

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Because we honor everyone, this work is for everyone.

Religion

MACC is a place where all belong.

Diversity fuels the MACC spirit empowering people in our inclusive community.

We celebrate uniqueness of each individual, and multiple points of view.

Be who you are.

We like it that way.

“Map is not territory.”

All for ourselves, and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind. (A. Smith, 1776)

Historically, scholars, theologians, and states have used “religious studies” as a tool to measure, abstract, and manage other humans. To illustrate, let's look at “*Moral and Political Chart of the Known World*”, an incredibly dense map from 1845 by W. C. Woodbridge. Further, we will look at a colorized version along with a crop of the legend, the ideas behind it, an example from the eastern Cape, and end with a challenge to the imagination.



Fig 1: Colorized version of “Moral and Political Chart of the Known World”

When making a map, the maker has to make a series of small choices, each with a question and reason behind it, and each which shapes data for ideological reasons behind the purpose. Asking about what might have influenced those reasons and questions can tell us something about what was going on. And with that, let’s zoom in on the legend.

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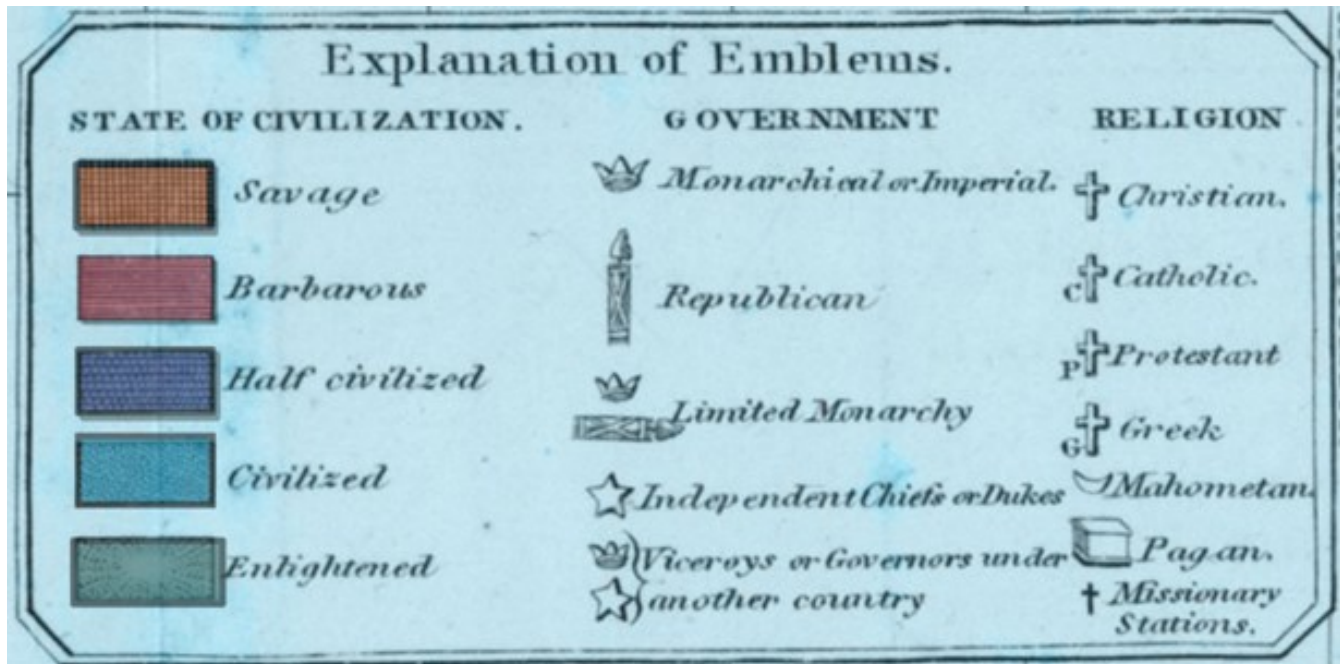


Fig 2: Crop of the legend. (Woodbridge, 1845)

Many questions come to mind here, but let's focus on why Woodbridge thought this was a *moral* map of the world---after all, the full name of the map is *Moral and Political Chart of the Inhabited World - Exhibiting the Prevailing Religion, Form of Government, Degree of Civilization, and Population of Each Country*. Quite the map of ambition. What is the deal with the clear ranking of degree of civilization and why are six religions represented, three of which are various forms of the same religion?

