization also, if they have any. Trace the matter further, and you will find that transcendental anatomy can alone explain these mysterious circumstances: how all embryos should resemble each other; how they should resemble the primitive forms of life when the world was yet young; how deviations in form or varieties, not intended to be permanent, should repeat primitive forms, as proved by fossil remains; or present human or bestial forms; or take unknown shapes, referring, no doubt, to the future: lastly, and that is the most difficult question, how specializations should ever appear at all, and be, for a time at least, permanent” (Knox 1862, 37); “Certain varieties then, in human form, are produced by the law of unity of the organization; for every individual living form grows up influenced, regulated by two contending principles. The law of unity of organization, ever present, ever active, ever ready to retain the embryonic forms: the law, in fact, of deformation as we naturally view it; for, as the human faculties are

was the main outcome of this endeavor. Robert Knox delivered the series of public lectures in big cities, including Newcastle, Manchester, and Birmingham, and in these lectures, he focused his attention on the problem of human races. In 1850, Robert Knox published his most famous work *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations*, a collection of public lectures on ethnology made in the course of several years after the abandonment of his academic career.

In 1844, Robert Knox moved to Glasgow where he obtained the position of lecturer in Anatomy at the Portland Street School. However, Knox left Scotland after few months, never to come back again.⁸⁸ The Edinburgh College of Surgeons cancelled his teaching diploma in 1847.⁸⁹ Due to the lack of opportunities, he was planning to move to the United States of America at the beginning of 1848, but later he abandoned the enterprise.⁹⁰ He translated several important anatomical treatises from French and spent many hours in the British Museum, studying Greek, Roman, and Renaissance sculptures from the anatomical point of view. Two books were the outcome of his efforts: *Manual of Artistic Anatomy* and *Great Artists and Great Anatomists*, both published in 1852.⁹¹ Robert Knox even applied for a vacant post at the British Museum, unfortunately without success.⁹² In 1854, Knox (who was sixty-one years’ old) attempted to be sent out as a physician or staff-surgeon to the Crimean war. His former student, Sir William Fergusson, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, supported his application: “You seem to me as full of energy as ever, and I need hardly say that your intellectual powers seem equal to any of those former efforts which in early days made you dux of the High School of Edinburgh, and the first teacher of anatomy in Europe.”⁹³ The Army Medical Department did not accept him because of his age.

On 23 September 1856, the Committee of the Cancer Hospital (established by William Marsden) appointed Robert Knox pathological anatomist. Knox spent last

constituted to look for and to admire the perfect form, the standard and type of which exists in every rightly formed mind, is regarded with a certain dislike. It is to this type that nature as constantly leans in carrying out the development of every individual; the law in fact of individuality; of species. Without it we should have no distinct species of men or animals on the earth; the law of deformation or unity would perpetually alter every form” (Knox 1862, 35–36).

88) Rae 1964, 131–132.

89) Desmond 1989, 388.

90) Rae 1964, 146.

91) Rae 1964, 147.

92) Rae 1964, 151.

93) Rae 1964, 156.

years of his life with this institution, and he built up a practice in Hackney.⁹⁴ He read Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and expressed a critical reservation that "it leaves the question precisely where it was left by Goethe, Oken, and Geoffrey Saint Hilaire".⁹⁵ In 1860, Robert Knox was elected an honorary fellow of the *Ethnological Society of London* and the honorary curator of its Museum.⁹⁶ He died on 20 December 1862, after an apoplectic seizure he suffered after his return from the Cancer Hospital.⁹⁷

The goal of Knox intellectual interest was to explain the origin of race, or to connect the history of race with the great laws regulating the living organic world.⁹⁸ For Robert Knox, the category of race presented the main tool for the understanding of human history:⁹⁹ "Nevertheless, that race in human affairs is everything, is simply a fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art – in a word, civilization, depends on it."¹⁰⁰ Races are unalterable; neither time nor climate seems to have any effect on race:¹⁰¹ "Each race must act for itself, and work out its own destiny; display its own destinies; be the maker of its own fortunes, be they good or evil. A foreign civilization they cannot adopt; borrow they may, and cunningly adapt, calling it national, native; but the imposture, like all impostures, becomes manifest in time, whether practiced by the Negro or the Saxon."¹⁰² Knox saw the mental characters of the different races as completely invariant, not subject to environmental influences or transformation.¹⁰³ Knox acquired "pessimistic vision of human history" (possible influenced by his own personal experience): Progress was utopian, reforms were useless, and racial conflicts inevitable.¹⁰⁴

