

## The Making of a Global Commodity: Indian Cottons and European trade, 1450-1850\*

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Historians have long debated when ‘globalisation’ really began. Economists like Williamson and O’Rourke use price convergence as an indicator of market integration and find no sign of a global market or of a process broadly defined as globalisation before 1800.<sup>1</sup> Historians like Gunder Frank and McNeill define globalisation as a cultural and economic process and trace it back to the beginning of the age of exploration in the second half of the fifteenth century, if not even earlier.<sup>2</sup> Others push this date back to pre-historical times and to the first exchange that man did.<sup>3</sup> It is the exchange of commodities to be central in the definition of a social, economic and cultural process that connects people living in the most remote parts of the globe. And as it is problematic what ‘global’ and ‘globalisation’ mean, so it is nearly impossible to provide a unilateral definition of what a ‘global’ commodity might be.

This paper does not intend to tackle such a problem of definition, but rather to reflect on the possible ways in which the production, exchange and consumption of one specific commodity – cotton textiles – came to influence vast areas of the world. The paper is divided into three parts: the first examines the role of cotton textiles in the Indian Ocean before 1600 and explains why Europe developed a different ‘textile tradition’. Eurasia was divided into two ‘spheres’, one dominated by cotton (Asia) and the other by wool (Europe). The second part of

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1 William H. O’Rourke, and Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘After Columbus: Explaining Europe’s Overseas Trade boom, 1500-1800’, *Journal of Economic History*, 62/2 (2002), pp. 417-56 and their ‘When Did Globalisation Begin?’, *European Review of Economic History*, 6/1 (2002), pp. 23-50; Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and the Poor Periphery before 1950* (Cambridge – MA, 2006).

2 Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, 1998); John R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird's-eye View of World History* (New York, 2003).

3 David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Andrew Sherratt, *Economy and Society in Prehistoric Europe: Changing Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1997).

the paper explains why European traders were so eager to import Indian cottons. When did cotton textiles arrive in Europe? Why were they so successful? How were they re-invented to suit European taste? And what effect did they have on European manufacturing? The integration of Europe into the ‘cotton sphere’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reshaped the role of cotton textiles across the globe. The final part of this paper charts the penetration of Indian and European cottons into West Africa, North and Latin America. It ends with some general considerations on the place of nineteenth-century India in the ‘globalisation’ of cotton textiles.

## 1. The Age of Separate Spheres

### 1.1. A GLOBAL FABRIC? MAKING

Whatever the criteria we use, in 1400 cotton textiles were not a global commodity. It is impossible to say which among the four basic fibres that consumers could use (wool, silk, cotton and linen) was the most common. Hemp and flax were cultivated in vast areas of central Europe, China, Japan and the Mongol Empire, but also in many parts of the Indian subcontinent. Different varieties of linen were produced in all these areas and they were traded in local and national, rather than international or intercontinental markets. In the case of China, the use of linen was regressing being second best to cotton, a new fibre whose cultivation and manufacturing – but not consumption – was fostered by Mongol rulers.<sup>4</sup> The use of silk, the other Chinese textile ‘speciality’, was even forbidden in most of China in the fourteenth century and its export was encouraged. In India, silk was an important but small industry and silken goods remained within the reach of only of the wealthiest of customers. By 1400, weavers in Lucca and other Italian cities had learned the secret of the production of yarn and silk cloth. Still silk remained a rare and precious commodity. From its early starts in China in the eighth century, sericulture appeared only a couple of centuries later in the Middle East and about five centuries later in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

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4 The expansion of the Mongol empire in the thirteenth century from Armenia to China and Korea meant that cotton textiles became part of a commodity basket for tributes to the central administration. Chinese cotton cloth, for instance, came in standardised sizes, qualities and shapes to fulfil strict government requirements.. Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 28-9.

5 For a general overview see Debin Ma, ‘The Great Silk Exchange: How the World was Connected and Developed’, in Dennis Flynn, L. Frost, and A.J.H. Lantham (eds.), *Pacific Centuries: Pacific Rim History Since the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1999), pp. 1-30. The account of the early European start with silk can be found in Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, 2000).

Either in terms of production or consumption, neither silk nor linen was a global commodity. In fact in 1400 there were no global textiles at all. Europe's specialisation was in the making of heavy woollen broadcloths produced in the Italian cities, but increasingly also in other parts of Western Europe. By 1400 sheep had undergone sufficient genetic modification through inbreeding to produce good-quality wool. The peculiarity of woollen textiles was that they were mainly 'native' to Europe. This is explained in the fact that Europe depended entirely on the supply of wool produced within its borders. England, the most important nation in the production of woollen textiles did not become dependent on imported wool until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> For more than five centuries Europe remained a wool area and the golden fleece came to represent the riches of the continent's manufacturing economy.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, in 1400 there were no sheep in Africa, nor for that matter in the hitherto areas unknown to Europeans of the Americas and Australia. Asia produced niche woollen textiles from goat hair, but there were few sheep around with the exception of Persia where a certain volume of woollen textiles and wool carpets were manufactured.<sup>8</sup> Still the quality of local woollens was so low to explain why European broadcloth was in high demand in the Ottoman Empire since the times of the Venetian Republic.

India had limited expertise in the production of animal fibres beyond silk. However, by 1400 the subcontinent had developed a specialisation in the manufacturing of cotton textiles.<sup>9</sup> A wide range of cottons, from heavy calicoes to flimsy muslin, were used by all castes. Unlike other parts of the world, India had domesticated the cotton plant already in antiquity and by the end of the first millennium had developed a highly sophisticated industry. Although there is not yet a comparative study of cotton manufacturing in different areas of the globe before the eighteenth century, several indicators suggest that cotton manufacturing was more developed in India than in other areas such as China, Southeast Asia and part of West Africa.<sup>10</sup>

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6 K.G. Ponting, *The Wool Trade: Past and Present* (Manchester, 1961), p. 140.

7 For an in-depth analysis of woollen textiles in medieval, early modern and modern Europe see Fontana and Gayot (eds.), *Wool*. See also John Munro, 'Medieval Woollens: Western European Woollen Industries and their Struggles for International Markets, c. 1000-1500' and Herman Van der Wee, 'The Western European Woollen Industries, 1500-1750', both in in David Jenkins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western textiles* (Cambridge, 2003), vol. I, pp. 228-324 and 397-472.

8 Willem Floor, 'Economy and Society: Fibres, Fabrics, Factories', in C. Bier (ed.), *Woven From the Soul, Spun From the Heart: textile arts of Safavit and Qajar Iran 16th-19th centuries* (Washington, 1987), p. 27.

9 W.H. Johnson, *Cotton and Its Production* (London, 1926), p. 2.

10 See in particular several of the papers on cotton manufacturing in China, West Africa, East Africa, Southeast Asia, Japan, the Middle East and Europe presented at the Global Economic History Conferences held in Padua (November 2005), Pune (December 2005), Les Treilles (March 2006) and Helsinki (August 2006): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNCottonResearchProjectNEW.htm>. Two books are forthcoming as a result of the project: Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (eds.), *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* (Oxford, forthcoming 2008); and Om Prakash, Giorgio Riello,

India excelled not just in spinning and weaving, but also in the dyeing and decoration of the cloth through the media of printing and painting.

