

ADDITIONS, INTEGRATIONS, CORRECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS  
TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE\*

By Teodoro Tagliaferri (University of Naples Federico II)

No. 30  
(November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

Addition to Part I,  
Works by Arnold J. Toynbee  
(Reviews)

**1949**

Lewis B. Namier, *Seeing Things Map-Wise*, in «The Observer», Sunday, June 28, 1931.  
Review of Item 1213 (A.J. TOYNBEE, *A Journey to China; or, Things which are seen*, London, Constable, 1931).

---

\* *A Bibliography of Arnold J. Toynbee*, compiled by S. Fiona Morton, with a Foreword by Veronica M. Toynbee, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

## SEEING THINGS MAP-WISE

by Lewis B. Namier

«When I travel in England I like to carry a map», writes Mr. Toynbee.

«(...) and I try to ask my way by reference to the map, and my wife always laughs at me and tells me that English people (in their credit, she maintains) do not look at things map-wise, and my wife is always tight – the map simply bewilders them»<sup>1</sup>.

But the fact that Mr. Toynbee looks at things map-wise explains a great deal in his book. Those of us who walk or travel by the map know what that means: we see the country in a peculiarly plastic manner; we see both sides of the hill; we follow up every road to its hidden destination, and with a passionate interest we pick out and ascertain single features of the landscape. We approach things in an acquisitive, not in a receptive, mood: we think and search, and pay the price. For is the general impression as true, as full of colour, as immediate and vivid, as it would be were our mood more harmonious and less intent? And still there is a peculiar joy in seeing things «map-wise» - the modern man, burdened with an infinite mass of theoretical knowledge, is able for once to clothe dead symbols in the reality of immediate perception, and to see that they tally.

\*\*\*\*

The journey to China was for Mr. Toynbee an escape into reality.

«The individual's capacity [he writes] for direct observation is infinitesimal compared with the accumulated experience and knowledge of mankind; and the sum of this knowledge is at the individual's disposal only at second-hand (...). In order to live at all he must be working all the time

---

<sup>1</sup> A.J. Toynbee, *Laputans or Houyhnhnms?*, in *A Journey to China; or, Things which are seen*, London, Constable, 1931, pp. 167-168 (T.T.).

upon provisional representations of the universe which he has put together from other people's reports»<sup>2</sup>.

For years he had studied the history and politics of the Old World – the "*orbis terrarum*" of the ancients – of the Eastern Roman Empire, and of its successors, the Moslems and Mongols; these, in turn, he followed in the opposite direction – to India and China, that other Empire which claimed universality and described itself as "All that is under Heaven". The range of Mr. Toynbee's knowledge and its thoroughness are equally amazing; he does not travel by the ordinary map only, but by a whole series of human maps historical and racial, super-imposed on each other; he discerns the various strata of successive empires and civilisations, their struggles and blendings. The present journey took him across the recent ruins of the Habsburg Monarchy and of the Ottoman Empire; next he skirted British India and called at Britain's Far-Eastern outposts, Singapore, Hong-Kong, Shanghai, and Wei-Hai-Wei; he visited Japan and her Empire in Korea and Manchuria., established only twenty-five years ago and already half-extinguished; and, lastly, China and Russia, in ruinous transition.

\*\*\*\*

An Englishman of the previous generation would have proudly contrasted life in British Asia with the misery of the outer darkness. Here is India preserved from internecine struggles and their chaos; Singapore, where the Chinese is «full of zest and enjoyment» and «positively happy», because he is provided «with a security for his person and his property such as he could never hope to receive at home from the present rulers»<sup>3</sup>; Shanghai, a refuge on the brink of a maelstrom; Wei-Hai-Wei, where Mr. Toynbee saw a look on the Chinese faces which he had not seen anywhere in China – «they looked unemotionally content, like people who knew by experience that, under this dispensation, they could count upon reaping where they had sown»<sup>4</sup>.

But Mr. Toynbee does not seem elated by Britain's achievements, nor intent on their being continued. He is imbued with the sceptical defeatism so common in our generation. In Iraq

---

<sup>2</sup> Id., *Ancient and Modern in China and Japan*, *ibid.*, p. 276 (T.T.).