Following the teaching of French transcendentalists Robert Knox assumed that all human races present concrete varieties of one ideal archetype: "The perfect type of man was discovered by the ancient sculptors of Greece: it cannot be surpassed; all attempts to improve on it have failed. Towards this, nature constantly tends. Certain races

seem to be approaching the condition of non-viable races; it would seem as if their course was run: they hold the same position to mankind as the individual or family in whom the laws of unity, superseding in part the laws of specialization, have given rise to deformations, monstrosities, incompatible with reproduction, or with individual life. These races may then probably disappear, and this may be the fate of man himself under every form, his intellectual nature notwithstanding."¹⁰⁵

Robert Knox, as the first author in the Western intellectual tradition, considered racial struggle to be the main principle of the human historical experience: "The views I had so long adopted of human nature, human history, and the future, had led me long ago to foresee the approaching struggle of race against race."¹⁰⁶ He was jealous of his supposed priority.¹⁰⁷ Knox was convinced that even the British society itself was split into distinct racial groups¹⁰⁸ and this fact should have had a crucial impact on its history, contemporary political life and future prospects.¹⁰⁹ Robert Knox was convinced that the revolutionary events of 1848 had confirmed his view that racial identity and solidarity presented stronger source for group solidarity than state institutions: "Then burst forth the mighty convulsion of the Celtic race of France; the Italian races rose against the barbarous savage Tedeschi, who, under the assumed name of Germans, to which they have not the most distant claim, lorded it over Italy; then rose the Saxon element of the German race in Austria, demanding freedom, and a division from the barbarous Slavonian; then fell that

105) Knox 1862, 446.

106) Knox 1862, 22. "Whilst tracing the progress of events all over the world since the period I mention, I have seen the question of race tested in a great variety of ways; its strength especially; its endurance. The evidence in its favor, up to 1844, enabled me to predict the coming war of race against race, which has convulsed Europe during the last two years" (Knox 1862, 16–17).

107) "One leading journal, at least, has fairly reprinted nearly all my views in the form of leaders, to which, of course, no name was attached. As these views had been delivered in public lectures at least three years previously; as they had been reprinted in the provincial press; and as they were then reporting in the medical times journal, - I scarcely expected in an English newspaper so barefaced a piracy" (Knox 1862, 23).

108) "The Norman, though he met in south England a kindred race, could not destroy the Saxon race of north England. To this day the country seems to be divided between them, notwithstanding the centralizing influence of Flemish London. The Celts still hold the western limits of Britain and Ireland, just as they did before the period of authentic history" (Knox 1862, 117–118).

109) "Englishmen cannot be made to believe, can scarcely be made to comprehend, that races of men, differing as widely from each other as races can possibly do, inhabit, not merely continental Europe, but portions of Great Britain and Ireland" (Knox 1862, 24).

94) Rae 1964, 159.

95) Rae 1964, 160.

96) Rae 1964, 160.

97) Rae 1964, 161.

98) Knox 1862, 419.

99) "Men are of various races; call them species, if you will; call them permanent varieties; it matters not. The fact, the simple fact, remains just as it was: men are of different races" (Knox 1862, 2).

100) Knox 1862, V.

101) Knox 1862, 181.

102) Knox 1862, 452.

103) Desmond 1989, 388–389.

104) Desmond 1989, 389.

miserable drum-head monarchy of Prussia, and the grand duchy of Posen furnished the field of contest between the German and Slavonian races."¹¹⁰ No political organization or conquest could prevail over race which was resilient to all occasional historical events.¹¹¹ State and all political institutions mean nothing compared to the power of racial solidarity.¹¹² It is impossible to build up a powerful and permanent political organization without strong racial base.¹¹³ Robert Knox emphasized that the balance of power in Europe must ultimately rest, not with states, but with races: the question of European civilization must repose on the same basis.¹¹⁴

110) Knox 1862, 22.

