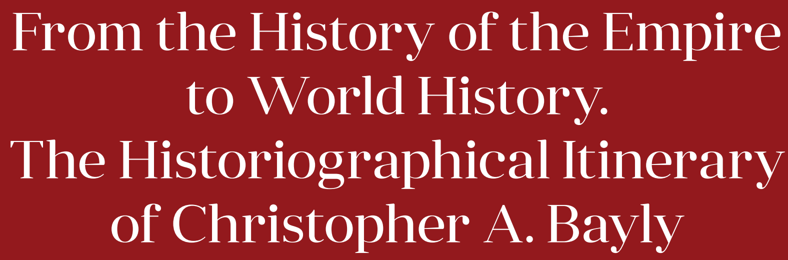

From the History of the Empire to World History. The Historiographical Itinerary of Christopher A. Bayly

Edited by Maurizio Griffo and Teodoro Tagliaferri

Federico II University Press

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On the front cover: Embroidered Map Shawl of Srinagar, Kashmir (detail).

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Foreword

This volume collects the proceedings of an international conference on the historical work of Christopher Bayly, held in Naples on 10 March 2016 by the joint initiative of the Departments of Political Sciences and Humanities of the Federico II University ("From the History of the Empire to World History: The Historiographical Itinerary of C.A. Bayly").[1] At less than one year from his untimely death, the convenors intended to promote a first survey of the rich and complex scientific legacy of the English historian, calling on a group of specialists in the several disciplinary areas in which Bayly distinguished himself to collaborate on this challenging and necessarily multifarious task. The conference did not pretend to cover the whole of Bayly's many-sided work, but, more realistically, it aimed to offer a general outline of his intellectual achievement by focusing on his foremost contributions to the different scholarly fields in which he pioneered innovative approaches throughout his academic career.[2] The resulting map is far from exhaustive, but the papers published in this volume provide an almost complete account (the most relevant exceptions being *Forgotten Armies* and *Forgotten Wars*, the diptych on the collapse of the English domination in Asia written by Bayly with Tim Harper, and the posthumous *Remaking the Modern World, 1900-2015*, that appeared in 2018) of the extraordinary sequence of great books by which he made repeated breakthroughs, over a period of five decades, on some of the most advanced research fronts of international historiography: the

[1] A shortened Italian version was published in *Passato e presente. Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 35 (2017), no. 100: 97-130.

[2] For a brief overview of Bayly's intellectual biography see C.A. Bayly, "Historiographical and Autobiographical Note", in idem, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia. Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 307-322, and C. Clark, S. Bayly, "Christopher Bayly and the Making of World History," in C.A. Bayly, *Remaking the Modern World, 1900-2015: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), xiii-xviii, which are now complemented by the bibliography annexed to the present volume (below, 149-160).

local roots of the Indian nationalist movement, the transition from pre-colonial to colonial India and the role of indigenous society in the establishment of European domination in the subcontinent, the nature and limits of colonial power, the rise of the Second British Empire, the history of globalization and the nineteenth-century turn towards planetary modernity, the transregional development of nationalism and liberalism.

The contributors do not give an univocal reading of the texts they analyze, but diverge at times also with respect to Bayly's interpretation of central historical issues (i.e. the forms and ways of European expansion in Asia, the coexistence between Hindus and Muslims in the Mughal and in the colonial ages, the essential character and periodization of modern and contemporary world history). Such differences not only enrich the discussion, but confirm the multifacetedness and fecundity of his work. The common aim of the participants in the Neapolitan meeting, however, was to highlight the stages of the path through which Bayly emerged, by virtue of the success achieved with *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, as a key figure in the contemporary revival of world history.[3] As already pointed out by previous authors,[4] the most immediate intellectual premise of Bayly's approach to the long nineteenth century has to be identified in a proposal of conceptualization of the history of globalization he had advanced in the early 2000s. On the other hand, the categorical apparatus adopted by Bayly, who was inclined to define the 'global' as a specific geohistorical space generated by the dynamic interaction between large regional societies, besides testifying to his substantial agreement with coeval developments in the North American New World History movement, reflected changes that had been affecting for a long time his original area of specialization —British colonial history—, whose post-decolonization practitioners have shown a marked propensity to consider the Empire as a particular network of interregional connections.[5]

[3] In 2016, in recognition of his outstanding services to global history, Bayly was posthumously awarded the Toynbee Prize conferred by the Foundation of the same name affiliated to the American Historical Association since 2010 (http://toynbeeprize.org/toynbee-prize/sir-christopher-bayly-named-2016-toynbee-prize-winner/).

[4] B. Bongiovanni, T. Detti, and P. Ginsborg, "L'alba di una globalizzazione imperfetta," edited by B. Bongiovanni, *Passato e presente*, 27 (2009), no. 1: 11-29.

[5] T. Tagliaferri, "L'espansione europea nella prospettiva della nuova storia globale," *Il mestiere di storico*, 11 (2019), no. 1: 5-26.

The following pages show, first of all, through which thematic, conceptual and documentary options Bayly contributed to the reorientation of the imperial and 'European expansion' studies. The historiographical path that emerges appears to be characterized by a growing complexity of the object investigated, by a progressive enlargement of its spatial and chronological boundaries. In this way, Bayly developed the conviction that only world history offered an analytical context suitable for the reconstruction of the vicissitudes of an expanded, composite imperial system as ubiquitous as the British one. The road to a more direct engagement with world history was neither short nor predetermined. The results of the Neapolitan conference make it clearer, we hope, the fundamental assumptions on the basis of which Bayly took this further momentous step.

The seven essays collected here can be classified in two general categories that also summarize a chronological development in Bayly's research work. To begin with, there are the essays concerned with the Indian, imperial and colonial history; secondly, the contributions devoted to world history. As is known, though, there is not a clear-cut division between the subjects that are closely interwoven. In other words, the historiographical path followed by Bayly never supersedes the original themes, but has extended them and developed them into a wider frame.

The essay by Maurizio Griffo ("The British Roots of Indian Politics: Bayly and the Cambridge School") studies the first works of Bayly, dedicated to the emergence of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bayly's approach to Indian nationalism came in the wake of the so-called Cambridge School. This historiographical orientation aimed to show that Indian nationalism was not an idealistic aspiration to independence and self-government, but was more easily understandable as a selfish commitment to place and office. From this angle, the Indian nationalistic movement had not to be studied according to its ideological profile but according to the utilitaristic rationale of its promoters. These were not indomitable rebels, but were in some way connected with the colonial power. The first essays by Bayly and his first book, which derive from his PhD thesis, deal with the political and social evolution of the town of Allahabad and its surroundings from 1880 to 1920. Bayly's narrative is in full accord with the tenets of the Cambridge School. The British domination in India is sustained by the active involvement of Indian collaborators. However, the need to rationalize the efficiency of the administrative machine from the 1880s onwards imposed on the British the need to give the indigenous collaborators spheres of influence (in local courts, municipalities, universities). So, the collaborators slowly acquired niches of patronage and power that, in the long run,

eroded the foundations of British dominion. Nevertheless, Bayly' s analysis also gives some credit to the national ideology. In the conclusion of his first book, Bayly underlines the fact that the Congress, from the mid-1920s onwards, was able to represent the aspirations and hopes of large sectors of Indian society, building on the foundations of the mass movement campaigns the identity of Indian nationalism.

The contribution by Michelguglielmo Torri ("India from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era: The Shaping of the Indian Middle Class and the Roots of Communalism. Thinking Back on Bayly's *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*") concentrates on Bayly's subsequent step into the field of Indian colonial history—i.e. *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, the influential and seminal work published in 1983 which consolidated Bayly's reputation as a first class scholar in the field of colonial India history. Bayly's book analyses northern Indian society in the first century of the British expansion. Torri's wide-ranging and accurate essay is divided into two different sections: a long and analytical summary of the book, followed by a critical discussion of the achievements of Bayly's research. The long summary of the text is justified because Bayly's book is a dense work based on a very wide range of unpublished sources. It is a work that, as has been noted by some commentators, weaves together the subjects of two or three books.

In particular, notes Torri, there are two insights that Bayly's research gives us. First of all, from his reconstruction, the fact emerges that the time preceding the British conquest of India was not a phase of decline and military anarchy. On the contrary, the crisis of the Mughal Empire saw the emergence of dynamic successor states able to ensure a flourishing economy. Secondly, the English historian makes it clear that, in the period between 1830 and 1850, the East India Company not only did not promote action to modernize the Indian subcontinent, but instead fuelled a very serious economic crisis—a crisis which is at the root of the Great Revolt of 1857. If these major heuristic insights of Bayly's study profoundly revolutionize our knowledge of the history of India across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, according to Torri, his investigation neglects some other essential factors for understanding the nature of British colonial domination.

Torri stresses in particular that Bayly, in describing the manner in which the East India Company acquired its dominion over the Indian peninsula, neglects the role of violence and assumes therefore an interpretative perspective that cuts out an essential aspect. In fact, without considering the British military superiority, it is not even clear why some of the most dynamic sectors of Indian society

sided with the conquerors. In other words, in Torri's opinion, the social groups which collaborated with the British were not free to choose the best ally, but were forced to collaborate because they had no alternative. In a substantially similar manner, Bayly, describing the evolution of Indian society in the nineteenth century, does not dwell on the famine that struck Indian society or on the low efficiency shown in that situation by British administrators, an attitude, underlines Torri, which is revealing of the nature of colonial rule.

A final critical survey is carried out regarding the emergence of the Indo-Muslim conflict. In Bayly's reconstruction, incidents of intercommunal violence have been recorded frequently since the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Torri, this is an insufficiently reasoned statement, which backdates a phenomenon that fully manifested itself only in the twentieth century. It is an affirmation that Bayly himself, in later interventions, will tend to attenuate.

The theme of the collaborators, faced from another perspective, is also at the centre of the contribution of Guido Abbattista ("Information, Communication and Knowledge in the Government of Empire") who examines *Empire and Information*, published by Bayly in 1996. The British historian's research in this case addresses an aspect usually neglected by historiography. Colonial rule was based on a dense network of informers, mediators, messengers and spies who provided useful information to connect the Indian reality as a whole. This knowledge process is defined by Bayly as "orientalism in action"—a controversial definition that reiterates how, in colonial domination, there was an interaction with Indian society and, above all, an active role of the colonized. A large score of informers also existed in the Mughal Empire: the British inherited it and perfected it in a sofisticate informative network that saw a strong mix of colonial power and local elites. This system of relationship/knowledge went into crisis with the rebellion of 1857, which reveals its lack of functionality and, above all, the destabilizing nature of that way of interaction with Indian society.

Teodoro Tagliaferri's essay ("Bayly's Imperial Way to World History") focuses on *Imperial Meridian*, a book published in 1989, where Bayly reconceptualizes the notion of imperial history and sets the premises for making it converge with global history.

The periodization of *Imperial Meridian* covers the fifty years following the American War of Independence, a pivotal age when the British reorganized their imperial system, and a periodization that will be resumed, more than a decade later, in *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*. Moreover, prefiguring a global historical approach, the reconstruction carried out in *Imperial Meridian* unites

a geographical area that goes from North Africa to Indonesia, where the lines of development show significant affinities, characterized by important developments in the process of state-building and the growth of an articulated social structure. However, the analogies of development that Bayly identifies cannot hidden the differences in power and evolution between Eastern and European societies.

Another noteworthy aspect of the 1989 book is the full inclusion into the field of colonial history of the political and social events in the motherland. The impulse for the reorganization of the empire was motivated not so much by the industrial development as by the political events of the period—first of all, the crisis that led to the independence of the thirteen American colonies and, subsequently, the development of the French Revolution and the emergence of Bonapartism. The British reorganization resulted in a re-legitimization of the empire and in the creation of what is called a constructive conservatism, an original mix of power politics and paternalism. In its non-European projection, the renewed imperial impulse did not crush the subject populations, but produced a fruitful hybridization in which locals actively participated.

The contribution of Maurizio Isabella ("Liberalism and Globalization") examines the volume published in 2011 that Bayly dedicated to Indian thought in the liberal age (*Recovering Liberties*). Compared to other syntheses on the subject of liberalism, Bayly does not favour the coherence of conceptual construction, but wants to draw attention to the way in which some key political ideas related to political balance are carried out in a different context. In particular, what he is interested in highlighting is that, in the reception of liberal ideas, the focus is on the way in which those ideas are reinterpreted and adapted to meet the political needs, more than on fidelity to texts. In this perspective, classic liberal authors, such as Benjamin Constant or John Stuart Mill, are less important than heterodox authors such as Giuseppe Mazzini or Auguste Comte. More ingeniously, Bayly's analysis seeks to underline how the differences between European and non-European political cultures are not so marked, because they share some common tenets such as an aversion to tyranny and the preference for a government based on consensus.

Marco Meriggi's contribution ("The Local and the Global: Bayly's *Birth of the Modern World*") examines probably the best known of Bayly's works. Meriggi observes that the book covers what is commonly termed the long nineteenth century, but does it with a larger span and a more polycentric approach than had been done in works of synthesis written previously by other historians. It offers a

more comprehensive approach which justifies the definition of global history, an approach that is linked to Bayly's previous study experience, because the fabric of the world historian is built on the foundations of the historian of colonial India and the British Empire. In Bayly's narrative, there is a fruitful and significant historical dialectic between the global and the local. The spur for the global comes from the Western world—above all from Europe, and mostly from Great Britain and the British Empire. But the local is not a passive object of dominion: instead it reacts actively in a creative way. In other words, Bayly's global world is not only polycentric, but also polymorphic. Bayly's enhancement of the peripheral areas follows a definite axiological trend. Indeed, Meriggi notes that the British historian is more interested to study how non-European countries absorb the Western influence than to study how they rebel against colonial dominion. This approach is a creative evolution of the theme of the collaborators as a key to understanding the British penetration in India, adapted to the new dimension of global history. More problematic, according by Meriggi, is the idea of a kind of republican ecumene that Bayly singles out as a common feature of different countries, a generalisation that, in Meriggi's opinion, disregards the undeniable and essential diversities of the various local contexts.

Laura Di Fiore ("The Origins of Indian Nationalism") analyses *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*, a book published in 1998 that collects the Radhakrishnan Memorial Lectures delivered at Oxford University in 1996 and several essays published in the previous fifteen years. Notwithstanding its miscellaneous origin, the book presents a strong unity. Its focus is on Indian nationalism, which Bayly reconsiders from a wider perspective than in previous works. Summarizing several decades of research work, the British historian argues against modernist interpretations of Indian nationalism, as expressed by scholars like Guha, Nandy or Chatterjee, who consider Indian nationalism a by-product of British imperialism. For Bayly, Indian nationalism is not an imported product but has an autochthonous origin predating the establishment of colonial domination.

At least from the seventeenth century onward, according to Bayly, it was possible to detect in India a loyalty towards the regional native country, a feeling which is not far from that we find in Europe in the same period; but, in the subcontinent, it is possible also to detect a wider sense of belonging. In the Mughal period, promoted especially by Akbar, grows what Bayly calls an imperial patriotism. Last but not least, it is necessary to consider, too, what the British historian calls the Indian ecumene—i.e. the existence of a wider community, perceived by the people dwelling in the different parts of the subcontinent as in

some way unitary. On this background is grafted the later ideological nationalism of the struggles for independence. So Indian nationalism, far from being a cultural imposition of the colonial power, is understood as the outcome of a complex historical process—as a movement wherein the indigenous population is not confined to a secondary role, but acts as a protagonist.

In conclusion, if the essays collected here do not amount to an organic and integral profile, they can provide the materials from which to draw some general guidelines useful for understanding Bayly's itinerary. Beginning with researches on colonial India, his investigation expanded first to the whole of British Empire and then to a world history aimed at reconsidering historical events, phenomena and processes in terms of their global connectedness. Bayly's was not a linear path: each new field of inquiry did not cancel but rather enriched and made more complex the previous levels. The joint efforts of the scholars contributing to this volume make it possible to catch sight of an important red thread that seems to run throughout his work, linking the methodology employed in *The Birth of Modern World* with the strategies he put in place to unravel the complexities of the 'global imperial'. This leitmotif consists in the heuristic prominence granted by Bayly to various types of elites placed at crucial junctions of the economic, political and cultural flows of ecumenical relevance, which he continued to regard as the chief actors in the play of asymmetric interactions between regional histories that gave shape to the common past of contemporary world society.

M.G.
T.T.

1

MAURIZIO GRIFFO

The British Roots of Indian Politics: Bayly and the Cambridge School

1. *Indian Nationalism according to the Cambridge School*

For those who are not familiar with colonial India studies, it is hard to understand how charismatic and influential Bayly was. In this case, a personal memory might be more useful than a bibliographical review. In the summer of 1994, I happened to see Bayly in the archive at the India Office in London.[1] That August morning, a veritable procession had taken place—at least five, six people, both British and Indian scholars, suspended the perusal of their documents and spent some time greeting him, talking to him, inviting him for a coffee at the archive bar. That sustained and spontaneous tribute was a definitive demonstration of the kind of authority he was in the field of subcontinental history, but a trusted rather than an intimidating one.[2]

At that time, Bayly was not yet a world history mentor, but his Indian studies path was already twenty years old. His first works were about colonial India: two articles and a book, which was a corrected and widened version of his PhD

[1] At the time, the new location of the British Library was not yet open, and the Indian administration's archive was allocated in a detached site in Blackfriars Road.

[2] Bayly's dialogic and maieutic solicitation skills towards other scholars, especially the young ones, were unanimously acknowledged. See the obituaries in the British press: R. Drayton, *Sir Christopher Bayly Obituary*, http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/23/sir-christopher-bayly; *Professor Sir Christopher Bayly, Historian – Obituary*, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11558389/Professor-Sir-Christopher-Bayly-historian-obituary. See also David Armitage's words reported by Paul Lay in his obituary in *History Today*, 13th May 2015, online edition, http://www.historytoday.com/paul-lay/christopher-bayly-1945-2015.

thesis.[3] More precisely, these studies were researches into the origins and development of Indian nationalism. Bayly had not started these studies on his own: they were part of a research programme where many other scholars, PhD students and young researchers were involved, all willing to give new life to that field. Bayly was, as a matter of fact, a non-organic member of what later would be called the Cambridge School.[4]

The kind of researches promoted by that group have influenced the interpretation of Indian nationalism and, at the same time, shed a different light on the classic version of the related facts, causing numerous controversies and historiographic fine-tunings. The main accusation, coming especially from the Indian historians, was that they practised a neo-imperialist historiography, simply reiterating in a more sophisticated way the old English colonisers' motivations for occupying India.[5]

At least for some decades, the commitment to the Indian independence movement had meant confrontation with the texts of the Cambridge School as a bibliographic imperative, which also meant being for or against its heuristic approach. Here we will not analyse its origins, related to African studies or other interest-

[3] The PhD thesis is *The Development of Political Organization in the Allahabad Locality, 1880-1925* (University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1970). The two articles: "Local Control in Indian Towns. The Case of Allahabad, 1880-1920," *Modern Asian Studies*, 5 (1971), no. 4: 289-311; idem, "Patrons and Politics in Northern India," *Modern Asian Studies* 7 (1973), no. 3: 349-388. The book: *The Local Roots of Indian Politics. Allahabad 1880-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). Part of the work that had been excluded from the 1975 volume was published only many years after: C.A. Bayly, "Rural Conflict and the Roots of Indian Nationalism: Allahabad District since 1800," in *The Indian National Congress and Indian Society, 1885-1985: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Dominance*, edited by P.R. Brass and F. Robinson (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1987), 219-241.

[4] Compared to other scholars in that group, Bayly's position can be described as excentric, as he had studied at Oxford. The author gives many details about the choice of his PhD thesis topic in C.A. Bayly, "Epilogue: Historiographic and Autobiographical Note," in idem, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia. Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 310-313. About Bayly's excentricity compared to the Cambridge School, see A. Ganachari, "Studies in Indian Historiography: 'The Cambridge School'", *Indica*, 47 (2010), no. 1: 70-93, 79. Dipesh Chakrabarty believes that Bayly has never been part of the Cambridge School, a judgement that is, however, expressed in relation to the whole of his historical production and not just his first writings. See "Reading (the) Late Chris Bayly: A Personal Tribute," *South Asia History and Culture* 7 (2016), no. 1: 1-6, 2.

[5] See T. Raychaudhuri, "Indian Nationalism as Animal Politics," *The Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), no. 3: 747-763; C. S. [Colin de Souza], "New Garb of Imperialistic Historiography," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9, nos. 45-46 (9 November 1974): 1897-1898.

ing aspects like the Oxfordian roots, but we will mention some fundamentals: the Cambridge interpretation, contrary to contemporary fashion, had researched Indian nationalism not starting from its ideology or doctrine, but trying to understand its role in the development of the Indian society. For the Cambridge School the analyses of the social relationships, deriving networks and patronage of India at the time are far more relevant to this topic than the ideological matrix and the cultural suggestions of nationalism. The approach has been defined by some scholars as Namierite, because it interpreted the political life of India, in the pre-independence phase, with categories similar to those used by Lewis B. Namier to analyse the political events of eighteenth-century England.[6]

In general, one should always bear in mind that the Cambridge School reused, through modern social analysis, the concept of collaborators referring to the colonial expansion in Africa, meaning that the English domination in India had become so deep and strong thanks to the cooperation of some natives, who had benefited from the British presence in Southern Asia. Understanding how that happened and why those relationships ultimately failed was the key to the knowledge of the growth and development of Indian nationalism.

This historiographic background is fundamental in order to evaluate Bayly's first researches, as it gives the measure of his personal judgement in the context of a strongly standardized historical interpretation. The accusation of neo-imperialism directed towards the Cambridge School finds an extra explanation in the expository style of its members. The patronage system characterizing Indian political life was not only described through reconstruction of the relationships among notables, associations and groups, but also through the use of sarcasm and unflattering comparisons.[7] These formal aspects are sometimes to be found

[6] On this topic, see H. Spodek, "Pluralist Politics in British India. The Cambridge Cluster of Historians of Modern India," *The American Historical Review*, 84 (1979), 3: 688-707, 692. As underlined by Sarvepalli Gopal, "Namier was accused of taking the mind out of politics; this school has gone further and taken not only the mind but decency, character, integrity and selfless commitment out of the Indian national movement": review of *South India. Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, by C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook (Delhi: Macmillan, 1975), *The Politics of South India, 1920-1937*, by C. Baker (Delhi: Vikas, 1976), *The Emergence of Provincial Politics, 1880-1920*, by D.A. Washbrook (Delhi: Vikas, 1977), *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 14 (1977), no. 3: 405-411, 405.

[7] This stylistic perspective is underlined in M. Torri, "Colonialismo e nazionalismo in India: il modello interpretativo della Scuola di Cambridge," in idem, *Regime coloniale, intellettuali e notabili in India. Politica e società nell'era del nazionalismo* (Milan: Angeli, 1996), 51.

in Bayly himself, when he describes, for example, the attitude of the Indian moderates during the extremist turmoil against the division of Bengal: they "were not united so much by reverence for Bagehot and Mill, as by success and status".[8] Later, while writing about the bland enthusiasm of Allahabad politicians for the sabotage of the brand new provincial councils, he also compared two Muslim politicians to the characters in one of Aristophanes' comedies (*The Knights*), wherein there was strong disapproval of the demagogy of Athenian political life.[9] This classical tone also emerges when Bayly briefly but significantly compares Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi. The former, though better mastering the English language and the procedural techniques of the Imperial Council, was the result "of a true Brahminical upbringing" that was "out of range of European experience", while he had found in Gandhi, with his loincloth and ascetic spirituality, "a character more deeply impregnated with western values".[10] In a few lines a double picture emerges, expressing the variety of Indian nationalism through the comparison of two outstanding personalities—some kind of miniature Plutarch at the service of historical and social analysis.

2. *Allahabad: General History from a Local Point of View*

As mentioned above, the Cambridge School—because of its anti-doctrinal approach, focused on the social connections in Indian political life—had devalued nationalism by breaking it up in a multitude of local cases. In general, though, this is not completely true, as a number of its researches can be defined as pan-Indian and their main focus is still the analysis of nationalism in its historical and social aspects.

However, this is far less true in relation to Bayly's first essays. They were presented like studies of a local case aimed at understanding Indian nationalism from a specific point of view. This aim can also be read in the volume preface, where it is said that: "this book is history from a local standpoint rather than a local history", meaning that its ultimate goal was to describe Indian political life

[8] Bayly, *The Local Roots*, 186.
[9] Ibid., 259.
[10] Ibid., 216-217.

between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries "in the context of local political systems and men of local influence".[11] In the same way, upon looking at Bayly's very first essay, published in 1971, one will not fail to note that the English historian was already talking about "some general suggestion about the changing patterns of non-official influence in northern Indian cities", specifying that, even though the majority of the examined materials were about the city of Allahabad, his conclusions were subject to much broader generalization, always taking into account the "contest of varying urban societies and different periods of time".[12] This pan-Indian perspective was already implicit in the choice of subject: Allahabad is the city of the Nehrus, Motilal and Jawaharlal, the residence of one of the most influential families of the national Indian movement and the birthplace of the first premier of independent India, the man who had a key role in the new state and in strengthening its internal politics and international relations.

Bayly looks at the history of the whole subcontinent from a specific point of view throughout his analysis, never forgetting its national character, which is why, in the summary of his book, he restates, going back to his first article, that the lens adopted for the capital of the United Provinces can be also applied to other regions, not only in Northern India, but also, with some amendments, to the South and the West of the subcontinent.[13]

Moreover, the attention to the pan-Indian dimension transpires from the whole analysis carried out by the author. An illuminating example can be traced in the conclusion of the eighth chapter, the one about the radicalization he had seen in the period between 1909 and 1918, which he had identified on the basis of two events: the so-called Minto–Morley reforms in 1909, introducing the separate electorate for Muslims and increasing the authority of the provincial councils, and the end of the Great War, when the social energies which had been constricted during the conflict were released. As a conclusion, Bayly recalls an opinion about Indian politics expressed in 1910 by Harcourt Butler, member of the Indian Civil Service, who worked in the United Provinces at the time and would later become General Lieutenant and then Governor of the United Provinces. In a note, Butler had expressed a positive judgement on the 1909 reforms because, in his opinion, by extending the electoral base, they had limited the

[11] Ibid., vii.

[12] Bayly, *Local Control in Indian Towns*, 289.

[13] Bayly, *The Local Roots*, 275-278.

power of the Westernized Indians and, thanks to the separate electorates, had increased the social antagonisms diluting "nationalism in provincial and local sentiment". Butler's optimism, says Bayly, would have been contradicted by the subsequent evolution, as in a few years India had to face a political crisis which had originated from those very 1909 reforms. Widening the constituency, the reforms had actually highlighted the centrifugal inclination of the local communities and had "released younger men, radicals, and local dissents from the control of existing intermediaries".[14]

As a consequence of the war and of the turmoil of the Home Rule movement, "important changes had taken place which were to shift the balance of local control decisively against the colonial government". Concluding his analysis, Bayly recalls a passage in Butler's note where the non-political character of the Indian society is underlined, as there are, actually, only two parties, "the party for the Government which is always in power, and the party against it, which is always in opposition". Implicitly agreeing with the social analysis of the British functionary, Bayly observes Butler's lack of political foresight, though, as, a few years after, "progressive professional men"—often related to the Congress—"were rapidly becoming 'the party in power' at the local level of politics".[15]

As we can see, this analysis, focused on the provincial reality, actually describes the whole subcontinental situation. Starting from this point, it is possible to arrive at two considerations. First of all, the idea of a power shift dislocating the British domination in India can also be found in another monograph by the Cambridge School, though in reference to another period of time. In Brian R. Tomlinson's book, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj,* published one year after Bayly's monograph, one can read that the crucial turning point—when the main features of the Indian political system and those related to the post-independence phase were established—was actually the moment of the elections for the Provincial Councils in 1937, as it represented the opportunity for some of the local parties' personalities, or for some Government-aligned movements, to face a transformation and converge on the Congress.[16] From that moment on, the

[14] Ibid., 243.
[15] Ibid., 243-244.
[16] See B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929-1942. The Penultimate Phase* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 75-85.

Congress became the main interlocutor for the different parts of Indian society, inevitably prefiguring 'the party in power' of the future.

A second consideration regards what kinds of source Bayly refers to. As already mentioned, one criticism levelled at the Cambridge School has been that it reiterated, in a new guise, the thesis of the scarce cohesion and the endemic conflict of Indian society, advanced by the British administrators as a justification of English domination in South Asia. Nevertheless, Bayly uses a British functionary's analysis in order to somehow reverse its meaning. Generally speaking, one should bear in mind that the British civilians had a deep knowledge of Indian society and often produced shrewd analyses which is worth examining in depth. Often colonial India history scholars have in their background roots in the British presence in the subcontinent. In other words, there is a sort of continuity in the researches about colonial India, which also have a biographical root for British scholars: some members of the Indian Civil Service became historians of India after the end of the Empire, such as Penderel Moon; some others, like Hugh Tinker, started on that path after winning the last competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service in 1942, not being able to start their service. Be that as it may, Bayly's approach has nothing to do with the nationalist rhetoric of the generous adhesion of Indian political personalities to the mass campaigns; he tries instead to attribute the success of the campaigns to a specious adhesion driven by a utilitarian rationale.

The Great War represents a critical turning point for the British domination, as it highlights uncontrollable drives already existing in the Indian society. Nevertheless, the crisis in Allahabad did not find a natural resolution in the first Gandhian disobedience campaign in 1919, which, on the contrary, saw little success in the capital of the United Provinces.

A veteran of the campaigns against the partition of Bengal a decade before was at that time ruling the Satyagraha Sabha in Allahabad, and the Sabha had not received the endorsement of the Congress and the local Home Rule league, both represented by Motilal Nehru. The boycott of the new provincial councils was also not that successful, as "the demands of provincial and local representation and patronage were still to outweigh the advantages of a general political movement".[17] Only the subsequent turmoil of the caliphate turned into a small success in the capital city of the United Provinces. The Non-Cooperation Move-

[17] Bayly, *The Local Roots*, 261.

ment represented a breakthrough which Bayly describes as fundamental, as, in spite of “the cautious response of Allahabad’s political leaders” to Gandhi’s appeal, not only was “the surge of popular feeling which they unleashed” to be taken into account, but two other consequences of that event also turned out to be extremely significant. First of all, the movement affected the relationship between the Indian leadership, mainly consisting of those who used to be British collaborators, and the colonial Government. With the mass campaign, “a potent political myth of national struggle and sacrifice” had been created, which would have “formed the background to all contacts between the British and the Indian leaders thereafter”.[18] After that date, it would no longer have been possible for the British Government in India to find a balanced controlling position like in the past, maybe through specific concessions and some kind of well-aimed openings about particular matters.

The second consequence is not less significant, though, and it comes, in Bayly’s opinion, directly from the Non-Cooperation Movement. In that political phase, the Congress had no rivals to question its role as a collector of Indian national aspirations. This way, “it retained the monopoly on national aspiration and the articulation of dissidence which it had established in the 1880s”, a result which not only reflected the actual situation, but also came from the ability to keep different leanings together. In this phase, indeed, the Congress “had shifted decisively towards an inclusive populist idiom”,[19] so the traditional constituency of administrators and merchants had come together with the working class, some radical activists and the supporters of the caliphate. This supremacy of the Congress would not have gone to waste as, even after the crisis of the first Gandhian turmoil, the Congress would have kept an ideal and practical hegemony in the political life of the subcontinent, a conclusion which widened the problematic horizon sketched in Bayly’s first two essays.[20]

[18] Ibid., 270.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Both in the 1971 essay and in the one of two years later, Bayly focused his attention more on the relationships between the local leaders with the colonial Government than on the ability of the Congress to draw the national interests together.

3. *The Collaborators change their Skin*

This, however, is not the end of the story. To complete our discussion, it is necessary to take a backward step and consider the factors that motivate Bayly's research. The question which spurred his whole work was a discrepancy between economic and social development on one side and political evolution on the other. In the foreword to his first book, it is said that "the rapid growth of the nationalist movement in the United Provinces"[21] and the subsequent persistent authority of some Allahabad leaders in the National Movement would have been impossible even just ten years earlier, when, in the midst of the turmoil against the partition of Bengal—the so-called *Swadeshi* movement—the Congress was not strong enough or deeply rooted enough in the city, its political leaders did not participate in the boycott, and the extremists came from almost all other Indian, Bengali or Punjabi provinces. Usually, says Bayly, this lack of incisiveness is attributed to crucial social factors, such as an inadequate education or consolidated land ownership interests. Nevertheless, from 1908 to 1917, there is no record of improvements in the field of education or of changes in the land ownership, so the answer to this question, in his opinion, is not to be found in macro-social factors, but in the way the public life of the Indian city developed over a longer period of time.[22]

Bayly's explanation focuses on the collaborators' role, the personalities who mediated the consensus between the colonial Government and Indian society. These local dignitaries—also called *rais* by Bayly—were bankers, merchants and usually also Government tax collectors. Their authority was used by the colonial Government "to control the periodic outbreaks of violence and communal strife".[23] For that purpose, they got honorary judiciary roles and were co-opted onto municipal or neighbourhood committees, which increased their prestige until they became partially elective after 1884. In the English historian's opinion, their monitoring role was fostered by the lack of social cohesion in Allahabad and its surroundings, which gave the British administrators the chance to constantly negotiate personal interests through minuscule concessions.

[21] Bayly, *The Local Roots*, 2.
[22] Ibid., 279.
[23] Ibid., 88.