The availability of the raw materials seems to have been a major barrier to the spread of any of the four basic fabrics across the globe. As sheep were little known in Asia, so was cotton in Europe. With the exception of some cotton cultivated in Sicily, Southern Italy and Spain, Europe's engagement in cotton textile production was restricted to supplies coming from the Middle East, in particular from Syria. The import of raw material could be seen as a partial solution, but it did not come cheap.<sup>11</sup> The story of the production of fustians and other cotton-linen mixes in Medieval Europe is characterised by a constant lack of a cheap and abundant supply of cotton. A war, a seized vessel or the plague in a Mediterranean port could bring to a halt the entire industry in Northern Italy and, after 1350, in Southern Germany.<sup>12</sup> Cotton textiles locally produced never became a staple in Europeans' dress or domestic textiles.

Eurasia in 1400 consisted of two large textile 'spheres', a Western one characterised by sheep and the production and consumption of woollens, and an Eastern one characterised instead by a vegetable fibre – cotton – and the production and consumption of cotton textiles. There was little overlap between the two areas and the commerce of raw material did not seem to alleviate such separation. The example of China, a region that picked up the production of cotton textiles in the twelfth century, shows us the difficulty of engaging with a non-local fibre both in terms of knowledge and consumer practices. It took several centuries for Chinese peasants to master the cultivation of the cotton plant and for spinners and weavers to perfection manufacturing. And even after textbooks were published in the 1270s in the hope of promoting cotton manufacturing, its finishing remained rather imperfect.<sup>13</sup> And so did its use, as cotton textiles initially threatened the balance between silk and linen and the clear-cut social separation in the use of textiles.<sup>14</sup>

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Tirthankar Roy and Kaoru Sugihara (eds.), *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850* (Leiden, forthcoming 2008).

11 Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui, 'The Cotton Industry of Northern Italy in the Late Middle Ages: 1150-1450', *Journal of Economic History*, 32/1 (1972), pp. 262-86.

12 Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui, *The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages 1100-1600* (Cambridge, 1981); Id., 'Cotton Textiles in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in Giorgio Riello and Prasanna Parthasarathi (eds.), *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1250-1850* (Oxford, forthcoming 2007).

13 Gang Deng, *The Premodern Chinese Economy. Structural Equilibrium and Capitalist Sterility* (London and New York, 1999), p. 284; Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics and Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 213.

14 Ramon H. Myers, 'Cotton Textile Handicraft and the Development of the Cotton Textile Industry in Modern China', *Economic History Review*, 18/3 (1965), pp. 614-15.

## 1.2. A GLOBAL FABRIC? TRADING

The perceived threat of new textiles to an established economic and social order is not unique to China. The uptake of silks in Europe is another good example of how ‘exotic’ textiles could be used in the re-definition of sartorial aesthetics and, consequently, in social competition and fashion.<sup>15</sup> In 1400, and I would dare to say in any period up to the twentieth century, textiles were the most common commodity traded over long distances. If none of our four basic types of textiles were global in their manufacturing, perhaps they could become global in consumption through the medium of trade. And silk was the fabric that was traded most in Eurasia across what came to be known as the ‘silk road’, a series of intermediaries between China and Europe passing through Samarkand, the northern parts of Iraq, and Turkey. Silks were truly global, but their global reach was more about a common ambition rather than the reality of most people’s wardrobes. Land trade allowed only small quantities to be exchanged. Silks were used initially by the high ranks of the Church in Europe and later by the social elite. Only with the diffusion of European sericulture and silk manufacturing, did silks become used widely. Still, the quantities were extremely small when compared to the omnipresent linens and woollens.

I have mentioned earlier how certain areas of Europe specialised in the production of woollen textiles that were exchanged over long distances. It was not uncommon for Italian consumers to have access to cheaper cloth imported from Northern Europe and England in the fifteenth century. But the success of the trade in woollen manufactures before the opening of the North American markets at the end of the seventeenth century remained confined mostly to Europe. An exception was the trade with the near East as woollens had reached the Ottoman Empire already in the Middle Ages and were exchanged with fine silks.<sup>16</sup> The success of European woollen cloth – especially the English one – in Turkey had by the seventeenth century produced high expectations of potential sales to India and China. Disappointment followed. The story (or drama) of the English East India Company and the Dutch VOC is about the struggle and ultimate failure in expanding the woollen trade sphere beyond the boundaries of Europe. Even pressure at home (the aim to increase the sale of woollen textiles in Asia in order to improve the deficit of the balance of trade with India and other parts of

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15 Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, ‘East and West: Textiles and Fashion in Eurasia in the Early Modern Period’, *Journal of Social History*, 41/1, forthcoming 2008). An earlier version can be found as *Global Economic History Working Paper, LSE*, 22 (2006): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNworkingPapers.htm>

16 By the 1580s the English cloth was preferred to the Italian cloth and what had been an indirect trade passing through Ostend and Venice became an important commercial route for the Venice and Turkey Company, later to become to Levant Company. Benjamin Braude, ‘International Competition and Domestic Cloth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1650: A Study in Underdevelopment’, *Review: Fernand Braudel Center* 2/3 (1979), pp. 437-51.

Asia) produced no results. Both companies found it very hard to sell any woollen textiles either to India, China or Southeast Asia.<sup>17</sup> After an initial interest in the product as a ‘novelty’, sales went flat and large quantities of goods remained unsold in the Company’s warehouses.<sup>18</sup>

Asia seemed to prefer cottons and silks to any quality woollens. What distinguished India in the production of cotton textiles from other parts of Asia was not just its ability in the manipulation of the material (spinning and weaving), but also the subcontinent’s expertise in the dyeing, printing and painting of cottons. Indian cotton textiles came to be appreciated not just by local consumers, but also by consumers across the Indian Ocean.<sup>19</sup> Recent research by Peter and Felicity Wild has found material as well as textual evidence for the trade of Indian cotton textiles from India to Egypt dating back to the fifth century AD.<sup>20</sup> Patricia Baker suggests that some tenth-century Egyptian cotton textiles found at Old Fustat have print motifs echoing Fatimid cotton cloth woven in Yemen.<sup>21</sup> By 1400 Indian cotton textiles were traded widely across the entire Indian Ocean from Southeast Asia to the Horn of Africa and from there via the Sahara to West Africa. The trade with the Gulf brought cotton textiles to the Middle East, central Asia, and with all probability, also to Eastern Europe.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3. A GLOBAL FABRIC? MEANING

Ruth Barnes’ findings of similar motifs for fourteenth-century cotton cloth in Old Fustat and Sulawesi in eastern Indonesia shows the reach of a trade dominated by India.<sup>23</sup> But her findings also place a question mark first on the meaning of such trade for consumers across

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17 Floor, Willem, ‘Economy and society: fibres, fabrics, factories’, in C. Bier (ed.), *Woven From the Soul, Spun From the Heart: textile arts of Safavit and Qajar Iran 16th-19th centuries* (Washington, 1987), pp. 20-32.

18 Still in the 1770s the East India Company was protesting that more than £400,000 worth of woollen textiles were lying unsold in the three presidencies and that the only solution was a decrease in the number of cloths sent to India. Huw V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 246-7.

19 Lotika Varadarajan, ‘Syncretic Symbolism and Textiles: Indo-Thai Expressions’, in Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (eds.), *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 362.