111) *"The chronicles called histories tell us that the Roman Empire extended from the Clyde and forth to the Tigris and Euphrates. Northern, extra-tropical Africa was said to be thoroughly roman; Italy, of course, was roman to the core. Where are the romans now? What races have they destroyed? What races have they supplanted? For fourteen centuries they lorded it over the semi-civilized world; and now they are of no more note than the ancient Scythians or Mongols, Copts or tartars. They established themselves nowhere as romans. Perhaps they never were a race at all. But be this as it may, they destroyed no other race, supplanted no other race: and now look over the map of their empire, and tell me where you find a physical vestige of the race; on the Thames or Danube, Rhine or Guadalquivir, Rhone or Nile. Italy itself seems all but clear of them. Southern Italy was gracias magna before they invaded it; and Sicily is even now more Greek than Italian. Byzantium was a roman city, and so was York. And so it is with other conquering races. Northern Africa never was Phoenician, properly speaking, any more than Algiers is Celtic now, or India English. Even in Corsica the Celtic race of France have failed to establish itself, though, from its proximity to France and presumed analogy of climate, and, as has been erroneously asserted, of races, there seems no reason why Corsica should not become Celtic or French"* (Knox 1862, 116).

112) *"A mere accidental political assemblage of people – a human contrivance based on no assurance of perseverance, on no bond of nature, but on protocols and treaties, on the mockery of words called constitutions and laws of nations, made to bind the weak, to be broken by the strong"* (Knox 1862, 297).

113) *"Accordingly, in 1845, I foretold the breaking down of the iron despotisms of Hapsburg and Brandenburg as a necessary result of a war of race: it came in 1847. The gold of England, and the sword of Russia, either thought invincible, could not amalgamate the dark-haired Fleming with the Saxon-Dutchman: 700 years of absolute possession has not advanced by a single step the amalgamation of the Irish Celt with the Saxon-English"* (Knox 1862, 17–18).

114) Knox 1862, 361.

Robert Knox did not believe in the progressive improvement of mankind. He argued that the ancient races of men were at least equal, if not superior, to the modern ones: *"Even the yellow race of Africa, the degraded Hottentot and Bosjeman, the Quaquoes and the Antiquas, must have had their aera; their attempt at civilization and its failure; instead of being a recent oppressed race, they are perhaps a most ancient and fallen race; fallen, never to rise again, not merely by having come into contact with more powerful races, but simply as a result of the history of development and progress."*¹¹⁵

Knox racial interpretation was incompatible with all precedent Western philosophy and understanding of history. Robert Knox was highly critical of the traditional Western environmentalism and climatic theories. He emphasized that each race presented a discrete and completely isolated unit with special physiology and intellectual abilities, conservative force permeating all aspects of cultural, social and political existence.¹¹⁶ The conversion of one race into another one was impossible and contradicted by all historical experiences.¹¹⁷ No mixed race could stand their ground for any long period of years.¹¹⁸ *"The original population of Mexico was Indian – the red Indian – a half-civilized barbarian. On this was engrafted the Spanish stock, itself not pure, being composed of several races, but still energetic, though likewise on the wane. The product was a mulatto, or half breed, whom nature never intended should exist as a race; therefore, having ceased receiving supplies from Old Spain, mulattoes could no longer be generated from that stock; they themselves, the mulattoes, die out and out, I think, in three or four generations, unless crossed and recrossed with some pure blood, white or black; they, therefore, would have*

115) Knox 1862, 454.

116) *"The habitants, le bas Canadian, is being of the age of Louis quatorze. Seignories, monkeries, Jesuits, grand domains; idleness, indolence, slavery; a mental slavery, the most dreadful of all human conditions. See him cling to the banks of rivers, fearing to plunge into the forest; without self-reliance; without self-confidence. If you seek an explanation, go back to Ireland, and you will find it there: it is the race. Even in the states, the free united states, where if a man remains a slave in mind it is his own affair, the Celt is distinct from the Saxon to this day"* (Knox 1862, 19).

117) Knox 1862, 20.