This balance, though, which may seem advantageous for the colonial authorities, was not that stable and could be altered on the basis of general political choices in London or in Calcutta. In particular, from the 1880s there was an impulse towards an administrative rationalization aimed at improving the efficiency of the colonial government. Tightening the mesh of the administration provoked unpredictable reactions, though, and most of all some uncontrollable effects, as Bayly describes when talking about a Government tax raise request: "if local resources were to be drawn out, then local representation was required", but these new representative forms "gave lawyers, teachers, and publicists the chance of carving out for themselves niches of power and patronage in the municipalities".[24]

Bayly's analysis follows different phases, with the Indian push and the Government counteraction facing each other more or less successfully. So in the 1880s a crisis and a subsequent stabilization took place, mainly thanks to the electoral municipal councils. At the end of the century, the Government appeared to be stable and no dangerous twists seemed to be around the corner, and it stayed like this even during the extreme turmoil surrounding the partition of Bengal. The 1909 reforms altered the political stability imperceptibly, while the Great War, a macro-politic event, also occurred, causing a new imbalance, this time in favour of India. Even though the analysis ends in 1920, it is clear that, in Bayly's opinion, this centrifugal force could not be stopped and became overpowering from the 1930s onward.[25]

As this summary shows, the decisive step in the process of growth of Indian nationalism was the establishment of consultative and participatory institutions by the British, institutions created in an imperial logic not to emancipate the Indians, but to better support colonial rule. Nevertheless, it was thanks to these institutions that the Indian elites obtained concrete means of power, created significant connections in the city and its surroundings, and weakened the English authority in the whole subcontinent. From this point of view, nationalism was an involuntary by-product of the English presence in India.

From 1909 onwards, the collaborators emancipated themselves and overturned the imperial balance. From this point of view—considering nationalism as something brought about by the British presence in the subcontinent—Bayly's

[24] Ibid., 91.
[25] Ibid., 17.

interpretation completely reflects that of the Cambridge School. This is also true regarding the underestimation of the impact of the Great War, which appears in the background but is not seen as a fundamental element in the radicalization of the independence movement.

What is highlighted in Bayly's analysis instead is how some choices made on a local level were successful only in the short/medium term, while they turned out even to be counter-productive in the long run. Also, the underestimation of the nationalist ideology, though in a more sober way compared to other authors of the Cambridge School, is clear. The actions of the *rais* and their followers are reduced to a specious logic, without any idealistic light. In the same way, the religious cleavage, underlined by Bayly as allowing room both for Hindu devotional revivalism and Muslim associations and initiatives, is not seen as a crucial faith factor but rather as another tool for factional struggle.

The ideological dimension in nationalism is not excluded, though, from this heuristic horizon. Among the long lasting factors characterizing colonial Indian public life, Bayly describes how, though loyalism was widespread and attempts to negotiate little concessions in different contexts were common, "there was even in the earliest days a striking undercurrent of anti-British feeling of a most strident kind", a permanent feeling, which, if precisely measurable, would be "remarkably constant through from 1860 to 1947".[26] With respect to this background of latent hostility, ideological nationalism, be it secular or religious, offered powerful help to "more localized aspirations and resentments" in "organizations which directly challenged the colonial regime".[27] In other words, the nationalistic ideology earned the role of a link between the ambitions of self-determination, even if still inchoate, and the latent anti-British sentiment present in the Indian society.

4. *Conclusions*

Compared to the heuristic approach of the Cambridge School, the first essays and the first book of Bayly seem to correspond to the Cantabrigian interpretative scheme, even though with some important problematic articulation. Bayly's analysis, in particular, is not entirely reductionistic and derogatory, but

[26] Ibid., 2.
[27] Ibid., 7.

includes a partial appreciation of Indian nationalism. The national sentiment, mainly expressed as a hostility to the English presence, has a crucial role in the development of events.

Compared to Bayly's research as a whole, these early works are significant because they show a continuity of inspiration that can be appreciated in at least two ways. First of all, there is the interpretative category of collaborators, as a key to understanding the British colonial penetration in South Asia. This was confirmed in his subsequent book dedicated to delineating the conditions of the northern Indian society at the time of the development and consolidation of colonial rule. On that occasion, summing up his work, the British historian notes how it is considered "a truism of colonial historiography that Europeans could not have established their trade and administration in Asia or Africa without the compliance of key people in indigenous society", and then specifies that his book "has tried to give such an assumption greater depth and precision in the case of India", where the historical research on the colonial phase was somehow less developed than the research concerning other geographical areas. This statement itself brings about further observations, as when Bayly describes how "the pace of 'expansion' and the form of colonial relationship was determined mainly by the form of the society penetrated in the years before the full force of industrialization was brought to bear on the non-European world".[28]

We therefore find both continuity and conscious development in Bayly's evaluation of Indian nationalism. If, in his first book, the Indian nationalism was not only devalued to a lesser extent than by other authors of the Cambridge School but also considered as an important factor for understanding the historical course, in the rest of his research activity Bayly comes to appreciate it in an even more articulate way. In these later developments, Indian nationalism is not a collateral result of the English presence but has a defined identity developed over a long period of time. In pre-colonial India, in Bayly's opinion, local loyalty and patriotism already existed in a similar way to Europe at the beginning of the modern age. With respect to these historical developments,

[28] C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 463. In a later book—a general synthesis focused on the conquest and the consolidation of the English presence in India—Bayly, referring to the various turmoils and especially to the big revolt in 1857, underlines again the widespread hostility to the British domination. See C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 178-199.

the subsequent nationalism, which began to manifest itself in the last decades of the nineteenth century, does not present itself as a breaking point but as an evolution, where the elements of continuity with the pre-colonial phase—though enhanced with thoughts osmotically borrowed from the English presence—are absolutely strong.[29] At this stage, Bayly had overcome the heuristic approach of his first researches into Indian history developed in the Cambridge School environment. At the same time, the widely comparative structure identifying the new interpretation of Indian nationalism already anticipates his future outreach towards global history.

[29] This wider interpretation of Indian nationalism is clearly presented by Bayly in the Radhakrishnan Lectures he held in Oxford in 1996. The lectures, together with other essays showing his increasing focus on the topic, are collected in Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*.

2

MICHELGUGLIELMO TORRI

India from the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial Era: the Shaping of the Indian Middle Class and the Roots of Communalism. Thinking back on Bayly's *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*

1. *Introduction*

Christopher Bayly's text under review, first published in 1983, reached a wider diffusion in 1988 following the decision of the Cambridge University Press to reprint it in its prestigious Cambridge Paperback Library.[1] This, and the numerous extremely positive reviews which accompanied its first edition, consecrated *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* as a milestone in the field of modern Indian history. In fact, the book is an extremely important and extraordinarily complex 489 page-long monograph, based on an amazingly large set of primary and unpublished secondary sources. No doubt, it changed—or should have changed—the received vision related to some nodal points concerning the history of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet the monograph has a set of problems, which were (usually implicitly) noted by some of its reviewers. The first among these problems is the extreme complexity of the book. For example, Peter Robb pointed out that *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* was "also two or three books interwoven"; so much so that, in his opinion, "the author must at times have wished that he had tackled them separately."[2] On their part, Eric Meyer and Henri Stern, namely

[1] C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars. North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The quotations from this book are from the 1988 paperback edition and are indicated in the text of this article with page numbers between parentheses.

[2] P. Robb, review of Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 48 (1985), no. 3: 571-574. Robb goes on to state that: "It is a study of the economic and social history respectively of North India in general terms; it is a detailed monograph

a historian and an anthropologist, taking an absolutely unusual step, felt the need to join hands in reviewing *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.[3]

The feeling of disorientation that, because of its complexity, this monograph is bound to cause in readers without a solid background in the history of eighteenth and nineteenth century India—and even in some who do have such a background—is increased by the fact that, on the one hand, the title and, particularly, the subtitle of the book are misleading, while, on the other hand, its objectives are not as immediately clear as one would wish.

Starting from the title, the book is focused not so much on 'townsmen' as on two categories of them, namely merchants and service people. Also, coming to the subtitle (*North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*), the analysis of the book does not cover the whole of North India; in fact, although there are references to some other northern India areas, it focuses on a limited although important part of North India, which, to a large extent, coincides with what, in the 1850s, became the United Provinces and nowadays is Uttar Pradesh.[4] If the geographical net cast by Bayly is much more limited than is claimed in the subtitle of his book, the chronological one is much wider: indeed, the author moves from the period after Aurangzeb's death (1707) to the first two decades of the twentieth century.[5]

As far as the goals set by the author are concerned, they seem to vary. Bayly states that the aim of his work "is to trace the fate of Indian towns, merchants and service people during the period of transition between the heyday of the last indigenous states and the establishment of the mature colonial system after 1857" (2). However, strictly connected to this aim is a second, as, in the author's own words: "In doing so, the book highlights the way in which conditions in Indian society determined the emergence and form of British India" (ibid.). Nevertheless, still in the introduction, Bayly points out that "one of the themes" of his book is "the triumph of the state, both Indian and British, over its compet-

on trade, merchants and the Indian city; it includes a brilliant, micro-account of indigenous business methods." In fact, the book is much more (and sometimes less) than that.

3 E. Meyer and H. Stern, "Compte Rendu de C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 46 (1991), no. 3: 693-697.

4 The geographical areas actually analysed in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* are discussed on pages 15-28, and highlighted in map 2 on page 16.

5 The last section of the last chapter of the monograph under review is entitled "Corporations, *Qasbahs* and the New Politics, 1870-1920".

itors [namely the non-state potentates present in the area which Bayly analyses] and the settlement of the agrarian and commercial economy" (30). Later in the book, Bayly points out that: "The aim throughout the work has been to trace the emergence over the longer term of some of the key elements which came to make up the 'middle classes' of North India in the later nineteenth century". This, adds Bayly, has the further goal "to provide a more adequate account of the connection between India's colonial and pre-colonial history" (369).

All this can be rather confusing, as the way in which the author organizes his analysis is sometimes confusing. Although scattered in the book there are synthetic résumés of what has been argued up to that point, and although, at times (but not always), at the end of a chapter or at the beginning of another, the themes that will be dealt with are anticipated, there is no systematic summing up, neither as an introduction, nor as a conclusion, of the topics analysed in the single chapters. No doubt it is true that, as pointed out by Peter Robb, "the author continually provides a thread to show the way."[6] However, it is equally true that it is not always easy to detect and keep hold of an Ariadne's thread that, like the course of a river which sometimes disappears in the karstic subsoil to reappear later, seems at points to vanish under thick layers of more or less connected but always intricate topics dealt with by the author.

All the above justifies the organization of the present article. Its first part (paragraphs 2-12) is a summary of Bayly's main argument, which is considerably longer and more detailed than any of those provided in the many reviews published soon after the publication of the book. This said, it is necessary to add immediately that, in spite of its length, the résumé provided hereafter leaves out some of the topics, even important ones, Bayly analyses in his book. In fact, the following résumé is, in a way, an attempt to disentangle one of the "two or three books" from the others which make up Bayly's monograph. Of course, this is an effort guided by the present writer's perception of what represents the most important part of Bayly's analysis; accordingly, the résumé itself is already an (implicit) evaluation of the work under review. However, a more explicit discussion of the crucial contributions made by the book under review to the comprehension of the history of India is broached in the second part of the present article (paragraphs 3-17). Also, in the second part, this writer will deal with some among the theses of the book which he considers contentious.

[6] Robb, review of Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 57.

2. *Analysing the Rise of the Merchant Class and the Service Gentry*

The book under review has as its starting point the reconstruction of a phase of Indian history that had previously been not so much overlooked as observed from a unilateral perspective. This was the rise of British colonial power as an almost compulsory and certainly beneficial result of the economic crisis and military anarchy allegedly characterizing India in the course of the eighteenth century. Bayly, however, paints a quite different image; no doubt, the crisis of the Mughal Empire in eighteenth century India brought about the decline of some of its key areas, in particular Delhi and its hinterland, but it also saw the rise of a set of strongly centralized successor states. These states became hubs of economic development by favouring the growth of, and relying on, new socioeconomic forces on the rise.

Basically, these socioeconomic forces were twofold. One was made up by merchants and moneylenders/bankers, two roles which often coincided in the same person; the other was made up by the 'service gentry', namely military men, bureaucrats, experts in Islamic law and literati, all different roles that, even if not always coincident in the same persons, usually overlapped in the same families or lineages. It was this category of men who staffed the bureaucracy of the new states and formed the backbone of their armed forces.

Bayly points out that, while both groups had been in the making in the Mughal period (but one could point out that they were already present at least from the time of the Delhi Sultanate), it was in the eighteenth century that their economic and administrative importance became crucial, while their demographic weight grew.

3. *The Merchants-Bankers-Moneylenders as Member of a Class in the Making*

The merchants-cum-bankers were required by the eighteenth century indigenous states to perform several crucial tasks. They managed the trade which supplied the rulers and their dependants with both the necessaries and the luxuries of life and, by doing so, controlled ready cash and other monetary instruments of payment, such as *hundis* (promissory notes), which were accepted for any economic transaction. The control of money allowed the agricultural surplus to be transformed into cash, making it available to the rulers, whose need for it had

greatly increased compared to the Mughal period.[7] Also, the control of cash allowed the merchants-cum-bankers to finance the expenditures of the state, from military expenditure to that related to religion and economy.

The headquarters of the most substantial merchants-cum-bankers were the *mohullas* (urban residential neighbourhoods) of the "great consumer cities" (227) in the area studied in the book. The lesser men belonging to this group were present in the smaller urban centres and in the countryside. Over the course of time, the activities of the bigger men branched out into the countryside, giving rise to an extensive network of which their lesser brethren became part. This growing merchant class-in-the-making was mainly made up by the local merchant castes: Agarwals, Khattris, Oswals and Maheshwaris. During the eighteenth century, the men hailing from these castes marginalized the formerly dominant Gujarati and Muslim merchants, giving rise to a new merchant class in the making, which "was formally divided by caste and functions" but kept together by "common interests and values". These common interests and values "were expressed through the organisation of markets, mercantile credit and Hindu or Jain religion which transcended these divisions." This brought about a situation where "different levels of solidarity subtly interlocked with each other to create a corporate culture of great vitality which could mobilize considerable reserves of political influence" (451). In fact, according to Bayly, this component of the future twentieth century Indian middle class was predominantly if not exclusively made up by Hindus (and Jains, who, from a socio-religious point of view, although members of an ancient autonomous religion, played a role somewhat akin to that of a Hindu merchant caste). In fact, as shown by Bayly particularly in chapters 10 and 11, the Hindu religion and morality played an important role both in the sense of belonging of this social group and in the personal and professional behaviour of its members.

4. *Naissance and Rise of the Service Gentry*

On its part, the service gentry had its headquarters in the *qasbahs*, namely the small towns which connected the rural hinterland to the major cities. Very often the *qasbahs* had grown around the tombs of Sufi saints, who were equally

[7] Mainly because of their need to pay for standing armies.

venerated by Hindus and Muslims.[8] As pointed out by Bayly: "From piety or policy, the Sultans and their Mughal and Nawabi successors maintained a steady flow of endowments to the holy families descended from the original saint-missionaries" (350). Before the mid-seventeenth century, "the *qasbahs* were already flourishing centres of scholars, artisans and office holders" whose political and military life, however, "revolved around the great Muslim courts of Jaunpur or Delhi". In 1590, the Muslims still "held only small patches of land as zamindars in Awadh and the Doab" (ibid.), but from the end of Akbar's reign (1605) onward, "Sayyid Muslim families rapidly gained land-rights all over Awadh and also throughout Doab". In the late eighteenth century, "they probably held the proprietary rights in two-thirds of the Awadh villages and made a significant contribution to the ecology of the area [...] by irrigation investment and the cultivation of fruit groves" (351). Moreover, during Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707), in an evolution bound to further strengthen the hold of the Muslim gentry of the lands surrounding the *qasbahs* where they lived, "many zamindars [many of whom were Muslims] appear also to have begun to assimilate their zamindaris to revenue-free holdings, thus avoiding state land tax and other dues" (351-352). In due course, the Muslim lineages based in the *qasbahs* developed a sense of pride for their home towns, which they came to consider as their own *watan* (homeland) (352).

5. *The Merchant-Bankers in the Pre-Colonial Period*

Bayly puts a lot of effort into analysing the growth of the merchants-cum-bankers and the service gentry and their connection first with the Mughal successor states and then with the British. As far as the merchant group is concerned, Bayly points out that during the Mughal period the officials of the Mughal Empire were rewarded, as a rule, with the grant of revenue rights (*jagirs*) on pieces of land which were periodically swapped and, most of the time, were located far from the actual residence of the grantee. This forced these Mughal officials to leave the administration of their *jagirs* to "local men who were skilled at financial

[8] "In many places tombs of Sufi saints became the particular resort of Hindu men and women seeking relief from illness or wishing to obtain the intercession of the saint in their conflicts and tribulations" (Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 350).

management and understood the marketing of produce" (164). In other words, a social stratum comprising merchants and bankers/moneylenders already existed in Mughal times and was well connected to the political power of the day. But the role, and therefore the influence, of this group boomed after 1707, when management of the state revenues was increasingly farmed out to them. The system allowed the new regional rulers to have at their disposal "a known and regular source of income without the problem of local collection" (ibid.). This explains why the farming out of state land revenues (usually on one, two or three year leases) became common in Northern India by 1740. But in certain parts of North India, particularly in Awadh and Benares, the system came to include "practically all the ruler's ancient taxation rights between 1740 and 1780" (165). Not only land revenues, but duties on trades and bazaars, too, were farmed out.

In the area studied by Bayly, this system initially favoured the rise of a limited number of great entrepreneurs; as the author points out, "the main revenue farmers in Awadh in 1770 amounted to some fifteen men; in Benares around thirty-six" (ibid.). But for all their apparent power and wealth, these great men "straddling the agrarian and commercial worlds […] were vulnerable to groups better entrenched in both" (ibid.). The result was that the dominance of these great men was short-lived: they disappeared from the scene because of economic failure, or because they died without leaving heirs or, more rarely, because they reconverted their activities by becoming *zamindars*. Their disappearance left in control of the rural economy the groups which were already in a dominant position in either the agrarian or the commercial worlds. To the first group belonged the former under-managers and local revenue farmers of the disappeared big entrepreneurs, namely Brahmin, Kayasth and, to a lesser extent, Sayyid local administrators. To the second group belonged the big merchants/moneylenders residing in—and dominating the economy of—the great cities. These "were the men who advanced money to the revenue-farmers and stood as sureties" for them with the rulers for punctual payment (168). In order to do that, the big urban merchant-bankers had to keep a close eye on what was going on in the rural localities and, to do that, relied on agents who monitored the work of the local revenue managers. These agents "generally appear to have been village shopkeepers linked by trading connection, and sometimes by caste, with the big merchants of the city" (ibid.). Basically, though, whoever was active in trade and moneylending at the local level could and was included in the networks headed by the big urban merchant-bankers. These networks did not only expand vertically, from the big cities to the rural localities, but also horizontally, encompassing wide

geographical areas. In fact, the big merchants were able to command resources across great distances, extending well beyond the geographical area of any single eighteenth century Indian state, which put them in a position of strength vis-à-vis the single rulers. Any pressure on the part of a ruler aimed at extracting a quantity of resources from the merchants which was seen as excessive and not consonant with the prevailing customs could bring about the decision by the merchants of closing the bazaars and moving out to a nearby potentate, with devastating consequences for any eighteenth century indigenous state. Of course, the merchants were in a position to act as a unified group because, during the eighteenth century, they increasingly acquired a corporate ethos.

Bayly hastens to point out that although there is ample evidence of the fact that merchant capital was becoming increasingly important in the economy, this "does not necessarily imply that merchants were aspiring to a direct political role" (171). However, the fact remains that "the covert and subtly exercised power of the merchant bodies imposed limitations on what eighteenth century rulers could do, and allowed commerce to achieve a more privileged position in regard to the military aristocracy" (172).

6. *Merchant-Bankers and Service Gentry up to the 1830s*

One of the key points repeatedly made by Bayly is that the British conquest and early administration of India was, if not made possible, certainly favoured by the shifting of merchant-bankers and service gentry behind the Europeans. "The incoming colonial power and European traders", claims Bayly, "succeeded when they were able to cajole, entice or manipulate these intermediate groups." "British conquest", he concludes, "often meant no more than the slow drift to the East India Company of soldiers, merchants and administrators, leaving Indian rulers with nothing more than a husk of royal grandeur" (6).

This explains why, at least up to the 1830s, the English conquest of North India did not witness any dramatic change in the role and fortunes of the Indian merchants of the Gangetic Valley. Their position had become so well entrenched that, as Bayly argues, when the English took over direct control of huge swathes of North Indian territory during the first half of the nineteenth century, either they were able to secure the cooperation of the Indian merchants in managing the land revenues of their new possessions or they had difficulty in extracting them. As a consequence, during the period up to the 1830s, "local merchant

communities which had seized their first opportunities in the dissolution of the Mughal hegemony pressed home their advantage. They found new security on the great trade routes [opened by the new European rulers] and in British revenue courts; their quid pro quo was to guarantee the British revenue system as they had guaranteed its Mughal predecessors" (227).

On their part, the Islamic gentry were somewhat less successful in adapting themselves to the changing times. As the author points out: "In Awadh the hold of the Islamic gentry on the small towns over revenue-rights already appears to have weakened before the imposition of British rule in 1856" (354). This was a result of the fact that during the reign of the last king of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856), the *qasbah* zamindars came under pressure both from the state and the Rajput clans in the countryside. The state resumed control of some of the revenue rights which had been held by the Muslim gentry for decades, whereas "during Awadh's terminal crisis in the 1840s [the Rajput clans] managed to prise away rights which had been slowly accumulated by the Sayyids in the previous century" (ibid.).

Although the author does not explicitly say as much, one can surmise that the weakness of the Muslim gentry, already evident at the moment of the British annexation of Awadh, made this group less important in the eyes of their new masters. This, in turn, might contribute to explain why the early British land revenue settlements were "notoriously harsh, especially in Allahabad and the middle parts of the Doab" (354-355). Furthermore, much charitable land, whose possession had been in the hands of sections of the Muslim gentry, was resumed by the colonial state. "On the other hand", points out Bayly, "British legalism and the search for 'ancient proprietors of the soil' ensured that some at least of dispossessed eighteenth-century gentry were able to re-establish a toe-hold in the revenue system" (355).[9] However, at the end of the day, "almost everywhere political change, the rise of monied men and the resurgence of Hindu landholding communities put pressure on the Islamic gentry" (ibid.). Again, this was at least partially countervailed by the fact that, up to the mid-1830s, the Muslim gentry maintained their hold "on major appointments both within the Nawabi and outside" (356).

[9] Bayly makes the example of the Barah Sayyids of Muzaffarnagar and Meerut Districts, who "were able to creep back into some of the villages from which they had earlier been ejected, once British settlement operations began" (Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 355).

7. *The Crisis of the 1830s-1840s*

Both the merchants-bankers and the service gentry, however, were put under strong pressure by the beginning of a major crisis in the 1830s. The reasons for the crisis were multifarious. Firstly, "the Gangetic area and western India suffered a virtual depression which derived from acute problems of liquidity" (264). Secondly, there was the collapse of the major European houses of agency in 1827 and 1828, which "brought about a general disruption in the flow of cash and credit which began in the export sector but rapidly affected internal trade also" (ibid.). Thirdly, Eastern India was facing a decline in its exports which went on from 1830 to 1860.[10] This crisis badly reverberated even in the Gangetic Valley. On top of that, in the 1830s the Gangetic area suffered from a cycle of weather instability—actually "the worst period of weather instability which the region had seen since the Chalisa famine of 1781-3" (292)—which brought about famine, migration and internal plunder.

However, argues Bayly, once all the above factors are taken into account, they matter less than "a more important transformation […] whose social consequences were to persist beyond the Great Rebellion itself". This was the "general crisis of the Indian political system" (265), namely the radical change of policy of the East India Company. This had two complementary aspects: one was "the British diplomatic offensive against the Indian states symbolized by the famous 'Policy of Lapse' and the anti-*taluqdar* settlements of 1830s and 1840s in the North-Western Provinces" (ibid.); the other was "a cutback […] in the meagre Company expenditure on military and civil government; a withdrawal of its embarrassed patronage of Hindu and Muslim places of worship; and a curtailment of the Company's residual trading functions" (266). Thus, the British brutally restricted the spending capacities of the Indian ruling aristocracies which, as shown by Bayly, in the previous hundred years had been the real engine which had kept the Indian economy moving and even growing, notwithstanding the dramatic decline of the Mughal Empire and the economic collapse of some of its key areas.

[10] This was the result of the fact that "agricultural produce from the region met increasing competition in foreign markets as other areas within and outside India began producing the cotton, indigo, opium, silks and saltpetre which had given rise to the heady but narrow growth after the end of the Napoleonic wars" (Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 265).

The new policy was bad for both the merchants and the gentry, but had an additional downside for the Muslim gentry. 1836 saw the abolition of Persian as an official language in the North-Western Provinces, which took away one of the advantages that the local Muslim gentry had when competing for state appointments. This was compounded by the annexation of Awadh in 1856. This "slimmed down the administration here as elsewhere, and gave new men from Bihar, Bengal and the east of the North-Western Provinces the chance to compete on equal terms with the local gentry even on their own turf" (356). These two decisions were a permanent reversal for the Muslim gentry, whose members, although still well represented in the colonial bureaucracy and able to find some openings in the surviving princely states, experienced a real and considerable socio-economic decline in the following decades (ibid.).

The anti-aristocratic policy could have been counterbalanced by a rise in the Company's spending, but, on the contrary, the Company further cut back its expenses and took some other measures aimed at negatively impacting the Indian economy. Among these there was the decision, taken for political reasons, to close the local mints of Farrukhabad, Saugor and Benares, which was "one of the contributing causes of the money and credit famines of the early 1830s" (267).

8. *The Changing Social Landscape as a Consequence of the Crisis*

All the above factors plunged the Indian economy into a gigantic crisis from which it started to recover in the mid-1840s. However, it was a "patchy revival" (298), and a full recovery came only in the 1860s. Also, it was a revival which revealed a starkly changed socio-economic landscape. In fact, the steady decline of courtly consumption was continuing while, "as yet, expenditure by the British government and westernized elites had failed to create a substantial alternative demand" (299). At the same time, the role of the Indian merchants in the state and in the agrarian society was dramatically reduced. This was a direct consequence of the creation of the British "great revenues systems", which, by the mid-1840s, became "established features of the landscape" (ibid.). Also, the spreading of district treasury bills as media of exchange gradually supplanted the *hundis*. Both changes resulted in a drastic curtailment of the Indian merchants' economic role.

Before and during the crisis, the merchants had continued to finance agriculture, but the effect of the crisis on agricultural production and the activities

of the British law courts, which enforced the sale of land for debt, completely upset the system which had hitherto prevailed. That had been a system including "merchant, peasant, artisan and ruler" in which, up to the crisis, "it was not in the interest of one element to reduce any of the others to complete dependence" (ibid.). The crisis, however, brought about a situation in which "commercial families often had little choice but to buy into land-rights in order to retain some benefit from the capital which had been immobilized in the form of advances to landholders" (ibid.). It was the coming together of the negative politico-economic circumstances which characterized the 1830s-1850s crisis which utterly transformed the eighteenth century Indian merchant-banker-entrepreneur into the "'usurious capitalist', the carrier of an unproductive or stagnant form of entrepreneurship which did little but expertly cream off the surplus of the peasant family in the form of interest payments" (ibid.), who became a fixed feature of the post-1830s colonial economy.

As shown by Bayly, the new Company policy had disastrous effects not only at the economic, but also at the political and social levels. At the political level, the new policy determined a crisis of legitimacy as, to Indians, the Company, while "exercising with even greater determination its right to revenue", appeared negligent in fulfilling its duty as a ruler (266). This was a duty that traditionally entailed massive expenditures and distribution of ritual gifts by the state. This crisis of legitimacy powerfully contributed to the explosion of the Great Revolt of 1857-1858.

9. *The Historic Roots of Communalism*

Even more insidious, however, were the negative long-term effects that, according to Bayly, this policy had on the Indian society. As he notes, "the decline of the aristocracy and gentry and the altered position of the merchant class opened new fissures between the Hindu and Islamic corporations of town and *qasbah*" (ibid.). Whereas the economy recovered, "the moral and social effects of the dislocation of the 1830s" persisted and yielded poisonous fruits in contributing to the rise of communalism (ibid.). The background to this development is explained by Bayly in a few crucially important pages. First of all, Bayly does not accept the thesis that "a blithe tolerance characterised relations between Hindus and Muslims in the pre-colonial period"; on the contrary, he flatly states that "communal conflict occurred before colonial rule" (335). Nonetheless, he him-

self provides several instances of good relations between Hindus and Muslims in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in the area which he analyses. However, according to Bayly, these good relations were based on the presence of a state (first the Mughal Empire, then the indigenous successor states) which was willing and able to act as a fair and firm arbiter between the two communities and the elites and corporations which represented them. This system, although giving ritual precedence to the Muslims, did respect the religious sensibilities of, and allowed ample spaces of autonomy to, non-Muslims. Starting in the nineteenth century, though, two developments took place in the cities which gradually sapped the existing social equilibrium.

The first was the gradual loss of both prestige and power by the traditional city magistrates: *kazis*, *muftis* and *kotwals*. The *kotwal* was the chief executive and police officer who derived his authority directly from the secular ruler of the state, who, in turn, took his decisions advised by the *kazi*, the chief registrar who was also a kind of censor of morals. Moreover, both the *kotwal* and the *kazi* sought the advice of both the *mufti*—an informal representative of the Muslim faithful of the city and a link with the *ulama* (the doctors of the Islamic law)—and the Hindu headmen (308, 336).

All this means that the city magistrates traditionally acted as final arbiters in managing the relations between the different elites, corporations and, ultimately, communities, which, in turn, accepted the legitimacy of the city magistrates' role. But the situation started to change with the decline of indigenous states, and changed permanently with the coming of colonial rule. The *kotwal* was reduced to "an inferior officer of police", the *kazi* to "little more than a glorified registrar" and, to top it all, "the religious sensibilities of learned Islam no longer bore on the officers of the government through the *mufti*" (342).

The other development which powerfully contributed to alter the existing equilibrium was the socio-economic change which, during the same period, saw the emergence in the cities of new dominant groups. As Bayly points out: "Since about 1800 in many cities and bazaars of the west [the western part of the Gangetic Valley] there had been steady commercial change and a shift of economic power to mercantile groups such as Jains of the Delhi region, Agarwal Banias around Kanpur or Chaubes in the Muttra region. These filled the vacuum left in the *qasbahs* society by the decline or withdrawal of the Islamic service people" (337). These new groups were reluctant or downright unwilling to subordinate themselves to the "older relations of ranking and precedence", while the old magistrates no longer had the prestige and power to force them. In

fact, most of the time, when these magistrates tried to do this, they were seen as acting in a partisan way, favouring one community (the Muslims) over the other (the Hindus).

Of course, the crisis of the 1830s and 1840s, by strengthening the Hindu merchant class vis-à-vis the Muslim gentry, powerfully contributed to the weakening of the old order. Things distinctly worsened in the 1830s, when "the new breed of British district officials" started to act on the basis of the conviction that their task was "to balance rights, not to enforce religious and social duties" as they had hitherto existed (336). Also, the new British rulers, though playing a crucial role in weakening the old order, did not develop new institutions which could fill the vacuum left by the decline of the old magistracies, which was encouraged by the British district officials' own personal initiatives, "sufficiently fast" (342).

10. *The Great Revolt of 1857-1858*

As noted above, in spite of the "patchy revival" of the late 1840s, the consequences of the crisis prolonged themselves into the Great Revolt of 1857-1858. As Bayly points out: "Though the rebellion is generally seen as a rural or even peasant uprising, towns and bazaars played an equal important part in the calculations of the rebels". In fact, in the west of the United Provinces, the rebellion "took the form of a series of skirmishes around the key urban centres" (360).

The author's handling of the Great Revolt is short (seven pages) and rather impressionistic. However, it is important for the comprehension of some of Bayly's key theses. He characterizes the uprising as "a succession struggle fought out in the context of an abrupt collapse of British power" (365). This, claims Bayly, seemed at times "to degenerate into a struggle between Islamic *qasbah* towns and the [Hindu] lineage centres of the interior zamindars" (360). These religious tensions were also apparent inside the commercial towns. "Quite widely it was the Muslim artisans and bazaar craftsmen", states Bayly, "who initiated conflict by attacking [Hindu] commercial men and landlords" (364).

However, although the momentum of his analysis points towards a characterization of the 1857 uprising as a civil conflict between Hindus and Muslims, what Bayly intends to demonstrate is his above quoted thesis, that good relations between Hindus and Muslims were based on the presence of a state willing and able to act as a fair and firm arbiter between the two communities. Accordingly,

Bayly qualifies what can at first appear as a characterization of the 1857 revolt as a communal conflict by bringing in the role of the indigenous political regimes. "Where viable [successor] regimes established themselves speedily as in Delhi or Lucknow, communal tension was minimised", states Bayly. On the other hand, "in areas such as Rohilkhand or the Doab, where British rule had rapidly eroded the authority of indigenous powers, political conflict might easily take on a religious tinge" (365).

Another important point made by Bayly concerns the role of the merchants during the rebellion. The fact—generally accepted by previous historians—that the merchants sided en masse with the British needs severe qualification. "Actually", says Bayly, "there are a substantial number of cases on record where commercial people gave quite strenuous support to the rebels" (361). On the other hand, the commercial families which had fewest connections with the old royal courts and which had prospered from the growth of the commercial economy after 1816 "threw in their lot with the British almost unanimously" (361-362). Quite interestingly, though, "for every merchant who threw in his lot with the British or the rebels, there were ten who hedged their bets" (362). The change in the merchants' attitude came only when the British were able to take the offensive and the troops originally meant for the opium war against China disembarked in Calcutta. Only at that point did "the commercial community of the Gangetic cities" come out openly "in support of the British" (ibid.). That greatly helped the British war effort, as the "volume of supplies going to isolated British garrisons increased rapidly, while incoming troops had no difficulty in securing transport and credit facilities" (ibid.).