20 John Peter Wild and Felicity Wild, ‘Rome and India: Early Indian Cotton Textiles from Berenike, Red Sea Coast of Egypt’, in Ruth Barnes (ed.), *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies* (London, 2005), pp. 11-16

21 Patricia L. Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London, 1995), p. 76.

22 S. Subrahmanyam, ‘Notes on the Sixteenth Century Bengal Trade’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 24 – 3 (1987), pp. 267-71; A. Das Gupta, ‘Gujarati Merchants and the Red Sea Trade, 1700-1725’, in B.B. Kling and M.N. Pearson (eds.), *The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia Before Domination* (Honolulu, 1979), pp. 123-58; S.P. Sangar, ‘Export of Indian textiles to Middle East and Africa in the Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of Historical Research*, 17/1 (1974), p. 5.

23 Ruth Barnes, *Indian Block-printed Textiles in Egypt. The Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford* (Oxford, 1997). See also Himanshu Prahba Ray, ‘Far-flung Fabrics – Indian Textiles in Ancient Maritime Trade’, in Ruth Barnes (ed.), *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies* (London, 2005), pp. 17-37.

vast sea and land areas, and secondly on the more profound differences between the European area of woollen and the Asian area of cotton production and trade. The finding of similar goose motifs at the opposite extremes of the Indian Ocean suggests the centrality of Indian manufacturing whose artisanal and aesthetic culture reached and influenced faraway places. But textile historians working on specific areas (Thailand, Sumatra, Japan, Sri Lanka or Ethiopia), have asked how much the Indian cotton textiles imported into these areas were made according to specific variations for the local market. Their overall findings suggest that Indian traders, in particular those selling the high quality textiles, were well aware of what was required for specific markets.<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese trading with Thailand in the sixteenth century were aware too that Indian textiles were made to Siam specification using a variety of symbolic references suitable for the various echelons of society, starting from the sovereign, down to the lower strata of the social hierarchy.<sup>25</sup>

The ability to differentiate production according to the market or the customer was not peculiar to Indian traders. In Europe, the wide-ranging trade in woollens relied on a variety of products with different price tags, most of which were the productive specialisation of a locality and targeted specific consumer markets. But what was different between woollens in Europe and cottons in the Indian Ocean was their level of 'commodification'. Both textiles were traded and exchanged either in kind or more commonly for money, but in the case of the Indian Ocean trade, Indian cotton textiles were often used in gift practices, religious rituals and had strong symbolic associations.<sup>26</sup> Anthropologists, studying in particular South-east Asian textiles, have underlined the importance of iconography and the complexity of 'translation' and creation of new sacred imagery through the import of foreign textiles.<sup>27</sup> By contrast in Europe, although textiles remained part of a parcel of personal and collective symbolic expression, they were also increasingly understood as secular artefacts. The rise of fashion and the increasing use of silk textiles beyond clerical embellishment, had cemented the position of textiles in a world of exchange, value, and appearance often part of urban social life. Similarly, the differentiation between dress and furnishing fabrics further contributed to the disjuncture

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24 See for instance Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: tradition, trade and transformation* (Melbourne, 1990); John Guy, 'Sarasa and Patola: Indian Textiles in Indonesia', *Orientations*, 20/1 (1989), pp. 48-60; Id., *Woven Cargos: Indian Textiles in the East* (London, 1998); Mattiebelle Gittinger, *Textiles for this World and Beyond: Treasures from Insular Southeast Asia* (London, 2005); Barnes (ed.), *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies*.

25 Lokita Varadarajan, 'Syncretic Symbolism and Textiles: Indo-Thai Expressions', in Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (eds.), *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 368.

26 See for instance Mattiebelle Gittinger (ed.), *To Speak with Cloth: Studies in Indonesian textiles* (Los Angeles, 1989); Id., *Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia* (Singapore and Oxford, 1990).

27 Ruth Barnes, 'Indian Textiles for Island Taste: The Trade to Eastern Indonesia', in Rosemary Crill (eds.), *Textiles from India. The Global Trade* (Oxford and Calcutta, 2006), pp. 106-7.

between design and symbolic meaning.<sup>28</sup>

This difference between Asian and European textiles should not be either exaggerated or understood as a lack of meaningfulness for the European consumer. Design and the techniques of creation of motifs, colour association and imagery are key elements in explaining such a difference. Whilst Europeans had acquired substantial knowledge in the dyeing of animal fibres, they had little familiarity with printing techniques on textiles. The quality of a textile in Europe was a factor of its woven pattern. If most textiles were dyed in one colour, the more sought-after woollens, and even better silks and velvets, were patterned on the loom to create appealing designs, complex plays of perspectives and suggestive floral motifs. Their design was entirely the result of complex methods of weaving. From the later Middle Ages rudimentary engraved wooden blocks were used to print simple designs on linens and woollens, but this industry never succeeded in expanding beyond some provinces of central Germany.<sup>29</sup> While the ‘fashioning’ of textiles in Europe relied mainly on weaving and embroidery, Asia (and India in particular) had developed a variety of processes that can be roughly distinguished into the three broad categories of dyeing, painting and printing.<sup>30</sup> In West India and Gujarat, for example, most chintzes were printed with wooden blocks by using one or more of various techniques, including direct printing, bleach printing (bleaching the design on an already dyed cloth), ‘mordant printing’ (printing with mordants and then bleaching the unmordanted areas) or ‘resist printing’ (printing a viscous substance, followed by dyeing, followed by the cleansing of the substance). This enormous variety of processes, combined with the local availability of high-quality dyes and the capacity to use mordants, made Indian textile production extremely articulated compared to its European counterpart.

## 2. Interlocking Spheres

### 2.1. WHEN DID COTTON TEXTILE ARRIVE IN EUROPE?

Before the fifteenth century, the European woollen and the Asian cotton spheres had interacted – albeit on a small scale – for centuries. Future research will have to explain in particular the

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28 Roberta Orsi Landini, ‘Da vanità a Virtù: l’Innovazione come Valore Aggiunto all’Origine della Produzione Tessile per l’Abbigliamento’, in Eugenia Paulicelli (ed.), *Moda e Moderno: Dal Medioevo al Rinascimento* (Rome, 2006) pp. 57-78.

29 A. K. Longfield, ‘History of the Irish Linen and Cotton Printing Industry in the 18th Century’, *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 58 (1937), p. 26. See also Monique Drosson, ‘Bref historique de l’imprimé avant l’arrivée des indiennes’, in *Le Coton et la Mode: 1000 Ans d’Aventures* (Paris, 2000), pp. 38-43

30 A. I. Tchitcherov, *India: Changing Economic Structure in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries: Outline History of Crafts and Trade* (New Delhi, 1998), p. 72.



role of the Levant both as an area of exchange between the West and the East, and as an important centre of manufacturing and consumption on its own right.<sup>31</sup> Established interpretations see the opening of the Cape route at the end of the fifteenth century as a turning point in the material and economic contact between Western Europe and Asia. What followed was a continuous, direct and strengthening contact that had enormous repercussions on the spread of cotton textiles well beyond the perimeter of the Indian Ocean. Such a new phase was not directed by the dynamic merchant communities active in the trade of cotton textiles within the Indian Ocean. European merchants saw an unprecedented opportunity to venture into unknown waters. It was the Portuguese, with the establishment of the Carreira da India, and later the English East India Company (founded in 1600), the Dutch VOC (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie founded in 1602) and the even later Danish (1616), French (1664) and Swedish (1732) East India Companies inaugurated a new and 'revolutionary' phase in the history of cotton in Europe.<sup>32</sup>

But the exact nature, extent and importance of such direct trade is put into question. For instance Wallerstein remains sceptical about the impact of direct trade via the Cape route and underlines the restricted scope and scale of commercial contacts between the two continents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> Tea, silk, spices and cotton textiles were luxuries within reach of the European elite and they had but limited effect either on consumption or on the structure and growth of the European economy in the early modern period. This position is supported by quantitative analyses that claim either that Eurasian trade was very small (five modern super-tankers could transport everything that was traded between Europe and Asia during the period from 1500 to 1800) or that internal European trade remained qualitatively and quantitatively more relevant than trade with Asia.<sup>34</sup> Transcending precise quantification,

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31 Good progress has already been made especially in the Ottoman-European cultural and economic exchange, and Ottoman consumption. Little or no research is available on the relationship of the Ottoman Empire with the core of Asia. See Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods* (London, 1996); Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance art between East and West* (Ithaca, 2000); Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London, 2004); Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph Neumann (eds.), *Ottoman Costumes: From Textiles to Identity* (London, 2004).

