





**Fig. 1.** Page from *Harvest Scenes Around the World* depicting different forms of agricultural technology in use in Russia. Source: *Harvest Scenes Around the World*, Chicago: International Harvester Company of America, 1913.

mechanized farming technology, some considered less so, and some used to represent a past time, suggests that IH was a participant in what scholars have argued was a dominant mode of geo-economic imaginings in the early 20th century (Cowen & Smith, 2009; Domosh, 2013; Massey, 2005; McClintock, 2013; Sparke, 1998, 2007). This vision characterized the world view of many U.S. economic elites, who believed that every nation and all peoples could be made “modern” through the purchase of American commodities; all potentially equal through commercial development (Domosh, 2006).<sup>1</sup> This form of flexible racism represents a shift in the U.S. from a fixed, biological understanding of race, to a more flexible, sociological or economic understanding of race (Schulten, 2001). In their brief introduction to the section on Asia, the IH authors put this notion into words: “Modern methods and machines have not yet been introduced to any measureable extent, and as soon as they are, India will become a considerable factor in commerce. It may be interesting to note in passing that the first blast furnace in India has just begun operations, and steel rails are now being introduced... Asia will inevitably become a large market for American and European manufactures” (International Harvester Corporation, 1913). Mechanization, in other words, is in the process of transforming India into a modern nation just as it had transformed the United States, and American products are both signs of that transformation and the results of it.

This notion of flexible racism – of “difference” being transformed through the power of commodities – also seemed to characterize IH’s perspectives on some of its domestic customers. Although the American South is given very short shrift in this pamphlet, in other ways, this American region figured prominently in the company’s “service” activities. For example, Fig. 3 is part of a large set of photographs taken by employees of the company on their travels through the American South as part of their agricultural extension work. This particular image, taken in Enon, Alabama in February of 1915, could be read as depicting a scene even more

“primitive” than the one of Egypt; suggesting as it does that women and children are working in the fields using a labor-intensive, ox-driven walking plow. Alabama is being presented, in other words, as if it was a primitive and undeveloped region of the world. The original caption for the photo makes the point clear: “This picture was not taken in Egypt not India nor Africa but in Alabama near Enon and shows the primitive methods still in use among the miserably poor colored people of the south.” The domestic, or at least a part of it, is being imagined through the lens of the international. International Harvester, one of the largest international corporations in the United States (Carstensen, 1984; Domosh, 2006; Rosenberg, 2011), was seemingly engaged in producing and reproducing a set of complex geography lessons about the power of technology to transform the “primitive” into the “modern” in the “undeveloped” regions of Egypt and Alabama. On the eve of America’s ascendancy as a global economic power, IH and other major American corporations were envisioning the international as an extension of the national (and certainly not as its opposite (see Anderson, 2002; Malkki, 1994)) and were beginning to develop practices of intervention (this, of course, in addition to their comprehensive national and international sales practices) within the frame of the nation that would serve as a practicing ground for their later overseas interventions.

As Neil Smith has argued, this “global manifest destiny” – the notion that the economic expansion of American corporations would continue unabated beyond U.S. borders – was at the center of the liberal internationalism espoused by Woodrow Wilson and fellow foreign policy advisors (Smith, 2003). It was a notion, according to Smith, that characterized the first pivotal moment in the making of an American empire in the 20th century; a vision that saw foreign economic expansion as the “fruition” of the long 19th century extension of corporate power within the space defined as the nation. It was also a vision that shaped the second pivotal moment in the making of the American empire, the postwar/cold

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