The British were generous with their late allies, rewarding them "handsomely with offices and grants of land sequestered from the rebels" (363). This siphoning off of land wealth from the rebellious, mostly Muslim, aristocracy to the merchants sometimes favoured old families, sometimes new men. In all cases, many among those which emerged as the wealthiest families in the period from the 1860s to the 1930s—for example the Tandons, who played such a distinguished role during the freedom movement—enriched themselves as a result of their pro-British stance during the Great Revolt.[11]

This development brought about a "substantial immobilisation of capital and skills in *rentier* land-management" (ibid.). As shown by Bayly, for reasons which

[11] Bayly grounds his assertion on his study of the commercial ledgers of the merchant families.

he details particularly in chapters 10 and 11, the economic style of the Indian merchant class had always been characterized by prudence and conservatism. However, the consequences of the 1830s crisis and of the Great Revolt, by reorienting much of the merchants' activities from trade, financing and contracting to "the comfort of a low regular return from landed property", contributed if not to an outright loss of entrepreneur spirit, at least "to confirm the conservative style of the late nineteenth-century business community" (ibid.).

11. *The Indian Society after the Great Revolt*

After the Great Revolt, the colonial state was forced to a more active presence, particularly in the areas which had been the epicentre of the uprising. It is true that, as pointed out by the author, the colonial state "was no Meiji government of Japan" and that "the sums spent on agricultural improvement in relation to the total size of the land revenue" were "puny" (428). However, mainly military considerations prompted the colonial state to implement a policy of much higher expenditure compared with what had been the rule in the three decades preceding the Great Revolt. This, unwittingly, returned the role of engine of the economy that had characterized the 18th century indigenous potentates to the colonial state.

In its pursuit of military security, the colonial state steeply increased its expenses in three fields: the construction of costly new barracks, particularly in the major cities such as Allahabad, Meerut and Delhi; the massive surge—again predominantly in those areas where the revolt had been stronger—in European troops;[12] and the building of an extensive railway network. In addition, there was the vigorous continuation of canal construction, which had begun in 1848.

Although canal construction "created some unfortunate side effects", it substantially contributed to wealth and security, particularly in the drier regions of the Meerut division (429). In turn, the building of new barracks, the spending on the maintenance of the troops deployed in the Gangetic Valley, and the expendi-

[12] "In the immediate aftermath of the Revolt", states Bayly, "the number of European troops almost trebled from the 1853 strength to 61,000 and a larger proportion of them were deployed in the western districts of the North-Western Provinces which had provided the greatest challenge to British supremacy" (Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 428).

tures of those high spenders who were the European troops "gave an immediate stimulus to wages and prices in the environs of the bazaars" (428). As far as the new railways were concerned, although much of the railway material, including railway sleepers, was imported,[13] "local labourers and contractors received some of this large expenditure in the form of wages and payment for bullocks, gravel and bricks" (429).

The expansion of the railway network had an additional and more momentous consequence, determining the shifting of the currents of traffic crossing the Gangetic valley from the Ganges to the new railroads, and at the same time making traffic more reliable and secure. In turn, this brought about a noticeable rise in the daily wages of the labourers working on the railway lines, the springing up of new agricultural bazaars and, eventually, the creation of new urban centres (ibid.).

The decades after the Great Revolt also witnessed "what might be called the 'colonisation of taste', which began to modify the balance of consumption and the physical appearance of north Indians and their cities" (ibid.). It was in those decades that stone-built houses ceased to be an exclusive preserve of European civil lines and cantonments, making their appearance "in the new service quarters of the old cities, and, later, in the district town" (430). Also, "with these new buildings came new tastes in clothes and personal property. For the service people of the booming law courts foreign cloth replaced homespun, leather replaced cloth bags and kerosene lamps replaced the little flames of vegetable oil" (ibid.).

In turn, the rise in state expenditures and the "colonisation of taste" were accompanied by the—admittedly "slow and patchy"—growth of the internal market which, in turn, was a function of "the growing momentum of population increase and the diffusion of small technological improvements in the countryside" (ibid.).

However, according to Bayly, all the above did not amount to a real transformation of the Indian society and economy. "The monies disbursed by government into society were small in volume even if agriculture made some significant

[13] Of course, these items were imported from Great Britain, powerfully contributing to its economic prosperity. On this topic, which is unaddressed by Bayly, the most stimulating essay which has come to my attention remains the one written by Marcello De Cecco, *Economia e finanza internazionale dal 1890 al 1914* (Bari: Laterza, 1971), particularly chapter IV. For an English translation, see *The International Gold Standard: Money and Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

local advances as a consequence of canal irrigation." Also, "exports provided only limited stimulus". Accordingly, in the author's assessment, "Growth and change there were, but uneven and insufficient to break the bounds of institutions as tenacious as the mercantile firm or the peasant family farm" (435).

12. *Indian Urban Society on the Eve of Nationalism*

As far as the urban reality of the area studied by Bayly is concerned, then, in spite of the crisis of the 1830s-1850s and the Great Revolt of 1857-1858, there was strong continuity at the social level, represented by the (rising) merchant class and the (declining) Muslim gentry of the *qasbahs*. By the close of the nineteenth century, the merchant class, "formally divided by caste and function", was firmly bound together by "its common interests and values", which were expressed "through the organisation of markets, mercantile credit and Hindu or Jain religion." As a result, "Different levels of solidarity subtly interlocked with each other to create a corporate culture of great vitality *which could mobilise considerable reserves of political influence*" (451, emphasis added). It was this social group which dominated Hindu society, and it was only by acting as "theorists, organisers, strategists and spokesman" of this social group that the rising Westernized elite could acquire a substantial social basis.[14] Significantly, at the first Indian National Congress held in Allahabad in 1888, traditional leaders and corporate bodies of the bazaars joined "to give the westernized lawyers of the High Court Bar a stronger base" (450). Likewise, the Muslim League—at least in the UP—found its base among the service gentry who had their homes "in *qasbahs* or the Muslim quarters of the district towns" (451).

In summing up the results of his research, Bayly points out that they "imply that some of the conditions which fractured the life of modern North India into Hindu and Muslim camps must be dated much earlier than is commonly supposed" (455). He goes on to state: "It was not a question of 'Two Nations' from

[14] Bayly seems to consider the Westernized elite as a social class, although one of minor importance when compared to other, more solidly grounded social classes. The Westernized elite, however, was not a class, but rather a group of intellectuals (in the Gramscian meaning) who acted as speakers and organizers of existing social classes or social classes in the making. On this, see Michelguglielmo Torri, "'Westernised Middle Class', Intellectuals and Society in Late Colonial India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24, no. 4 (27 January 1990): 2-11, 6.

time immemorial, or even of the inevitable conflict between members of the two religions as a result of 'modernisation'. But the social formations which consolidated themselves between 1700 and 1830—what we have called the 'merchant class' and the 'service gentry'—had tended to develop within two very different economic and cultural contexts, the Islamic *qasbah* or *mohulla* and the Hindu corporate town." "While strong, indigenous states retained power," concludes Bayly, "these parallel developments did not necessarily presage conflict. But from the 1830s the disintegration of the old magistracies and notabilities left broader space for contention" (455-456).

13. *Bayly's Crucial Contributions to our Understanding of the History of India*

At the end of the day, the real Ariadne's thread for the labyrinthian book under review appears to be the effort to analyse the rise and the distinguishing features of the indigenous middle class in the making from the beginning of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, if not in India at large, at least in the United Provinces. Indeed, Bayly's painstaking reconstruction not only shows the insufficiencies of the traditional explanation of the rise of the modern middle class in India as the outcome of modernization and Westernization,[15] but has a wider methodological meaning. In fact, Bayly convincingly disproves two basic propositions, enunciated by Karl Marx and Max Weber, which have been extremely influential, if not in the field of Indian studies (at least as they have evolved since the 1960s), certainly in moulding the vision of India held by the generic 'educated person' in the West (and not only there). These two propositions hold that "the cellular, caste-based society of India frustrated the development of wider solidarities except the state itself" and that the state "was largely an agency of plunder" (471). In contrast, Bayly's work compellingly demonstrates that groups such as the merchants and the service gentry developed a common ethos and a sense of identity which crossed caste identities (and sometimes even religious identities[16]) and allowed them to act as unified groups. Likewise, it

[15] As articulated in monographs such as B.B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), and B.T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966).

[16] Bayly points out that in the mainly Muslim *qasbahs* in the area he studies, Hindu families of service gentry lived side by side with their Muslim counterparts, sharing the same culture and,

demonstrates that the Indian state, far from being "an agency of plunder", was a main engine in promoting economic development.

That said, my contention is that some of the most important contributions of the monograph under review to advancing our comprehension of the history of India lie not so much in the development of this central theme as in dealing with two related topics, namely the eighteenth century and the crisis which overtook India in the 1830s-1850s.

The image of the eighteenth century that emerges from Bayly's analysis is unambiguously different from that originally painted by the colonial conquerors, administrators and historians, later incorporated as the orthodox academic historiographical view, according to which the eighteenth century was characterized in India by steep economic decline and military anarchy. In contrast, Bayly shows, as noted above, that the breakup of the Mughal Empire saw the emergence of a set of dynamic states which played a key role in the maintenance of a flourishing economy. No doubt, points out Bayly, the breakup of the Mughal Empire caused the decline of some of its core areas, particularly Delhi and its hinterland. The areas of decline, however, were quite limited in extent, and anyway, their decline favoured other, more stable areas which benefitted from the movement of aristocracies, merchants, artisans and, sometimes, peasantry from the declining areas to the new rising regions. These regions, as a rule, were both the favoured ones from an ecological viewpoint and the centres of new rising potentates which played a key role in guaranteeing good conditions of safety to their subjects and in vigorously promoting economic expansion. Internal trade continued to flourish, and a network of new inland trade routes, which took the place of the old Mughal arteries, bound together the economically strong regions of the area studied by Bayly, connecting them to the outer world in the subcontinent and beyond. Accordingly, the eighteenth century, rather than being characterized by decline and collapse, saw a shift and a redistribution of human resources and material wealth—according to Bayly, an "orderly" one (460)—from the old core areas of the crumbling Mughal Empire to the new political centres represented by the successor states. Moreover, before the colonial conquest, the new political and economic core areas had already become centres of a renewed economic expansion, as farmers, merchants and aristocrats fanned out from them to colonize or re-colonize virgin or declining areas.

one supposes, the same attachment to their common *watan*.

Bayly's findings concerning the persistence of a vibrant economy in the middle and upper Gangetic Valley, confirmed by those of Stewart Gordon related to the areas which came under Maratha sway[17] and preceded by those of Asok Sen in relation to Tipu Sultan's Mysore,[18] have conclusively changed the received historical view of the eighteenth century.

Bayly's second crucially important contribution to our comprehension of the history of India relates to the 1830s-1850s crisis. In the received orthodox historical view, those decades are described as the ones in which, at long last, good government came to (British) India through a policy of reforms.[19] Of course, although generally accepted as a truism, the conclusion that good government came to (British) India because her colonial government became more honest and more efficient is based on a *non sequitur*. In fact, the above optimistic conclusion does not take into account that the East India Company (EIC) government in India, far from being intended to the promotion of Indian welfare, aimed, first, at enriching the EIC directors and shareholders in England, and, second, at favouring British interests in general. In other words, a good and honest EIC government could logically result not in enhanced welfare for the Indian subjects of the Company, but in their increased exploitation on behalf of British interests. Without squarely dwelling on the received historical view, Bayly's analysis thoroughly and conclusively devastates it. North India, far from being vigorously driven by her British masters on the way to modernization and prosperity, was forcibly pushed into the biggest economic crisis experienced in some centuries. And, as Bayly's analysis implicitly but conclusively shows, this happened mainly because of the working of the new, modern and honest system of government created by the British in the late 1820s. In other words, after the publication of the book under review, any general appraisal of the history of India in the first

[17] S. Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, by arrangement with Cambridge University Press, 1993); idem, *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation in Eighteenth-Century India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[18] A. Sen, "A Pre-British Economic Formation in India of the Late Eighteenth Century: Tipu Sultan's Mysore," *Perspectives in Social Sciences I. Historical Dimensions*, edited by Barun De (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1977), 46-119.

[19] Exemplary of this historiographical trend is J. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck. The Making of a Liberal Imperialist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975).

half of the nineteenth century is bound to be a profoundly changed one when compared to that hitherto accepted.[20]

14. *Some Contentious Points*

Once the fact has been clarified that the monograph under review has changed, or should change, our vision of the history of eighteenth and nineteenth century India, some dubious points present in it must be highlighted.

I must confess that in reading the book under review, it powerfully, even imperiously, brought to my mind Peter Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity*.[21] In both Bayly's and Brown's decisively important monographs, a period which had hitherto been seen as characterized by profound, catastrophic and long-drawn upheavals is skilfully reinterpreted as an age of orderly, even harmonious change. I still remember Brown's analysis, which I read some forty years ago, as so enticing to be almost hypnotic. However, I also remember that, as I finished Brown's book, the spell cast on me by the wonderfully crafted reasoning of one of the major historians of our time soon started to pale. Simply put, as soon as the fascinating music played by Brown stopped, the doubt set in that such a catastrophic and epochal event as the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the violent rise of the new states could really be seen as nothing more than an orderly and harmonious process of change. Eventually, my doubts found their confirmation in Bryan Ward-Perkins's splendid monograph on the fall of Rome and the end of civilization.[22] In it, the wealth of mainly archaeological data expertly marshalled by its author cut like a Damascene steel sword through Brown's fabulous and fabulously interwoven tapestry of words, cutting it to pieces.

By saying this, I am not anticipating the coming of a Ward-Perkins-like Indian historian who will cut Bayly's *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* to pieces. Simply, I want to emphasize that Bayly's grand painting lacks some crucially important

[20] Unfortunately, the most widespread histories of India, all originally written before the publication of the book under review, even when reprinted after it, have not taken Bayly's analysis into account. This author has attempted to do it in his *Storia dell'India* (Bari: Laterza, 2000).
[21] P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976, first edition 1971).
[22] B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

parts, in particular the role of violence and of famines. Also, the depiction of the historical roots of communalism, although central to Bayly's analytical effort, presents some serious shortcomings. The remaining sections of the present article will explore these three problems.

15. *The (Missing) Role of Violence*

The first crucial flaw in Bayly's analysis is the disconcerting lack of attention to the overwhelming role of violence in making possible the rise of colonialism in India. In fact, Bayly's leitmotif as far as the British conquest of India is concerned is clearly set in the book's introduction, where the author recalls Sir John Seeley's statement, made as early as 1883, according to which: "The East India Company […] had merely taken advantage of the disturbed conditions after the end of the Mughal empire in 1707, and that was mainly by dint of the support of important groups of Indians" (2). As already recalled, this is a statement which is developed some pages later, when Bayly argues that the political and economic success of the British depended on their ability "to cajole, entice or manipulate" Indian merchants and service gentry, who slowly drifted to the East India Company, causing the final and decisive weakening of the Indian states (6). This, indeed, is a leitmotif that is followed all through the book and is in fact applied not only to the transition from the pre-colonial to the colonial era, but even to that between the Mughal Empire and its successor states.

Of course, the above thesis is an evolution and a refinement—or, maybe, an involution—of Gallagher's and Robinson's thesis that the European colonial empires were based on organic cooperation between the colonial rulers and important indigenous groups,[23] so much so that, according to Gallagher and Robinson, when the latter withdrew from the partnership with the Europeans, the colonial empires crumbled.

Gallagher's and Robinson's thesis has much to recommend it and its application has undoubtedly contributed to round and deepen our knowledge of how the European colonial system actually worked. But when this thesis is stretched

[23] J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1953), no. 1: 1-15; reprinted in J. Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, edited by A. Seal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-18.

so far as to render the role of military force invisible or only dimly visible, it powerfully contributes to misrepresent and obscure historical reality. The point here is that cooperation between the important intermediate groups present in the Indian society and the new British rulers was firmly predicated on the military might of the European newcomers. In other words, the choice for the important intermediate Indian groups to cooperate or not to cooperate with the newcomers simply did not exist. To survive, Indian social groups, no matter how influential they were, were forced to collaborate with the rising power of the EIC; any other choice would mean the destruction of any political and economic power or social influence they had. Differently put, the movement of merchants, aristocrats and soldiers from the indigenous states to the new rising colonial state was not the smooth by-product of a free choice but the forced result of the Company's overwhelming and steadily increasing military power. Had the Company's army not decisively won at Udhua-nala, Baksar and Kora, it is difficult to think that the merchants, aristocrats and soldiers who had supported the *nawabi* of Bengal and the *nawabi* of Awadh would have blithely and smoothly moved behind the Company.

As already noted, this was a process that was analogous to the one that, in the first half of the eighteenth century, had seen the shift of merchants, aristocrats and soldiers from the declining Mughal Empire to the successor states. But, differently from what has been argued by some scholars,[24] it was not this move that caused the decline of the Mughal Empire: it was the decline of the Mughal Empire which triggered it. And in the case of the Mughals, as in the case, later in the century, of the successor states, it is difficult to think that the exodus of the aristocrats, merchants and soldiers to the successor states would have taken place had the Mughal armies been successful against Marathas and Persians—which, from a strictly military point of view, was not an impossibility. However, there was a difference between the process that marked the shifting of power from the Mughal Empire to its successor states and that characterizing the analogous move from the successor states to the Company Raj. In the first case, the aristocrats, merchants, soldiers and even organized peasant groups who abandoned the sinking Mughal ship had at least the choice among several successor states; in the second case, the options on offer were basically limited to the Company's

[24] For example, K. Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 21 (1979), no. 2: 151-167.

Raj, which was steadily and rapidly spreading its military power all over the subcontinent.

Also, it is worth stressing that, while the collaboration with the EIC was the one option left, it did not guarantee the survival of the indigenous collaborators. The Company had an unpleasant tendency to exploit its collaborators as long as it considered them useful, only to discard them like squeezed lemons once it decided that they were not useful any more.[25] At the end of the day, the British policies which led to the crisis of the 1830s-1850s and the Great Revolt of 1857-1858 can—nay, must—be seen in this perspective.

All the above drastically changes the portrait of harmonious change and free cooperation between the incoming British rulers and the existing indigenous intermediate groups painted by Bayly. In this field, much additional work is to be done to arrive at a more satisfactory portrait of historical reality and, unfortunately, in this perspective, the monograph under review is not even a launching pad.

16. *The (Missing) Analysis of Famines*

Scattered in the pages of the monograph under review there is more than one hint of famines (85-86, 88-92, 102, 224, 292-299, 331-335, 406), but these hints are like a far-away background noise which is barely perceptible. Of course, famines in India were a cyclical fact of life, like the monsoons or, rather, their failure or overabundance; however, the way in which the states reacted to famines changed over time, and an analysis of their anti-famine policies can shed much light on many of the problems studied in the monograph under review.

The study of famines, however, is cursory in Bayly's book. Of course, this lack of attention is far from being unusual; sadly, in the past 50-60 years, the question of famines and famine policies has been one of the most understudied

[25] The present author has examined the problem of the relationship between the British on the one hand and Indian merchants and bankers on the other in a different geographical setting, namely the city of Surat, proving the exploitative nature of the relationship and the fact that it did not guarantee the survival of the indigenous collaborators. See M. Torri, "Trapped inside the Colonial Order: The Hindu Bankers of Surat and their Business World in the Second Half of the 18th Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991), no. 2: 367-401; idem, "The British Monopoly on the Surat Trade to the Middle East and the Indian Ship-Owning Merchants' Struggle against it: 1759-1800," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 28 (2017), 1: 101-134.

among the truly momentous problems in the history of India. Somehow, the idea has been generally accepted—and, by and large, seems to have been accepted by professional historians too—that the analyses of Indian famines by many Indian pre-Gandhian nationalist intellectuals and their British liberal friends were nothing more than ideological propaganda pieces. As such, they have been regarded less as serious factual inquiries into a major problem in Indian history than as the expression of a nationalist ideology in the making. Symptomatically, Mike Davis, the scholar who, after a gap of decades, produced a major work on Indian famines, their socio-political context and the role of the state in dealing with them, is neither an academic historian nor a historian of India.[26]

From the limited viewpoint of the present analysis, the absence of an enquiry into the role of famines is particularly striking because of what it can reveal in relation to the collaboration between the British colonizers and influential Indian social groups. In fact, the radical differences between the anti-famine policies implemented by the Indian indigenous states and the colonial state and the radically different consequences of these policies for Indian society are both glaring and revealing.

The Mughal Empire and the successor states reacted to famines with proactive policies. During the famine of 1661, Aurangzeb "opened his treasury and granted money without stint. He gave every encouragement to the importation of corn and either sold it at reduced prices, or distributed it gratuitously amongst those who were too poor to pay".[27] On his part, Muhammad Shah, when confronted by a famine on ascending the throne in 1719, relied on the services of Fateh Chand, whom the Emperor later rewarded with the title of Jagat Seth ('banker of the world'), to inject money into the economy by making use of

[26] M. Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts. El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London & New York: Verso, 2001). Davis' work does not deal only with Indian famines, but the analysis of Indian famines is a major part of it. Before the publication of Davis' monograph, the most important work on Indian famines had been published some forty years earlier. See B.M. Bhatia, *Famines in India. A Study in Some Aspects of the Economic History of India, 1860-1965* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963). Of course, when stating that Indian famines are understudied, I do not imply that they have not been studied at all. I simply intend to stress that the amount of scholarly attention on a phenomenon which caused such an appalling amount of human loss, devastating Indian society across huge expanses of land, has been less studied than many other topics of much less import.

[27] *The First Famine Commission Report* (1880), quoted in Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 286.

hundis.[28] Again, as remembered by Bayly himself, during the Chalisa famine of 1783-1784, the *nawab* of Awadh allegedly employed 40,000 people from the Lucknow hinterland to build the great monuments of the city, and had freely distributed Rs. 5,000-10,000 daily (102, 331). All these policies minimized human losses and, more generally, the social devastation brought about by famines.

The reaction of the colonial state to famines, with a solitary exception in the second half of the eighteenth century in South India,[29] was completely different. The colonial state—maybe because of ideological blindness,[30] or maybe because its priority was the good functioning of the British imperial system worldwide rather than the wellbeing of its Indian subjects—left the free market in charge of redressing the situation. The only policy that the colonial state implemented in support of its starving Indian subjects was marching them to deliberately faraway labour camps—which were concentration camps to all intents and purposes. Here, the unfortunate inmates were forced to perform exhausting—and mainly pointless—hard work, on a diet that was poorer than that in some Nazi extermination camps.[31] All this, of course, had the result of pushing the number of human losses to dreadful heights, causing literally millions of deaths. And while all this happened, India went on exporting huge quantities of food.[32]

Summing up, famines in the colonial period were akin to gigantic hammer blows which hit wide geographical areas, devastating the local indigenous society, including those intermediate groups—merchants and service people—on whose cooperation the colonial state was supposedly based. By stating this, I do not want to put a question mark over the fact that the working of the colonial state was grounded on cooperation between its European lords and the most

[28] J.H. Little, *House of Jagatseth* (Calcutta: Calcutta Historical Society, 1967), 47. Funnily and significantly enough, the author, in remembering the event, muses on the fact that "in any case it is difficult to understand how the circulation of hundis could avail such a crisis". Nowadays, after the work of Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, why injecting money in the economy helps to overcome a famine is no longer a mystery. It is worth stressing that the Mughal aristocracy, although without the benefit of the knowledge of modern economic theory, seems to have been fully aware of how to cope with a situation of famine.

[29] R. Ahuja, "State Formation and 'Famine Policy' in Early Colonial South India," *The Indian Economic Social History Review*, 39 (2002), no. 4: 351-380.

[30] As argued by Srinivasa Ambirajan, "Political Economy and Indian Famines," *South Asia*, 1 (1971), no. 1: 20-28.

[31] Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 39 (Table 1.3), and passim.

[32] Ibid., passim.

important indigenous intermediate groups. What I do intend to stress, however, is that the colonial state famine policy is as clear a demonstration as any that the intermediate groups' collaboration with the British did not even guarantee the mere physical survival of the collaborators if the real holders of power decided otherwise.

Let me further clarify this point through an admittedly overbold comparison. Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi, in his *I sommersi e i salvati*,[33] while describing the experience of the inmates in the Nazi extermination camps, stresses that the first violence—and, indeed, most of the usual daily violence to which the internees were subjected—was at the hands of the *kapos*, namely other inmates who had been co-opted by the Nazis as supervisors of their brethren. In this way, the Nazis minimized the cost of running the extermination camps and rendered it more efficient. So, you see, the *kapos* can be compared to the collaborators with the Indian colonial state. But, of course, being a *kapo* did not change the ultimate position of the inmate co-opted for the task; a *kapo* could exercise considerable power over his brethren and be as violent and brutal as he wanted when dealing with them, but his final destiny was exactly the same as that of the people whom he bullied and victimized: the gas chamber. No doubt, even the merchants, the gentry and the 'rich' peasants who were caught up in the vice of the deadly famines of the colonial era, or at least most of them, ended up, like the *kapos*, not differently from their humbler brethren, dying like flies because of starvation or because of infectious illnesses against which their undernourished bodies had no defences left.

17. *The Thesis of the Historical Roots of Communalism and its Limitations*

The last contentious point on which I wish to dwell is Bayly's reconstruction of the historical roots of communalism. As recalled above, according to Bayly, the rise of the so-called Muslim separatism[34] from the 1870s onward was not only—and, maybe, not so much—the result of the policies of the coloni-

[33] For an English edition of Primo Levi's memoir, see, for example, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989).

[34] I speak of the "so-called Muslim separatism" because I strongly dislike this label, which I consider communally flawed. A more correct one is, in my own view, that of "Indo-Muslim nationalism".

al government and the working of the new Westernized schools and colleges, which favoured the shaping of a new Indian-Muslim identity. Rather, it had in-depth historical roots, related to the different religious features of the two main components of the modern Indian middle class. Looking at the problem from this standpoint, particularly cogent appears to be Bayly's criticism of Paul Brass's characterization of the Indian Muslims in the United Provinces. Brass argues that in 1859-1931, the Muslims in the United Provinces, in spite of all the rhetoric about the poverty and backwardness of the Indian Muslims (which they themselves contributed to craft), were indeed a privileged community, more advanced than the local Hindu community.[35] Bayly, quite convincingly, counters Brass's argument by pointing out that, although still a privileged group, the Muslims of the United Province had historically been moving along a long-term declining trend. As a consequence, in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, the UP Muslims' perception of being a disadvantaged community, far from being a figment of ideology, was an accurate appraisal of their (historically deteriorating) social position. In turn, this explains the UP Muslims' crucial role as the intellectual and organizational leaders of the Muslim community.

All the above is undoubtedly correct, at least up to a point. In fact, the conclusion—implied in Bayly's analysis, but not openly articulated—that, because of their different cultural-religious features, the two main segments of the Indian middle class were bound to be pitted one against the other in a communal confrontation, triggering the so-called Muslim separatism, seems to be based on a far from unassailable axiom. This is that social groups characterized by different religious connotations are bound to clash, politically and socially, unless a strong state keeps them in check.

Now, if Bayly's analysis is correct, it is logical to deduce that Muslim separatism in the late colonial period was as much the result of the different religious connotations of the two main segments of the rising Indian middle class as of the inability (or unwillingness?) of the colonial state to keep in check communal tensions. It is, however, a fact that Bayly, in the monograph under review, appears rapidly to lose sight of the implications of the second half of his statement, namely that a strong state could keep different communities in check, preventing communal conflict.

[35] P.R. Brass, "Muslim Separatism in United Provinces: Social Context and Political Strategy before Partition," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5, nos. 3/5 (January 1970): 167-186.

Rather, he focuses his attention on proving the existence of communal tensions during the pre-colonial and early colonial period. Chronologically, he starts from the "bloody massacres of Ahmed Shah at Agra and Muttra in 1761" which, according to the author, "were calculated acts of religious savagery" (335), and continues by enumerating a series of communal clashes which, in Bayly's opinion, characterized the 1820s, the 1830s and the Great Revolt of 1857-1858.[36]

No doubt the instances of communal tensions and clashes occurring in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries enumerated by Bayly are real—at least most of the time.[37] Accordingly, they cannot be wished away and must be con-

[36] According to the author, in the 1820s and 1830s "there were a series of bloody Hindu-Muslim clashes in the cities and rural bazaars of north India" (Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 335). For Bayly's tendency to characterize the Great Revolt as at times similar to a communal clash between Hindus and Muslims, see above.

[37] I must confess that I am puzzled by Bayly's reference to Ahmad Shah's (I suppose Ahmad Shah Abdali's) "calculated acts of religious savagery at Agra and Muttra in 1761". In Bayly's heavily footnoted monograph, there is no reference for this assertion. On my part, far from being able to locate any supporting evidence for it, I have been incapable even of finding any indication that this "religious savagery" ever took place. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, at the beginning of 1761 the Abdali was fully engaged in confronting the Maratha army and certainly did not have either the incentive or the possibility to divert part of his forces to commit "calculated acts of religious savagery at Agra and Muttra". On 14 January 1761, the Abdali confronted the Maratha army, headed by Sadashivrao Bhau on the fields of Panipat, decisively vanquishing it. Again according to Sir Jadunath, after the battle the Abdali Shah first visited Panipat, paying tribute to the tomb of the saint Bu Ali Qalandar, and then set out for Delhi, where he spent February and the first half of March, happily engaged "in seizing property 'beyond imagination'": J. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 vols. (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1970-1972, first edition 1932), vol. 2 (1971), 270-271. At the beginning of March, the Abdali was planning to advance towards Agra, but his troops mutinied, forcing him "to decide on a prompt return to Afghanistan" (ibid., 272). He left Delhi on 20 March. Sir Jadunath points out that, according to a Maratha report, "there was a three days' plunder of Delhi by his [the Abdali's] retreating troops" (ibid.). However there is no hint either that the plunder of Delhi had communal undertones or that the Afghans ever had the chance to sally to Muttra and Agra, to commit "calculated acts of religious savagery". Ahmad Shah returned to India only the next year, but he did not even advance as far as Delhi, let alone Agra and Muttra, as he was fully engaged in trying, rather unsuccessfully, to subdue the rebellious Sikhs in the Punjab. Summing up, in 1761, Ahmad Shah never reached either Muttra or Agra, which makes Bayly's assertion rather difficult to accept. Of course, this leaves open the possibility that Bayly misquotes the date of the alleged massacre. By persisting in my attempt to locate the event, I came across what James Grant Duff writes concerning the Abdali's actions in Muttra and Agra some years before. Duff states that, in 1758, Ahmad Shah Abdali crossed the Attock with a large army and entered Delhi. As a consequence, "Delhi was plundered, and its unhappy people, again subjected to

fronted and explained. A main gauge for doing so is to clearly define if the instances put together by Bayly represent the norm or, on the contrary, are exceptions. It is logical to expect some frictions between two social groups which live together but are characterized by different socio-economic and religious features and customs. The problem, therefore, is not if there were frictions and clashes or not, as, of course, they were bound to happen. Rather, the problem is whether these frictions and clashes were frequent and recurrent enough to be judged the norm in the social interaction between the two groups or, rather, must be judged as exceptions. In this perspective, the bottom line is that the examples marshalled by Bayly are simply too few and too unsystematic to be construed as proof of the existence of some in-depth religious-based fissure in the pre-colonial and early colonial Indian society. These examples, at most, point to the need for a more thorough examination of the communal interactions in Indian society before the late colonial period. In conclusion, by themselves, Bayly's examples are insufficient to disprove the thesis that communal relations in India, at least from the time of Akbar and up the 1870s, were, as a rule, tolerably harmonious and that the 1857-1858 Great Revolt, in spite of some exceptions, was characterized by Muslim-Hindu cooperation. In turn, this means that the assumption that the Indian middle class, as it took shape in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United Provinces, was bound to split politically along communal lines is based on very flimsy factual foundations.

Bayly himself must have been dissatisfied with the conclusions that he had reached in the book under review in relation to the problem under discussion. It is a fact that he went back to the subject in an article published two years after *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.[38] The article, focused on the "pre-history" of communalism, is a very nuanced one which, observed from the vantage point of *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, appears to be engaged in both deepening Bayly's analysis of communalism before 1870, and, maybe more important, qualifying it.

pillage, and its daughters to pollution. The city of Muttra shared a like fate, and Agra was only saved by the breaking out of a violent disease in the camp of the Afghans, which compelled their king to abandon his conquests, and hasten beyond the influence of pestilence, to the more congenial climate of Cabul." See J. Grant Duff, *A History of the Mahrattas*, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826), vol. 2, 130. What happened in Delhi and Muttra (but not in Agra) could well have been calculated acts of savagery, but the "unhappy people" and their daughters, who were its victims, were both Hindu and Muslim. There is no indication that only the former were subjected to the indignities described by Duff.

[38] C.A. Bayly, "The Pre-History of 'Communalism'? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860," *Modern Asian Studies*, 19 (1985), no. 2 : 177-203.

The author puts his effort into perspective by pointing out that: "If religious revitalization did not necessarily give rise to religious or communal conflict, it is also the case that the widespread Hindu-Muslim symbiosis of the pre-colonial and early colonial periods did not totally exclude the possibility of riot and disturbance along communal lines."[39] He goes on to make an accurate analysis of the nature of eighteenth century religious syncretism and of the fact that the undeniable existence and relevance of this Hindu-Muslim syncretism did not preclude instances of religiously motivated conflict. This, he points out, was sometimes strengthened by the socio-economic differentiation among the groups involved.

Without dwelling on Bayly's analysis, what is important to stress here is his conclusions. The author states:

> While this paper does not provide much support for the old nationalist view that pre-colonial and early colonial times (with the deplorable exception of Aurangzeb's reign) were characterized by *entirely* peaceful relations between the major religious groups, it cannot be taken to endorse the 'two nations' theory either. What seems difficult to show is that there is any unilinear or cumulative growth of communal identity before 1860 […]. But ultimately, the evidence presented in this paper tends to re-emphasize the importance of preconditions in social structures for sustained communal violence […]. Religious differences were more likely to become communal conflicts when they coincided with shifts in political and economic power. *Conflicts between Hindu and Sikh peasantry and Muslim gentry, or between Muslim peasantry and Hindu gentry did not inevitably lead to polarization on communal lines*.[40]

This is a rather different conclusion from the one that, although not explicitly stated in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, forms the subtext of the book—namely, that the Hindu and Muslim sectors of the modern Indian middle class were, if not predestined, at least strongly predisposed to communal confrontation. As Bayly himself concludes: "Preconditions are not the same as causes."[41]

This is a salutary warning which must be applied to Bayly's own analysis of the historical roots of communalism in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.