32 Maxine Berg, 'Manufacturing the Orient. Asian Commodities and European Industry 1500-1800', in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Prodotti e Tecniche d'Oltremare nelle Economie Europee. Secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della Ventinovesima Settimana di Studi, 14-19 aprile 1997* (Florence, 1998), pp. 394-6.

33 Immanuel Wallerstein, *Modern World System. 2: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750* (New York, 1980).

34 Jan de Vries, 'Connecting Europe and Asia: A Quantitative Analysis of the Cape-Route Trade, 1497-1795', in Dennis O'Flynn, Arturo Giráldez and Richard von Glahn (eds.), *Global Connections and Monetary History, 1470-1800* (Ashford, 2003), pp. 35-106; Pieter Emmer, 'The Myth of Early Globalization: The Atlantic Economy, 1500-1800', *European Review* 11/1 (2003), p. 39; David Ormrod, 'Consuming the Orient in Britain, 1660-1760' (Paper presented at Session 25 on 'Luxury Production, Consumption and the Art Market in Early Modern Europe',

Chaudhuri and Frank emphasise instead the importance of market integration which followed the replacement of a series of intermediaries in the Middle East with direct routes connecting distant parts of the Eurasian continent.<sup>35</sup>

A third position, based on a demand-side interpretation, emphasises how the commodities imported into Europe from Asia (including cottons) became significant in cultural (as well as economic) terms because they increasingly shaped innovations, imitations and taste in Europe. They changed not so much the grammar of trade, but the vocabulary of material culture.<sup>36</sup> In the case of cottons, it is claimed that its importance went well beyond the occasional palampore or Indian cushion. Cotton textiles were one of the most traded commodities between Asia and Europe well before the classic date for the take off of trade in the middle of the seventeenth century. Beverly Lemire argues against the established idea that ‘only small quantities [of textiles] were brought to Europe on the Portuguese carracks in the sixteenth century’.<sup>37</sup> Already in the first decade of the seventeenth century the Portuguese imported 770,000 pieces of cottons and silk each year, equivalent to c. 8 million yards.<sup>38</sup> The quantities of textiles traded by the East India Company (EIC) and the VOC were, in the early seventeenth century, rather smaller, but it is worth reminding that throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries substantial imports of Indian textiles continued to arrive into the Ottoman Empire and part of these were re-exported to Western Europe together with Ottoman silks. This was the case of the famous *indiennes* arriving into the port of Marseilles.<sup>39</sup> But their importance was not just in terms of quantities. The influence of Asian textiles in Europe pre-dated the seventeenth century and restricted imports through the Iberian Peninsula had

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International Economic History Congress, Helsinki 21-25 August 2006).

35 K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978); Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, 1998).

36 Maxine Berg, ‘New Commodities, Luxuries and their Consumers in Eighteenth-Century England’, in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds., *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 63-85; Id, ‘From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Economic History Review* 55/1 (2002), pp. 1-30; *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (New York and London, 2002), pp. 46-62.

37 Niels Steensgaard, ‘The Growth and Composition of the Long-distance Trade of England and the Dutch Republic before 1750’, in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 123. See Beverly Lemire ‘Shaping Fashion: Asia, Europe and the Trade in Indian Cottons, c. 1300-1800’, in Riello and Parthasarathi, eds., *Spinning World*.

38 James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640* (Baltimore and London, 1993), p. 139.

39 R.W. Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems. A Historical Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 89. On the *Indiennes* see: Katsumi Fukasawa, *Toilerie et commerce du Levant d’Alep à Marseille* (Paris, 1987); Olivier Raveux, ‘The Birth of the Calico Printing in Europe: The Case of Marseilles (1648-1692)’, in Riello and Parthasarathi (eds.) *The Spinning World*. An earlier version in French can be found at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNTreillesConferencePapers.htm>

considerable effects on the embroidering motifs of the fifteenth century.<sup>40</sup> A longer period of trade with India facilitated the adoption of Indian textiles when they became more widely available in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.2. THE SUCCESS OF COTTON TEXTILES IN EUROPE

Debates over the chronology of trade and the relevance of the quantities of Indian cotton textiles exchanged across Eurasia point out a deeper problem: why and how were cotton textiles so successful in Europe? This is a question that implies long discussions over the nature, cost and use of textiles in early modern Europe, and I will try only to summarise briefly here. Indian cottons embodied qualities that could hardly be achieved by worsteds and woollen textiles, including permanent colour and washability. The fastness of colour allowed them to be exposed to protracted light, but also – what was even more important – let them to be washed.<sup>42</sup> This was a feature that fostered a change in notions of cleanliness from the washing of undergarments to the washing of both over-garments and undergarments.<sup>43</sup> But the true versatility of cotton textiles perhaps did not relate to the intrinsic properties of the fibre. Cotton textiles were light fabrics that could replace or imitate more expensive silks and the middle-range ‘new draperies’ that had originated in the Low Countries in the late Middle Ages and that established themselves as fashionable in many parts of Europe in the late sixteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Imported cottons can thus be seen as exemplifying a transition from heavy to lightweight fabrics that had started in Europe well before the mid-seventeenth century.

From a price point of view, cottons could be direct substitutes of the low and medium quality worsted and woollen cloth produced in several parts of Europe. From an ‘aesthetic’ point of view cottons could replace more expensive silks and new draperies. In this case cotton was a ‘populuxe good’.<sup>45</sup> From a fibre point of view, cotton behaved like a ‘parasite’. It

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40 Beverly Lemire, ‘Plasmare la domanda, creare la moda: l’Asia, l’Europa e il commercio dei cotone indiani (XIV-XIX secc.)’, *Quaderni Storici*, 46/122 (2006), pp. 481-508.

41 I would like to thank Beverly Lemire and John Styles for discussing this topic with me.

42 Sarah Levitt, ‘Clothing’, in Mary B. Rose (ed.), *The Lancashire Cotton Industry. A history since 1700* (Preston, 1996), pp. 154-55.

43 See in particular Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1988). See also Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the ‘Ancien Regime’* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 151-83.

44 Negley B. Harte, ‘Introduction’, in Negley B. Harte (ed.), *The New Draperies in the Low Countries and England, 1300-1700* (Oxford, 1997), p. 3.

45 On the concept of ‘populuxe goods’ see Cissie Fairchild, ‘The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris’, in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 228-48.

developed not only through its own qualities or competitiveness but also by 'borrowing' other fibres' markets, consumers and technologies. The variety of cottons and their change over time makes it particularly difficult to identify areas of integration/competition with other fabrics.