In the biz, these are called “hierarchies of exclusion,” and are made to fit together by sovereign powers. (Katz) On this map, Turgot's hierarchy of *social* forms is joined to Tiele's hierarchy of *religious* forms, which were formulated in part as a response to what's known as “the indigenous critique” of Europe. (J. Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious”; Wengrow and Graeber) The key bit here is that these forms were assumed by the professor, priest, and prince to be more or less natural or enculturated traits, rendering the peoples they encountered as in need of “saving” by means of North Atlantic approaches to religion and politics.

Ambassador Corner

My name is Steph Hills and I am excited to be a DEI ambassador because I get to be a part of helping all students feel welcome and supported at MACC. I believe that diversity, equity and inclusion for students is very important and I love having the opportunity to work with other students, as well as faculty and staff, that see the importance of DEI as well. I have the opinion that when all students are treated equally with respect and encouraged to be themselves, our educational experiences will be more positive and influence our lives both inside and outside of the classroom.

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If you are interested in how this worked, David Chidester's *Savage Systems* shows how the Dutch and English invaders denied --- but then discovered --- the very capacity for religion among the Xhosa-speaking peoples of the Cape of Africa several times. This intellectual warbling suspiciously mirrored how smoothly things were going for the occupiers at the time. (Chidester) More generally though, the "Masters of Mankind" Adam Smith warned us about have used similar reasoning to justify class, gender, racial, and other power imbalances, which have disastrously reformatted so much of the world since.