[39] Ibid., 180.
[40] Ibid., 202, 203 (emphasis added).
[41] Ibid., 203.

3

GUIDO ABBATTISTA

Information, Communication and Knowledge in the Government of the Empire. Reflections on Bayly's *Empire and Information*

When he published *Empire and Information*,[1] Bayly had already written three major books: *The Local Roots of Indian Politics* (1975), *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1780-1870* (1983) and *Imperial Meridian* (1989),[2] all works strongly connected with the 1996 book. In other words, *Empire and Information* is the culmination of an already very rich research path on the history of colonial India, which began with the 1975 book on Allahabad derived from the doctoral thesis carried out under the guidance of Jack Gallagher. Thanks to this path, Bayly has been able to put to good use his knowledge of the archives of the Benares region, a knowledge of previously unexplored sources to which the Cambridge historian had access thanks to his linguistic knowledge and the intermediacy of consultants, making the 1996 book a pioneering and highly innovative work which has profoundly changed the way we look at the history of modern India, the dynamics of the construction of British imperial power, and the birth of Indian nationalism.

In *Empire and Information*, if we want to simplify to the maximum, Bayly brings into the open, with reference to Northern India (i.e. the central region of Benares, the so-called United Provinces of the British period, between Bengal

[1] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Quotations from this text are referenced with page numbers in brackets.

[2] C.A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics. Allahabad 1880-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); idem, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); idem, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

and Rajputana) between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the complex world of Indian spies, informers, mediators, couriers, messengers and political secretaries. These were figures the English recruited and on whom they relied to collect, through the exploitation of personal networks—family, parental, social networks of which those characters were part—information about the territory, the cities, their inhabitants and the Indian reality as a whole. But the heuristic and interpretative scope of the book goes far beyond these aspects of social and political history. The book aims at demonstrating how the forms assumed by British politics in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the result of a complex mechanism of interaction between pre-colonial local traditions and new structures of imperial power, according to a historiographic perspective that was no longer Anglocentric, but capable of placing at the centre of the observation Indian reality, as would happen in subsequent books such as *Origins of Nationality in South Asia* (1998) and *Recovering Liberties* (2011).[3]

Indeed, through field experimentation, *Empire and Information* directly touches some of the key issues of historiographical (and literary, historical-anthropological and sociological) debate from the 1770s onwards: the nature of colonial power between domination and negotiation; the complex set of phenomena included under the category of 'Orientalism', introduced by Said, caught in its most immediately performative dimension; the relationship between forms of knowledge and exercise of power; the forms and role of the public sphere; and the nature of national sentiment as the result of complex cultural constructions and representations. From this point of view, Bayly's interpretation—thanks, too, to the teaching of Eric Stokes—comes into direct contact with the works by authors such as Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Benedict Anderson, who, from the early 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, contributed to a profound redefinition of how we conceive the ways of exercising power, the historical phenomena of colonial and imperial domination, the interaction between Western and Asian cultures, and the problem of 'native agency', understood through a dimension of historical temporality focused on continuity

[3] C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia. Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); idem, *Recovering Liberties. Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

and permanence rather than on breakages. At the same time, it dialogues with interpretations by scholars who, in turn, have modified the way we understand the most specific phenomena of birth, nature and evolution of British imperial domination in India, like Ranajit Guha, the guru of the Subaltern Studies, or the historian of anthropological formation Bernard Cohn, but also Eugene F. Irschick and Nicholas B. Dirks.[4]

Strengthened by this complex critical and historiographical background, Bayly traces in *Empire and Information* an analytical path through three main phases of the history of the advent and structuring of British power in Northern India. In Bayly's book, the treatment of the pre-1765 period is characterized by the description of Mughal power in the northern areas as already traditionally based on networks of personal relationships, structured information-gathering systems, and the implementation of political control through information coming from networks of political and social mediators, and on the affirmation of a highly literate public sphere, certainly limited and elitist but nevertheless essential to the orderly development of the administrative work under the control of the Mughal imperial authority. In describing this "indigenous public sphere" (180), Bayly emphasizes the presence of factors such as the existence of limits to the political authority deriving from Islamic law and the relative vision of society and religious life; a relative idea of a just and unjust government; the existence of an apparatus of juridical schools and jurisconsults with independent opinions and a strong idea of custom; and the existence of a multiplicity of places and actors carrying a lively political debate even in the absence of the market, as a separate area from the family and private domestic sphere and periodical press communication. Bayly's is a representation that arises from the analysis of very rich unpublished materials preserved in the Indian archives (memorials, notes, instructions, correspondences, reports).

We must also observe how that representation has exerted a considerable influence, beyond the sphere of academic historiography, on a certain progressive Indi-

[4] B. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); E.F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); N.B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993); idem, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); idem, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

an public discourse. Take, for example, the case of Amartya Sen, tending to depict Mughal India from the age of Akbar as an open, tolerant society characterized by the form and exercise of negotiated and consensual authority, which would have sown the seeds of democracy before the advent of European domination.

The second fundamental moment of Bayly's periodization is that which goes from 1785 to the 1820s, which the Cambridge historian analyses from the point of view of the creation of a refined intelligence system capable of identifying and relying on pre-existing networks, informants and the indigenous public sphere. In short, the British power, expanding in the centre-north starting from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, aims to become part of the public sphere, using it to its own ends and building in synergy with it an Anglo-Indian cognitive "ecumene" that allows the accumulation of a "colonial knowledge" (6) in crucial matters such as taxation; topographical, economic and fiscal control of the territory; public order; defence; identification; description and repression of crime; and administrative management of the caste system. It is therefore a period of high commingling and negotiation with the local elites by the exponents of British power, whose operational effectiveness develops parallel to the ability to collect and use information for the purpose of building an information order managed by an expert bureaucracy, who, in turn, inherit the relational and sapiential heritage of traditional bureaucracies. In this process, which Bayly analyses through an original conceptual instrumentation, the two orders of knowledge—the "patrimonial" or "affective" one of Moghul ancestry and the "incorporated" or "abstract" and "institutional" (7-8, 179) one of the British matrix—interact, balancing reciprocally in a dialectic between native agency and instances of colonial politics through which is recognizable what Bayly, alluding to the real forms and protagonists of the knowledge of Oriental realities behind the stimuli of government practice, calls an "orientalism in action" (144).

The importance of this interpretation concerning the mechanisms of formation of colonial knowledge is perfectly understandable when compared with the vision developed by Bernard Cohn. According to Cohn, colonial knowledge is structured autonomously and unilaterally as a direct projection of power. For Bayly, though, the imperial power cannot amount to sheer domination, but can consolidate itself through the construction of an efficient informational order, the realization of which can take place only through interaction with local forces and their active participation.

The third moment of Bayly's periodization is that from the 1830s to the 1850s, with the date limit inevitably fixed at 1857 with the Great Mutiny. This is a phase

of crucial importance, during which negotiated and participated colonial knowledge tends to be supplanted by the entrance of "useful knowledge" (212-246), an expression that is only apparently generic: in reality—as well demonstrated by the use that Joel Mokyr makes of it in his book *The Enlightened Economy* (2009) with reference to the economic and social modernization of England in the early 1800s[5]—it is able to synthesize an idea of typical Enlightenment ancestry, pertaining to a Westernizing brand of progress through public education, Western scientific and technological knowledge, and the diffusion of communication through the press, especially the periodical press. The intent of modernizing India by disseminating "useful knowledge" and its interaction with "native knowledge" (273) is documented by Bayly in the central chapters of the book with reference to the fields of astronomy, medicine, language and geography, wherein the projects and the cognitive energies of the Anglo-Indian government unfolded to the highest degree. Projects, programmes, institutional initiatives and major publications of fundamental importance began at this stage, giving substance to an "orientalism in action" through which a reclassification of colonial knowledge was realized on the basis of hierarchies, reflecting the vision of the world proper to the Britons of the beginning of the nineteenth century. This process also involved the introduction of educational systems often linked to missionary initiatives; technical and agronomic literacy initiatives; the construction of a modern, efficient and low-cost postal system; the birth of a publishing industry; and the dissemination of printed books in a reality that a generation before had been totally devoid of it but which now substantially helped the emergence of a culture that was not only anglophone, but also vernacular.

However, even in this case, the process was not totally detached from the traditional forms of local knowledge, but rather a bi-directional process. As Bayly points out, "These institutionalised forms of knowing, however, were still influenced by people present—and presenting themselves—in Indian society. The colonial information order was erected on the foundations of its Indian precursors" (179). It was not a process that Indian society suffered passively. On the contrary, Bayly speaks explicitly of a "colonial paradox" according to which traditional information, cultural and sapiential networks continued to exist alongside the order of imperial knowledge, giving rise to a "juxtaposition" rather than to the re-

[5] J. Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

placement of one order with another (ibid.). If the order of information available to British power was extraordinarily rich and structured, still quite out of British control were Indian sensibilities, experience and visions of life and society, which remained impervious to the British power and strengthened themselves by developing from within a criticism of sociologies, interpretations of religious systems, and ideas of crime elaborated by British institutions. In short, the British Empire in the mid-nineteenth century is presented as a monster, an information-devouring system, according to the suggestive image by Rudyard Kipling[6]—a creator of mechanisms of development of local opinion without the ability to control and orient it, so that precisely these areas of interaction became, as Bayly demonstrates, the most fruitful places for the incubation of nationalist ideas. Precisely these kinds of cultural experience, if adequately understood, reveal the limits of Orientalism, which does not appear, in the manner of Said (and Cohn), as the fruit of a political agenda that generates its own denigrated 'otherness', but rather as a complex fabric of relationships and interactions.

From this point of view, the revolt of 1857 only revealed the "paradox of colonial rule" (ibid.). A government devoted to information-gathering and structuring dramatically realized its own inadequacy, ignorance and weakness in the face of the onset of forces that it had contributed to create but had not been able to control. Bayly's conclusion is that "the new media and the diffusion of western knowledge had unsettled society. The dissidents saw the changes not so much as a contest between a stagnant Orient and dynamic western science, as one between still-vital Indian knowledges and the foreigners' abstract rule-making, which divorced information from godly wisdom" (246).

Ultimately, the first major crisis of the British Empire in India is presented by Bayly as a crisis in the order of information—what he calls the most dramatic example of "information panics" (143). This is demonstrated by the inability to foresee, anticipate or even think about the possibility of a great uprising revealed by a dominant power endowed with great influence, great means and solid convictions about the superiority of Western knowledge, and the inertia and immobility of traditional ones—a dominant power inadequate, though, not only to achieve a complete control of the society under its government, but also to realize the depth of the forces of change that it had triggered.

[6] R. Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (London: Macmillan, 1899; first edition 1888), 224.

One of the most interesting and lasting conclusions of *Empire and Information* concerns the concept of Orientalism itself. Bayly convincingly proves that, if observed in the concrete practice of the exercise of power, one cannot speak of Orientalism as an indistinct cultural attitude generated by the hierarchically superior position of the West over the Eastern world. Studied in British India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the concrete practice of power management—or what Foucault terms 'governmentality'—Orientalism was a diversified complex of notions stemming from mediation, negotiation, collaboration, and interaction between a culture in power and local traditions, to the elaboration of which local groups contributed directly in a process not unilaterally directed from above according to the needs of power.

Empire and Information is a fundamental contribution that has radically changed the way of looking at the history of modern India under English domination, demonstrating at the same time the relativity of a periodization that, from the perspective of imperial and global history, cuts across traditional chronological limits. It is also a great reservoir of ideas for studying forms of imperial domination based on the collection and use of information, and the creation of colonial knowledge.

4

TEODORO TAGLIAFERRI

Bayly's Imperial Way to World History

1. *World History as the Story of Globalization*

Bayly's intellectual itinerary exemplifies at its highest levels one of the most remarkable aspects of the transformations taking place on the contemporary historiographical scene: the merging into one another of the processes of renewal that have almost simultaneously affected the nineteenth- and twentieth-century traditions of both imperial history and *Weltgeschichte* during the last generation.[1] Analysis of the role played by the "global connections" in planetary modernization, on which both *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* and the posthumously published *Remaking the Modern World, 1900-2015* focus, shows substantial analogies and several points of more direct contact with the methodological ideas, scientific programme and ethical-political premises of the international movement for the professionalization and academic institutionalization of world history which developed after the end of the Cold War, and in particular with

[1] J. Osterhammel, "World History," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, 5 vols., General Editor D. Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011-2012), vol. 5, *Historical Writing since 1945*, edited by A. Schneider and D. Woolf, 106; T. Tagliaferri, *La repubblica dell'umanità. Fonti culturali e religiose dell'universalismo imperiale britannico* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2012), 133-147; S. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013), 57; T. Tagliaferri, contribution to "Connessioni globali e storia transnazionale," edited by M. De Giuseppe and A. Roccucci, *Il mestiere di storico. Rivista della Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea*, 7 (2016), no. 2: 57-60. For Bayly's own views about these historiographical developments, see C.A. Bayly, "Afterword," in A. Burton, *Empire in Question. Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 293-302; idem, "History and World History," in *A Concise Companion to History*, edited by U. Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-25; idem, introduction to *Remaking the Modern World, 1900-2015: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 1-11.

its US branch.[2] But the approach tested in the fortunate volume of the *Blackwell History of the World* published in 2004 can also be seen as the result of another trend in which Bayly had taken part in previous decades, when he had repeatedly placed himself on the cutting edge of the attempts made by the imperial historians to redefine the object of their discipline by studying British colonialism "as a theme in world history"—that is, "as part of the larger and dynamic interaction of European and non-western societies", and a formative factor of today's globalized society.[3]

It is precisely the centrality they assign to the category of globalization which offers the two historiographical currents joining together in Bayly's work a natural meeting ground. While the world historians select globalization as their own privileged subject of investigation, and the historians of the British Empire regard its study as providing the only analytical framework appropriate to understand the rise and decline of European world hegemony,[4] both groups of scholars tend to interpret it as a phenomenon which has been coextensive with human

[2] C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); idem, *Remaking the Modern World*. Some key themes of this last volume were preliminarly discussed in idem, "Michael Mann and Modern World History," *The Historical Journal*, 48 (2015), no. 1: 331-341. This is a review of *The Sources of Social Power*, by M. Mann, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986-2013), vol. 4, *Globalizations, 1945-2011.*

[3] W.R. Louis, "Foreword," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols., Editor-in-chief W.R. Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999), vol. 1, *The Origins of Empire*, edited by N. Canny, vii; idem, "Introduction," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, *Historiography*, edited by R.W. Winks, 41 (reprinted as "The Historiography of the British Empire" in idem, *Ends of British Imperialism. The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization. Collected Essays* [London: Tauris, 2006], 955-998; T. Ballantyne and A. Burton, "Empires and the Reach of the Global," in *A History of the World*, 6 vols., General Editors A. Iriye and J. Osterhammel, vol. 5, *A World Connecting, 1870-1945*, edited by E. Rosenberg (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 338. The best starting point for an overview of Bayly's life and career is the "Historiographical and Autobiographical Note" attached to C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia. Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 307-322. See also "'I am not going to call myself a global historian'. An Interview with C.A. Bayly," by B.M. John, *Itinerario. International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction*, 31 (2007), no. 1: 7-14; "Christopher Bayly interviewed by A. Macfarlane on 24th July 2014," (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-I7BJZQTpTE); C. Clark, S. Bayly, "Christopher Bayly and the Making of World History," in Bayly, *Remaking the Modern World*, xiii-xviii.

[4] P. J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, "Afterword. Empires and Globalization," in idem, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, second edition (Harlow: Pearson, 2002, first edition 1993), 661-681.

experience since antiquity, and therefore in a way similar to the definition given by the Egyptologist and theoretician of cultural memory, Jan Assmann, who describes globalization as:

> a process of general dissemination (of merchandise, technologies, news, political influence, religious ideas) across political and cultural boundaries and of the ensuing integration and coalescence of various previously isolated zones into one system of interconnections and interdependencies, where everything, that is, all nations, empires, tribes and states cohere in some way or other by political, economic, or cultural relations.[5]

Bayly's proximity or critical interlocution with some forerunners and leading exponents of the "New World History",[6] like Marshall Hodgson, William McNeill, Kenneth Pomeranz and Jerry Bentley, is well documented by a group of writings (some of them published shortly before *The Birth of the Modern World*) which record the maturation of his thought about three crucial components of his approach to the "long nineteenth century": the diagnosis of the "Great Divergence" between the West and Asia; the periodization of the history of globalization; and the critique of Eurocentrism and the compartmentalization of regional histories.[7] But the profound congruence of the conceptual framework of Bayly's

[5] J. Assmann, "Globalization, Universalism, and the Erosion of Cultural Memory," in *Memory in a Global Age. Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, edited by A. Assmann and S. Conrad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 121; idem, "Cultural Memory and the Myth of the Axial Age", in *The Axial Age and its Consequences*, edited by R.N. Bellah and H. Joas (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 376. See also M. Bandeira Jéronimo, "Imperial Globalizations," in *Explorations in History and Globalizations*, edited by C. Antunes and K. Fatah-Black (London: Routledge, 2016), 212-230.

[6] L. Di Fiore and M. Meriggi, *World History. Le nuove rotte della storia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2011), 16-90; *The New World History: A Field Guide for Teachers and Researchers*, edited by R. E. Dunn, L. J. Mitchell, and K. Ward (Oakland, CA.: University of California Press, 2016).

[7] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 41; idem, "South Asia and the 'Great Divergence,'" *Itinerario. European Journal of Overseas History*, 24 (2000), nos. 3-4: 89-103; idem, "'Archaic' and 'Modern' Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena, c. 1750-1850," in *Globalization in World History*, edited by A.G. Hopkins (London: Pimlico, 2002), 47-73; idem, "From Archaic Globalization to International Networks, ca. 1600-2000," in *Interactions. Transregional Perspectives on World History*, edited by J.H. Bentley, R. Bridenthal, and A.A. Yang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 14-29; J.H. Bentley, "Regional Histories, Global Processes, Cross-Cultural Interactions," ibid., 1-2, 5-6; P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly, "Comparing Pre-Mod-

book with the methodological proposal of the North American scholars emerges in full evidence especially when the architecture of the series for which it was written—the *Blackwell History of the World*—is taken into account, as well as the historiographical ideas of its planner and editor, the British medievalist Robert Ian Moore, which were formed, in turn, in close dialogue with a galaxy of authors that included among others, besides Hodgson, McNeill and Bentley, L.S. Stavrianos, Philip Curtin, Alfred Crosby, Janet Abu-Lughod, David Christian and several contributors to the first years of the *Journal of World History*.[8]

In order to outline this comparison, it will suffice to recall that the terrain of competence that the American world historians claim for their discipline in the academic division of labour consists in the study of the "global past" and the evolution of the "human community" (an expression employed in the mission statement of the World History Association and borrowed from the subtitle of McNeill's *The Rise of the West*).[9] In their terminology, the much-abused term 'global' acquires a specific conceptual meaning: historical events and processes qualify as global when they "work their influence", and make their influence actually felt, in "more than one civilization or cultural region" and unfold therefore on an "interregional", "hemispheric" or literally "ecumenical" scale. Among the examples of global historical phenomena of this kind, the imposition and the exertion of economic, military and governmental control on colonial territories and attempts at empire-building involving peoples rooted in remote or different civilizational backgrounds, like Europeans and Asians in the obvious case of British

ern Empires," *The Medieval History Journal*, 6 (2003), no. 2, Special Issue, *Tributary Empires in History*, edited by P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly: 169-187, 182-183; C.A. Bayly, "Hodgson, Islam, and World History in the Modern Age," in *Islam and World History: The Ventures of Marshall Hodgson*, edited by E. Burke III and R.J. Mankin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 38-54. See also B. Bongiovanni, T. Detti, and P. Ginsborg, "L'alba di una globalizzazione imperfetta," edited by B. Bongiovanni, *Passato e presente*, 27 (2009), no. 1: 11-29, and, for further details, T. Tagliaferri, "Christopher Bayly e 'the return of universal history,'" in idem, *La persistenza della storia universale. Studi sulla professione di storico* (Rome: Bordeaux, 2017), 18-22.

[8] R.I. Moore, "World History," in *Companion to Historiography*, edited by M. Bentley, London, Routledge, 1997, 918-936.

[9] W.H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community*, second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991; first edition 1963); P. Manning, *Navigating World History. Historians create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3-15; World History Association, "History, Mission and Vision of the WHA," http://www.thewha.org/about-wha/history-mission-and-vision-of-the-wha/, accessed February 25, 2017.

India, are entitled to a prominent place alongside cross-cultural migrations and the creation of diasporic communities; the establishment of long distance trade networks; the impact of innovations in transport and communication technologies; the encounters and exchanges of social, religious, cultural, political and institutional traditions; missionary initiatives; the diffusion of botanical and animal biological species; and the spreading of diseases.[10]

Correspondingly, by "human community", the New World Historians mean both the ethical standpoint, transcending the limitations of "nation-states, discrete regions, or particular cultures", from which they make profession of practising the study and teaching of history, and the specific field of social activity which has been generated throughout history by the interactions among human groups that have taken place in the "transregional" and "cross-cultural" geohistorical spaces.[11] The "human community" is, in other terms, a kind of macro-society composed of regional "great societies" interacting both among themselves and with the global society that includes them all.[12]

Moreover, the "human community" grows and changes shape in the course of time. It has a "morphological" history of its own,[13] which can be empirically reconstructed, which is susceptible to periodization, and which may provide the thread for a unified narrative of world history centred on the prolonged genesis of the present epoch of "global cosmopolitanism", when "all the cultural variety of mankind is embraced within the bounds of an intimately interacting whole".[14] As far as the modern and contemporary age is concerned, the "global past" coincides with those phases in the history of the human community through which

[10] J.H. Bentley, "A New Forum for Global History," *Journal of World History. Official Journal of the World History Association*, I (1990), 1: iii-v, iv; idem, "Myths, Wagers, and Some Moral Implications of World History", *Journal of World History*, 16 (2005), 1: 76-81.

[11] WHA, "History, Mission and Vision"; P.D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); J.H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Interactions*, ed. Bentley, Bridenthal, and Yang.

[12] G. Wallas, *The Great Society. A Psychological Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1914); A. J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey. A Study in the Contact of Civilizations* (London: Constable, 1922), 361; McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 57-58, 63, 131, 135. See T.H. Qualter, *Graham Wallas and the Great Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980).

[13] A.J. Toynbee, "The Philosophy and Morphology of History," in *Science et conscience de la société. Mélanges en l'honneur de Raymond Aron*, 2 vols., edited by J.-C. Casanova (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1971), vol. 2, 19-33.

[14] McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 727, 729.

it first assumed the general character of *panmixìa* and subsequently evolved into the particular kind of *panmixìa* prevailing today.[15]

Translated into Bayly's terminology, the "cross-cultural interactions" emphasized by Bentley and the "history of the human community" outlined by McNeill correspond respectively to the "lateral history" (or "history of connections") that, in *The Birth of the Modern World*, the British scholar aimed to combine organically with the more conventional "'vertical history'" dealing with the diachronic development of single regional histories, and to "globalization", understood in its basic meaning of "progressive increase in the scale of social processes from a local or regional to a world level".[16]

A concrete and very significant example of periodization based on the concept of "human community" is provided by McNeill's *The Rise of the West*. In his influential 1963 book, the recognized founding father of New World History in the United States identified three main epochs in what Bayly and Assmann have more recently defined as the history of globalization. The first was that of the Middle Eastern ascendancy (1700 to 500 BCE), when the "human community" first emerged—already presenting the features of a "cosmopolitan civilization" that encompassed a number of local civilizations and cultures—from the expansion of a Babylonian "'great society'" formed at the beginning of the second millennium BCE. The next epoch spanned the two thousand years from the "closure" of the entire Eastern hemisphere (occurring between the fifth century BCE and the third century CE) to the threshold of the early modern age, and saw the establishment of the "Eurasian cultural balance", or "Eurasia's equilibrium", as it has been recently renamed by John Darwin. In this second period, the "human community" expanded into an even wider "Eurasian ecumene"—a unified space within which a variable constellation of four or five mildly connected civilizations interacted without any one of them losing its autonomy or gaining ascendancy over the others. The third epoch, the epoch of "Western dominance", opened in the aftermath of the early modern "closure" of a "global ecumene" which now became almost literally coextensive with the inhabited world. This period saw the Eurasian equilibrium first "changing" to the advantage of the West (1500 to 1700 CE), then

[15] On this concept, see below, 107.

[16] Bayly, "'Archaic' and 'Modern' Globalization", 48-49; idem, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 4. Cf. J.H. Bentley, "Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History", *The American Historical Review*, 101 (1996), no. 3: 749-770; F. Leonardi and L. Maggioni, *World History. La storia delle civiltà secondo W.H. McNeill* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2015).

"tottering" (1700-1850 CE), finally to give rise, since the mid-nineteenth century, to the radical reconfiguration of the "human community" corresponding to the initial form of the "global cosmopolitanism" of our day.[17]

Albeit in many ways outdated, *The Rise of the West*, whose republication in 1991 could be seen as a minor symptom of the incipient "'return of universal history'" diagnosed at the time by Jürgen Osterhammel,[18] has been one of the inspirations for the resurgent belief in the possibility and necessity of producing big works of synthesis compliant with scientific standards in the form of "large-scale empirical narratives, as opposed to totalizing ahistorical metanarratives", which is to be regarded as an essential aspect of the present revival of world history.[19] Since the 1980s, several American scholars (including Bentley and McNeill himself) have advanced and attempted to realize in their writings the project of an "ecumenical world history" centred on the "contributions by all peoples and societies to the making of larger global orders".[20] The underlying idea was that the development and the metamorphoses of the "human community" could provide a coherent framework for a comprehensive and non-Eurocentric narrative of world history which would explain the genealogy of the contemporary mondialized society in terms of the history of globalization. The most immediate and relevant precedent for this kind of present-centred and practically-oriented approach to "ecumenical history", dating back to the decades of the pre-First World War globalization and renewed by Arnold Toynbee in the 1920s,[21] was precisely McNeill's 1963 book. *The Rise of the West* can be read as a deliberately teleological account of the rise of "global cosmopolitanism", which McNeill portrayed

[17] McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 56-58, 110, 247, 295, 316, 563; J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane. The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 164.

[18] J. Osterhammel, review of *Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, by C.A. Bayly (London: Longman, 1989), *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 36 (1993), no. 1: 91-93, 91.

[19] J.H. Bentley, "World History and Grand Narrative", in *Writing World History, 1800-2000*, edited by B. Stuchtey and E. Fuchs (New York: Oxford University Press for The German Historical Institute, London, 2003), 50-51; idem, "Myths, Wagers," 77-78. See *21th-Century Narratives of World History. Global and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by R. Charles Weller (Cham: Springer, 2017).

[20] W.H. McNeill, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), no. 1: 1-10, 7, reprinted in idem, *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3-22; Bentley, "Myths, Wagers," 52, 78-79.

[21] McNeill, "Mythistory," 7; T. Tagliaferri, *Storia ecumenica. Materiali per lo studio dell'opera di Toynbee* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002); idem, *La repubblica dell'umanità*, 221-258.

as the ultimate outcome of a process of progressive enlargement of the scale and growth of the historical significance of the spaces of cross-cultural interaction. In its concluding chapter, he made explicit that the title, *The Rise of the West*, was intended "as a shorthand description of the upshot of the history of the human community to date", when mankind was faced with the alternatives of a nuclear catastrophe and "the eventual establishment of a world-wide cosmopolitanism". McNeill's narrative culminated with a diagnosis of the present and a "vision of the future" centring on the possible advent of a "cosmopolitan world society", which would have been erected on the scaffolding of a "world state" enabled by its "world-wide political-military authority" to exercise "an overarching world sovereignty" (by analogy with the Roman unification of the Mediterranean or the imperial unification of Ancient China) and which would have initially borne "a Western imprint", being actually "an empire of the West", given the role played by the West in the history of the "human community" since 1500.[22]

The Human Web, published in 2003 and written by McNeill in collaboration with his son John, largely represented an updated version of the same conceptual model. The book aimed to provide the reader with "A Bird's Eye View of World History" by emphasizing "the centrality of the webs of interaction" as both significant factors of historical change and human creations whose transformation "constitutes the overarching structure of human history".[23] The history of the world lends itself, in other words, to be entirely and organically described in terms of the widening, thickening, growing power of conditioning exerted on both the social life and the biosphere by "the human web". In this work, therefore, the evolving morphology of the webs of interaction takes the place of the history of human community as the chief criterion of periodization of the global past, from the first "world wide web" operating before the Neolithic age, to the denser "local or regional webs" forming inside it as a result of the invention and diffusion of agriculture, to the "metropolitan web" of the subsequent age of civilizations, to the Euro-Afro-Asian "Old World Web" which arose at the beginning of the vulgar era, to the "cosmopolitan web" of the Oceanic age, to end with the "single global web" of today.[24]

[22] McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 806, 807.

[23] J. R. McNeill and W. H. McNeill, *The Human Web. A Bird's-Eye View of World History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 3, 5.

[24] Ibid., 4-5

A different but not incompatible or unrelated example of the same trend is the multivolume *Blackwell History* to which Bayly contributed *The Birth of the Modern World* and *Remaking the Modern World*. These two books can be numbered among the attempts (the most successful attempts, in the first case) made in recent years to employ the notions of global past and globalization sketched before in the construction of "empirical narratives" dealing with long periods and fundamental junctions in the development of the "human community".

As declared by its editor Moore in the general preface, the ambition of the series, originally planned in more than twenty volumes, is to offer the reader "a (…) comprehensive (…) account of the entire human past" by combining two methodological approaches: the "oldest and simplest" ecumenical approach, that identifies "world history" with "the history of the contacts between peoples previously isolated from one another", and the macro-regional approach, which consists in adopting as units of geohistorical analysis and comparison such regional or hemispheric civilizations and "world systems" as (according to various lists of the volumes planned by Moore) Oceania and the Pacific, Latin America, Japan, China, South-East Asia, India, Russia taken together with Central Asia and Mongolia, Africa, the Islamic World, the Mediterranean (or the Western Mediterranean in the most recent prospectus), and the Western World.[25]

The organization of the series reflects the belief that an "attempt to understand history as a whole" may be pursued with a reasonable hope of success only by alternating "volumes defined by regional parameters", like those devoted to single regions, "worlds" or maritime geohistorical spaces, and "volumes defined by global parameters", like the two written by Bayly or the one originally commissioned to Sanjay Subrahmanyam on *The Early Modern World*.[26] The alternation and the crossover of the two methodological perspectives should therefore confer the *Blackwell History* a "barrel" shape, in which "the indispensable narratives of

[25] Moore, "Series Editor's Preface," in Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, xx; idem, "World History," 929-930. See also idem, "World History: World-Economy or a Set of Sets?," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, third series, 3 (1993), no. 1: 99-105. This is a review of *Before European Hegemony. The World System, A.D. 1250-1350*, by J.L. Abu-Lughod (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), and *Asia before Europe. Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, by K.N. Chaudhuri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Bayly criticised Chaudhuri's book for underplaying the role of "historical change" in human affairs in a review published in *The English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), no. 3: 680-682.

[26] Moore, "World History," 929, note 19; idem, "Series Editor's Preface," xix; Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, iv.

very long-term regional developments" are "bound together by global surveys of the interactions between regions, and the great transformations which they have experienced in common, or visited upon one another", like global modernization.[27]

It is clear, then, that in the overall economy of the series *The Birth of the Modern World* was one of the volumes to be drawn up according to "global parameters" and called to act as hoops, so to speak, of the historiographical barrel imagined by Moore. The task entrusted to its author was to treat the years between the American Revolution and the First World War as one of the great epochs of "convergence" in which historical processes assumed ecumenical dimensions and characteristics by virtue of closer contacts between the several civilizational spaces, and to examine them in terms of their reciprocal relationships and from a cross-regional point of view.[28] Bayly's 2004 book looks at the "long nineteenth century" as a period in which a dramatic acceleration in the pace of historical change coincided with an intensification and a transformation in the nature of the "global 'connectedness'" that had already established itself among the regional societies during the early modern age. Its theme is, in a sense, the classic one of the revolutionary transition "from the Old regimes to Modernity", but it deals with it on a planetary scale, as a product of "global connections" and in its interactive aspects.[29]

2. *Multiple Modernities and Dynamic Interactions in the Transition to the Globalized World*

The strategy employed by Bayly in his analysis of transregional interactions also appears to be in substantial harmony with the methodological attitudes of the New World History, as it rests on the refusal to consider modernization in merely Eurocentric terms. Certainly, while concurring with McNeill in placing against the background of contemporary "cosmopolitanism" a period marked by the long persistence of a condition of relative "equilibrium" in the balance of power among the Old World "great societies", Bayly only disagrees with him about the exact moment in which "the West" would have risen to a position of ascendancy.[30]

[27] Moore, "Series Editor's Preface," xx.
[28] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 19-20.
[29] Ibid., 41, 49; Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 6.
[30] Bayly, "Marshall G. S. Hodgson", 48. See below, 92 e n, 93n.

According to the alternative periodization subscribed to by both Bayly and John Darwin (another global historian deeply influenced, like Bayly, by John Gallagher, the founder of the Cambridge School of imperial history),[31] the interregional equipoise subsisted for about a quarter of millennium, long after the Europeans had taken the initiative in the process of world unification starting with the early modern "closure" of the ecumene. The "Eurasian revolution" unfolded between the 1750s and the 1830s; after that, the new phase of globalization initially driven by the West became so intense as to entail a partial "convergence" and reciprocal assimilation between the cultural regions of the world in conformity with patterns provided by the Western experience (like in the obvious example of the diffusion on a planetary scale of the national state—originally a product of European history—as the fundamental model of organization of the political life and international relations between peoples of diverse civilizational traditions).[32] The very least that can be said, without incurring the risk denounced by the late Giuseppe Galasso of carrying to unacceptable extremes the just demand for "provincializing Europe", is that Europeans and Westerners, also but not only through the means of imperial conquest and colonial control, have been leading actors in the transition to global modernity.[33] This means that, in Bayly's and Darwin's approaches, a central historiographical task remains that of giving a realistic account and assessment of the unquestionably prominent role played by the "expansion of Europe" and the encounters between Europe and the other regional spaces, in particular of the Eastern hemisphere, from the fifteenth century onwards in the making of the present globalized society.[34]

[31] Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, xi. According to Richard Cobb, Gallagher "always described [Chris Bayly] as the best pupil he had ever had in either University [Cambridge and Oxford]" ("Jack Gallagher in Oxford," *The Cambridge Review*, 7 November 1980: 21-24, reprinted in J. Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire. The Ford Lecture and Other Essays*, edited by A. Seal [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], xxvi). See P. Di Gregorio, "'Il più grande impero che il mondo abbia mai conosciuto': alle origini del revisionismo sull'imperialismo britannico", *Storica*, 14 (2008), nos. 41-42: 89-122.