The innovative nature of cotton textiles was not just a function of their material characteristics or price. Recent scholarship has underlined their importance in shaping both new consumer demand and new channels of distribution (shops, second-hand, and peddlers).<sup>46</sup> The use of sources such as court records, shopkeepers' ledgers, advertisements and personal records provides a comprehensive account of the integration of cottons within British consumers' practices that goes well beyond the simple and perhaps erroneous idea that the success of Indian cotton textiles in Europe relied on their cheapness: 'Ce n'est point la modicité du prix', commented Jacob Nicolas Moreau in his examination of French trade 'c'est la mode, c'est une certaine vanité qui rend les femmes du menu Peuple si curieuses de Toiles Peintes. Habillées de Siamoise ou de Toiles de Coton, elles ne peuvent se comparer qu'aux femmes de leur Etat... elles se croyant au-dessus de leur condition, parce que les femmes de qualité portent aussi des Toiles Peintes'.<sup>47</sup> His contemporary, and rather more optimist, André Morellet, reached similar conclusion when he said that 'Cette mode preferit d'avoir une robe Perse; les femmes de la Cour en ont, if faut bien que toutes en ayant: & il n'y a point de femmes de ces Fabricants qui crient si fort contre les Toiles, chez qui on n'en trouvait plus d'un meuble & plus d'une robe'.<sup>48</sup>

This finding concerning the price of imported Indian cottons is in line with recent revisionism in Indian historiography. Prasannan Parthasarathi has queried the over-reliance on contemporary European travellers who commented negatively upon the conditions of Indian weavers and spinners.<sup>49</sup> The wages of Indian spinners and weavers were probably not as low as previously thought, although European traders still enjoyed a relatively strong currency. It is also worth reminding that the price of Indian cotton textiles increased during the eighteenth century. The buoyant 1690s and early 1700s had seen both sale prices in London and Amsterdam and the profits of the EIC and VOC boom, but in the following fifty years sale prices remained constant, in the face of shrinking mark-ups. During the first half of the

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46 Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991).

47 Jacob Nicolas Moreau, *Examen des effets qu doivent produire dans le commerce de France, l'usage & la fabrication des toiles peintes: ou Réponse à l'ouvrage intitulé ...* (Geneve, 1759), p. 60.

48 André Morellet, *Réflexions sur les avantages de la libre fabrication et de l'usage des toiles peintes en France; pour servir de réponse aux divers mémoires des ...* (Geneve, 1758), pp. 42-3.

49 Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 158 (1998), pp. 79-109. A good summary on the productive structure of Indian textiles can be found in K.N. Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Tirthankar Roy (ed.), *Cloth and Commerce. Textiles in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 33-84.

eighteenth century both tougher competition in Europe and a deterioration of the terms of trade with India made imported cotton textiles more expensive than in previous decades.<sup>50</sup>

Asian cotton textiles penetrated into the purchasing habits of European and later North American consumers for a variety of different factors, beyond their cheapness. But what were cottons for? Beverly Lemire has recently demonstrated how calicoes' success was not initially due to a new '*culture des apparences*' based on bodily adornment. Painted and printed cotton textiles firstly penetrated European domestic interiors in the shape of upholstery, but most commonly valances, cushions and bed hangings.<sup>51</sup> Their uses in Europe were with all probability, influenced by their employment in India. Here several travellers noticed the 'architectural use' of textiles in tents and houses. Pyrard described pillows and sheets of cotton, but also hangings 'composed of pieces of cotton cloth of all colours, arranged together in various ways'.<sup>52</sup> Similarly Tavernier reports that they were used as bedcovers, tablecloths, pillowcases, and handkerchiefs.<sup>53</sup> This early association between Indian cottons and domestic interiors is not surprising. Asian textiles penetrated into middle-ranks European houses in close association with other exotic goods and furnishings such as 'Japan' chests and stands, ivory and Madre pearl Indian tables, cabinets and screens. The houses of seventeenth-century merchants – surely the social class most receptive to foreign and extra-European consumer influences – were increasingly dominated by such commodities, not just in bedrooms and bed chambers but also in dining rooms, parlours and drawing rooms.<sup>54</sup> The dollhouse of the Dutch Petronella Dunois, dated c. 1675, is perhaps the best example of the effect of calicoes in seventeenth-century interior design: the dollhouse is lined with bright-coloured dyed and painted cotton textiles from Coromandel.<sup>55</sup>

The increasing quantities of painted and printed cottons imported into Europe in the second half of the seventeenth century reflects an expansion in their use beyond the domestic

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50 Giorgio Riello, 'The Extension of the Market for Cottons in the Early Modern Period: From Local to Global' (Unpublished Paper, May 2006), pp. 27-8. For the price data see K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 540-1.

51 Beverly Lemire, 'Domesticating the Exotic: Floral Culture and the East India Calico Trade with England, c. 1600-1800', *Textile 1/1* (2003), pp. 65-85. See also Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York, 1983), pp. 189-90, 195.

52 Pyrard, François, *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil* (London, 1887-88), p. 222. Pyrard describes a wooden house that 'within is hung with cotton or silk cloths of all colours, and of the finest and richest description available'. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

53 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India* (Oxford, 1925), p. 4.

54 Adriana Turpin, 'Furnishing the London Merchant's Town House', in Mireille Galinou (ed.), *City Merchants and the Arts 1670-1720* (London, 2004), pp. 59-60.

55 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Inv. BK-14656.

sphere.<sup>56</sup> Calicoes were now increasingly used as apparel, a shift that made Daniel Defoe frown upon the ‘persons of quality dressed in Indian carpets’.<sup>57</sup> While few doubt the importance of cottons in re-shaping the visual, tactile and design culture of textiles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their degree of penetration into consumers’ wardrobes is the subject of very different opinions. John Styles, for instance, suggests a later chronology for the popular uptake of cottons and argues that plebeian consumers preferred linens and woollens well into the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> My own estimates point out that cotton textiles (imported and home produced) were less than 5 percent of all textiles in England in 1750, a small but important figure. Beverly Lemire’s analysis of garments pawned at a South London pawnbroker in 1667-71 shows how only 3 percent of all fabrics were cottons, compared to 51 percent linens and 39 percent woollen and worsteds. A century later, in the late 1770s, York pawnbrokers showed how cotton accounted for 18 to 22 percent of all garments while woollen and linen had receded to respectively 12 and 6 percent respectively.<sup>59</sup> In contrast Daniel Roche estimates that by 1789 nearly 40 per cent of Parisian wage earners’ wardrobes were composed of cottons and fustians.<sup>60</sup>

We must think about the implications of the use of cotton beyond gross figures. Cottons impacted on established consumers’ ideas on the quality, durability and propriety of textiles. The anonymous author of *The Trade of England Revived* (1681), for instance, complained that

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56 Beverly Lemire, ‘East India Textiles and the Flowering of European Popular Fashions, 1660-1800’, in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Prodotti e Tecniche d’Oltremare*, pp. 515-524;

57 Cit. in Arno Pearse, *The Cotton Industry of India, being the Report of the Journey to India* (n.a., 1930), p. 19.

58 Styles uses the evidence from the Old Bailey for stolen goods. John Styles, ‘What Were Cottons for in the early Industrial Revolution?’, in Riello and Parthasarathi (eds.), *Spinning World*. Margaret Spufford’s work uses probate accounts to show how in the seventeenth century cottons not only ranked much lower in children’s wardrobes than omnipresent woollens and canvas, but were not as common as linen, kerseys, stuff and russets. Anne Buck claims that it was fustians, not imported cottons, which became popular among the middling sorts as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century. Margaret Spufford, ‘Fabric for Seventeenth-Century Children and Adolescents’ Clothes’, *Textile History* 34/1 (2003), p. 62; Anne Buck, ‘Clothing and Textiles in Bedfordshire Inventories, 1617-1620’, *Costume* 34 (2000), pp. 27-9. Recent research by myself and John Styles suggests instead that printed cotton textiles, some of which were imported from India, were commonly used in children’s clothing in the 1760s and 1770s. See John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, forthcoming 2007), ch. 7

59 Beverly Lemire, ‘Transforming Consumer Custom: Linen, Cotton, and the English Market, 1660-1800’, in Brenda Collins and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The European Linen Industry in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 189 and 206-7. These figures are in line with Steven King’s data that shows that cotton and mixed cotton garments were only 15 to 30 per cent of paupers’ wardrobes in the late eighteenth century. Steven King, ‘Reclothing the English Poor, 1750-1840’, *Textile History* 33/1 (2002), p. 43. For a critique see Peter Jones, ‘Clothing the Poor in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Textile History* 37/1 (2006), pp. 17-37.