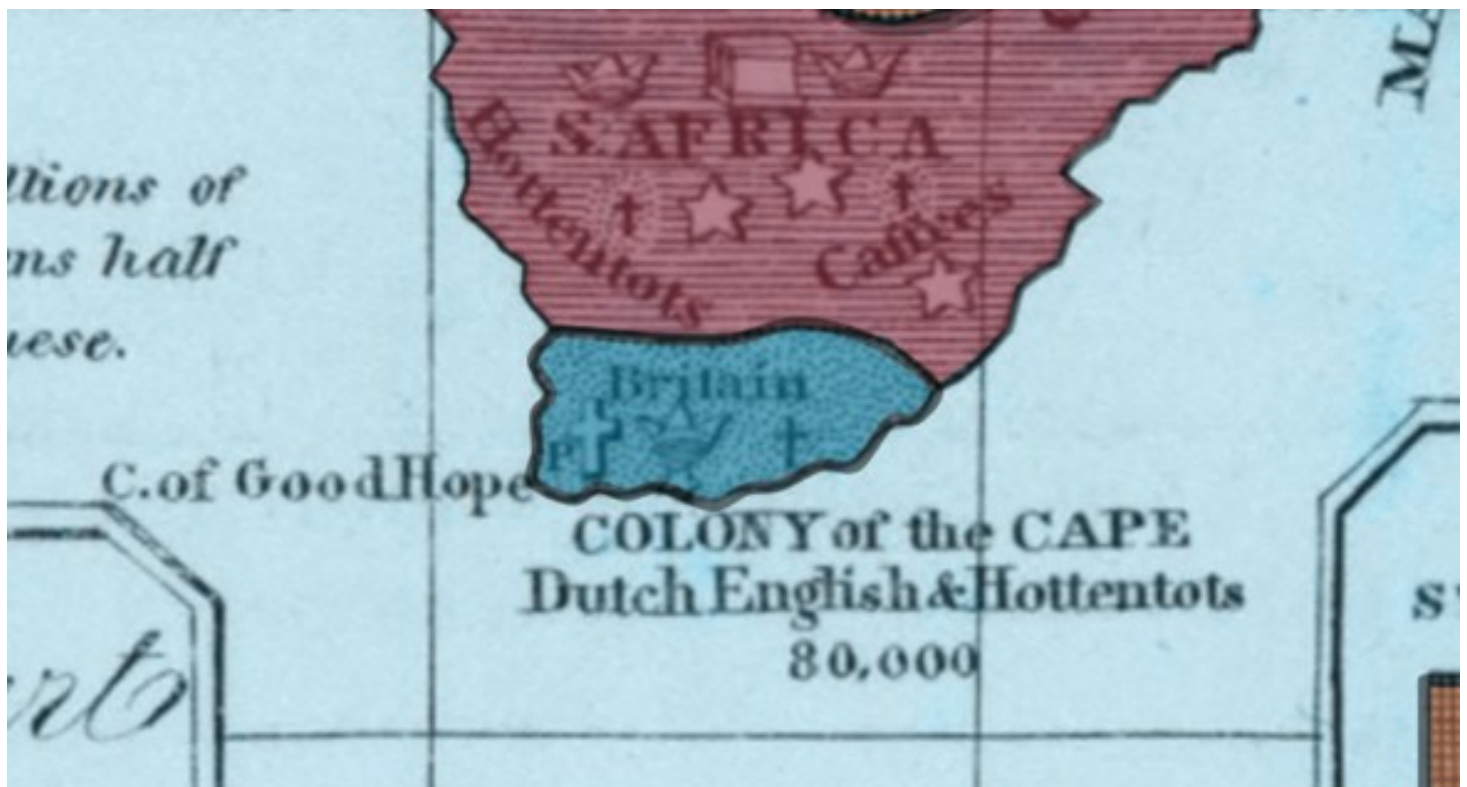


Figure 3: Crop of the Cape of Africa (Woodbridge, 1845)

With this in mind, we can see why scholars like Korzybski and J.Z. Smith are quick to point out that "map is not territory"! (Korzybski; J. Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory*) Maps sometimes show us a dark mirror of ourselves--Woodbridge's map certainly does for the North Atlantic study of religion. As someone trained within this tradition, it can be difficult to navigate and grapple with the complex history that helped set the stage for some of the challenges the world faces today. Having realized many of our prior base assumptions about hierarchies of humanity were just plain wrong, the discipline has been working through such assumptions in both theory and fieldwork.

Trying to describe a singular essence of religion doesn't seem possible. In fact, we can't even really define "religion" in *religious* studies! Rather than despair, this might actually *free* us to use religion as a *tool to understand* and talk *with* others about who they are and how they understand and act in the world. (J. Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious") Returning to our purposes, perhaps speaking in a similar spirit about *and with* religious others might create the circumstances that can lead to a more hopeful and understanding discussion in our classrooms. Religious studies has come a long way since Woodbridge, but there is still room for improvement. Perhaps we might even experience the social pleasures of getting to know one another along the way.

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If you'd like to read more, consider the following from MACC's library!

Bayyah, Abd Allah bin Mahfuz bin, et al. *Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI*. 2006.

Chidester, David. "Anchoring Religion in the World: A Southern African History of Comparative Religion." *Religion*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1996, pp. 141–59, <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1996.0012>.

Katz, Ethan B. "Shifting Hierarchies of Exclusion: Colonialism, Anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia in European History." *CrossCurrents*, vol. 65, no. 3, 2015, pp. 357–70. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10/grbfh5>.

Korzybski, Alfred. *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*. International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1933.

Mills, Charles W. *The Racial Contract*. Cornell University Press, 1997.

Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford University Press, 1988.

Smith, Adam. "Chapter IV: How the Commerce of the Towns Contributed to the Improvement of the Country." *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. III, W. Strahan and T. Cadell, London, 1776.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. University of Chicago Press, 1978.

---. "Religion, Religions, Religious." *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 269–84.

Suzie, By, et al. *All in God's Family: A Jewish Guide to Creating Allies for Our LGBT Families*. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources, 2014.

Wengrow, David, and David Graeber. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

Woodbridge, William C. *Moral and Political Chart of the Inhabited World - Exhibiting the Prevailing Religion, Form of Government, Degree of Civilization, and Population of Each Country*. 1845, <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:19343168>. PJ Mode Collection.