[32] Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 157-217, 500-505.

[33] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Differenc* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); "Galasso: 'La Storia è in crisi ma è ancora maestra di vita'", *Il Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, 23 September 2017 (interview by Mirella Armiero).

[34] T. Tagliaferri, "L'espansione europea nella prospettiva della nuova storia globale," *Il mestiere di storico*, 11 (2019), no. 1: 5-26.

The foremost theoretical innovation introduced into their respective disciplinary fields by the New World Historians and their fellow travellers working in the cognate areas of imperial history and "Expansion studies" during the last four decades pertains precisely to the way of conceptualizing the transregional and cross-cultural interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans which have shaped the trajectories of modern and contemporary globalization.[35] Bayly himself has remembered how, in the Oxford of the early 1960s, when he was an undergraduate at Balliol College, the extra-European societies involved in the processes conducive to the expansion of Europe and overseas empire-building continued to be regarded by his university teachers as historically static, powerless and passive vis-à-vis the unique dynamism, overwhelming superiority and extraordinary enterprise of their Western conquerors. Such was the enduring legacy of the nineteenth century—"Britain's imperial century" par excellence—[36] when the narrative of European colonialism "was written around the triumph of European society over native misrule" and "Indians and Africans were rarely more than a backdrop to the doings of colonisers, missionaries and merchants".[37] This personal testimony referred to a state of things which, since 1945 and the dawn of decolonization, had already begun to change elsewhere in the British academic world and particularly at Cambridge, where Bayly went as a doctoral student in 1970, on the initiative of a group of scholars led by his supervisor John Gallagher who had been accomplishing the first, limited steps of a revisionist trend aiming "*to return agency to indigenous actors*".[38]

In the jargon of the New World History, the use and overuse of the noun 'interaction' (sometimes coupled with such adjectives as 'dynamic' or 'bilateral') fulfils the rhetorical purpose of underlining that the "linkages" and "connections" binding together regional societies and cultures in the globalized spaces should no longer be imagined like the imposition of an omnipotent 'centre' on

[35] R. Hyam, "The Study of Imperial and Commonwealth History at Cambridge, 1881-1981: Founding Fathers and Pioneer Research Students," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29 (2001), no. 3: 75-103, reprinted in idem, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 498, note 19.

[36] R. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*, third edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, first edition 1976).

[37] C.A. Bayly, "What is Third World History?," in *What is History Today?,* edited by J. Gardiner (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 158.

[38] C.A. Bayly, "Ashin Das Gupta," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 43 (2000), no. 1: 14-17, 16.

helpless 'peripheries', since they emerge from and are operated by a much more complex multipolar field of forces with the positive contribution of "all the peoples" concerned.[39] Although these human groups are usually invested with different and shifting degrees of power and influence, it cannot ever happen that one of them is utterly devoid of any historical effectiveness. The chief distinguishing feature of the New World Historians, as compared with their nineteenth and twentieth century predecessors, lies therefore in the propensity to endow the modern and contemporary extra-European worlds with four attributes: first, an endogenous dynamism prior to the "impact of the West";[40] second, the ability to condition the European expansion abroad; third, a real incidence on the construction of "global orders";[41] and fourth, the capacity to re-act and feed back to the Western societies themselves.[42] Seen from this perspective, explicitly adopted by the *Blackwell History of the World*, the transition to modernity analysed in Bayly's 2004 volume appears in a very different light than in the past: no longer "as something which some people or some regions did to others less favoured or deserving, but as a series of transformations in which most of the people of the world participated, and to which most of them contributed, not simply as the objects or victims of the successes of others, but actively, independently and creatively".[43]

As already hinted at before, the effort to highlight the polycentric nature of historical change does not carry Bayly to the point of denying the existence of temporary differentials of power between 'the West and the rest'. His "long nineteenth century" remains the period in the growth of the human community when European "dominance" gave globalization a series of accelerations which propelled the several regional societies towards a unification that was carried out under the contingent hegemony of Western culture. Bayly continues therefore to identify the critical phase of the birth of global modernity with Robert Palmer's and Eric Hobsbawm's "Age of Revolution", which he raises indeed to the rank

[39] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 4; Bentley, "World History and Grand Narrative," 65.
[40] P.D. Curtin, "The British Empire and Commonwealth in Recent Historiography," *The American Historical Review*, 65 (1959), no. 1: 72-91, 73.
[41] Bentley, "Myths, Wagers," 77.
[42] Tagliaferri, *La repubblica dell'umanità*, 133-135.
[43] Moore, "Series Editor's Preface," xxi.

of "an 'axial age' in the history of the world" coinciding with "the first epoch of global imperialism".[44]

In Bayly's thinking, on the other hand, the expansive élans of modern Europe interwove with previous developments that had seen as their chief protagonists the non-European societies assailed by the Western initiative. And this happened not only within the Eurasian arena, where the Europeans found on their path other ancient civilizations comparable with their own, but even in the case of those "native peoples" and "peoples without State" who still in the first half of the twentieth century were deemed unable to stem the "white deluge" and escape, in the long run, a destiny of assimilation, extinction or extermination.[45] Disagreeing with a too simplistic diffusionist interpretation of Westernization, Bayly tries to show how the reception of foreign models was grafted on autonomous "passages to modernity" which were well under way in the extra-European worlds long before their "encounters with the West".[46] And these "non-Western modernities" can help to explain in part the establishment of European imperial supremacy as the response that the colonized societies themselves gave or accepted was given to systemic crises originating from their own internal and autochthonous changes.[47]

In *The Birth of the Modern World*, Bayly therefore adopted as the starting point for his analysis what he portrayed as a global "old regime" embracing the

[44] C.A. Bayly, "The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760-1830," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 26 (1998), no. 2, Special Issue, *Managing the Business of Empire. Essays in Honour of David Fieldhouse*, edited by P. Burroughs and A.J. Stockwell: 28-47; idem, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 61; idem, "The 'Revolutionary Age' in the Wider World, c. 1790-1830," in *War, Empire and Slavery, 1770-1830*, edited by R. Bessel, N. Guyatt, and J. Rendall (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 21-43; idem, "The Age of Revolution in Global Context, c. 1760-1840," in *The Age of Revolution in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, edited by D. Armitage and S. Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 209-217; T. Detti and G. Gozzini, *Storia contemporanea*, vol. 1, *L'Ottocento* (Milan: Pearson, 2016), 10-11.

[45] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 432-450.

[46] Ibid., 49-83. See A.J. Toynbee, *The World and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952); idem, *A Study of History*, 12 vols., Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1934-1961), vol. 8 (1954), Part IX, "Contacts between Civilizations in Space (Encounters between Contemporaries), B. A Survey of Encounters between Contemporary Civilizations, (II) Operations according to Plan, (a) Encounters with the Modern Western Civilization", 126-346.

[47] University of Cambridge, Faculty of History, Historical Tripos, Part 1, Paper 21, "Empires in World History from the Fifteenth Century to the First World War," Reading List, 2012-2013.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this epoch, the Eurasian space was occupied almost entirely—with the possible exception of its north-western European corner—by a chain of peasant-based and culturally composite great "agrarian empires". State power, in accordance with the ideal type of the "segmentary state",[48] fulfilled only restricted functions and showed a very limited capacity of territorial projection which was conditioned to the collaboration of peripheral elites. Correspondingly, the forms of political legitimacy reflected the dependence of the imperial authority on the equilibrium between centripetal and centrifugal forces. The ideology of the cosmic monarchy enhanced the attitude of the sovereign to represent more things at the same time—that is, different things for each one of the several groups of his ethnically, territorially and religiously diverse subjects, rather than the focal centre of a single shared collective identity (like nationality in the antithetical ideal type of the modern nation state).[49] The ecumene of the agrarian regimes, moreover, was going through a dual process of globalization. Early modern globalization driven by the expansion of Europe coexisted and mixed, according to Bayly, with an older form dating back to antiquity—"archaic globalization"—which was propelled and shaped by three main factors: 1) the "humoral conception of the bodily well-being", which put a high premium on the consumption of substances deemed able to confer health and happiness to their consumers and therefore generated a demand for goods only to be obtained through the long-distance traffic webs it helped to sustain; 2) the missionary initiatives of the world religions with their widespread webs of shrines, monasteries and pilgrimages; and 3) the ecumenical circulation of such ethical and political ideals as universal monarchy and civic republicanism of Aristotelian origin, which contributed to give the Old World a certain degree of cultural homogeneity.[50]

[48] C.A. Bayly, "States and Empires in the Work of Burton Stein and his Contemporaries," *South Asia Research*, 17 (1997), no. 2: 115-120. See also S. Subrahmanyam, "Aspects of State Formation in South India and Southeast Asia, 1500-1650," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 23 (1986), no. 4: 355-377; C.A. Bayly, "Bibliographical Essay," in idem, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 2, *Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism*, Part I, 1988), 213; A. Southall, "The Segmentary State in Africa and Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30 (1988), no. 1: 52-82.

[49] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 27-41.

[50] Ibid., 41-47.

It is worth repeating that Bayly, by placing such a strong emphasis on the uniformities of early modern Eurasia, does not intend to deny for a moment the peculiarities of the West. Rather, he aims at redeeming Western exceptionalism from crude Orientalist readings of the so-called "European miracle" which, availing themselves of too rigid dichotomic schemes, totally deprive 'the East' of those traits of dynamism they regard as uniquely Western.[51] In Bayly's approach, the specificity of the European development emerges from the particular configuration and intensity of phenomena of change which, in the light of the empirical findings of area studies, can no longer be judged an exclusive monopoly of Europe and completely absent elsewhere. In conducting his "global comparisons", Bayly therefore follows a strategy centred on categories which have already been well tested in specialist works related to single study cases and which seem suitable both to highlight historical changes in non-European societies and to correct the conventional image of Western modernization in the direction of a greater gradualism and temporal extension, so as to reduce the distances and draw attention to possible analogies and parallelisms between the different regional experiences.[52]

A good example of this methodology is provided by the enlargement and application on a planetary scale of the concept of 'industrious revolution'. Bayly rejects the stereotype that portrays an undifferentiated Orient condemned to a perennial immobility by the predominance of stifling "tributary economies". The zone of the Islamic and Asian empires, too, provided a major theatre for two crucial processes of growth which connoted the global ancient regime: the "last great domestication" (i.e. the huge advance of the limits of the areas reclaimed for agriculture and non-migratory or semi-nomadic pastoralism in the Eastern hemisphere) and the "industrious revolutions" (in the plural).[53] This expression (in the singular) was first coined by the eminent economic historian Jan De

[51] E. Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); R. Vivarelli, *I caratteri dell'età contemporanea* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2005).

[52] C.A. Bayly, "Writing World History: C.A. Bayly looks at the opportunities presented to the historian in 21st century, when trying to write the history of the world," *History Today*, 54, no. 2 (February 2004): 36; idem, "Reply" to J.N. Pieterse, "The Long Nineteenth Century is too Short", and G. Viswanathan, "The State of the World", *Victorian Studies*, 48 (2005), no. 1: 134-145; C.A. Bayly, S. Beckert, M. Connelly, I. Hofmeyr, W. Kozol, P. Seed, "On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review*, 111 (2006), no. 5: 1440-1464.

[53] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 49-59.

Vries to designate a slower, more prosaic movement of rationalization of Western economic life that far preceded the 'Industrial Revolution' proper, in consonance with another historiographical trend which tends to postpone the global impact of the latter towards the central decades of the nineteenth century. While the economic and social changes catalysed by industrialization were the result of factors which operated on the supply side through the abatement of production costs, the behaviour of the agents of the "industrious revolution" was ascribable to the influence exerted on the demand side by modifications pertaining to the sphere of material culture and consumer values. The emergence of new models of desire in the mentality of the middle sort of people, who were compelled to turn to the market to obtain the goods necessary to satisfy their socially conditioned needs, urged them to a more efficient use of their work energies on a household basis which fostered an ever-increasing production of commodities.[54]

In *The Birth of the Modern World*, Bayly tests the validity of De Vries' theory in a variety of non-European contexts on the basis of the hypothesis that the role played in the Netherlands and England by the mechanical clock or the breakfast may have been fulfilled in China, Japan and India by such goods as, respectively, domestic furniture, samurai swords or pottery, in accordance with the values and social horizons prevailing in each cultural region.[55] In this way, Bayly's attempt to define differences through a greater emphasis on analogies distances itself from more usual forms of comparison, because it comes to the delineation of a multiplicity of "passages to modernity", without abandoning or sidelining the big question concerning the long-term reasons for the primacy of Europe and the consequent "Great Divergence" between her history and the history of the rest of Eurasia.[56]

[54] J. De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[55] Bayly's first foray into the anthropology of consumption was "The Origins of *Swadeshi* (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700-1930," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspectives*, edited by A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 285-321, reprinted both in idem, *Origins of Nationality*, 172-237, and in *Material Culture. Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, 5 vols., edited by V. Buchli (London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 2, 56-88.

[56] K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Bayly, "South Asia and the 'Great Divergence'"; P. O'Brien, "Ten Years of Debate on the Origins of the Great Divergence between

Bayly identifies four main "competitive advantages" of the European West on the economical, juridical, sociocultural and international plans. The first consisted in the asymmetrical structure of early modern globalization, which saw the Europeans—the unifiers of the global ecumene—in a position to link up the various "industrious revolutions" and exploit the self-propelled modernizations of the other parts of the world in their own interests. The second advantage enjoyed by the European society was a political, institutional and legal framework which proved particularly well suited to favouring the cumulative development of its "industrious revolution". Economic progress was also supported by a custom of public criticism and a "civil society" which, although not absolutely a Western prerogative, was much more developed, vocal and articulate there than anywhere else in Eurasia. The fourth factor advantaging Europe should be seen, according to Bayly, in the pluralistic, multicentric nature of her states system. This created a situation of chronic competition and conflict which acted as a permanent incentive for institutional and technological innovation and extra-European expansion, and both stimulated and exploited the early formation of patriotic identities on a national scale.[57]

In Bayly's account, however, an essential condition for the subsequent establishment of European hegemony was the general upheaval that during the revolutionary age overwhelmed the global ancient regime as a whole. One of its most determining aspects was the quasi-simultaneity, convergence and interconnection of the several "revolutions" to which it gave rise well beyond the borders of France, continental Europe or the Atlantic world.[58] The first to be caught in this worldwide sequence of global events was the Eurasian East. The crises occurring in all the Oriental tributary empires (including China) presented numerous and important traits in common. They mostly manifested themselves at the fiscal-military level, as a lack of resources for financing big imperial armies, but their origins should be traced back to the social and ideological spheres. The ascent of various types of middle classes benefitting from the "industrious revolutions" and other economic changes eroded the foundations of monarchical legitimacy in the long run. In a sense, the ill-famed agrarian regimes paid

the Economies of Europe and China during the Era of Mercantilism and Industrialization," in *Reviews in History*, 1008, December 2008, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1008.

[57] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 59-64.

[58] Ibid., 86-120.

the consequences of their too long underestimated historical performances. The endogenous transformations which they had encouraged or favoured generated an increasing imbalance between centres and peripheries. In the provinces, the early modern modernizations enhanced the power and prestige of dynamic local elites, who were able to exploit, in order to challenge the more traditional imperial authorities, a growing sense of regional belonging and patriotism, along with new forms of moral or religious discourse (comparable in a way to contemporary Western public criticism), for which they acted as spokesmen or standard-bearers. The imperial centres, on their part, suffered from the worsening of their relative oversizing and were increasingly paralyzed by the impossibility of adequately funding a commensurate expansion of their military apparatuses.[59]

An additional factor of aggravation of the difficulties of the Oriental monarchies was finally introduced by the global impact of the crises which hit even the ancient regimes of Western Eurasia in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War.[60] The response to these crises propelled a breakthrough in the European initiative on the transoceanic geopolitical theatres at the same time that the other regional societies were experiencing their own internal troubles (with a few decades of delay in the cases of China and Japan), because it combined revolution with heightened competition on a worldwide scale between aggressive imperial powers. The international fights between England and France drew their impulse from the clash of opposite patriotisms which revealed themselves capable of mobilizing metropolitan resources and consent to an unprecedented degree. In the crucible of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, political legitimacy itself had to be rebuilt on a new basis in both England and France. In both cases, the ideological reconstruction relied on palingenetic myths that elevated public authority to the status of messianic actors in a millennial narrative of reform and improvement of social conditions and human life, and these progressive ideologies found their raison d'être in the role that the European states were actually playing in giving fresh impetus to the local "industrious revolutions".[61]

The globalizing confluence between the conflicts of various kinds originating from the endogenous changes which the Oriental societies had undergone in the course of the previous three centuries, and the exportation of the military and

[59] Ibid., 89-92.
[60] Ibid., 92-100.
[61] Ibid., 114-119.

political-ideological struggles of the European Age of the Revolution, marked a new period in the history of the human community because, while contributing to multiply, tighten and thicken the linkages between the cultural regions of the world, these momentous events precipitated the final disruption of the "Eurasian equilibrium" which had preserved itself throughout the early modern age. But the "World Crisis"[62] laid the foundations for the further material and ideological expansion of Europe in the long nineteenth century not only because it provided its agents with the occasions and incentives for territorial empire-building, but also in the sense that it allowed the Western model to present itself to the other regions of the Eastern hemisphere as a response to the contradictions they were internally facing and a solution (if not the only or the best available solution) for carrying on the processes of development of industrious classes and modernization of the forms of statehood, collective identity, public discourse and religious experience which had begun to involve the supposedly unhistorical Orient well before the "Eurasian revolution". The intricate geohistorical template emerging from the world crisis set the context within which non-Europeans started to appropriate and adapt for themselves the resources and means of various kinds put at their disposal by their asymmetrical symbiosis with the West so as to grow strong enough to resist, and ultimately to rise to challenge, the incoming "global imperial order".[63]

3. *The "Interactive Emergence" of the British Empire in Afro-Eurasia*

As Eric Hobsbawm rightly suggested in a remarkable preface to the French translation of *The Birth of the Modern World*, Bayly's insistence on regarding ecumenical modernization not as "something imposed from outside by the West, but a complex process made of evolutions interacting with each other and emanating from both sides", which bears witness to his full agreement with the New World Historians about the need to restore "agency" to non-Europeans, must be traced back to the formulation he had developed in prior works in response to the problem of the creation of the British Raj, according to which the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent were "active agents and not simply passive bystanders

[62] Ibid., 88-89.
[63] Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 368.

and victims" of empire-building.[64] Contrary to the ingrained and die-hard cliché which portrayed it "as an immutable society within a declining Mughal empire, ready to let itself be subjugated by a foreign power", eighteenth century India was a world vibrant with change and innovation whose promoters were already trying "to forge their own tools to cope with the political instability of the region". The British empire-builders acted not so much as conquerors from overseas, but as senior partners in efforts "imagined" by sectors of the Indian modernizing elites who aimed to modify to their advantage the balance of power in the subcontinent. And even after being "accepted", the European domination had to continue to rely "on a combinations of local forces and supporters, making sure that the Indians accepted the Raj in view of their own interests".[65] In short, if the British expansion was successful, this was so also because it satisfied the needs arising from a modernization originally initiated by autochthonous actors with whom the colonizers were constantly compelled to come to terms throughout the duration of their rule.[66]

It is important to stress, however, that the conceptual model implemented in the volume of the *Blackwell History* was the outcome of a more prolonged and nuanced development in Bayly's methodological views. In the 1970s, at the beginning of his professional career, he had established himself as a brilliant young historian of colonial India belonging to the so-called 'Cambridge School' of Indian history.[67] In the next decade, his scientific interest turned to the transition from the pre-colonial to the colonial period.[68] It was at this stage, when he advanced his theory of the "interactive emergence" of British domination in

[64] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 5; E.J. Hobsbawm, "Préface," in C.A. Bayly, *La naissance du monde moderne, 1780-1914*, traduit de l'anglais par Michel Cordillot (Paris: Le Monde diplomatique en collaboration avec Editions de l'Atelier, 2006), 13.

[65] Ibid. For Bayly's views on the evolution of Indianist studies, see C.A. Bayly, "English-Language Historiography on British Expansion in India and Indian Reactions since 1945," in *Reappraisals in Overseas History. Essays on Post-War Historiography about European Expansion*, edited by P.C. Emmer and H.L. Wesseling (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1979), 21-53; idem, "Modern Indian Historiography," in *Companion to Historiography*, 663-677; idem, "Eric Thomas Stokes, 1924-81," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 97 (1998): 467-498.

[66] For an alternative and much less optimistic view, see R.K. Ray, "Indian Society and the Establishment of British Supremacy, 1765-1818," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, edited by P. J. Marshall, 508-529.

[67] See, in this volume, the essay by Maurizio Griffo.

[68] See, in this volume, the essay by Michelguglielmo Torri.

South Asia, that he actually outlined the very first sketch of what was to become his general approach to global history.[69] The most complete prefiguration of the categorical framework employed in Bayly's 2004 book, however, is found in a further turning point in his historiographical trajectory which coincided with the production of *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*.[70]

Published in 1989 in the Studies in Modern History Series directed by John Morrill and David Cannadine, and spanning the half century of expansion and refoundation of the British Empire from the pan-imperial crisis that accompanied American Independence to the aftermath of the defeat of Napoleon, this important work, whose strong originality and potential paradigmatic value was immediately underlined on its appearance by such an authority as David K. Fieldhouse, marked a new phase in Bayly's academic career.[71] The specialist of colonial and pre-colonial India, soon to be nominated Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History at Cambridge, had enormously widened the horizon of his historical reflection, extending it from the Raj to the totality of the "imperial system"—the British Isles included—and attempting the arduous task of organizing in a unified analytical and narrative field the corresponding multiplicity and variety of great geohistorical spaces.[72] In accomplishing such a

[69] J.E. Wills, Jr., "Maritime Asia, 1500-1800: The Interactive Emergence of European Domination," *The American Historical Review*, 98 (1993), no. 1: 83-105.

[70] See Bayly's programmatic essay "The Middle East and Asia during the Age of Revolutions, 1760-1830," *Itinerario. Bulletin of the Leyden Centre for the History of European Expansion*, X (1986), no. 2: 69-84, and, for a fuller account of the complex historiographical background to his 1989 volume, Tagliaferri, "Christopher Bayly e 'the return of universal history'", 31-48.

[71] D.K. Fieldhouse, review of Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, *The English Historical Review*, 106 (1991), no. 1: 128-129; idem, "Can Humpty-Dumpty be put together again? Imperial History in the 1980s," *The Journal of Imperial and Colonial History*, 12 (1984), no. 2: 9-23.

[72] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 100, 253; *Atlas of the British Empire: A New Perspective on the British Empire from 1500 to the Present*, edited by C.A. Bayly (London: Hamlyn, 1989). It is to be remarked, however, that since the 1970s Bayly had followed the footsteps of the Cantabrigian tradition which practised the specialized study of British imperial history as a way to understanding the world-historical process of "the Expansion of Europe" and insisted, therefore, on the euristic importance of "comparative colonial history". See Tagliaferri, *L'espansione europea*; C.A. Bayly and D.H.A. Kolff, "Introduction," to *Two Colonial Empires. Comparative Essays on the History of India and Indonesia in the Nineteenth Century* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 8. Cf. also C.A. Bayly, "Indian Merchants in a 'Traditional Setting': Benares, 1780-1830", in *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India*, edited by C. Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 171-193; idem, "Inland Port Cities

veritable *tour de force*, Bayly came to envision an integral reconceptualization of imperial studies which already involved their substantial identification with the territory of research of the emerging New World History and with those aspects of the "global past", investigated by both disciplines, to which should be traced back "the origin of contemporary international order".[73] A prominent global historian of our days, Jürgen Osterhammel, who reviewed *Imperial Meridian* in 1993, noted that, although formally an essay in imperial history, "the scope and ambition" of Bayly's book were "nothing less than universal"; he suggested that it should be read "in the light of a current 'return of universal history'".[74] Another reviewer stressed (exaggerating a little, perhaps, but anticipating the actual development of Bayly's historical writing) that the "real stuff" of *Imperial Meridian* was not so much "the British Empire" as "the world" mentioned in its subtitle.[75] Bayly himself not only declared that the purpose of the book was to place "British expansion in the wider context of world history", but made altogether explicit his intent to contribute to a "project"—to be prioritized by the "future histories"—aiming "to fit (…) together once again" the three disconnected "fragments" into which the nineteenth- and twentieth-century professional historiography had unfortunately broken the unity of the "history of the world" imagined by the Enlightenment: the history of Europe; the history of the neo-European settlement colonies; and "Orientalism" (i.e. the all-encompassing history of the non-Europeans parts of Afro-Eurasia).[76]

in North India: Calcutta and the Gangetic Plains, 1780-1900," in *The Rise and Growth of the Colonial Port Cities in Asia*, edited by D.K. Basu (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for South Pacific Studies, University of California, 1979), 11-15; idem, "Creating a Colonial Peasantry: India and Java c. 1820-1880," *Itinerario*, 11 (1987), no. 1, Special Issue, *India and Indonesia from the 1830s to 1914: The Heyday of Colonial Rule*: 93-106; C.A. Bayly and L. Blussé, "Introduction," to *Itinerario*, 13 (1989), no. 1, Special Issue, *India and Indonesia: General Perspectives*: vii-xiii; T. Abdullah and A. Lapian, "Report on the Third Cambridge-Delhi-Leiden-Yogyakarta Conference: 'The Ancient Regime in India and Indonesia', Yogyakarta, 21-25 September 1986", in *India and Indonesia during the Ancient Regime*, essays by P.J. Marshall, R. Van Niel *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, Comparative History of India and Indonesia Series, 3, 1989), xvii-xviii.

[73] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 2.

[74] Osterhammel, review of Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 91.

[75] F. Harcourt, review of Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, *International Journal of Maritime History*, 2 (1990), no. 2: 281-284, 282. Harcourt agreed, however, that the book constituted "a landmark in imperial history".

[76] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 13, 75, 256. See also idem, "The Orient: British Historical Writing about Asia since 1890," in *History and Historians in the Twentieth Century*, edited by P. Burke

The argumentation carried out in *Imperial Meridian* in many respects foreshadowed Part I of *The Birth of the Modern World*, where Bayly situates the world crisis that acted as midwife at the birth of global modernity in the new *Achsenzeit* discernible precisely between the American War and the Restoration.[77] While in his 1988 volume on *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* the recognition of a full capacity for historical initiative to the non-Westerners had led him to attribute the success of British colonialism in the subcontinent to its correspondence to needs and interests resulting from previous indigenous transformations,[78] fifteen years later Bayly's interpretation of the process which prepared the ground for the imperialist penetration and the nineteenth century hegemonic appeal of the West would come to embrace a whole range of "Passages from the Old Regimes to Modernity" that took place in Afro-Eurasia before and independently from the establishment of European dominance.[79] However, in the chapters of *Imperial Meridian* dedicated to the rise of the "'Second British Empire'" in the East,[80] he had already followed the lead of Marshall Hodgson and adopted as a unit of analysis, if not Eurasia as a whole, the entire chain of great Islamic kingdoms extending from the Maghreb and the Balkans to Burma and the Indonesian archipelago.[81]

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 88-119; idem, "Religion, Liberalism and Empires: British Historians and their Indian Critics in the Nineteenth Century," in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, edited by P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 21-47.

77 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 61; "Storia e età assiale," edited by M. Deodati, F. Miano, and S. Wagner, *Studi jaspersiani*, 3 (2015): 3-351. On modernity as a "second axial age" (after the first one theorized by Karl Jaspers), see *Le ragioni del moderno*, edited by C. Dipper and P. Pombeni (Bologna: il Mulino, 2014).

78 See above, 88-89.

79 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 49.

80 Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 2, 9, 11, 136-137, 248, 252; idem, "The Second British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, *Historiography*, ed. Winks, 54-72.

81 M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); P. Rich, "Civilisations in European and World History: A Reappraisal of the Ideas of Arnold Toynbee, Fernand Braudel and Marshall Hodgson," *The European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms*, 7 (2002), no. 3: 331-342. See also C.A. Bayly, "India and West Asia, c. 1700-1830," *Asian Affairs*, 19 (1988), no. 1: 3-19; idem, "Beating the Boundaries: South Asia History, c. 1700-1850," *South Asia and World Capitalism*, edited by S. Bose (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 27-39.

Bayly starts from the anti-Eurocentric assumption that the "empire in a world-historical sense [i.e. as a factor in global history] can only be understood by examining social change in the areas colonised as an essential component of an imperial system".[82] Although the central theme of the book is, after all, the rebuilding of the British Empire after the loss of the American colonies between 1780 and 1830, *Imperial Meridian* devotes dozens of pages to the "longer-term patterns of class formation and state-building" which can be found in Asia and North Africa since the sixteenth century and which were destined to be "central to the emergence and form" of British supremacy. Bayly justifies the employment of this enlarged geohistorical and chronological scale by arguing that

> the genre of 'imperial history' or of 'European expansion' has no future unless it can draw on the growing body of studies of the extra-European world to illuminate the development [in the pre-colonial era] of social institutions and ideologies which were as formative of the nineteenth-century colonial world as were the policies of European governments or the profit-hunger of their merchants.[83]

At the beginning of the modern age, the territories composing the Afro-Eurasian scenario surveyed by Bayly were dominated by four large Islamic polities: the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire in Persia, the Mughal Empire in India, and the Muslim Empire of Mataram in Java. Bayly sees the histories of these great cultural spaces as both distinct from each other and interconnected in even wider "interregional units".[84] What they share in common (together with the many links binding them in an interactive whole, like religion)[85] is a three-phased evolutionary pattern which, far from confirming the nineteenth-century

[82] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 253.

[83] Ibid., 75, 253.

[84] Ibid., 14-15. See M.G.S. Hodgson, "Hemispheric Interregional History as an Approach to World History," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, 1 (1954), no. 3: 715-723; idem, "The Interrelations of Societies in History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5 (1963), no. 2: 227-250, reprinted in idem, *Rethinking World History. Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, edited by E. Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3-28; E. Burke III, "Marshall G.S. Hodgson and the Hemispheric Interregional Approach to World History," *Journal of World History*, 6 (1995), no. 2: 237-250.

[85] C.A. Bayly and L. Tarazi Fawaz, "Introduction: The Connected World of Empires," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, edited by L. Tarazi Fawaz, C.A. Bayly, and R. Ilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 1-27.

stereotype of the Asian "'decline'", reflects a complex dialectic of "crisis and re-organization".[86] In the initial stage, these vast patrimonial and agrarian states, which were legitimized in terms of the ideology of universal monarchy, ensured stability and order to their countries. In turn, the "'*Pax Islamica*'" encouraged an interweaving of processes that contradicts "the notion of the diffusion of the modern capitalist system from West to East". During the first two centuries of the modern age, not only the West, but the rest of Eurasia, too, underwent such developments as demographic growth, an increasing geographical division of labour, the rise of a class of landowners rooted in the localities, the setting in motion of a plurality of "Asian routes to commercial agriculture", the flowering of the mercantile economy and a lively culture of consumption, the emergence of multiple forms of "'proto-capitalism'" and "Asian (or North African) 'capitalism'".[87] But the very success of the Islamic empires created the conditions for the "'general crisis'" which was to descend on them in the eighteenth century.[88] The main beneficiaries of the empires were in fact, in the long run, the newborn, modernizing agrarian and bourgeois provincial elites. As a further historical paradox, their centrifugal tendencies were also fuelled by the very prestige of the monarchical institution. The Islamic ideal of cosmic royalty spread in peripheries that had preserved or had begun to develop "a strong sense of their own identity, expressed in religious difference or regional solidarity", and where imperial universalism underwent a radical metamorphosis which anticipated the rebuilding of political legitimacy in a national-statal key which would have characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[89]

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, all the Islamic imperial polities faced an escalation of conflicts and internal contradictions ultimately attributable to the "consolidation of Asian capitalism". This happened before a new series of eighteenth century "tribal break-outs"—which saw as their protagonists the egalitarian warlike societies surviving at their margins—decreed the end of the *Pax Islamica*.[90] What replaced it, however, was not the condition of decadence,

[86] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 22, 23-24, 35-74. See also idem, "Pre-Colonial Indian Merchants and Rationality," in *India's Colonial Encounter. Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes*, edited by N. Gupta and M. Hasan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), 3-24.
[87] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 18, 27-32, 73-74, 179, 254.
[88] Ibid., 24, 61.
[89] Ibid., 34.
[90] Ibid., 18, 35-46, 74.

stagnation and anarchy evoked by the historians engaged in the apology of the European conquest; rather, the crisis gave rise to a fundamental restructuration of the political spaces occupied by the agrarian regimes, in which Bayly invites the reader to recognize the features of a new round of Afro-Asian state-building, developing this time not on a macro-regional, but on a sub-imperial, provincial scale. The "regional magnates", who posed as the would-be heirs of the universal sovereigns of the great empires, adopted mercantilist practices and endeavoured to redress the balance of power between the state and rural landowners for the benefit of their own treasury. Moreover, the new provincial rulers had to legitimize realms which were much more compact, intrusive and exclusive than the old empires. In pursuing this aim, they were able to exploit and mobilize the growing sentiments of territorial patriotism and religious affiliation which were much more "tightly defined" than in the past. This gave them the opportunity to become a focal point of unprecedented kinds of collective identity which foreshadowed modern nationality.[91] In this sense, Bayly argues, the late eighteenth century marked "an important stage in the creation of the preconditions for the emergence of modern ethnicities and nation states" in Asia as well as in Europe. Nor does he fail to emphasize how this implies that "the regional ethnicities which were later seen as 'nationalism' in Europe, Asia and North Africa had already begun to form *before* the full impact of the West was felt. They were not the simple product of 'Westernisation'"—of a Westernization, that is, interpreted according to the diffusionist stereotype.[92]

More generally, the reasons that bring Bayly to regard the early modern transformations in Eastern societies as "a critical force in the creation of European world-wide dominance", rather than the "immobile background" of the expansion of Europe, are threefold. Firstly, these changes generated both the "pressures and opportunities" that induced the Westerners to take or try to take the power in "key regions" such as Bengal, Java or Egypt before 1800. Secondly,

[91] Ibid., 18, 34, 51. See also C.A. Bayly and S. Bayly, "Eighteenth Century State Forms and the Economy," in *Arrested Development in India. The Historical Dimension*, edited by C. Dewey (New York and Delhi: Manohar, 1988), 66-90, and, on the agrarian empires, Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 27-48, Bang and Bayly, "Comparing Pre-Modern Empires," P.F. Bang and C.A. Bayly, "Tributary Empires—Towards a Global and Comparative History," in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, 1-17.