118) *"The Danish (Scandinavian or Saxon) blood, which must have existed in sufficient abundance in south England during and subsequent to Canute's time, has given way before the Flemish races, which preceded the Saxon, and now prevails everywhere. All traces of the Scandinavian and Celtic seem to have left Greece. The mingled Italian races, the product of so many others, seem fast reverting to a primitive race, which occupied Italy before Rome was founded. A mixed race may then be produced, but it cannot be supported by its own resources, but by continental draughts from the two pure races which originally gave origin to it"* (Knox 1862, 470–471).

ceased to exist; the Indian blood, predominating from the first, would naturally gain the ascendancy; but, as that race seemingly dying out when Cortes seized the kingdom, there existed no elements in Mexico to perpetuate the race beyond a few centuries."¹¹⁹ Robert Knox remarked that "when the Negro is crossed with the Hottentot race, the product is a mild-tempered, industrious person; when with the white race, the result is a scoundrel."¹²⁰

Robert Knox exploited racial theories in his radical views concerning political system of the British Isles. He called the present ruling British dynasty and aristocracy "the descendants of William and his Norman robbers".¹²¹ The racial antagonism between the Norman government and oppressed Saxon populations played a crucial role in the British political life. The people of England were entirely in the hands of a Norman government – united, wealthy, all-powerful and corrupt beyond imagination. The last argument of Normans had been always sword. The constitution of England was sham. The Church was rampant.¹²² The people of England were stripped of land and manipulated by superstition and priests: "England is perfectly feudal: the results are not quite so apparent, it is true, in a Saxon country, in consequence of the energy of the race; but in Celtic Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, 'the system' has produced its full results."¹²³

The European soil was inhabited by three or four main racial groups: Saxons, Celts, Slaves and Sarmatians. Knox doubted the existence of the Germanic race. It was a great error committed by Thomas Arnold and some other authors and scholars to confound under the common name "Teutonic" very diverse races having lived in Central and Northern Europe. Saxons, Celts, Slaves and Sarmatians cannot be classed together under the name of Teuton:¹²⁴ "The present or modern South German does not belong to the race described in classic Roman history; they are not Scandinavians or true Germans, and never were a fair race."¹²⁵ For Knox Germany¹²⁶ was an obscure geographical region

invented by ancient and romantic authors and inhabited by various human races.¹²⁷ Knox even despised the Prussians: "No native Pruss has ever been found fit for anything."¹²⁸ Robert Knox anticipated the successful expansion and hegemony of Russia over the Germany and Scandinavia: "The struggle between the Muscovite and Saxon was soon over; it was decided at Pultowa; the contest with the Pruss may be said to have ended also in his favour, the dynasty of Brandenburg being merely a tenant-at-will of the Muscovite. If you desire to see his power over the Northern Saxons or Scandinavians, attempt a constitutional monarchy or republic in Sweden or Denmark, and watch the result; he now aims at the Slavonian – this is his best game – it leads to the gates of Constantinople, and the possession of Greece."¹²⁹

Saxons and Celts have achieved the modern hegemony through their mental energy, power of concentration and physical force; in every other quality they are evidently inferior to the traditional racial groups, especially they lack the intellectual capacities of the Slaves, true creators of the Western science and art.¹³⁰ Unlike the ancient nations, the Saxon and Celtic races did not invent the sciences, arts, or literature: "Neither Iliad nor Odyssey were written by Saxons or Celts."¹³¹ Saxons were primitive barbarians a few hundred years ago. When left to themselves, on the banks of the Ohio in

Ireland. They die out of course, or return to the pure races; but this I will say, that in no instance have I ever observed them to bear any resemblance to the modern middle and south German" (Knox 1862, 349–350).

127) "So early as 1830, I asked the persons who called themselves Germans to point out Germany to me on the map; to tell me who are the Germans? I asked them if the Viennese and the bohemians were Germans? If they thought they would ever become so? If the inhabitants of Posen were Germans? If the Dutch, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, were Germans? To these questions I could never get a rational reply. The educated men to whom I spoke were quite aware that, strictly speaking, there was no such place as Germany, and no single race to which the word German could apply? They knew that the countries which at various times have figured on the map as the German empire, Germany, Prussia, Saxony, &c., contain within them various races of men; the Saxon or the classic German of Roman writers; the Slavonia, the Sarmatia, and another race, not yet well described; they were quite aware of this; they knew well that such conflicting elements could never agree" (Knox 1862, 17).