60 Daniel Roche, *La culture des apparences: une histoire du vêtement (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1991), p. 138.

‘instead of Green Sey that was wont to be used for Children Frocks, is now used Painted, and Indian-stained, and Striped Calico, and instead of a Perpetuana or a Shalloon to Lyne Mens Coats with, is used sometimes a Glazened Calico’, but suggested dismissively that this was no real gain as such calicoes were ‘not above twelve pence cheaper, and abundantly worse’.<sup>61</sup> He continued by observing how hardwearing textiles such as perpetuana and shaloon could last twice as long as calico, and even when worn out ‘will serve for one use or other afterwards for children’.<sup>62</sup> By contrast calico did not last and could hardly be re-used.<sup>63</sup> In his view, cottons were reshaping the overall material culture of clothing, altering established notions of durability and the recycling of textiles. Our late-seventeenth-century commentator was surely worried also about the hierarchical place of cottons. As observed by Sarah Levitt, ‘cotton enabled more than just the rich to display cleans shirts and, through its ability to imitate different fabrics, brought the appearance of satins, velvets and lace within reach of millions’.<sup>64</sup> But its use was not just confined to the substitution of linen. Cotton was used also for hosiery in the place of silks and woollens, as outerwear thus replacing wool and leather, and as a printed fabric for light dresses.<sup>65</sup> Cottons surely appeared a more ‘democratic’ and ‘progressive’ alternative to woollens and worsteds.<sup>66</sup>

### 2.3. BANNING THE EXOTIC

In 1670 Molière dressed his bourgeois gentleman, Monsieur Jourdain in a banyon of toiles peintes ‘Je me suis fait faire cette indienne-ci’. Says Monsieur Jourdain with confidence ‘Mon tailleur m’a dit que les gens de qualité étaient cela le matin’.<sup>67</sup> He was not the only one to be charmed by brightly coloured and richly designed Indian textiles. His contemporary Englishman Samuel Pypes had fallen for similar fashions, though he had thought better to decorate his wife’s study room with chintzes rather than to wear it as done by Monsieur

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61 *The Trade of England Revived: and the Abuses Thereof Rectified* (London, 1681), p. 16.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*

64 Sarah Levitt, ‘Clothing’, p. 155.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

66 Lemire, ‘Fashioning Cottons: Asian trade, Domestic Industry and Consumer Demand, 1660-1780’, in Jenkins (ed.), *Cambridge History of Western textiles*, vol. I, pp. 493; Id., ‘Fashion and Tradition: Wearing Wool in England during the Consumer Revolution’, in Giovanni Luigi Fontana and Gérard Gayot (eds.), *Wool: Products and Markets, 13th-20th Centuries* (Padua, 2004). Barbara Johnson’s album shows the impact of cottons on the wardrobe of a well-to-do but not necessarily privileged lady with an increasing number of cotton garments taking the place of silks, woollens and worsteds over the period between 1750 and 1825. Natalie Rothstein (ed.), *A Lady of Fashion: Barbara Johnson’s Album of Styles and Fabrics* (London, 1987).

67 Cit. in Céline Cousquer, *Nantes, une Capitale Française des Indiennes au XVIIIe Siècle* (Nantes, 2002), p. 18.

Jourdain. Pypes was pleased with the result which he thought was ‘very pretty’. It would be difficult to underestimate the impact of toiles peintes. If one could not have the original Indian import, he would have resorted to rather more modest imitations that were increasingly produced in Europe, in particular in Holland and England towards the end of the seventeenth century. The visual impact of such toiles peintes can be grasped from the words of one of the directors of the French Compagnie des Indes when he said that ‘eyes are so much used to it that at present it is impossible to do without these’.<sup>68</sup> And such fashion was increasingly becoming part of general attire with areas like Frisia incorporating toiles peintes into their traditional quilted petticoats.<sup>69</sup>

Such perceived or real frenzy for Indian imports was seen with great concern by the authorities and was thought deleterious for the domestic economy. If most consumption was bad, this had awful effects firstly on the balance of trade (causing a haemorrhage of bullion to pay for imported calicoes) and secondly on the home industries (especially the producers of woollens and silks). They claimed that consumer had fallen in a ‘calico craze’<sup>70</sup> – not dissimilar from the tulip mania that had swept Holland in the 1630s – and that the consumption of imported cottons and silks had to be stopped. Mercantilist measures based on protectionism were quickly put in place across Europe starting with the ban on the use of imported calicoes in France in 1686 where ‘les tissus de coton peints ou imprimés ne pouvaient être importés dans l’intérieur du royaume. Les seules étoffes qu’il fut permis d’y introduire furent les toiles de coton blanches comme les guinées et les percales et les mousselines’.<sup>71</sup> This was followed by similar laws in Spain and Prussia in 1713. In England a partial ban was enacted in 1701, followed by a total ban in 1721.<sup>72</sup> Colourful reports on the

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68 Cit. in Indrani Ray, ‘The French Company and the merchants of Bengal (1680-1730)’, in Lakshmi Subramanian, ed., *The French East India Company and the Trade of the Indian Ocean: a Collection of Essays by Indrani Ray* (New Delhi 1, 1999), p. 77.

69 Margherita Bellezza Rosina, ‘La diffusione del tessuto stampato nell’abbigliamento maschile e femminile: da fenomeno d’élite a prodotto di massa’, in Ranieri Varese e Grazietta Butazzi, *Storia della Moda* (Bologna, 1995), p. 228.

70 There is an extensive literature on the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century calico craze. See: Rothstein, ‘The Calico Campaign’; Audrey W. Douglas, ‘Cotton Textiles in England: The East India Company’s Attempts to Exploit Developments in Fashion 1660-1721’, *Journal of British Studies* 8/2 (1969), pp. 28-43; Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minneapolis, 1976), pp. 79-124; Mukerji, *From Graven Images*, ch. 5; Lemire, ‘Fashioning Cottons’.

71 Cit. in Henry Weber, *La Compagnie Française des Indes (1604-1875)* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1904), pp. 504-5.