[92] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 50, 52. See also Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 1-132, and, in this volume, the essay by Laura Di Fiore.

they made available to the conquerors the administrative, financial and military tools elaborated by the "new 'Asian states'".[93] Thirdly, and perhaps less obviously, they also cast some of the foundations of the "colonial world" and the "'para-colonial' states" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, preparing the ground, in particular, for the rise of native proprietary classes who would become "the keystone of the European colonial economy" and "the nineteenth-century export boom in primary agricultural produce". Moreover, endogenous changes in Afro-Eurasia acted as a "critical precondition" of phenomena which were destined to shape "the modern world order" not less decisively than the globalization of the catchwords of the French Revolution—"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity"—, and with effects recognizable to the present day, such as the emergence of new paradigms of political legitimacy more attuned to the modern state (as compared to monarchical universalism) and the beginnings of what were to become the "national consciousness", "communalism" and religious fundamentalism.[94]

4. *The World Historical Impact of "British Nationalism" in the Age of Revolution*

The will to highlight the much-underestimated analogies between European and extra-European histories and the multipolar character of world-historical change makes Bayly well aware of the faultiness of any approach to globalization which assigns an overbearing role to the West. The most obvious example is provided by those normative 'stages of development theories' which simply equate modernization with Westernization. In his 1989 book, however, Bayly detects the same error in the opposite theory of the "European capitalist world system" advanced by Immanuel Wallerstein, then much in vogue, according to which the expansion of the European world-economy since the sixteenth century, far from promoting the progress of other areas of the ecumene, condemned them uniformly to a condition of underdevelopment and subaltern integration as peripheries or semi-peripheries in the Western-dominated global order. Such theories, both denying, in different ways, the interactive nature of the process of globaliza-

[93] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 16, 17, 69.

[94] Ibid., 27, 47, 51, 53, 72, 74, 174-175, 178-179, 180, 231, 235, 255. See also idem, "The Pre-History of 'Communalism'? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860", *Modern Asian Studies*, 19 (1985), no. 2: 177-203, revised in idem, *Origins of Nationality*, 210-237.

tion, appear inadequate to provide historiography with those synthetic, unifying categories which its practitioners require in order to reverse "the fragmentation which has overcome the discipline", and to escape the risk of remaining locked within their respective specialistic fields, without sacrificing the agency and individuality of the single world "cultures or communities".[95]

Imperial Meridian clearly prefigured the argumentation laid out in *The Birth of the Modern World*, however, in that Bayly refused to underplay the momentary superiority in power and the expansive drive accruing to the West from the relative exceptionality of its path to modernity.[96] Bayly's critique, in fact, did not target only or mainly the "'Eurocentric'" theories of imperialism. His methodological polemic was directed with equal vigour, and perhaps greater urgency, against the "'excentric'" interpretations developed in reaction to them, which he charged with having exaggerated, in turn, the role played in the colonial expansion of Europe by such extra-European factors as "'local crises'" in the peripheries, the availability of indigenous "'collaborators'" and independent initiatives of European 'men on the spot' operating in territories remote from the metropolitan centre. In the 1980s, when *Imperial Meridian* was written, this historiographical trend had resulted, for example, in a complete "Africanisation" of the factors taken into account in the debate on the partition of the Dark Continent. Bayly therefore felt obliged to remind his readers of the apparently obvious truth that the "metropolitan impulses were, by definition, central to the process of expansion and to the creation of the social order of European empires". The mutually opposing limitations of the two explanatory strategies—the Eurocentric and the excentric—were surmountable, in his opinion, only if it was firmly borne in mind that the imperial experience "by definition was a dialogue between the metropolitan impulses and the history of the colonized societies".[97]

Perhaps the single most noteworthy aspect of the extremely articulate historiographical operation attempted by Bayly in his 1989 book was the virtual re-inclusion of the *histoire à part entière* of the colonizing power in the field of investi-

[95] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, xiv, 14-15, 253.

[96] See also *Aux origines de la domination européenne*, réflexions de C.A Bayly, Paris, UNESCO, 12 juin 2006 (http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/carnet/2006-06-21-Colloque-Bayly-I).

[97] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 13, 75, 253. Bayly was implicitly referring to R.E. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, edited by R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (Harlow: Longman, 1972), 117-142.

gation of the imperial studies.[98] He shows a vivid awareness of the impossibility of neglecting what happened in the depths of "British society" if one really wants to understand "those societies which were touched by imperial power".[99] This methodological attitude represents an important novelty with respect to Bayly's previous work on India, as well as an essential prerequisite of his subsequent work on global and world history.

In *Imperial Meridian*, then, Bayly made an original attempt to reincorporate the internal histories of Britain and Europe as a whole into a field of inquiry where the historiographical school that had influenced his beginnings as a colonial historian—the Cambridge School—had rather privileged, albeit not in an exclusive manner, the overseas side of the Western expansion. In the preface, he confesses that the composition of the volume coincided with the resumption of his interest in national history which had remained dormant since he was an undergraduate. Bayly added that this new interest had been reawakened in particular by two historiographical trends. The first, well exemplified by David Cannadine's work on the prolonged *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* between the 1780s and the 1980s, focused on the very long-term role played in the history of British society by the "landed establishment". The other, and complementary, whose chief exponent was Linda Colley, addressed the formation of British national identity in the context of the European international state system, with particular reference to the Second Hundred Years' War between England and France from the end of the seventeenth century to the fall of Napoleon in 1815.[100]

In Bayly's case, then, reinterpreting the British and European expansion by locating it in a world-historical frame of reference did not just mean crossing the boundaries of his original area of specialization, colonial India, and widening the range of his studies so as to embrace all the regions of the ecumene in any way interacting, or comparable at least, with England and its colonial system. Adopting a

[98] See also C.A. Bayly, "Returning the British to South Asian History: the Limits of Colonial Hegemony," *South Asia. Journal of South Asian Studies*, 17 (1994), no. 2: 1-25 (revised in idem, *Origins of Nationality*, 276-306).

[99] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 218.

[100] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, xv; idem *The Middle East and Asia*, 84; L. Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820," *Past and Present*, no. 102 (1984): 94-129; eadem, "Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750-1830," *Past and Present*, no. 113 (1986): 97-117; eadem, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992); D. Cannadine, "Preface to the 1992 Edition," in idem, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New York: Vintage, 1999), xxii.

global perspective in his approach to the British Empire also implied rediscovering and revisiting the past of the European Metropolis itself, whose very Anglo-Celtic core presented, after all, the specific character of a "'British Empire in Europe'".[101] And in making this effort of "returning the British" to imperial history, Bayly could avail himself of the guidance of colleagues who had specialized in other areas of historical research and who were intent, in their turn, to reintegrate into the purview of British national experience the international, the imperial and the "fiscal-military"[102] dimensions, and the correlative culture of patriotism. All these aspects of the British past, it has to be remarked, had been neglected or moved to the background by major trends in the historiography of the second half of the twentieth century such as Anglo-Marxism (especially in the "populist" version given of it by E.P. Thompson), which had tended to emphasize internal social conflicts, and especially the moments when ordinary people had contested the hegemony of the ruling classes, as the main theme of national history.[103]

The central thesis argued by Bayly in *Imperial Meridian* is that "metropolitan impulses" played a preponderant role in giving impetus and form to empire-building during the expansive phase that it underwent between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The engine of the expansion, in this particular historical conjuncture, could not be industrial capitalism, which would begin to make its consequences felt on the Empire only from the 1830s-1840s onwards. The greatest thrust behind global imperialism did not even come from "'gentlemanly capitalism'", a capitalism dominated, according to the proponents of this theory, Anthony Hopkins and Peter Cain, by a landed or gentrified elite prone to invest his wealth in commerce and finance rather than in industry.[104] What propelled the extra-European expansion was, for Bayly, the energetic response given to a succession of terrible internal and external challenges by the broadly

[101] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 77. See also idem, "Ireland, India and the Empire: 1780-1914," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 10 (2000): 377-397.

[102] Bayly, "The British Military-Fiscal State and Indigenous Resistance: India 1750-1820," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, edited by L. Stone (London: Routledge, 1994), 322-354, revised in idem, *Origins of Nationality*, 238-275.

[103] C.A. Bayly, "Patriotism and Political Ethics in Indian History," in idem, *Origins of Nationality*, 6; idem, "Rallying around the Subaltern," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 16 (1988), n. 1: 110-120, 113; Tagliaferri, *La repubblica dell'umanità*, 129-133.

[104] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 12, quoting P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. 1. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850," *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 39 (1986), no. 4: 501-525.

majoritarian sectors of the British metropolitan society who were under the hegemony of the oligarchic and aristocratic agrarian establishment.

The initial challenge came from the "imperial crisis" concomitant with the secession of the Thirteen Colonies in 1776.[105] American Independence, in fact, only marked the partial triumph of a more general tendency towards the transfer of imperial power from the metropolitan centre to the peripherical white elites, which had established itself in the colonies of settlement, including Ireland, after the Seven Years' War. The British reaction, while failing to avert the outcome of the American Revolution, arrested and inverted the process of "'creolization'"[106]. In the case of Ireland, for example, the Act of Union of 1801 deprived the Kingdom of legislative autonomy, abolishing the Irish Parliament. Irish Protestants maintained the right to parliamentary representation, but the members they elected had to sit in the London 'imperial' House of Commons, while the Irish Catholics remained excluded from it till the Emancipation Act of 1829. The Irish Act of Union was passed in the context of the subsequent, interrelated challenges which spurred Britain to imperial expansion between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were the competition with revolutionary and Napoleonic France and the veritable "world crisis"—"the first true world crisis since the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century"—[107] that the further globalization of the inter-European international conflicts contributed to triggering from the "Atlantic Mediterranean"[108] to South-East Asia.

The British response to this succession of crises developed therefore at the international, ideological, political, institutional and military levels, more and before than at the economical level. Integrating the mainly 'excentric' approach followed in his previous works on the genesis of the colonial empire in India, in *Imperial Meridian* Bayly examined the "new imperialism" emanating from the British Isles as an organic part of the nascent "British nationalism", which was fomented by the aristocratic and noble ruling class in order to mobilize the wealth and the consensus of the Metropolis for the purposes of the anti-French struggle.[109]

[105] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 95-99.
[106] Ibid., 91.
[107] Ibid., 164-192.
[108] J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England. Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 101.
[109] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 11, 15, 100, 106-107, 108, 109, 115, 134, 213. See also idem, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 227-233.

The war between England and France was at its core a clash of ideologies. The peculiar Toryism that the British opposed to the French Gospel of the Revolution took the shape of a patriotic ideal which credited the British State with a providential mission and re-legitimized the Empire as an essential instrument for performing it. The anti-revolutionary patriotism inspired a reinvention of the British monarchy which made of the King (George III for most of the period) the symbolic personification of the British identity. This process had been studied by Linda Colley in a series of essays published during the 1980s.[110] In *Imperial Meridian*, Bayly complemented her investigations significantly by also tracing the manifestations of the new cult of the monarch in the public rituals which were celebrated in the imperial and colonial "scenarios of power" in Ireland and overseas[111]. On the other hand, Bayly differentiated himself from Colley's paradigm, which had paid much more attention to popular patriotism, because he focused almost exclusively on elite nationalism.[112]

It is important to observe that the new British nationalism emphasized by Bayly did not draw its chief inspiration from the kind of conservativism and constitutionalism represented by Edmund Burke, whose celebrated and enormously influential *Reflections on the Revolution in France* criticized the French revolutionary model and its British admirers and followers by arguing that that dangerous foreign experiment was completely alien and antithetical to the spirit of the English political tradition and institutions. Burke condemned the arrogant French ambition of remaking state and society in conformity with abstract reason and extolled the contrary ideal of change-in-continuity supposedly realized in the history of England, whose Constitution had not been consciously and artificially 'made' by men according to a preconceived overall plan, but had

[110] See above, note 100.

[111] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 109-115; R.S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995-2000); T. Tagliaferri, "Democrazia, nazione e Impero nella modernizzazione della monarchia britannica," in *Sovrani a metà. Monarchia e legittimazione in Europa tra Otto e Novecento*, edited by G. Guazzaloca (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2009), 93-117.

[112] For Bayly's later approach to the popular culture of imperialism, which seems in broad agreement with the 'Manchester School' animated by John MacKenzie, see C.A. Baily, review of *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, by J.M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), *Journal of Historical Geography*, 22 (1996), no. 3: 361-363; idem, "Foreword to the New Edition," in P.S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (Sage, 2002), xii-xxxvi.

organically and naturally 'grown' in time from precedent to precedent without ever losing contact with its roots in the past. The culture and mentality of the anti-French patriotism analysed by Bayly in his 1989 book shows the very different aspect of a "constructive", dynamic, reformist and modernizing conservatism. Its projection in the colonial world gave rise to a series of autocratic, militaristic and paternalistic regimes far remote from the Burkean ideal. These "proconsular despotisms" and the policies they pursued were very similar to each other, so they "began to impose a uniform pattern of rule and uniform notions of 'law' and 'progress'" also on the heterogeneous mosaic of distant extra-European societies all around the world which were affected by its impact.[113]

What the increased British domination and influence globally spread, starting from the colonial fringes of the British Isles themselves, Ireland and Scotland, were first of all the after-effects of the enormous strengthening of the "sinews"[114] of the state produced by the imitative antagonism with France. The period, like any other period of world war, saw a huge growth of the fleet, the army, the armaments industry, the police forces, the bureaucratic institutions and personnel, and a corresponding "revolution in government" (i.e. administrative) concealed behind the appearance of constitutional continuity.[115] The repercussions of all these developments were felt well beyond the borders of the United Kingdom proper.

At the same time, the "new British Empire" forged in the struggles of the revolutionary and Napoleonic epoch conveyed outside its original European laboratory a system of beliefs and attitudes supporting a pedagogical-religious "project" of regeneration of humanity which Bayly deems comparable, in view of its universalistic claims, to the much more well-known French revolutionary ideology.[116] This palingenetic grand design can be regarded, in some respects, as a

[113] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 11, 14, 193. Bayly's contributions to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* are devoted for the most part to prominent examples of "proconsular despots". See idem, "Elphinstone, Mountstuart (1779-1859)," in *ODNB* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, January 2008; idem, "Metcalfe, Charles Theophilus, Baron Metcalfe (1785-1846)," ibid., online edition, January 2008; idem, "Wellesley, Richard, Marquess Wellesley (1760-1842)," ibid., online edition, January 2011; C.A. Bayly and K. Prior, "Cornwallis, Charles, First Marquess Cornwallis (1738-1805)," ibid., online edition, September 2011.
[114] J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Bayly, *The British Military-Fiscal State*, 241-242.
[115] Idem, *Imperial Meridian*, 116-121; G. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government. A Study of Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
[116] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 11, 253.

prefiguration of the civilizing mission that the nineteenth-century propagandists of colonial rule assigned to the British Empire, called to convert backward peoples to "Commerce, Christianity and Civilization", a celebrated mid-Victorian triad.[117] Bayly does not identify the intellectual basis of this first modern culture of imperialism with the doctrines of utilitarianism and free trade prevailing in subsequent periods of European expansion. The main source of the new British nationalism and imperialism was a peculiar kind of civic republicanism—a form of political discourse, dating back to classical antiquity and Aristotelian politics, and spread in various shapes at pan-Eurasian level, which extolled as one of the highest forms of self-realization of the human being the performance of the duty and the fruition of the right to take an active interest in the *res publica*, to participate in its corporate life and to contribute to its common good even at the cost of personal sacrifice.[118] It was therefore both fully compatible with the cult of the King and much similar, in fact, to the Napoleonic conception of the administrative monarchy.[119]

The specific British variant of civic republicanism, which Bayly named "'agrarian patriotism'", was strongly indebted to the ideas of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and in particular to the Scottish Enlightenment and the Physiocrats, in that it regarded agriculture as the real source of the wealth of nations and advocated the right to the full enjoyment of land property rights and free exchange of the products of agricultural work. Agrarian patriotism therefore idealized the figure of the "independent" big landowner or, in its more democratic Scottish version, the "independent" yeoman.[120]

"Independency" embodied a whole cluster of economic, ethical and communal values: enterprise, strength of character, public spirit. Bayly discerns their worship as reflected in many ways in both the rhetoric and the colonial institutions of the refashioned British Empire, the "Second British Empire" resurrecting, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the "First". The presumed degree of "'moral independency'" was placed at the foundation of a pyramid of racial, social and religious types more or less provided with this complex of human virtues. The scale of mankind culminated, of course, in the white Anglican gentleman. In the

[117] S.J. Brown, *Providence and Empire. Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), 139-213.

[118] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 42-43, 71-80.

[119] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 11-12.

[120] Ibid., 80-81, 85, 89, 108, 121-126, 155-160, 193, 210.

period covered in Bayly's book, the anthropological ladder was still conceived in a historical-evolutionary rather than a biological way, so that the peoples arrested at its lower steps were deemed susceptible of improvement, and their elevation began to be considered the very purpose of imperial government. In the colonies, however, well before the rise of biological racism, the worldwide exportation of the cultural hierarchy inherent in agrarian patriotism propelled by global imperialism resulted in a hardening of the boundaries between colonizers and natives (which previously had remained much more fluid and porous), practices of exclusion, and multiple forms of juridification of otherness. Faith in the beliefs of agrarian individualism also inspired the legislative interventions of the imperial authorities in the sphere of land regimes, which in this case met the demands of the rising Asian "gentry".[121]

The decades that witnessed the rebirth and rebuilding of the Empire on a wider scale also saw a significant missionary expansion of the Established Church and British Christianity in general. It is true that the missionary initiative had as its recipients, in this period, the European colonizers themselves, or categories of non-Europeans who were already Christianized (for example, the Indian Eurasians born from European males and Asian women). The missionaries, therefore, did not aim at direct conversion of the followers of other cults, at least in principle. But the mere intensification of the Anglican and Christian presence in the colonial world, together with the explicitly Protestant character of the Second Empire's legitimizing myth, was enough to provoke not only hostile reactions, but also attempts at emulation by Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. These religious implications of the new imperialism, as Bayly remarks, offer the most eloquent confirmation of the capacity of British metropolitan nationalism to exert its influence, through colonial expansion, even on "the deeper historical experience of non-European peoples".[122]

[121] Ibid., 26, 32, 73, 151, 219. Organic incorporation of metropolitan cultures, ideologies and ideas into the disciplinary field of interactive colonial history, pioneered by another of his mentors, Eric Stokes, was a fundamental premise of Bayly's subsequent work in the areas of imperial knowledge and global intellectual history. See E. T. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), Tagliaferri, "Christopher Bayly e 'the return of universal history'", 58-59 (note 107), 64-65 (note 121), and, in this volume, the essays by Guido Abbattista and Maurizio Isabella.

[122] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 147; idem, "Returning the British," 278-282.

The analysis of the elements of affinity discernible in the "proconsular despotisms" predominating throughout the Empire during the first three or four decades of the nineteenth century fulfils a strategic function in Bayly's attempt at reincorporating imperial history into world history. The homogenizing effects of the British expansion favoured "the emergence in varied colonies remote from each other of similar policies and similar types of colonial discourse", thus testifying to the globalizing effectiveness of forces of change which had their sources, in this case, in the very heart of the European civilization: "Out of the collision and accommodation between widely differing societies and these impulses to uniformity was generated much of the structure of the modern world".[123]

On the other hand, the fact that the new powerful expansive efforts accomplished by Europe were intertwined with previous dynamics which were endogenous to the non-European societies, and never ceased altogether to depend on these other paths to modernity (as an indispensable source of native 'collaborators', for instance), helps to explain why the convergence between the regional histories that was being realized under the aegis of a contingent and temporary Western hegemony could not give rise, either now nor later, to mere cultural homologation or provoke resistances which were capable of preserving a mythical integrity of the threatened cultures.[124] Imperial globalization, as described by Bayly, rather produced a numerous range of what the American scholar Emily Rosenberg has called "differentiated commonalities"—a type of hybridization in which the surviving local identities were transformed by creatively incorporating the global uniformities that provided them with both the stimuli and the means to express themselves in completely renewed forms.[125]

5. *A Global Past for a Common Future: Bayly's "Ethics of World History"*

The human condition that seems to be the point of arrival of the story of transregional encounters and clashes told in *Imperial Meridian* and *The Birth of*

[123] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 14, 193-216.

[124] Bayly, *Rallying around the Subaltern*. This important article was a polemical review essay comprehensively dealing with *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society*, 4 vols., edited by R. Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982-1985).

[125] E. Rosenberg, "Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World: 1870-1945," in *A History of the World*, vol. 5, 813-996.

the Modern World, whose recently published sequel, *Remaking the Modern World*, carries the narrative literally to the present, offers a precious key to the ethical assumptions which were at the very heart of Bayly's approach to world history and to the practical purposes he pursued through his scientific work in this field of inquiry.

It is quite striking how similar the globalized society whose roots in the past Bayly aimed to explore appears to a brilliant characterization of contemporary India first given by E.P. Thompson in the late 1970s and disseminated afterwards by Amartya Sen: "All the convergent influences of the world run through this society: Hindu, Moslem, Christian, secular; Stalinist, liberal, Maoist, democratic socialist, Gandhian. There is not a thought that is being thought in the West or East that is not active in some Indian mind".[126] What Thompson and Sen observed about Indian multiculturalism some decades ago, and Bayly's "narrative of convergence" concurrently suggested about the historical present generally,[127] could be truly repeated, with the necessary adaptations, for each and every part of the world of today. It is not only that, in the very shrunken planet we inhabit, the once remote regional cultures interact much more closely than in the past, so that their bearers and representatives may be found living, working and studying at each other's elbow in the same streets, factories, offices and schools, or inveigh against each other on the same TV talk shows and social media. Contemporary globalization means something more. It implies that the world's cultures have been increasingly penetrating, permeating and modifying the core identity of each other up to the level of the individual minds and souls of the people belonging to them (this already happened in the past, so there is no reason to believe that it couldn't happen again), if only because their unprecedented mixing forces us to react in some way or another to their ubiquitous presence and influence.[128]

[126] E.P. Thompson, "Indira: The Light That Failed," *The Guardian*, 16 November 1978, reprinted in an expanded version as "The Nehru Tradition" in idem, *Writing by Candlelight* (London: Merlin Press, 1980), 135-149; A. Sen, "Tagore and his India," *The New York Review of Books*, 26 June 1997, reprinted in idem, *The Argumentative Indian. Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 116-117. On the affinities between Bayly and Sen see also, in this volume, the essays by Guido Abbattista and Marco Meriggi.

[127] Clark and Bayly, *Christopher Bayly*, xvi.

[128] On the fascinating process of interactive globalization of Indian religious traditions see C.A. Bayly, "India, the Bagavad Gita and the World," in "The Bagavad Gita and Modern Thought," edited by S. Kapila and F. Devji, *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), 2: 275-295; idem, "Making Hinduism a 'World Religion': before and after Swami Vivekananda," Inaugural Indian

It is only too obvious that our political future will greatly depend on the way in which we cope with this melting pot situation, or *panmixìa*.

The term *panmixìa*—an ancient Greek word which signifies the mixing of everything with everything—was employed by Arnold Toynbee in the 1940s to describe the cultural condition created by globalization, which he still equated with Westernization. Referring in particular to the possible role of Islam in future world politics, Toynbee evoked the "discordant *panmixìa* set up by the Western conquest of the world" in order to warn that "a *panmixìa* may end in a synthesis, but it may equally well end in an explosion". He believed that the investigator of the global past had both the power and the responsibility to help mankind to avert this last "disaster".[129]

Toynbee's precedent may serve to introduce the examination of a further relevant affinity between Bayly's position and the orientations of the US New World History, which pertains to the values choices related to the adoption of the "global point of view",[130] and the results that the global historians should expect from it in the educational and public spheres. Among the North American scholars, there is a widespread belief that the production of an intelligible world history would be "the moral duty of the historical profession in our time", because it would possess the virtue "to diminish the lethality of group encounters" and to favour "cross-cultural understanding and global peace". A history written according to the methodological precepts followed by these scholars would reveal itself as the natural ally of movements committed "to advance the causes of global citizenship, cosmopolitan democracy, cross-cultural dialogue" and analogous "globalist projects", as well as the international struggle for a "more just and equitable organization" of the world economy.[131]

These sanguine expectations are also reflected in Moore's plan for the *Blackwell History* to which Bayly contributed both *The Birth* and *Remaking the Modern World*, so that we are allowed to suppose he partook of them to the full.[132] The ideal readers to whom the series addresses itself are in fact the citizens of "a world

Ministry of Culture Swami Vivekananda Visiting Professor Lecture, April 8, 2014, University of Chicago (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdY9W1qqqlU).

[129] A.J. Toynbee, "Islam, the West, and the Future," in idem, *Civilization on Trial* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 209.

[130] Bentley, "A New Forum for Global History," iv.

[131] McNeill, "Mythistory," 7; Bentley, "Myths, Wagers," 52, 78-79.

[132] R.I. Moore, "Series Editor's Acknowledgements", in Bayly, *Remaking the Modern World*, xi.

which faces a common future of headlong and potentially catastrophic transformation". A mature awareness of its common history would help the peoples who are living and appear destined to live together in a unified world make it into "a rational and humane cosmopolis" based on mutual respect and understanding among the identity groups involved. It is the consciousness of a shared present and future, in other words, that gives value and relevance to knowledge of the global past.[133]

It is pretty clear that Bayly personally endorsed a belief in the ethical responsibility of the global historian professed by the editor of the *Blackwell History*, although he rarely expressed his own deepest convictions in public. This was witnessed by Richard Drayton in an obituary written for *The Guardian*. Drayton describes his colleague's and friend's entire scientific work as tacitly "animated by a moral, even utopian, purpose". "Hidden" behind his impeccable professionalism, there was an "emotional" source of inspiration—Bayly's "hope for a cosmopolitan liberal future, in which human beings, beyond race and nation, would live compassionately in a family of democracies".[134]

Bayly's propensity towards some form of pluralist cosmopolitanism seems confirmed by a certain sensitivity to what he himself has critically defined as "the fascination which the vast, multi-ethnic empires of the agrarian world exercise on scholars and laymen". There is an obvious ideological dimension to the historical-cultural myth which portrays such universal empires—when compared to the homicidal and genocidal intolerance of diversity displayed by the nation state in the contemporary age—"as benign political organisms providing their subject populations with the benefits of peace, law and order".[135] It is worth noting that until the mid-twentieth century, the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations claimed to be the newest and the last incarnation of the ideal of the cosmic monarchy. Official propaganda represented the British world state as a great family of peoples scattered in every corner of the earth, all contributing to the richness of the whole in terms of their prized talents and peculiarities, and therefore realizing the utopia of unity in diversity.[136] There is every reason to believe, on the strength of Bayly's own autobiographical testimony, that he actually

[133] Moore, "World History," 933; idem, "Series Editor's Preface," xix.

[134] R. Drayton, "Sir Christopher Bayly," *The Guardian*, 23 April 2015.

[135] Bang and Bayly, "Comparing Pre-Modern Empires," 169, 170.

[136] T. Tagliaferri, *La cultura metropolitana e il mito di legittimazione dell'Impero britannico (1858-1947). Saggio d'interpretazione* (Naples: Giannini, 2015).

entered into contact with this kind of popular liberal imperialism through the mediation of both his parents when he was a boy (being born in 1945).[137]

But how exactly did Bayly imagine that his scholarly activity in the field of world history could help ensure "a 21st-century global future for his kind of liberalism"?[138] It is not an easy task to give an answer to this question, because Bayly never addressed it explicitly in his published writings and several recorded interventions. There may be no doubt, on the other hand, that he was confident in the practical usefulness of historical studies. He contributed to the World Bank Development Research Group a dense paper on the *Indigenous and Colonial Origins of Comparative Economic Development*, analysing the cases of India and Africa and thus establishing a telling example of how imperial history could be concretely employed in the planning of policies aiming to face global poverty.[139]

It can be ruled out from the start, moreover, that Bayly attributed to the empirical knowledge of the common past of the globalized world any mystical virtue of automatically converting into a choice of value in favour of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. This way of thinking was widespread among the world historians of previous generations. Many of them, often influenced by religious providentialism, believed that history possessed an objective teleological meaning—an immanent purpose, logic and direction. They therefore regarded the historical process as the realization, depending on the right use of human free will, of a predetermined end. For influential scholars, including Toynbee, this *télos* consisted in the reunion of mankind into a single "family" or "oecumenical society" (corresponding to the Church that the Christian tradition had posited as the ultimate beneficiary of the unification of the globe whose antecedent stages

[137] Bayly, "Historiographical and Autobiographical Note", 308-310.

[138] Drayton, "Sir Christopher Bayly".

[139] C.A. Bayly, "Indigenous and Colonial Origins of Comparative Economic Development: The Case of Colonial India and Africa," The World Bank, Development Research Group, Poverty Team, Policy Research Working Paper 4474, January 1, 2008 (http://documents.banquemondiale.org/curated/fr/945001468034474628/pdf/wps4474.pdf), reprinted in *History, Historians and Development Policy: a Necessary Dialogue*, edited by C.A. Bayly, V. Rao, S. Szreter, and M. Woolcock (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 39-64. See also idem, review of *Measuring the Condition of India's Poor. The Physical Quality of Life Index*, by M.D. Morris and M.B. McAlpin, *Pacific Affairs*, 58 (1985), 2: 348-349; idem, "Introduction to the Third Edition," in idem, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars. North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, third edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; first edition 1983), xxi.

had seen as their protagonists secular actors like the Roman Empire).[140] A man equipped with a truthful notion of world history could not help but take sides for some form of pluralist cosmopolitan way out from the predicament of globalized humanity, which was being torn apart by the intensification of the simultaneous "unifying and divisive movements" coexisting in the "Atomic Age".[141]

Some conspicuous traces of this old mode of viewing and trying to exploit the potentialities of the global perspective can be recognized in the work of William McNeill, the historian of the "human community" and a former contributor to Toynbee's *Survey of International Affairs*.[142] In 1985, McNeill was elected President of the American Historical Association, a significant indication of the emerging recognition of world history as a legitimate field of scientific professionalization. On this occasion, he delivered a remarkable address entitled *Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians*, whose main thesis was that, in order to perform the most urgent duty conferred on them by the society in which they lived and worked, professional historians had to take on the task of producing a world history which partook of both myth and historical truth.[143] As history, "mythistory" had to be impeccably written from a scholarly point of view. But the "ecumenical history, with plenty of room for human diversity in all its complexity" envisaged by McNeill had to possess at the same time the narrative structure and meaningfulness proper to a "myth". To this end, the would-be mythistorians were exhorted to reconstruct a synthetic overview of the entire human past around an organizational principle which sounds reminiscent, both in

[140] Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 3 (1934), Part III, "The Growths of Civilizations, C., The Criterion of Growth, (d), The Transference of the Field of Action," 212; ibid., vol. 12 (1961), "Reconsiderations, C, Reconsiderations of Particular Topics, VII, Explanations and Revision of Usages of Terms, 15, Civilization," 279.

[141] A.J. Toynbee, *Democracy in the Atomic Age*, The Dyason Lectures, 1956, Issued under the Auspices of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1957); idem, "Divisive and Unifying Movements in History," in idem, *Change and Habit. The Challenge of Our Time* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 87.

[142] W.H. McNeill, *Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: America, Britain and Russia, Their Co-operation and Conflict, 1941-1946*, with a Foreword by A. J. Toynbee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); idem, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford Universiy Press, 1990); idem, *The Pursuit of Truth. A Historian's Memoir* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 39, 60-63, 68-70; idem, "Leaving West Civ Behind," *Liberal Education*, 97 (2011), nos. 3-4: 40-47, 43.

[143] McNeill, "Mythistory," 7. See J. Mali, *Mythistory. The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 24-25.

its hypothetical gnoselogical status and particular content, of Immanuel Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*. Resorting to the mythistorical approach in fact implied surveying the global past as if it were the long, difficult march of mankind towards the "eventual establishment of a world-wide cosmopolitanism". The resulting world historical narrative would have been able to generate in its readers "a sense of individual identification with the triumphs and tribulations of humanity as a whole".[144]

Bayly distanced himself much more markedly than McNeill from the teleological attitude of the old global history, albeit the two scholars in a way shared a similar religious upbringing (McNeill was the son of a Presbyterian minister, while Bayly's father, Roy, had converted from his family's Presbyterianism to free thinking).[145] Bayly's epistemological pronouncements indeed reveal a strict adherence to the precepts of the English empiricist tradition. He was radically sceptical about the possibility for the professional historian to base any judgement about how things ought to be on the knowledge of the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen". More exactly, Bayly's work is infused with a sophisticated, quasi-Weberian understanding that history cannot by itself yield any ethical message, because the objects of historical research are shaped by the cognitive interest of the researcher and an indispensable role is therefore played in their shaping by values choices. The historian cannot draw his preferences from the realities he probes. What happens is rather the opposite: his evaluations give form and meaning to that portion of the past which he selects as the subject matter of his inquiry.[146]

It must be added that Bayly, as a historian of imperialism, opposed any apologetic whitewashing of its evil consequences and crimes, as well as the Manichaean posture of prejudicial and indistinct condemnation of this most ambivalent phenomenon which has for so long prevailed.[147] He has shown himself only too

[144] McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, 806; idem, "Mythistory," 7.