128) Knox 1862, 347.

129) Knox 1862, 364.

130) Knox 1862, 190.

131) Knox 1862, 190.

119) Knox 1862, 260–261.

120) Knox 1862, 243.

121) Knox 1862, 370.

122) Knox 1862, 371.

123) Knox 1862, 370.

124) Knox 1862, 341.

125) Knox 1862, 343–344.

126) Robert Knox was convinced that middle and southern Germany was inhabited by Slavonic populations (identified by ancient authors as "Goths"): "To the hypothesis, that the modern German is a hybrid between the Celt and Saxon, I reply, first, that there are no hybrid races; and, secondly, the accidental mixture of Celt and Saxon produces, for a time, a body of people of uncertain character, indefinable; they are occasionally to be met with on the eastern coasts of Scotland and of Ireland, and they may be found, no doubt, in great abundance in the great manufacturing towns of England, Scotland, and

Northern America, or in Southern Africa, they abandoned all mimicry of civilization and returned to their original barbaric nature.¹³²

Robert Knox emphasized that Saxons love freedom and independence; therefore, England should not be able to retain its overseas Anglo-Saxon empire, because Saxons are completely devoid of the patriotism - their adopted land becomes their new fatherland: "*With the first opportunity they shake off the despotism of England and set up for themselves: hence, in time, England must lose all her colonies.*"¹³³ In North America, Saxons – relieved from the bayonet of the furious Celt, fiery Hun, brutal Muscovite and from the Norman government – found a place where they might display – undisturbed – their real character which is absolutely democratic. Democracy could be considered as the destiny of the Saxon race.

This is not the case of Celtic race whose members accustomed to despotism inhabit Ireland, Wales, Scotland and France. This race is full of contradictions: "*Civilized man cannot sink lower than at Derrynane, but civilized man may, perhaps, proceed higher even than in Paris. But of this I am not quite sure. Beer-drinking, smoky London, with its vaults and gin-shops, its Vauxhalls and Cremornes, its single gay street, and splash of a short season, cannot be compared with Paris.*"¹³⁴ Robert Knox regarded Celts as the most warlike race on the globe:¹³⁵ "*War is the game for which the Celt is made.*"¹³⁶ Despite their grievous defeat in Napoleonic wars Celts are still the dominant race of the earth.¹³⁷

Robert Knox stressed that each race developed in a concrete environmental milieu and could not cross its own boundaries permanently. Therefore, Europeans cannot colonize a tropical country, because their racial nature could not adapt to local climatic conditions.¹³⁸ White races could conquer India or Central America militarily, using physical force, but they could not become a local inhabitant in the literal sense of the term: Nature

132) Knox 1862, 190.

133) Knox 1862, 374.

134) Knox 1862, 325.

135) Knox 1862, 297.

136) Knox 1862, 319.

137) Knox 1862, 321.

138) "*The Hindoos, then, are Englishmen, as the Corsicans are Frenchmen, and the Mauritanian inhabitants of northern Africa were called roman citizens! Human contrivances, to mystify, to job, to rob, to plunder. It is a portion of the organized hypocrisy which marks the statesman wherever he exists. France has never colonized Corsica, which remains in the hands of its primitive inhabitants; England has never colonized Ireland, three-fourth of which remains in the hands of its original Celtic inhabitants*" (Knox 1862, 309).

had not given it to them as their inheritance.¹³⁹ A real, native, permanent American, Australian or Caribbean race of pure Saxon blood could not be realized:¹⁴⁰ "*Travel to the Antilles, and see the European struggling with existence, a prey to fever and dysentery, unequal to all labour, wasted and wan, finally perishing, and becoming rapidly extinct as a race, but for the constant influx of fresh European blood. European inhabitants of Jamaica, of Cuba, of Hispaniola, and of the Windward and Leeward Isles, what progress have you made since your first establishment there? Can you say you are established? Cease importing fresh European blood, and watch the results.*"¹⁴¹