72 Historians have explained the mercantilist measures as a temporary loss of political power by the English East India Company after the change of regime in 1688 and by Government concerns about the drainage of bullion that had started with the import of calicoes in the early 1660s. The debate was particularly intense in England. Natalie Rothstein, ‘The Calico Campaign of 1719-1721’, *East London Papers* 7 (1964), pp. 3-21; Tim Keirn, ‘Parliament, Legislation and the Regulation of English Textile Industries, 1689-1714’, in L. Davidson, Tim



mob chasing down the streets of London and stripping women wearing calicoes are perhaps not the best indicators of how the ban on the 'wearing or use of all printed, painted, stained or dyed calicoes' might have worked. It was claimed that 'forbidden' products were still available in large parts of Europe, especially thanks to Dutch imports that were never banned at home and that were actively sold around Europe.<sup>73</sup>

The ban on the import of Indian cottons and silks had more profound consequences on manufacturing rather than consumption. Historians have long claimed that these protectionist measures facilitated – and perhaps were even aimed at – fostering a process of 'import substitution'. High duties or a straightforward ban could facilitate the replacement of Indian products with European substitutes. This hypothesis, originally formulated by Wadsworth and Mann for Britain back in 1932 has been re-categorized and extended to include notions of 'imitation' thus capturing the material, visual, but also emotional value of such goods.<sup>74</sup> Maxine Berg, in her studies of the import of 'exotic' products from India, China and Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has argued for a European drive towards the imitation of imported commodities. The goods themselves with their visual and tactile attributes stimulated desires that in turn produced attempts to replace them with European-made products. She notices how so many of the commodities initially imported from the East were eventually produced at home. They were partially adapted to suit European tastes and expectations.<sup>75</sup> But in the early eighteenth century the substitution of imported calicoes and other cotton textiles was mostly confined to their printing.<sup>76</sup> In Marseille in the 1650s and 1660s and in Amsterdam in the 1670s, Armenian workmen were employed to 'draw and colour or dye all kinds of East Indian cottons, which has never before ... been practiced'.<sup>77</sup>

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Hitchcock, Tim Keirn and Robert D. Shoemakers, eds., *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 1-24. For a detailed analysis of the legislation on cotton in England see Patrick K. O'Brien, Trevor Griffith, and Philip Hunt, 'Political Components of the Industrial Revolution: English Cotton Textile Industry, 1660-1774', *Economic History Review* 46/3 (1991), pp. 395-423.

73 Lemire, 'Fashioning Cottons', p. 403.

74 Arthur P. Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780* (Manchester, 1932).

75 Maxine Berg, 'In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 182 (2004), pp. 116-23. See also John Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London', *Past and Present* 168 (2000), pp. 124-69.

76 Giorgio Riello, 'The Rise of European Calico Printing and the Influence of Asia in the 17th- and 18th-centuries' (paper presented at the GEHN Conference on 'Cotton Textiles in the Indian Ocean', Pune, December 2005): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNConference8Papers.htm>

77 Cit. in Ernst Homburg, 'From colour maker to chemist: episodes from the rise of the colourist, 1670-1800', in Robert Fox and Agustí Nieto-Galan, eds., *Natural Dyestuffs and Industrial Culture in Europe, 1750-1880* (Canton, Mass., 1999), p. 221.

At Avignon, the first calico printers set up in 1677 and workshop appeared also in Languedoc, Dauphiné, in Normandy and in Paris.<sup>78</sup> Calico printing spread to Switzerland and Alsace with the cities of Geneve, Basle, Mulhouse and Neuchâtel becoming important centres of production.<sup>79</sup> During the long ban on calico manufacturing in France lasting from 1689 and 1759, production continued to those cities and small areas that were not directly administered by the Central government and enjoyed autonomous jurisdiction such as Marseille, and later the Arsenal in Paris (1746), Angers (1753), Rouen (1755) and Nantes (1758).<sup>80</sup>

‘Import substitution’ is a key element in linking the success of cotton textiles in the sphere of trade and consumption and the fact that in the course of the eighteenth century their global centre of manufacturing shifted from India to Europe. It is the relationship between consumption and the re-location (from one continent to another) and re-organisation (from artisanal to industrial) of production to be at the core of debates over the nature and working of ‘import substitution’ industrialisation. The extension of the cotton sphere to include Europe was thus somewhat different from the established system existing within the Indian ocean for two reasons: firstly the role of European merchants as examined above; secondly the progressive strengthening (and in due course overtake) of Europe as a centre of manufacturing in its own right. The new system was not just becoming global. It was also finding a new productive core that increasingly attempted to co-ordinate the world trade in textiles.

It must be born in mind, however, that import substitution was not the prerogative or Europe, let alone Britain. India had exported textiles for centuries to other nations and import-substitution effects were evident in many parts of Southeast Asia, in the Arabian Gulf and in the Ottoman Empire where producers specialised in imitating Indian cotton cloth and sold them across the Empire, in the Balkans, and the Mediterranean. But what did make Europe distinctive? This question cannot find at present a satisfactory answer. Historians have explained the nature of such import-substitution process by upgrading it to a full-fledged industrial revolution in which endogenous and exogenous causes of growth marry each other to support the idea of a certain European (read Anglo-Saxon) exceptionalism. Technology, institutions, political hegemony and control over world markets are some of the general categories of factors characterising the economic surge of Europe over the century between

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78 Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, ‘Indiennes et mousselines: le charme irréductible des cotonnades (1650-1750)’, in *Le Coton et la Mode*, pp. 53-4.

79 Franco Brunello, *L'Arte della Tintura nella Storia dell'Umanità* (Vicenza, 1968), p. 215.

80 Henri Clouzot, *La Manufacture de Jouy et la Toile Imprimée au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris and Brussels, 1926), pp. 8-9; S. Chassagne, ‘Calico printing in Europe before 1780’, in David Jenkins, ed., *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles* (Cambridge, 2003), vol. i, pp. 523-4. For a discussion on the geography of the French calico printing industry in the late eighteenth century see: *Toiles de Nantes des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* (Mulhouse, 1978), pp. 8-9 and Serge Chassagne, *Manufacture de Toiles Imprimées de Tournemine*, pp. 47-51.

1750 and 1850.

I would like to confine myself to the very nature of the commodities exchanged and I would like to make a case for the existence of a peculiar relationship between import and home-produced commodities. The ‘foreign’ object was not necessarily received within the materials space of early modern Europe as ‘extra-ordinary’, that is to say referring to a world estranged from the daily consumer choices and preferences. As previously observed, many of the high-quality Indian cotton and silk textiles traded to Southeast Asia, but also to Nepal, Thailand, or the Horn of Africa, remained strictly associated to customs based on gift, rituals, and sometimes – but perhaps not as commonly as previously thought – religious practices. Earlier, I mentioned how Europe ‘commodified’ such imported products, making them fully part of a world of trade, monetised exchange and fashion. But from the point of view of consumers, imported objects – not just from Asia, but also other parts of Europe – were conceived to be ‘stimulants’ in the short term, but became integral parts of a shifting material culture in the long term. Early modern Europe, I argue, especially in those localities better equipped for protracted contact and exchange with distant places – developed a notion of material culture that was characterised by change – perhaps even ‘progress’. And part of this vision was based on the idea that influences, objects, shapes, materials and forms not endogenous could be adopted, used and manipulated. This was an optimistic world of material welfare in which ‘foreign’ commodities increasingly impacted beyond the realm of the established elite culture and conspicuous consumption. As in the case of chinaware, the collector’s pieces of the early seventeenth century came within the reach of the aspiring middle classes and even changed the material world of large parts of the European population who had no clue where these commodities came from. But the process of assimilation, of making the ‘foreign’ ordinary, was as much a destruction and denial of the exotic nature of imports as it was the confirmation of the expectation that new commodities would enter the material world of a household, community, city or nation.