[145] Bayly, "Historiographical and Autobiographical Note," 309. See McNeill's dedication of *The Rise of the West* to his colleagues of the University of Chicago—"*I seek to understand, and if I can/To justify the ways of man to man*"—, which was an obviuos paraphrase of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I, vv. 25-26.

[146] Bayly, "Historiographical and Autobiographical Note," 322.

[147] See, for example, C.A. Bayly, "Two Colonial Revolts: The Java War, 1825-30, and the Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857-59", in *Two Colonial Empires*; idem, *Creating a Colonial Peasantry*; idem, "Distorted Development: The Ottoman Empire and British India, circa 1780-1916," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27 (2007), no 2: 332-344; idem, "Moral Judgment: Empire, Nation and History," *European Review*, 14 (2006), no. 3: 385-391. Bay-

aware, therefore, that the vivid consciousness of a common history is not in itself conducive to a better mutual comprehension between peoples. After all, what the past co-experienced by the descendants of colonizers and colonized has left to the globalized present is first and foremost a heavy, almost unmanageable legacy of violent clashes and "inexcusable" wrong.[148]

For all these reasons, Bayly seems to have set himself a practical purpose which appears much more circumscribed, but at the same time much more well defined and actually achievable, than the ambitious edificatory goal of McNeill's "mythistory". Far from attempting to convert anyone to his own brand of liberal cosmopolitanism, Bayly's explorations of the global past aimed at counteracting the obnoxious ideological tendency of our times to reify as fixed and separate essences the fluid, overlapping, intricate group identities coexisting in the contemporary globalized society, so as to equip the aspirant builders of the future Cosmopolis with a realistic knowledge about the cultural materials which must be handled and the obstacles which must be overcome in order to advance towards its always imperfect realization.[149]

But even within these rigorous limits, there remains an uplifting lesson in rational hope to be apprehended from reading and attentively studying Christopher Bayly's books and essays. The critical investigation of the actual ways in

ly's critical attitude towards imperialism most clearly emerges from his vast contribution to the historiography of the 'end of Empire': idem, "Rangoon (Yangon) 1939-49: the Death of a Colonial Metropolis" (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, Centre of South Asian Studies, Occasional paper no. 3, 2003); C.A. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Armies. Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), and *Forgotten Wars. The End of the Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), whose subtitle in the American edition reads *Freedom and Revolution in Southern Asia*; C.A. Bayly, "'The Nation Within'": British India at War, 1939-1947", Raleigh Lecture on History, 26 November 2003, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 125 (2005): 265-296; idem, "Ideologies of the End of the Raj: Burma, India and the World, 1940-1950," in *Decentering Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World*, edited by D. Ghosh and D. Kennedy (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006), 351-373; idem, "Fighting and Talking. Politics and War in South and Southeast Asia, 1936-56," *The RUSI [Royal United Services Institution] Journal*, 156 (2011), 6: 84-91. See also C. Elkins, "The Re-Assertion of the British Empire in Southeast Asia" (review of Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*), *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 39 (2009), no. 3: 361-385.

[148] D. Lena, "Denmark's Moravian Church Apologizes to Virgin Islands for 'Inexcusable' Injustice of Slavery", *Atlanta Black Star*, 28 March 2017.

[149] C.W. Hedrick, "The Ethics of World History," *Journal of World History*, 16 (2005), 1: 33-49; D. Sachsenmaier, "World History as Ecumenical History?", *Journal of World History*, 18 (2007), 4: 465-489.

which modern globalization has come to shape the identity profiles of groups and individuals interacting in today's world disproves the pseudo-historical stereotypes that tend to credit the prejudice according to which between 'us' and 'them' (between 'us' Europeans or Italians, for example, and non-European Union migrants of various origins and provenances) there would exist irreducible differences, to be classified in simple dichotomic schemes. Rather, the history of the last quarter of millennium has generated a conspicuous set of "differentiated commonalities"—resemblances between regional societies and civilizations which result from their sharing the same or analogous experiences, but which are everywhere inflected according to the most varied local codes. As they have made possible the present degree of convergence and interpenetration among the cultures of the world, the global interactions of the past have bequeathed to us, together with a tragic legacy of conflict, vast and manifold opportunities for mutual accommodation between group identities which are anything but rigid, homogeneous, mutually exclusive and uncommunicating monads.

5

MAURIZIO ISABELLA

Liberalism and Globalization

The book of Bayly on the Indian liberalism in a global context, *Recovering Liberties*, contains in the subtitle (*The Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*) an explicit reference to a classic of the historiography of extra-European political culture published in 1962 by the Oxford University Press, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789-1939* by Albert Hourani. To the old master Bayly makes a warm homage also in the preface, where he is defined as "one of the finest historians of the later twentieth century".[1]

In the volume of Hourani, the relationship between Ottoman intellectuals and Europe played a central role, not only because the opportunity or not to imitate the European model was at the centre of their reflections, but also because the author of every type of reformist opening of the Arabic thought, although formulated in the terms of indigenous culture, depended on ideas and stimuli which came in any case from the European continent.

Elie Kedourie, the great scholar of nationalism, of Iraqi origins, in a famous review wrote that the title of the book was deceiving because there was no form of liberalism in the Ottoman empire.[2] To understand the reactions produced by Hourani's book we must return to the terms of the post-war debate on the nature and origins of liberalism. As Duncan Bell recently argued, a strongly normative conception of liberalism has its roots in the critique of totalitarianism inaugurated in the 1930s and consolidated during the Cold War. Basically, starting from the fortunate stories of Guido De Ruggiero and Harold Laski, liberalism has been associated with Western modernity and progress, and has

[1] C.A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties. Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vii.

[2] E. Kedourie, "Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-1939," *Political Quarterly*, 24 (1963), no. 2: 217-219.

therefore been defined as an ideology created to protect individual rights and property in the framework of a constitutional government. To give coherence and unity to this ideology contributed an entirely European intellectual genealogy whose founding father was John Locke, and whose conceptual bricks were analyzed through a gallery of thinkers, from Thomas Hobbes to Charles de Montesquieu, from Benjamin Constant to John Stuart Mill. Within this tradition were recognized at the most the distinctions between a British and a continental variant of liberalism.[3]

Bayly's work calls into question this reconstruction together with its historiographical and methodological premises. How is it possible to study liberalism at a global level in a period when it became the dominant ideology of those countries that politically and materially conquered the rest of the world without adopting the diffusionist model implicit in the post-war literature on liberalism? The great merit of Bayly, already starting from a brief section of *The Birth of the Modern World*,[4] is to radically revise the terms of the relationship between European and extra-European liberalism in the era of colonial expansions, abandoning, on the one hand, the thesis of the derivation of the second from the first, on the other, a homogeneous and univocal idea of liberalism that has become unsustainable in the light of the studies of the last twenty years on nineteenth-century political culture.[5]

Moyn and Sartori have proposed three definitions of global intellectual history: a history that considers the global as a meta-analytic category that the historian uses; the study of a historically given process (for example the globalization of ideas); a category historically used by the intellectuals. Bayly has contributed to this discipline at all levels, although its greatest contribution has been above all to the globalization of ideas as a result of co-production, interactions and exchanges.[6] A fundamental premise of his approach is the reduction of the distance or the difference between European and extra-European political culture even before the nineteenth century.

[3] D. Bell, "What is Liberalism?", *Political Theory*, 42 (2014), no. 6: 682-715.

[4] C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of Modern World 1780-1914* (London: Blackwell, 2004).

[5] Cf. too C.A. Bayly, "European Political Thought and the Wider World during the XIX Century", in *The Cambridge History of the XIX Century Political Thought*, edited by G.S. Jones and G. Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 835-863.

[6] Cf. *Global Intellectual History*, edited by S. Moyn and A. Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 5.

According to Bayly there is a substantial affinity between the idea of freedom of the Western republican civic tradition and those of the Arab, African, Asian and Creole-Latin American cultures, all based on the notion of "virtuous city" and anxious to defend themselves from the threat posed by corruption and by tyranny thanks to the principles of justice and wisdom. The new themes of nineteenth-century liberalism are grafted onto these concerns, and therefore there is convergence and also continuity, not just rupture, between the "liberty before liberalism"—according to the fortunate definition of Quentin Skinner—and liberalism.[7] If in the nineteenth century the reception of European texts in the rest of the world was successful, this also happened thanks to the fact that Western ideas were recognized as familiar by their non-European readers. It becomes difficult—Bayly seems to suggest in this way—to defend the exclusivity or the peculiarity of Western political thought.

At the same time Bayly's approach does not deny the fundamental importance of the interaction between local traditions and European ideas for the creation of liberal currents in the world. What counts is not so much the rate of reception of European culture and fidelity to its original texts, as the way in which the language of liberalism in non-European continents used Western ideas by handling them, cannibalizing them, rebuilding them and reinterpreting them in a drastic way to reinvent alternative modernities and criticize the colonial authority in an original way. Consequently the relationship between liberalism and empire, whose importance is already underlined in the subtitle of *Recovering liberties*, takes on new connotations. The classic studies of Uday Mehta and the more recent ones by Jennifer Pitts have suggested a close link between the imperial project, whose ascent in the nineteenth century is associated, according to Pitts, with a "turn to empire". For Metha, the logic internal to liberalism is imperialist, since it is linked to a universally applicable idea of progress and civilization, which in the face of extra-European diversity reacts with the colonial paternalism of the gradual education to freedom.[8] The study of extra-European liberalism by Bayly, however, demonstrates the existence of a liberal criticism of the empire, but dismantles the rigid opposition between anti-colonial anti-imperialism and Western imperialism. The first Indian liberals did not want to dis-

[7] Cf. Q. Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[8] Cf. U. Metha, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1999); J. Pitts (*A Turn to Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

mantle the British Empire but to reform it by granting forms of local autonomy, without invoking its dissolution.

The prominence given to the connections through space and time does not therefore reduce the differences and the existing intellectual facets, it does not annul the characteristics of nineteenth-century liberalism in a minimum common denominator. One of Bayly's fundamental methodological observations seems to me that the global dimension, whose definition requires a greater level of simplification or generalization, must always be combined with the regional and local level, because none of these plans alone is sufficient to understand the characteristics of the liberal thought in its interactive dimensions. Bayly uses the term "ecological niche"[9] to indicate the local intellectual and institutional traditions that sometimes remain isolated or which, in certain historical contexts, take on new meaning by connecting and mingling with international trends.

The period for which Bayly more accurately and convincingly demonstrates the link and dependence between the different plans is that of the first decades of the nineteenth century, which he very happily defines as a "liberal moment" of a transnational nature.[10] Central figure of this global constitutional phase is Ram Mohan Roy, a reformer whose intellectual horizons are marked by the geopolitical spaces of the British and Portuguese empires, of the Mediterranean, of Southeast Asia.[11] This constitutional moment is defined by the reformist aspirations that emerge simultaneously in the Ibero-American world, in Europe and in Asia, but Bayly emphasizes how the meaning of constitution and the expectations linked to the request for its adoption vary from context to context, from region to region. Roy supported the cause of the Spanish and Portuguese Carbonari and Liberals, but what he wanted for India was a constitution that guaranteed to the Indians first of all access to the jury, rather than their national representation. Although the constitutional moment marked the emergence of new political aspirations also in Southeast Asia, the liberals in India, Singapore, Ceylon and Malaysia claimed a role in the imperial justice system, referring to the tradition of *panchayat* or councils, as examples of representation of local issues, and therefore to their "ecological niche".

[9] Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 12.

[10] Ibid., 95.

[11] C.A. Bayly, "Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India," *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), no. 1: 25-41.

Until now we have wanted to underline the strategies adopted by Bayly to overtake a derivative and Eurocentric approach to the history of liberalism. Another important issue raised by his work is the rate of 'normativity' of the liberalism historically given in its extra-European dimension, when compared to the ideal-typical model proposed by post-war studies. In truth, Bayly does not seem to completely abandon the use of a normative model in the study of the historical roots of liberalism. He often assumes the comparison of the essential characteristics of the thought of the Indian reformers with the writings of John Stuart Mill, labeling them as classic liberalism. At the same time, it should not be forgotten how Bayly, while giving an unusual weight among scholars of intellectual history to the social, political and economic context of the debates studied, remains a 'contextualist' according to the methodological canons of the Cambridge school. It is not for nothing that his book is the hundredth of the Ideas in Context series founded by Quentin Skinner, one of the main inspirers of that kind of approach to the history of political thought.

Referring to the positions of the philosopher and historian Raymond Geuss,[12] Bayly nevertheless considers the liberalism historically given as the product of "an amalgamation of historically contingent fragments" of different ideologies.[13] Consequently, the study of this amalgam transforms in a surprising, at least at the first sight, way the most usual image of nineteenth-century liberalism. In the first place because what is presented to us is a liberalism which in its various facets and planetary declinations remains largely and profoundly religious. In India the Buddhist, Islamic and Hindu cultures merged with Evangelical Christian influences in the texts of local reformers. Among the Indian liberals, toleration was conceived not as a protection of an individual right, but as a privilege or defense of community rights. The liberalism that emerges from the pages of Bayly often subordinates the defense of individual rights to the defense of the community, whether it is a national community or a traditional social body. In nineteenth-century India one can be a reformer and at the same time defend the caste system in an anti-British function. But obviously, as Bayly does not fail to point out, the subordination of individual rights to the community must be traced back to global trends, not just local, which bring together European and Asian thinkers. The worldwide success of the Mazzinian thought, together

[12] Cf. R. Geuss, *History and Illusion in Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[13] Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 2

with the Indian reception of Comte, demonstrates the ambiguous relationship that exists historically between nationalism and individual liberties.[14] Finally, as we have mentioned, the liberalism revealed by Bayly absorbs and also contains "liberty before liberalism". The civic virtues and participation were important for the nineteenth-century Indian liberals: in Bombay and Calcutta the middle class identified with their city, exalting philanthropy and responsibility towards the urban community.

In this perspective the rigid distinctions and dichotomies used by historians of political thought lose meaning: the oppositions between republicanism and liberalism, historical constitutionalism and contractualism, nation and empire, organicism and individualism—if understood as alternative or incompatible languages—appear fundamentally ahistorical because not perceived as such by the actors of the time. Finally, the manipulation of European culture in the rest of the world subjected the nineteenth-century liberal thought canon to a very severe test. Figures considered marginal or non-liberal acquired value for their global echoes: so Mazzini or Comte are more important, from this point of view, than Benjamin Constant or Adam Smith.

As the titles of the numerous conferences organized in honour of the work of Bayly as an historian of the ideas suggest—*Global Liberalisms*, *Liberal Multiplicities*, *Liberalisms at the Margins*—the need to pluralize our notion of liberalism seems urgent. If liberalism in the nineteenth century becomes a global and universal language, its spread on a planetary scale is accompanied by a proliferation of political languages, categories and topics, by a notable enrichment of semantic nuances, and not by their homogenization, and less than less by their uniform assimilation to a single project tending to Western liberal democracy.[15] Thanks to Bayly's work nineteenth-century liberalisms appear today as the answer to a series of questions and problems shared by those who in the world tried, even with different intellectual instruments, to reconcile in a new way authority and freedom, and to invoke reforms against or within old or new states or despotic empires, to simultaneously defend the rights of individuals and communities as well as, as suggested by the title of his book, "to recover ancient liberties".

[14] Cf. *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830-1920*, edited by C.A. Bayly and E. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[15] G. Sluga and T. Rowse, "Introduction" to "Forum: Global Liberalisms", *Modern Intellectual History*, 12 (2015), no. 3: 523-528.

6

MARCO MERIGGI

The Local and the Global: Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World*

The period 1780-1914 is conventionally considered by historiography as the long nineteenth century. This is also the temporal scenario which Bayly's book spans: the long nineteenth century of the Industrial Revolution and of the great expansion of the market; that of the growth of the role of science in society and simultaneously of its capacity to dominate nature; that of secularization; finally, that of the diffusion and consolidation by the Napoleonic-Weberian bureaucratic state of such values as citizenship on the one hand, and popular sovereignty (variously shaped in a liberal or democratic sense) on the other.[1]

Of course, this list could continue. The topics we have recalled are yet sufficient to begin a critical path through the book—among the many written by Christopher Bayly—which has known the greatest resonance.[2] Already his works on India had consecrated him as a historian tending to cross the specific boundaries of his own discipline and to practise with intelligence the technique of analogy—if not precisely a comparison—between the historical trajectories of the subcontinent and the West. These works have been, yet, read and debated almost exclusively within the field of the so called area studies, although the

[1] C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World. Global Connections and Comparisons, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[2] For a detailed critical illustration of the content of the work we are considering, see J. Osterhammel, "Baylys Moderne," *Neue Politische Literatur*, 50 (2005), no. 1: 7-17. Among the numerous reviews of the work that appeared in Italy, see M. Meriggi, "Come nacque la modernità," *Il Mestiere di Storico*, 1 (2009), no. 1: 52-54. In this regard, see also idem, "Storie mondiali dell'Ottocento," *Contemporanea*, 13 (2010), no. 3: 591-597, which discusses both the book by Bayly and that by J. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des XIX Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 2009).

critical dialogue which Bayly entertained during the 1980s and the 1990s with the authors of the Subaltern Studies group undoubtedly made him known also by a wider audience, namely a public not necessarily interested in the themes of Indian history, but rather in the methods and problems characteristic of post-colonial studies.[3]

Thanks to *The Birth of the Modern World*, many basic ideas which Bayly had formulated in his previous researches enjoyed a full-fledged treatment, in so far as the author tried to test their heuristic effectiveness on a global scale; a scale, however, that the book we discuss here has greatly contributed in recent years to make familiar to the historiographic community, and especially to its younger generation.[4]

Bayly's 'modern world' is, actually, incomparably larger than the one proposed by previous general histories of the long nineteenth century. It is a polycentric world, whose profile doesn't correspond only to the economic, political, scientific agency of its traditional supposed emerging social subject, the Western bourgeoisie.[5]

This polycentrism, which often surprises the 'conventional' reader, corresponds to a lively and spiky dialectical tension between the global and the local moment. It is precisely the focus of this specific intertwining—one, and certainly not the only one, of the visual angles from which it is possible to follow the architecture of this book—that represents the thread of the considerations developed here.

What is the 'global' in Bayly's reconstruction? Essentially, the dissemination on a planetary scale (but, in truth, Eurasian above all) of some factors that imposed on the human coexistence unifying trends to which the author attributes a modernizing value. Globalization therefore means at the same time growth and

[3] A reconstruction of the assumptions and results of the line of research taken by Bayly as a scholar of Indian history, can be read in D. Chakrabarty, "Reading (the) Late Chris Bayly: A Personal Tribute," *South Asian History and Culture*, 7 (2016), no. 1: 1-6. Here, Chakrabarty sensibly mitigates the tones of the controversy that he had engaged in with Bayly between the 1980s and the 1990s, as the Indian historian was on the front line of post-colonial critique, while the British was strongly identified with the 'Cambridge approach'. Later, the distance between the two authors was considerably reduced.

[4] On the theme now, in the context of a huge literature, see the clear synthesis written by S. Conrad, *Storia globale. Una introduzione* (Rome: Carocci, 2015; original German edition 2013).

[5] See the famous Hobsbawm trilogy: E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (London: Abacus, 1962); idem, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld, 1975); idem, *The Age of Empires: 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987).

modernization, a universalization of techniques and binding internal normative definitions of the fields of knowledge and belief, a push towards the future and a distancing from the past.

These are all processes that can be easily analysed thinking of the simultaneous growth of the market and the state, but that—in order to be fully understood—need also to be connected with another basic trend: the long nineteenth century also means, perhaps above all, the almost entire world's domination by the West. This West was essentially Europe; a Europe that was, in its turn, above all the British Empire, according to a logical sequence that explains well, I believe, Bayly's 'conversion' from the refined specialism of Indian history to the universalizing perspective of global history.

Now, if the global—which the author defines as an extension of the ambitions of the "European State [and of] its colonial offshoots"[6] thanks to the "growing economic dominance of Western Europe and North America"[7]—performs in Bayly's reconstruction the function of an expansive and modernizing vector, the local, instead, tends to play the role of an element under pressure and under manipulation, if not altogether in full retreat.

The local dimension, in Bayly's book, means, for instance, corporeity, once free and now disciplined by the general adoption of Western clothing;[8] or poverty, highlighted by the "huge differentials of wealth, productivity, and life expectancy which had opened up between the West and the rest by 1900";[9] or, again, indigenism/nativism,[10] naturalism and wildness.[11] These were all features of living first attacked and then eventually put on display by colonial rule. They

[6] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 7.
[7] Ibid., 2.
[8] "In 1780, the most powerful men in the world were dressed in a large variety of different types of garments which ranged from Chinese mandarin robes, through French embroidered frock coats, to ritualized undress in the Pacific and parts of Africa", whereas, "by 1914, a growing number of the most important men operating in public arenas wore western style clothes wherever they lived. Chinese nationalists and the leaders of the new Japan dressed in the top hat and black morning coat" (ibid., 13). See also page 380, where the *redingote* jacket, alternating with the Prussian military uniform, is also worn by the Young Turks.
[9] Ibid., 59.
[10] "If the native peoples were so irremediably primitive, corrupt, or trapped at the level of the ancients, then the British, French, Americans, or Germans would have to bring them the benefits of state, commerce, and freedom of trade" (ibid., 111).
[11] "The sciences of living beings, natural history, and anthropology intervened to class native peoples and rare animals as specimens, and this afforded them a degree of protection [...]. As

were the remains of a defeated adversary, put on show in the global museums set up in the colonial metropolises, from London to Paris.[12] At the same time, they were forms of manifestation of the 'good' ancient communitarianism, scrambled and transformed by the intrusive devices of modern statehood.

This modern statehood, however, was not the exclusive prerogative of the Western world and its dominant groups. True, the state was first "the European state alone",[13] but its global expansion gave rise to numerous phenomena of mimesis and of fully-fledged metamorphosis. Like the European ones, in fact, certain non-European states, "notably the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese Empire, and Tokugawa Japan were forced to widen their scale of ambition". On the other hand, "the leaders of these states had to adapt and modify the new ideologies. They had to trench into areas of society that had formerly been autonomous".[14]

The advance of the global (and modernity) had, therefore, a Western engine, but its performers on a local scale show a more varied physiognomy which does not automatically correspond to that of the Europeans in action in the colonial scenario, the bearers of the supposed Kiplingian burden. Sometimes, in fact, the autochthonous territorial elite was actually the social subject, who put into practice the authoritarian mechanisms on which the unprecedented globalizing supremacy exerted by the West rested.

To the expansion of the Western macro-empire, which subjugates to its direct dominion much of the globe, corresponded, therefore, the attempt at survival of at least some of the great non-European empires of the past.

These were immense territorial complexes, each of which characterized by its own peculiar form of organization of society, whose features now tended to melt and give way to a Westernized style of government. Once the world was not only polycentric, but also polymorphic, despite the "family resemblances" between the many "old regimes" that flourished in Eurasia and in Western and Northern Africa before the late eighteenth century European expansion.[15] This latter still gave some chance to polycentrism, but tended to homologize its features. Yet, having been embodied and developed by extra-European contexts, the Western

'living fossils', such peoples surely needed conservation as much as the physical objects and natural history specimens preserved in museums" (ibid., 447).

[12] Ibid., 315, 370, 447.

[13] Ibid., 267.

[14] Ibid., 7.

[15] Ibid., 30.

model knew a variety of transformations. The moment it met the local worlds, the global produced in fact a genealogy of globalized places that were distinct from each other.

Therefore, globalization did not—and still does not—simply and necessarily mean the fulfilment of a generalized imitation process. The bourgeois with the turban—the subject of a book written by Margrit Pernau a few years after Bayly's *Birth of the Modern World*, and certainly at least partially inspired to the perspective developed by Bayly himself[16]—is, for instance, an emblematic representation of this entanglement between Western modelling and a variety of local contexts. Through their mutual encounter, the local changes the global.

Is yet the local, in its double figuration of resistance and metamorphosis, all located in areas of the planet other than the West? In Bayly's reconstruction, it is certainly largely prevalent there and this represents, in my opinion, one of the problematic aspects of the world reconstructed by the British historian.

There are, in fact, sporadic references in the book—for instance, those to "Christ stopped at Eboli", or to the romantic rediscovery of *Heimat* in post-Napoleonic Germany— which allow us to realize that the 'South' of the world was, indeed, multiple. This becomes evident also through some other themes analysed in Bayly's narrative; for example, handicraft, or the mythical pre-industrial and local past, nostalgically considered as a good old time to place in opposition to the humiliating present, marked by the generalization of factory work.[17] Further, these Souths were sometimes located near the places where the command engine of the process of globalization and modernization was at work.

On the other hand, the turning point that gave birth to the long nineteenth century was primarily due precisely to the long lasting process of transformation of the polycentric fabric of the old European regime by the modernizing and levelling tendencies deployed by capitalism and statehood.

[16] M. Pernau, *Bürger mit Turban. Muslime in Delhi im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2008).

[17] "Where socialists and even conservative historians once saw the industrial worker as in the vanguard of political change, modern historians have argued that the rebellions of 1848 and the Paris Commune were really caused by dispossessed old-style artisans" (ibid., 171). Further, "Thinkers and activists on the left of British politics before the 1890s tended to look back to an idealized era of guild-like work and labor, in which the artisan and the field-worker owned his tools and his plot of land" (ibid., 310).

In truth, we have to consider a contrasted and longstanding open-ended process, as Arno Mayer suggested some decades ago in an important study. Bayly actually evokes it incidentally, but this doesn't seem to represent a truly significant reference in his reconstruction, where resistances—both traditional and modern—to globalization arising in the metropolitan territories play a decidedly accessory role.

Thus, we find ourselves faced with a problem of organization of the hierarchical structure of the narrative of global history that, as Tagliaferri has observed, seems to emerge even in more recent works. An example is given by the fifth volume of the *History of the World*, recently translated into Italian, where "the metropolitan imperial project [...] continues to be painted as something intrinsically monolithic and unproblematic [whereas it is] almost continuously shaped and reformed also by negotiations and conflicts among a multitude of subjects operating in the centres of the imperial systems, and able to leave their 'imprint' no less than the colonial subjects".[18]

Likewise, in Bayly's study, reactivity—in the form of both rebellion and adaptation—to the hegemonic tendencies deployed by nineteenth century globalism is depicted, in essence, as an almost exclusive problem of non-European local worlds. It seems to me that, in order to give depth to his polycentric narrative, Bayly mostly tends to highlight these latter at the expense of the metropolitan societies.

Clearly, the world of the Westernizing territorial elites fascinates Bayly more than the world of subalterns.[19] Such a predilection leads him to formulate another of the great ideas of his book: that concerning the simultaneous existence, in many late eighteenth century societies moving towards globalization, of 'moral communities' animated by "ideas not dissimilar to European traditions of civic republicanism". On this ground, during the long nineteenth century, these mor-

[18] T. Tagliaferri, contribution to "Connessioni globali e storia transnazionale," edited by M. De Giuseppe and A. Roccucci, *Il mestiere di storico*, 7 (2016), no. 2: 57-60, 60.

[19] Here again, on a different territorial scale, one can find some important traces of the studies about Indian nationalism developed in the past by the author, which gave rise to a heated controversy between him and Partha Chatterjee. See C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). We will analytically discuss the essential issues of this controversy shortly.

al communities tended to mix "elements from modern Western radicalism and theories of human rights with claims to defend ancient traditions of community and the honour of the land from the rising tide of global commercialization".[20]

This idea of the existence of an eighteenth-nineteenth century public opinion, on the one hand global but on the other locally variegated, and inspired by a sort of universal crypto-republicanism, nurtured by the most heterogeneous cultural traditions, is a great one, indeed, but not entirely persuasive. Yet it is perhaps the idea that best illustrates Bayly's effort to insert radically non-Eurocentric points of view in his narrative. For this reason, it is advisable to review analytically the examples to which he resorts, and the reasoning structure he derives from them.

These are examples that lead us, undoubtedly, into places and sites very distant from those in which we usually locate the process of genesis of eighteenth century public opinion, the latter essentially seen as an outcome and renewal of the tradition of civic republicanism characteristic (as suggested by Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment*) of the history of the West. Here is what Bayly observes:

> Indeed, ideas not dissimilar to European traditions of civic republicanism existed in many world societies. Anthropologists, for example, have shown how pre-colonial Africans used ideologies of good kingship to justify the overthrow of wicked and ineffectual rulers. John Peel has demonstrated this particularly effectively in the case of the West African Yoruba, a people who recorded their struggles to maintain a harmonious society and wise kingship through bardic myths which stressed the role of the honorable householder. Wise counsel, care for the toiler, and the desire to be ruled by virtuous patriarchs were, quite understandably, the social goods sought by intellectuals in all agrarian and early commercial societies before industrialization. In contrast, what was perceived as corruption, although it was understood differently in the various traditions, seems to have been a cause for dissent and even revolt almost universally.[21]

From the West Africa of the Yoruba we then move on to Japan, where we get to know Ogyū Sorai, "probably the most influential thinker of eighteenth-century Japan", who considered the exercise of criticism "as a way of safeguarding the regime", and therefore spent his life attacking "samurai corruption and merchant violations of the moral economy", as well as familiarizing some of his

[20] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 288.
[21] Ibid.

countrymen with an attitude of contestation of the constituted power that in the following century fed "dissidence against the Tokugawa dynasty", acting as a prerequisite for the "Japanese 'revolution' and 'renaissance'".[22]

If, according to Bayly, a local tradition that insisted on the "ethnic myth of divine monarchy and good rulership" gave life in Japan to a deep renewal of the relations between political power and society, in Hindu and Muslim India, instead, "the elite and popular understandings of corruption took on a more immediate, bodily sense through the notions of purity and pollution". These notions offered the basic framework for Indian patriotism in the colonial era.[23]

Yet, so far, as Bayly himself states, "the connection between Euro-American civic republicanism and patriotic communitarianism elsewhere" would be "merely implicit". On the other hand, to the British historian, the case of the Muslim world seems different. There, in fact, the tradition of criticism of power "harked back to the medieval Arab and Persian moralists' attempts to reconcile Aristotle's civic morality with the Prophet's norms of the godly life". Here, one could consequently catch a glimpse of "a direct, if distant, connection between the archaic European traditions of civic republicanism and the political ethics of an extra-European society", since "Aristotle was common to both civilizations".[24] On the other hand, "some Islamic liberals in nineteenth-century Egypt appealed to the early days of the Prophet's reign in Medina, which they pictured as a sort of representative government".[25]

Now, it seems to me that this method of argumentation tends to equalize spatially and temporally the peculiar local modalities of expression of the eighteenth century moral communities; that is, their being what Eurocentric historiography, thinking mostly of Europe and America, usually calls public opinion, yet recognizing, at the same time, in this latter something strictly and exclusively connected to the (Western) enlightenment and its characteristic values in terms of promotion of rights.

In articulating his position on this topic, Bayly declares that he is drawing on those scholars who, in the history of ideas, since the 1960s have "partly changed their views", distancing themselves from a previous largely shared opinion, tend-

[22] Ibid., 288-289.
[23] Ibid., 289.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 290.

ing to highlight instead the radical difference of the eighteenth century ways of critical interaction with public power from those preceding them. In this new perspective, "much of the critical thought of the revolutionary age" could be considered, according to Bayly, as "the last flowering of a much earlier political tradition".[26] It is on the basis of this assumption that it becomes feasible for Bayly to suggest the existence of a close proximity between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' developments of the public spheres in various parts of the globe, each starting from pre-existing local traditions.

This proximity goes so far as to induce the author to affirm that "the fabled 'republic of letters' of eighteenth-century Europe"—the classic public sphere depicted by Jürgen Habermas—was in reality "analogous elsewhere",[27] and especially to the one of East Asia, whose reforming intellectuals were also between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "grappling with their own forms of modernity no less rigorously than the freemasons and philosophes of Western Eurasia".[28] According to Bayly, "behind Confucian 'revivals' of knowledge or Islamic 'doctrinal controversies'" of that era, one could so "discern rulers and intellectuals attempting to grapple with the problems of organizing society and human experience" through the exercise of a radical critical attitude, which is therefore not ultimately to be regarded as a Western exclusive.[29]

Let us try to gather together this argumentative sequence. On the one hand, the author postulates the existence, under every sky and in every time, of moral communities wishing to pursue the goal of good government and inclined to offer (each according to their own cultural peculiarity) their advisory contribution to the holders of the public power for the purpose of its realization, since these latter, also everywhere at all times, were liable to be contaminated by corruption and to abandon the main road of virtue. On the other hand, he suggests the sharing of a minimum common denominator (Aristotle) by at least some of these moral communities (namely, the Western and the Islamic). Finally, he assumes a strong continuity between the timeless tradition of the critical moral community as such and the republics of letters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[26] Ibid., 286.
[27] Ibid., 78.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 79.

The impression, however, is that here, in the worthy effort to overcome the conceptual barriers of Eurocentrism, Bayly has lost sight of an important thread. True, of course, the aspiration to good governance and to the 'good advice' that various moral communities can provide to the rulers can be found in every time and in every place. Yet such a finding appears to be barely significant in many ways, because it is not circumstantial enough. In other words, the author runs the risk of becoming undefined, since, evoking that aspiration, reference is made to contents and methods of pursuing them that are often so different as to be, in fact, irreconcilable. Although it is plausible to maintain that, until the end of the eighteenth century, many societies of the world were governed by ancient constitutions which, despite the diversity of their forms, were characterised by significant features of mutual familiarity,[30] the Atlantic revolutions in the West played the role, in fact, of a moment of strong separation from both that world and that tradition; a world and a tradition which suddenly became past.