Despite his skepticism to prospects of Western imperial expansion Robert Knox anticipated the global war of race, "*which must continue whilst race exists, and war confined to no particular region, but extended over the earth. It has been sometimes called a war for conscience' sake – a religious war; at other times it blushes not to own its commercial character and origin; and at times the cross has been raised, and the extermination of the heathen loudly demanded. But after all, the basis is difference in race that key-stone to all human actions and human destinies*".¹⁴²

So-called colored races inhabiting America, Africa, Asia and Australia should lose such conflict with Saxons, Celts and Slaves (Sarmatians).¹⁴³ Especially the Saxon race will never tolerate them – never amalgamate – never let them at peace:

139) Knox 1862, 108. "*If we are to hold India, it can only be as military masters lording it over a slave population. It is the same with Jamaica, Cuba, even Brazil, tropical Africa, Madagascar, the northern coasts of Australia, and all the islands of the Indian ocean situated as Borneo, Sumatra, &c.*" (Knox 1862, 292).

140) Knox 1862, 51; "*Already the united states man differs in appearance from the European: the ladies early lose their teeth; in both sexes the adipose cellular cushion interposed between the skin and the aponeuroses and muscles disappears, or, at least, loses its adipose portion; the muscles become appear on the surface; symptoms of premature decay manifest themselves*" (Knox 1862, 73).

141) Knox 1862, 107.

142) Knox 1862, 348.

143) "*Whether doomed to destruction and extermination before the savage energy of the Saxon and Celt, the Russ and Slavonia, or protected by the unconquerable forest – the tropical forest; by the desert; by the jungle and fen, the bog and marsh; by the all-powerful tropical sun and snow-clad icy barriers of the arctic circle; or withering and so perishing before the as yet undiscovered laws of population, which unseen extinguishes the hopes of races and of nations, Mongol and Copt, American and Saxon, yet they may stand their ground during the present order of the material world, feebly contending against the stronger races for a corner of that earth, which we have been told was given to man as an inheritance*" (Knox 1862, 218–219).

“The hottest actual war ever carried on – the bloodiest of Napoleon’s campaigns – is not equal to that now waging between our descendants in America and the dark races; it is a war of extermination – inscribed on each banner is a death’s head and no surrender; one or other must fall.”¹⁴⁴

Robert Knox assumed that in the course of the final partition of the globe America would be conquered by Saxons, Asia would be dominated by Slaves (Sarmatians) and Africa could become Celtic.¹⁴⁵ Russian soldiers and Saxons from independent Australia (whose Anglo-Saxon inhabitants would throw off allegiance to England and set up for themselves) would probably dispute China (whose Mongolian race would perish) and Japan. The local Asian races would be supplanted by European masters and China and Japan would be converted into another Raj.¹⁴⁶ Russians would probably subjugate Tibet: “A single rail-road will do it; and with that rail, our power in Indostan ceases.”¹⁴⁷

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144) Knox 1862, 244–245.

145) Knox 1862, 293.

146) Knox 1862, 451.

147) Knox 1862, 363–364.

Miroslav Šedivý

Anton Prokesch von Osten: The Co-author of Austria’s Policy towards Egypt in Vormärz¹

Abstract

The primary goal of the paper is to explain the influence of the Austrian diplomat, Anton Prokesch von Osten, on Austria’s Near Eastern policy in Vormärz, in particular towards Egypt governed by the powerful pasha, Mohammed Ali, with whom Prokesch met several times and was impressed by his personality and reforms in the land on the Nile. Though Prokesch’s views were not always shared by Austrian Chancellor Metternich in the 1830s, Prokesch served him as a prominent adviser on Mohammed Ali and his political ambitions, and Prokesch also contributed by his knowledge of Egypt as well as his diplomatic skills to limit Mohammed Ali’s power and destroy Egypt as a local power in the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of the decade. The paper should contribute to the history of not only Austria’s diplomatic history but also the history of modern Egypt and its national rebirth in the 19th century.

Key words: Anton Prokesch von Osten, Egypt, Mohammed Ali, Africa, Ottoman Empire, Austria, Eastern Question, Egyptian Question

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