<sup>3</sup> Id., *Running into China*, *ibid.*, pp. 156, 157 (T.T.).

<sup>4</sup> Id., *Wei-Hai-Wei*, *ibid.*, p. 234 (T.T.).

«the present equilibrium between Englishmen and Iraqi is wonderful, but (...) depends on the existence of a sincere conviction (...) that the present regime is transitional»<sup>5</sup>. In India «the Englishman (...) is patently a pilgrim and a sojourner (...). It is easy to conceive an India from which his presence would be eliminated, for good or evil»<sup>6</sup>.

«The break-down of a "going concern" on this scale would be a disaster of a magnitude which the imagination can hardly conceive. Yet the possibility of this disaster can be envisaged, for the force which brought about the downfall of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires is patently present and patently active in the Indian Empire, too»<sup>7</sup>.

At Colombo and Hong-Kong Mr. Toynbee thinks of the time when the British empire-builder will have «softly and silently vanished away»<sup>8</sup>. In Malaya «the chief monument of the British Empire (...) may be the creation of a nineteenth Chinese province – and a very creditable monument it would be»<sup>9</sup>. At Shanghai, when looking «at that line of Babylonish hotels and clubs and palatial banks and Custom houses», he is haunted by the vision of «the Great Shanghai Fire of the Year Blank»<sup>10</sup>. At Wei-Hai-Wei he shuddered at the thought of what the promised «rendition» to China will mean for its population. «Yet, on second thoughts, was I not slightly relieved as well as vastly sorry? For "unreal worlds" are perhaps dangerous places to linger in»<sup>11</sup>. All Empires seem to Toynbee «unreal» and doomed, and he warns the Japanese «to consider the comedy of modern English "empire-builders" in India»<sup>12</sup>. But is it not defeatism which threatens to turn the work of empire-builders into tragicomedy?

\*\*\*\*

No differences in opinion and outlook can, however, detract from the sincere admiration which the reader must inevitably feel for Mr. Toynbee's wide and thorough learning, his comprehension of the most varied and strange social phenomena, and (despite of

---

<sup>5</sup> Id., *Iraq, ibid.*, p. 113 (T.T.).

<sup>6</sup> Id., *Ancient and Modern in India*, cit., p. 143 (T.T.).

<sup>7</sup> Id., *The Twilight of the Gods?*, *ibid.*, pp. 147-148 (T.T.).

<sup>8</sup> Id., *The Isles of the Sea*, p. 153 (T.T.).

<sup>9</sup> Id., *Running into China*, cit., p. 157 (T.T.).

<sup>10</sup> Id., *Shanghai, ibid.*, p. 163 (T.T.).

<sup>11</sup> Id., *Wei-Hai-Wei*, cit., pp. 237-238 (T.T.).

<sup>12</sup> Id., *The Continent, ibid.*, p. 187 (T.T.).

occasional overelaboration of ideas and “concepts”) for his art in writing. Of this the following passage, chosen at random, may serve as an example: –

«(...) the dominant feature in this Korean landscape was the golden flame of the autumn poplars – a foreground of dull gold to match the distant mountains’ pale blue. It was a flame without heat; and that visual impression translated itself into the language of a different sense: a music without sound. This inaudible music of the Korean landscape was not the serene and triumphant “Music of the Spheres”. It was an elegy in a minor key – a dirge over a country that was in the autumn of its days»<sup>13</sup>.

Mr. Toynbee’s book is frankly personal and full of reminiscences. And while I was reading his travels, my own thoughts wandered back to a scene of some twenty-two years ago. I saw the two of us sitting, late at night, on the floor in his room at Balliol, over a large-scale map of Western Asia: he had read the itinerary of Marco Polo, and I, that of Benjamin of Tudela, a Jew, who, having set out in 1163 for Spain in search of a refuge for the persecuted Jews, reached the very confines of Western China. We compared notes, and followed our authors. Now the route of Marco Polo can be covered with ease and speed, but all the world and all the centuries have failed to supply an answer to the question of Benjamin of Tudela.

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185 (T.T.).