In the decades during which the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and later those of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Central and South America took place, in various other places on the globe many other major political upheavals broke out; and certainly this happened thanks to an active contribution by the respective moral communities.[31] Even in Mughal India, in Safavid Persia, in the Ottoman and in the Chinese Empires, contemporaries described those agitations, some of which preceded the 'Atlantic revolutions', with the term 'revolution'. Asian revolutions, however, unlike the Western, did not give rise to an attempt to build up a political community without a king or, in any case, grounded on popular sovereignty: their goal was rather to replace a sovereign who was considered bad with a better one.

The fact is that, in spite of a—so to say—perennial 'crypto-republicanism', which—according to Bayly—was universally widespread from the African Yoruba, to Japan, to India, to China, to the Islamic empires (namely, the places he evokes to exemplify his theory about the role of moral communities or ethical communities in the exercise of 'public criticism'), the idea of replacing the mon-

[30] This was, for example, even then, the opinion of Edmund Burke. See R. Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India. The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), but also M. Meriggi, "Costituzioni antiche e narrazioni orientaliste. Dal Sette all'Ottocento," *Storica*, 15 (2009), nos. 43-45: 209-255.

[31] See the geographical map that illustrates them in Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 84-85.

archy with an institution like the republic had no luck outside a specific place: the 'Atlantic' world, in which a new, modern West, no longer limited to Europe alone, began to take shape. Many of the great rebellions that characterised Asia during the decades we are considering aimed not, in fact, at the introduction of a new system of law, but rather at the restoration of old customary rights which the sovereigns of the time were trying once again to disregard, as they had almost always done in the past. As the Ottoman poet Sheyh Galib—who lived between 1757 and 1799, very turbulent five decades even for the empire in which he spent his existence—wrote:

> The sagas of kings are but a painted rose
> nothing more
> on a fragile Chinese cup,
> made for the ruler's hand
> not my own.[32]

The late eighteenth century was a specific time during which Western citizenship began a process of radical differentiation from the rest of the world, grasping with determination that cup that elsewhere remained in the hands of the sovereigns. On the other hand, it was the time when the 'birth of the modern world' took place. In addition to the processes mentioned at the beginning of the text, this 'birth' manifested itself in phenomena and values such as the emergence of liberal individualism, of popular sovereignty and of the rights of citizenship connected to both.

These were all factors that entailed a drastic break with the modes of expression of the public sphere that were characteristic of the ubiquitous world of ancient constitutions. Qualifying itself as the queen of the world, modern public opinion exceeded the usual limits of the traditional ancient regime moral communities, since it claimed a role that was no longer that of providing good advice to a higher authority, but rather of being the holder of the government of things as such.

[32] Quoted in D. Armitage and S. Subrahmanyam, "Introduction," in *The Age of Revolution in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, edited by D. Armitage and S. Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xxviii.

However, in order to find the roots in Bayly's thought of the interpretative key on which we have just now focused—that is, the strong emphasis on the role universally played by local moral communities —it is necessary at this point to take a step backwards. Let's now combine, for this purpose, the reading of *The Birth of the Modern World* with that of one of the works written during the Indian phase of Bayly's scientific path.

It is there, in relation to a specific country and cultural area, that we meet for the first time the theme of non-European traditions of good governance, which will later assume such a crucial role in some chapters (particularly the second, the third and the eighth) of the 2004 book, whose treatment of the entanglements between global and local we are trying to highlight.

This work is dedicated to the origins of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century,[33] and, as mentioned earlier, is nourished by a strong critical stance against theories about its derivative nature (that is, directed externally by the West) suggested by some authors belonging to the Subaltern Studies group, in particular Ashis Nandy and Partha Chatterjee. Here Bayly states that, despite the undeniable Western influences, "the particularities of Indian nationalism have to be understood in the context of Indian forms of social organization and ideologies of good governance that pre-date the full western impact".[34] Moreover, he goes on to declare that "Historians of modern India are apparently unable to see any political forms between those of decentralized, traditional society and mass, 'modern' nationalism, other than the experience of the colonial rule".[35]

Now, that form "between" the decentralized local communities, hermetically closed to the outside world, and the universalistic and supra-local systems of aggregation typical of modern nationalism, would be, according to Bayly, precisely the moral community, or ethical community,[36] aimed at pursuing an ideal of good governance,[37] whose global agency we already met by reading *The Birth of the Modern World*.

According to the author, this moral community gave expression to a traditional patriotism in which one can identify the origins of the Indian national

[33] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*.

[34] Ibid., vii.

[35] Ibid., 2.

[36] In this study, Bayly sometimes defines it as a "community of sensibility" (ibid., 40).

[37] Or even the exercise of a "right counsel" by the society for the purpose of implementing a "good administration" (ibid., 71).

nineteenth and twentieth century ideology. This ideology would therefore not be—as the scholars gathered around Subaltern Studies maintain—a mere imitative derivation of the Western model, introduced in the subcontinent following the British colonial occupation.

If one agrees with the Subaltern Studies theory—Bayly concludes—one ends up paradoxically legitimizing the imperialist and Eurocentric interpretations according to which, on the one hand, the pre-colonial social order of the subcontinent was completely antipathetic to the spirit of the Western modern state (and politics), and, on the other hand, found its core in decentralized local communities, rather than "in active political sentiments or in theories of government". This would lead to the denial of any "agency [of the Indians] in their own history", and to the acceptance of an interpretation according to which "Europe was the only moving force in the world history, sweeping away Asian and African despotisms and their primitive societies".[38]

We will not follow the further argumentations—in my opinion, even in this case, not always convincing and fully supported by evidence—developed by the author in this text to give substance to his thesis. However, we note that the underlying argument that is placed at the centre of this thesis has been criticised and variously rejected by an array of authors both before and after the publication of the volume in question, and that it is one of the most burning and sensitive issues of the whole debate today fuelled by post-colonial studies.

Long before the authors belonging to the Subaltern Studies group, already Rabindranath Tagore theorized a radical 'otherness' to the typical Western political forms (not only the state, but also, implicitly, the crypto-republicanism mentioned above) of what he defined as India's "nature". At the same time, he claimed for the local community and its values the emblematic function of ensuring social cohesion and primary political aggregation in the subcontinent.[39] The same interpretation was proposed in the 1960s by Louis Dumont, who provided a much rawer (but substantially similar) portrait of the holistic myth of the Indian local community, which was yet later harshly disputed.[40]

[38] Ibid., 2-3.

[39] R. Tagore, "Società e Stato," in Rabindranath Tagore, *La civiltà occidentale e l'India* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991), 23-40. Tagore's essay was written in 1904.

[40] L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus. Il sistema delle caste e le sue implicazioni* (Milan: Adelphi, 1991). A sharp critique of Dumont's theses is that by R. Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

Clearly culturally and ideologically far from Dumont, the Subaltern Studies group, in turn, has been claiming the centrality of the spiritual (here synonymous with autochthonous) dimension in the public life in India, supporting the thesis of the derivative (and contaminated) nature of the materialistic nationalism displayed by the elite during the colonial era. This led the group to argue in favour of a 'provincialization' of Europe,[41] and at the same time of the radical irreducibility of the Indian corporate structure to Western political models. The result of this interpretation was the rejection of any universalizing (and therefore globalizing) theory.

By proposing this point of view, the Subaltern Studies group has revived the theme of the extreme autonomy of the local, which contraddicts not only the idea of the supposed all-pervasive connectivity of the global, but also the idea of the similarity of cultures suggested by Bayly through the image of moral communities simultaneously practicing their counselling function in various parts of the world.

However, it must be said that Bayly, in turn, although strongly criticized by those accusing him of privileging the world of the colonized and Westernized elites and of completely neglecting the spiritualizing Indian popular values represented by home and the community,[42] was certainly in good company in his effort to refuse both the theory of the incommensurability between different cultures and the basic idea of localist essentialism. Like Bayly even such authors as Amartya Sen[43] and Sanjay Subrahmanyam,[44] maintaining a distance from the universalistic prejudices of the Eurocentric matrix, have shaped in fact through a similar effort good conceptual tools for enhancing the peculiarities of the Indian civilization and of its interpretation of history and politics.

[41] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializzare l'Europa* (Rome: Meltemi, 2004).

[42] On this aspect, see primarily Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 128-159.

[43] A. Sen, *The Argumentative Indian. Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (New York: Picador, 2005). In Italian, A. Sen, *La democrazia degli altri. Perché la libertà non è un'invenzione dell'Occidente* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004).

[44] S. Subrahmanyam, *Mondi connessi. La storia oltre l'Eurocentrismo (Secoli XVI-XVIII)* (Rome: Carocci, 2014), a collection of essays written in previous years and published in various editorial locations; also idem, *Alle origini della storia globale* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2016.) On Subrahmanyam, in addition to the introductions by Giuseppe Marcocci and Adriano Prosperi to the two volumes mentioned, see S. Pellò and M. Meriggi, "A Proposito di *Mondi connessi* di Sanjay Subrahmanyam," *Quaderni Storici*, 50 (2015), no. 2: 567-584.

Let us recap. We have Western expansion on a global scale on the one hand and, on the other, various assimilations, reactions and adaptations by the cultures and by the forms of social and political organization disseminated in other parts of the world. Sometimes all this happened through dialogue (a dialogue mostly imposed and therefore mandatory), with the pressures to modernize urged by European colonialism and its related regulations and classification logic; sometimes, instead, it happened through the valorisation of a heritage of habits and endogenous ideals capable of renewing themselves and of supporting trajectories of modernization. While the dialectic between global and local, according to Bayly, took mostly place between these two polarities, although under the predominance of Western agency,[45] there is a specific field in which things seem to have taken a different turn. This is that of religion: in the age of globalization, the Western religion, Christianity, faced and still faces difficulties in advancing.

In fact, every religion of the world in this period experienced a process of standardization and internal hierarchization, not unlike what happened in secular institutions and in the market, the two scenarios from which we started. However, in the course of this process of formalization of "homogeneous religions" characterized by a previously unknown degree of "uniformity of doctrine",[46] as well as by the presence of more solid centres of authority, Christianity was not the only colonizing religion.[47] In spite of the concomitant Western colonization, and therefore of the reduction to the rank of local of most of the territories in which it was practised, the new nineteenth-century Islam, now standardized, and in its own way canonized through the marginalization of its spiritual peripheries, was the protagonist of a new expansion. It gained space and territories, imposing itself—obviously completely outside any Western agency—among the main vectors of globalization.

Similar processes of normative tightening and the reduction of the local specificities of cults took place for other forms of religiosity, such as Hinduism,

[45] Further on this subject, and in a long-term perspective, see the monumental study by W. Reinhard, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt: Globalgeschichte der europäischen Expansion 1415-2015* (Munich: Beck, 2016), an extensive and updated review of the four volumes published about thirty years ago by the author on the topic of European expansion. In Italian, see also *Storia del mondo*, vol. 3, *Imperi e Oceani 1350-1750*, edited by W. Reinhard (Turin: Einaudi, 2016), which, however, stops at a time earlier than that analysed by Bayly.
[46] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 343.
[47] Ibid., 333.

although, in this case—unlike Christianity and Islam—in the absence of an expansion outside the territorial areas in which it was already practised.[48]

In this specific field, therefore, the process of expansion of the global and its simultaneous conquest of the local were decidedly more varied and polycentric than in the context of power politics and modes of government, since the Western religion was not - and still isn't - the only one capable of exercising successful levelling pressures and of gaining new souls for its spiritual army.

[48] On the topic, an interesting work is that of M. Margotti, *Religioni e secolarizzazioni. Ebraismo, cristianesimo e islam nel mondo globale* (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2012).

7

LAURA DI FIORE

The Origins of Indian Nationalism

In his world history of the long nineteenth century, Christopher Bayly focused in particular on the theme of nation and nationalism, which he analysed from a global perspective. In the dense pages of *The Birth of the Modern World*, he explicitly defines the nationalism that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century as "a global phenomenon" that "emerged contemporaneously in large parts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas" as well as in Europe.[1] At variance with diffusionist interpretations, Bayly did not therefore see nationalism as an exclusively European invention, developing on the Old Continent and later exported via colonial domination to the rest of the world. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of nationalist movements in Egypt, India and Japan that were no less lively and developed than those affecting Germany and Italy at the same time. In reality, the crisis of the old order, identified as the origin of the global rise in nationalism, did not concern Europe alone, which makes it possible to reconstruct a meaningful chronology at the global level. Two groups of world crises (1780-1815 and 1848-1865) acted as a driving force and accelerator in the development of "incipient national identities"[2] outside Europe that drew on specific local cultural and religious systems, as well as feelings of belonging and concepts of land and people proper to the various scenarios in question. Thus, in the construction of new national identities, pre-existing cultural materials and identities were recovered and reworked within the framework of the global rise of nationalism.

[1] C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 199.
[2] Ibid., 205.

The origin of this interpretation, made known mainly thanks to the resonance of *The Birth of the Modern World*, needs to be sought in Bayly's works on India, an area in which he specialized from his student days at Oxford at a time when—as he himself was keen to recall—modern history meant that of the French and German elites.[3] The desire to move beyond these narrow horizons was certainly decisive for his encounter with Indian, and later global, history. As far as the theme of nationalism and nation building in particular is concerned, a reading of some of Bayly's works on the Indian scenario highlights, on the one hand, the empirical foundations underlying his interpretation of these questions and, on the other, their importance in contemporary historiographic debate and today's global history.

A particularly important volume from this point of view is a collection of essays, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*, that came out in 1998, including Bayly's unpublished Radhakrishnan Lectures, held at Oxford in 1996, aiming to shed new light on Indian nationalism in the late pre-colonial period and during English domination.[4] From the opening chapters of the book, Bayly distanced himself from modernist interpretations of Indian nationalism, which, in the wake of the claims of scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Ashis Nandy, and Partha Chatterjee,[5] was deemed "illegitimate" because of its "derivative" nature.[6] According to this reading, despite its origins in rebellion against colonial domination, the Indian nation state, slavishly borrowed from the Western model, was the product of a movement firmly tied to a wholly Western discourse and an imperialist framework. Bayly strongly criticized such hypotheses for the fundamental reason that they tend to deny the Indian people an original "agency" "in their own history", relegating them to the rank of a set of "second-class nationalists" .[7] Without denying that both the organization and the nationalist ideology of modern India were in many ways shaped, to some extent consciously,

[3] C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia. Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 310.

[4] This contribution focuses on these four unpublished essays that constitute, in Bayly's own words, "the heart of the book" (ibid., v).

[5] A. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); R. Guha, *A Disciplinary Aspect of Indian Nationalism* (Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, 1991); P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[6] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, vi.

[7] Ibid., 3.

by the Western model, Bayly underlines the specificity of Indian nationalism, characterized by two essential features: its doctrinal system and its models of social relations and communication, dating back to an era prior to the impact of the West.[8]

Before analysing these two elements as reconstructed by Bayly, it is necessary to clarify that his thesis in no way embraces a teleological perspective inclined to propose some sort of epic of original Indian nationalism where the construction of the nation state would represent its inevitable triumph. Nor does reference to characteristics at times dating back to, and indigenous to, native nationalism aims to convey a primordialist position laying claim to an authentic (and ahistorical) essence of 'Indianness', since, as will be seen, the pre-existing doctrinal and institutional matter, merged and re-worked within the nationalist movement, was in turn modified within the framework of colonial domination.

The first of the two specific features of Indian nationalism identified by Bayly concerns the ideological plane and, in particular, the so-called "Old Patriotisms" that indicate "the sense of loyalty to place and institutions which bound some Indians, even in the immediate pre-colonial period, to their regional homelands".[9] This is a form of patriotism not unknown to European history: rather than expressing the meaning more closely associated with the modern nation state and the principle of sovereignty of the people, it actually denoted a form of ancient loyalty to communities and political and religious institutions.[10] Through this combination, Bayly convincingly demonstrates the reconcilability of a comparative strategy with a global historical perspective.[11] In reality, it is a question of comparing the reaction of two human macro-groups to changes that historians recognize as similar and at the same time connected. If it is true that, starting from the seventeenth century, European theorists and statesmen developed a universalizing system of doctrines of good governance, marking the passage

[8] Ibid., vii.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 4-8.

[11] S. Curtis Comstock, "Incorporating Comparison in the Rift: Making Use of Cross-Place Events and Histories in Moments of World Historical Change," in *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Social Science Research Methodologies in Transition*, edited by A. Amelina, D.D. Nergiz, T. Faist, and N. Glick Schiller (London: Routledge, 2012), 176-197; P. Parthasarathi, "Comparison in Global History," in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by M. Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69-82.

from "traditional" to "rational" patriotism, a similar scheme can be identified in the pre-colonial Indian context.[12] Specifically, a peculiar feature of the first type of patriotism consisted in the identitary value attributed to the concepts of 'land' and 'people', as emerges from the Indian lexicon and literature. Rational patriotism, on the other hand, distinguished itself—as it did in Europe in the early modern age—by the combination of elements proper to the sciences and natural philosophy with doctrines of good governance in treatises on political ethics. A just government first of all had to balance the different types of people and organizations in a given territory, conceived as a set of complementary elements of bio-moral substance. Although this ethical literature dated back to Abul Fazl, Minister of the Emperor Akbar, it was further developed within the post-Mughal states, and some of its features continued to characterize Indian political discourse in the nineteenth century. These principles, elaborated at the theoretical level, also permeated popular discourse. Moreover, despite the theoretical differences, ideas of good governance characterized both the Hindu and Muslim ethical systems and proved to be largely congruent in practical terms.

Significantly, Bayly compared this conception of the balance of the different moods of the political body, as well as the different castes and communities, to the ancient constitutions of Western Europe, based mainly on forms of negotiation between rulers and holders of different corporate, class-driven and territorial interests. The definition of Oriental despotism as "myth",[13] given the Indian rulers' practice of striking a balance and bargaining with the interests represented in the *panchayats*, or traditional local councils, opens up an original perspective for comparison between European and Asian macro-regions regarding institutional forms. This approach is particularly significant in view of the contemporary historiographical rethinking of 'the state' in European history. In the wake of interpretations that limit the existence of the 'modern' state to the time frame between the late eighteenth century and the third quarter of the twentieth, some recent studies have highlighted a number of similarities between Europe and Asia, rejecting the notion of "oriental despotism" and reconstructing "the image of a modern age in Eurasia that, despite the undoubted differentiations between its components, remained substantially impermeable to the 'despotic' primacy of administration that the late-eighteenth century revolutionary turning point

[12] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 11-19.
[13] Ibid., 18.

would make tangible first in Europe, then in the rest of the world that had fallen under the rule of one of its powers".[14] Prior to this change, therefore, balance and negotiation practices between different social and territorial interests would appear to have brought Europe and Asia much closer than interpretations based on the ambiguous concept of 'despotism' had suggested.

Similarly, a sense of territoriality contributed to the definition of 'rational' Indian patriotism and, contrary to frequent claims, was far from absent in the Indian scenario and very strong among both nobles and commoners. Certainly, rather than being seen as an economic resource marked out by rigid political boundaries, the land was considered a heritage to be protected, as it included spirits and substances incorporated by individuals. In any case, the concept of political boundary was well understood by the rulers and the Indian people, although it was evoked only in moments of need, while a sense of territorial belonging was far from extraneous to the development of local patriotic feeling. These reflections prove particularly interesting in the light of recent questioning of the concepts of 'territory' and 'border' as specifically Western ideas transferred beyond Europe through colonial domination. Not only were various ideas of territoriality and border present in non-European cultures,[15] but in Europe itself the existence of a linear political boundary as an exclusive expression of territorial limits can be ascribed only to the nineteenth century within the framework of a complex territoriality less rigid than is traditionally presented.[16]

Nor did a land-related feeling of belonging exist only on the local scale. At variance with the historian J.R. Seeley, who denied that Indians had any sense of

[14] M. Meriggi, "Le istituzioni asiatiche in età moderna," in *Storia delle istituzioni politiche. Dall'antico regime all'era globale*, edited by M. Meriggi and L. Tedoldi (Rome: Carocci, 2014), 57; idem, "Costituzioni antiche e narrazioni orientalistiche. Dal Sette all'Ottocento," in *Storica*, 15 (2009), nos. 43-45: 209-255.

[15] Cf. I. Surun, "Une souveraineté à l'encre sympathique? Souveraineté autochtone et appropriations territoriales dans les traités franco-africains au XIXe siècle", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 69 (2014), no. 2, Special Issue, *Souveraineté et territoire (XIXe-XXe siècle)*: 313-348; on the issue of borders, see P. Valsecchi, "La frontiera come storia. Politiche dell'appartenenza sul confine Ghana-Costa d'Avorio," *Il Politico*, 75 (2010): 101-117; G. Casentini, "Il confine come agente di costruzione della rappresentanza politica: il caso di Ghana e Togo settentrionali," *Il Politico*, 75 (2010), no. 3: 118-135.

[16] L. Di Fiore, "The Production of Borders in Nineteenth-Century Europe. Between Institutional Boundaries and Transnational Practices of Space," *European Review of History/Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 4 (2017), no. 1: 36-57.

identity beyond the regional, Bayly highlights the existence of a broader sense of identity on the subcontinent[17] dating back to the imperial patriotism promoted by Emperor Akbar and characterized by a specific Indian identity within the broader Islamic *umma*. The symbolic value of this Hindustan, understood as a cultural kingdom shared by Hindus and Muslims, seems to have survived despite the emergence of smaller regional homelands related to the decentralization and decline of the Mughal empire. And again, in the eighteenth century, the sense of identity of an 'all India', seen as a projection of the country onto a larger scale, continued to coexist alongside other horizons of identification and other loyalties, not least those of religious origin.

In this regard, Bayly argues that by that time the differences between Hindus and Muslims had already become significant on the subcontinent, even if they were not of the same nature as in colonial times. If, in reality, the distinction between the two religions in comparison with other dividing lines connected with different rituals and forms of worship was not prevailing until the seventeenth century and part of the eighteenth century, it took on new meaning during the eighteenth century. In this way, Bayly questions the idea of communalism as a mere product of colonialism. While recognizing that communalism, in terms of the "transformation of religious ties into active and mutually hostile pseudo-ethnicity", was developed under colonial domination, he argues that it in fact consisted of antagonisms, polemics and pre-existing aspirations.[18]

More generally speaking, the idea of the coexistence of different forms of belonging in the subcontinent opens up interesting scenarios in the light of twentieth century debates on the possibility of recognizing the status of British India as a dominion. This guaranteed the colonies with a white population a different degree of autonomy from their homeland, undergoing a decisive evolution between 1917 and 1931, albeit within the broader institutional framework of the British Empire.[19] In

[17] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 36-62.

[18] Ibid., 46.

[19] J. Darwin, *A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics*, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols., Editor-in-chief W.R. Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998-1999), vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century*, edited by J.M. Brown and W.R. Louis, 64-87; T. Tagliaferri, *La repubblica dell'umanità. Fonti culturali e religiose dell'universalismo imperiale britannico* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2012); L. Lloyd, "Loosening the Apron Strings. The Dominions and Britain in the Interwar Years," *The Round Table. The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 92 (2003), no. 369: 279-303; W.D. McIntyre, "Clio and Britannia's Lost

any case, as has been ably pointed out,[20] the tendency to reconcile forms of political identity with belonging to a broader horizon of identification was a characteristic of British nationality itself, the expression of a political-institutional entity produced by the union of four nations. The longstanding coexistence on the subcontinent of different levels of belonging that emerges from Bayly's analysis would also last, with numerous developments, until the twentieth century, when a 'softer' model of an Indian nation, conceived as a federal union of regional homelands, was actually competing with a more rigid form of unitary state, which would remain an important alternative well into the twentieth century.[21] This elaboration of federal institutional models, with indigenous roots at the intellectual level, may thus represent an innovative, and not solely English, standpoint from which to analyse the phase between the first and second post-war periods when a number of theorists of the British Empire proposed to involve a non-European colony for the first time in that experiment in some new kind of federalism which was the British Commonwealth.

The second of the indigenous elements identified by Bayly as preconditions for the development of Indian nationalism—namely, the existence of an "increasingly sophisticated regional and even interregional system of communication"[22]—strengthened the profile of a supra-local and supra-regional Indian 'imagined community'. This complex communication system at the origin of what Bayly calls the Indian "ecumene" was the subject of another of his books.[23] The most interesting aspect of the core theme of this essay is Bayly's emphasis on the 'literacy awareness' of the largely illiterate Indian society. On the one hand, this can be seen in the extensive use of various types of written media, such as private letters and newsletters; and, on the other, in a dense informal network comprising numerous actors—from astrologers to singers, midwives and mediators—who, as they moved around the territory, contributed to the development of indigenous systems of knowledge and the collection of information, flows of

Dream: Historians and the British Commonwealth of Nations in the First Half of the 20th Century," *The Round Table*, 93 (2004), no. 376: 517-532.

[20] T. Tagliaferri, "*Greater Britain*, Stati Uniti, India nella visione imperiale di John R. Seeley," *Archivio di storia della cultura*, 21 (2008): 7-94; L. Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707-1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[21] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 119-121.

[22] Ibid., 20.

[23] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For an analysis of this text, see the contribution in this volume by G. Abbattista.

ideas and news. The density and flexibility of these indigenous communications systems are considered fundamental in explaining phenomena that would otherwise be difficult to interpret. To begin with, the existence of this communicative fabric made it possible to take advantage of periodicals supporting nationalist movements in Northern India after their wide-scale distribution in the 1830s and 1840s; secondly, it explains how it was possible to create a widespread and popular nationalist movement in a country that was essentially poor and largely illiterate.[24]

While appreciating this dimension of social communication prior to "print capitalism",[25] Bayly also distances himself from interpretations such as Anderson's—and Gellner's[26]—that tended to consider nationalism as the product of profound schisms linked to decisive processes of change, such as industrialization, print capitalism and the advent of public education. Rather than a sharp contrast between tradition and modernity, Bayly prefers the prospect of a gradual and modulated change, where pre-existing elements were not supplanted by new horizons but formed their very basis. Thus, the author's emphasis is on the craft industry or the expansion of literacy, considered vectors of change that would then continue to inform subsequent models. In this sense, the North Indian ecumene, characterized by various analogies with the public sphere as theorized by Habermas, represented a form of political and cultural debate in a period preceding the widespread use of newspapers, later destined to cohabit with the new forms of communication and the journalism of the age of nationalism. It testified at any rate to the emergence of a public sphere which, according to an interpretation that Bayly developed in *The Birth of the Modern World*, cannot be considered exclusive to eighteenth century Europe.[27]

These old forms of patriotism and the Indian ecumene are the two elements in pre-colonial India upon which nationalism was later developed and grafted at the time of its encounter with colonialism. This meeting, both at the time of the East India Company and in the subsequent phase of British domination, set in motion crucial dynamics and mechanisms for the development of Indian nation-

[24] Bayly, "Introduction" to idem, *Empire and Information*.

[25] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[26] E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

[27] For a critical analysis of this theme, see the contribution by M. Meriggi in this volume.

alism.[28] First and foremost, in the period between 1760 and 1860, the presence of the British intensified traditional forms of patriotism. For Bayly, the chain of revolts between 1760 and 1850 and the 1857 rebellion must both be interpreted as patriotic revolts, supported by significant strata of the population. Secondly, contact with the British sparked extremely vigorous public debate that belonged to and enlivened the traditional arena of political exchange constituted by the Indian ecumene, to the point that Sir John Malcolm was able to define "our Indian Empire" as "an Empire of opinion".[29]

Moreover, the very nature of this debate was extremely diverse. On the one hand, it was heavily influenced by criticism in Great Britain of the way the East India Company worked, as well as by information concerning the struggles of other peoples against colonial expansion. On the other hand, the Indian public debate was fed by old traditions of political ethics and regional patriotism. Moreover, some of the key arguments in defence of Hinduism and Indian integrity re-emerged in 1885 at the first general Indian National Congress in Bombay. By now, however, they had been reshaped by a century of confrontation, debate and conflict with the British rulers. Bayly's reconstruction does not in fact aim to suggest a sort of uninterrupted continuity in the development of Indian nationalism; rather, it shows how "old patriotisms and, more recently, nationalisms, have long been making and remaking each other within the context of the British Empire".[30] For example, Bayly recorded the coexistence, after 1857, of three different kinds of discourse in the field of developments in nationalism, where belonging to different religious communities and the persistence of old patriotic themes existed alongside a nationalism derived from Western ideologies, emphasizing modern industry and the importance of the international role of India.[31] This also indicates that Bayly does not presuppose an essentially Indian path to nationalism.

Naturally, Bayly aims to counter the theory of derived nationalism using the specificities of the Indian context and the long-term elements that can be seen on the conceptual, emotional and communicative levels, which not only favoured

[28] In *Origins of Nationality* Bayly analysed this encounter in the essays on "Patriotism and Ethical Government, c. 1780-1860" (ibid., 63-97) and "Patriotism and Nationalism" (ibid., 98-132), but also in some important pages of the chapter devoted to "The Consolidation of Indian Patrias and the Colonial Encounter" (ibid., 49-59).

[29] Ibid., 64.

[30] Ibid., 99.

[31] Ibid., 93-94.

the entrenchment of nationalistic ideologies, but continued to characterize them for a long time to come, as emerges from an analysis of political activity in the major cities on the Indian subcontinent between 1880 and 1930.[32]

The most interesting feature of his interpretation, however, is that, while supporting the thesis that Indian nationalism was rooted in the indigenous social, political and cultural fabric and was not merely a heterodirect product of European political discourse, he points out that the "indigenous inheritance" was transformed and reworked in the context of contacts, exchanges and transfers typical of the imperial models.[33] And these exchanges were not unilateral. It should not be forgotten that in the early days of the empire—while, as we have seen, Indian patriotisms had to reckon with the political culture and ambitions of the newcomers—British nationality found itself being defined as much in the home country as in the colonies. A number of aspects of the British and Indian political identities were therefore taking shape at the same time, and not without confrontation and conflict.

Once again, therefore, Bayly distances himself from Chatterjee who, in his second work, *The Nation and its Fragments*[34], revises his previous position, now distinguishing between a more external, material sphere, borrowed from the Western model, and a more internal, spiritual, specifically Indian one. Bayly, on the other hand, is unable to consider Indian spirituality as immune to both modernization and colonization, since, in the imperial framework of exchange and circulation of ideas and political models, "all were to some degree hybrid".[35]

Thus, Bayly seems to avoid the risk identified by Conrad of distinguishing between form, understood in universal and transferable terms, and content, seen as culturally more specific, in the study of the nation from the global perspective.[36] The scope of this volume should not then be underestimated: twenty years on, it still offers extremely important elements for the study of a subject—the nation—which, far from being outdated, remains a central topic in global history, one of whose most recent challenges is precisely the analysis of concepts and institutional models as products of global processes.

[32] Ibid., 110-111.

[33] Ibid., 127

[34] P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[35] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 103.

[36] S. Conrad, *Storia globale. Un'introduzione* (Rome: Carocci, 2015; original German edition 2013), 146-150, esp. 149.

Some studies on the processes of development of nationalisms outside Europe have examined, for example, the impact of Western paradigms of nation and nationalism on the Muslim world[37] and Africa.[38] What such studies have shown is how nationalism in non-Western contexts has been expressed in original forms, through confrontation and resistance, but also as a hybridization with a local cultural substratum that, far from being erased by European models, is subsumed within them, to borrow a term used by Bayly himself.[39] Similarly, more recent studies have insisted on the importance of global processes and transregional connections for nation building in India,[40] China,[41] Japan[42] and the West itself, such as in Germany[43] or the United States.[44]

In the essays collected in *Origin of Nationality in South Asia* discussed here, Indian nationalism emerges mainly as the result of the circulation of ideologies and exchanges of ideas and models which, despite taking place in a non-egalitarian context marked by the colonial power relationship, also developed on a level that was in many ways horizontal and in no way unilateral. It was thus in his specialist studies on India that Bayly began to outline his interpretation of the development of nationalism outside Europe that would be given greater coverage in *The Birth of the Modern World*. Compared with the 2004 work, however, where Europe always made the first move while non-European peoples were seen as having agency in a response that, albeit formulated in terms of resistance or creative reworking, was still a response, in Bayly's 1998 book the key note seems to be the syncretic, hybrid nature of ideologies and political models resulting from the dynamics of interaction and exchange which are currently of core interest to global history.

[37] A.K. Bennison, "Muslim Universalism and Western Globalization," in *Globalization in World History*, edited by A.G. Hopkins (London: Vintage Digital 2011), 74-97.

[38] J. Lonsdale, "Globalization, Ethnicity and Democracy: A View from 'The Hopeless Continent'", ibid., 194-219.

[39] C.A. Bayly, "'Archaic' and 'Modern' Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena, c. 1750-1850," ibid., 47-63.

[40] M. Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[41] R. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).,

[42] C. Hill, *National History and the World of Nations: Capital State and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[43] S. Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006).

[44] T. Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

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This volume is the outcome of a conference on the work of Christopher Bayly held in Naples on March 2016. At less than one year from his untimely death, the convenors called on a group of specialists in several disciplinary areas, on which Bayly has left his enduring mark, to collaborate on a first survey of the rich and complex scientific legacy of the English historian. Each essay focuses on one of the extraordinary succession of great works by which he pioneered innovative approaches throughout his academic career. The collection as a whole provides therefore an account of Bayly's foremost contributions to the different scholarly fields in which he made repeated breakthroughs, over a period of five decades, on some of the most advanced research fronts of international historiography: the local roots of Indian nationalism, the transition from pre-colonial to colonial India and the role of indigenous society in the establishment of European domination, the nature and limits of colonial power, the rise of the Second British Empire, the history of globalization and the nineteenth-century turn towards planetary modernity, the transregional development of liberalism and nationalism. The common aim of the authors is to highlight the stages of the path through which Bayly emerged, at the beginnings of the 2000s, as a key figure in the current revival and renewal of world history.

Maurizio Griffo is Professor of History of Political Doctrines at the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Naples Federico II. He is the author of *L'India coloniale dalla "autocrazia" costituzionale alla protodemocrazia. Il dibattito sulle riforme e l'Indian Civil Service, 1908-1919* (Milan 1999). His latest book is *La Terza forza. Saggi e profili* (Rome 2018).

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