#### 2.4. TAMING THE EXOTIC

This cultural process had also good allies in Europe both in the manufacturing and the political economy sides. From the point of view of the political arithmetician of the late seventeenth century, the substitution of an imported commodity was the result of an aggressive nationalistic stance in the international economy. Bans were only the epiphenomenon of wider processes aimed at curbing spending and reducing the timeframe of dependence upon foreign products. This did not necessarily mean the exclusion of all new commodities. Manufactures, artisans and skilled workmen were called to copy and imitate, actions with few negative

connotations in the eighteenth century as the concept of originality, ‘in its uncompromising modern sense, was not necessarily prized’.<sup>81</sup> The French *indienne*, for instance, was a copy of an Ottoman cotton cloth imitating an Indian one.<sup>82</sup> The same can be said about the concept of provenance. We have to remember that eighteenth-century culture lumped together several Asian countries, from India to China to Japan, under the broad category of ‘the East’. There was not just confusion on which was the original product, but also where it passed through. Les Perses, for instance, were indiennes arriving in Europe through Persia and the Levant. In 1762 Jacques Savary des Bruslons complained that ‘Se dit aussi des toiles peintes qui viennent de Perse, & qu’on suppose y avoir été fabriquées & peintes; quoique souvent ce sont des «toiles indiennes» qu’on fait passer pour Persanes. Les Perses sont les plus estimées des toutes les toiles qui viennent d’Orient, & sur-tout en France, les Dames les préfèrent à toutes les autres ... Pour faire l’éloge d’une toile peinte, on dit simplement, c’est une Perse’.<sup>83</sup> But such an inaccurate attitude extended also to the difference between the original products arriving from Asia and home-produced manufacturers. It was in the interest of domestic producers to suggest exotic provenance also for products with a much more local origin. This was true for porcelain, chinoiserie, Japanese beds, and many other imports. In the case of cottons, every technological improvement meant that copies increasingly similar to imports could be produced.<sup>84</sup>

Europeans started to re-interpret commodities not just by substituting them, but also through a process of selection and modification in loco. John Styles, in his analysis of the EIC sale of Indian cottons in Britain, underlines how the Company had a curious combination of proactive business practices. So we find that the EIC was careful to commission palampores with motifs suitable for European consumers by sending patterns to India as early as 1669.<sup>85</sup> Samples became widely used: ‘Now of late they are here in England come to a great practice of painting large branches for hanging of Roomes’, commented a EIC employee in the late

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81 Styles, ‘Product Innovation’, pp. 130-1.

82 Fukasawa, *Toilerie*; Olivier Raveux, ‘Espaces et technologies dans la France méridionale d’ancien régime: l’exemple de l’indiennage marseillais (1648-1793)’, *Annales du Midi* 116/246 (2004), pp. 155-70; Id., ‘Les débuts de l’indiennage dans les pays d’Aix (1758-1770)’, *Industries en Provence* 4 (2004), pp. 1-8.

83 Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, 5 vols. (Copenhagen, 1762), vol. 4, cit. in Gorguet Ballesteros, ‘Indiennes et mousselines’, p. 48.

84 The often quoted correspondence of the New York merchant James Alexander, active in the 1740s, did not distinguish between English and Indian calicoes. Written documents are seldom so precise, but in this case the physical presence of samples makes the document quite unique. Florence M. Montgomery, *Printed Textiles: English and American Cottons and Linens, 1700-1850* (New York, 1970), p. 18.

85 Margherita Bellezza Rosina, ‘Tra Oriente e Occidente’, in Marzia Cataldi Gallo (ed.), *I Mezzari: Tra Oriente e Occidente* (Genoa, 1988), pp. 20-1.

seventeenth century.<sup>86</sup> A similar thinking was in the minds of the employees of the French East India Company when they considered the sizes of textiles that could be easily sold and advised to hoard those ‘types of cloth which we get painted in ordinary chittes for France, because of their [suitable] width. I believe nevertheless that we shall be quite able to sell these coarse narrow pieces there [in France] for common people as well as for the American islands, since the chittes of Seronge which are hardly wider than these, are in demand there’.<sup>87</sup> In some cases, the overall aim was to produce textiles that continued European aesthetic traditions simply by transposing motifs – as in the case of bizarre silks – from more precious to cheaper materials.<sup>88</sup> In other cases the hands-on approach of the EIC even produced new products as the tree of life, imitated by Indian producers but originating in Scandinavian myth and marketed in Europe as a quintessential Indian commodity.

Once European calico producers perfected their techniques, the ‘copy’ could become more appealing than the original. John Holker, the Englishman spying on the Lancashire cotton production for the French government, reported in 1751 that the commerce of Lancashire-made fustians and mixed linens printed in London was wide across Europe. He observed that, of course, France was the main victim of such a trade, but he underlined how part of the problem lay with consumers: ‘They [the English] send large quantities [of fustians] to France, which are sold as Indian chintzes because of the special finish they are given and also because the purchasers of this type of English goods have but slight knowledge of them’.<sup>89</sup> This was a worry not just for the French manufacturers but also for the East India and other European companies who had initiated the creation of hybrids that were now capturing their own traditional markets.

Hybridity was particularly relevant for design and colours. The correspondence of the EIC contains mainly orders from London to factors in India asking for ‘lighter’ colours. In 1643 it was asked for instance that ‘Those quilts which hereafter you shall send we desire may be with more white ground and the flowers and branch to be in colours in the middle of the quilt as the painter pleases, whereas now most part of your quilts come with sad red grounds which are not too well accepted here’.<sup>90</sup> This European preference had important repercussion on import substitution during the next century. The Indian technique of resist dyeing was based

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86 Cit. in T. Osumi, *Printed Cottons of Asia: the Romance of Trade Textiles* (Tokyo, 1963), p. 17.

87 Cit. in Ray, ‘French Company’, p. 68.

88 Steven Cohen, ‘The Unusual Textile Trade between India and Sri Lanka. Block Prints and Chintz 1550-1900’, in Rosemary Crill (eds.), *Textiles from India. The Global Trade* (Oxford and Calcutta, 2006), pp. 66

89 Cit. in Florence M. Montgomery, ‘English Textile Swatches of the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 102/687 (1960), p. 243.

90 John Irwin, ‘Origins of the ‘Oriental Style’ in English Decorative Art’, *Burlington Magazine*, 107 (1955), p. 109.

on the waxing of the areas that were to remain un-dyed. This labour-intensive procedure allowed for the production of ‘white motifs on blue backgrounds’ rather than ‘blue motifs on white backgrounds’ (like Chinese porcelain of the time), which would have meant the waxing of most of the cloth. We find that the substitution of this product with European-made products meant the learning of the Indian techniques of waxing and tepid indigo fermentation by European producers during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. But by the early eighteenth century they were already experimenting with improved techniques, unknown in Asia. The most important of these was the use of cold vats obtained by dissolving indigo in iron sulphate. This process, invented in England in 1734, quickly replaced the hot fermentation of indigo and was followed a few years later by the so-called English-blue and China-blue, the ability of printing in blue, again unknown in India.<sup>91</sup> Consumers did not just remodel products but also reshaped the technologies used to produce them.

### 3. The Making of a Global Commodity

#### 3.1. MAKING IT GLOBAL: RE-EXPORTING TO WEST AFRICA

A ‘product revolution’ as observed by Maxine Berg, emerged in Europe from the encounter, assimilation and manipulation of exotic commodities and accompanied the process of eighteenth-century economic growth succinctly labelled as the ‘Industrial Revolution’.<sup>92</sup> The expansion of the cotton sphere from the Indian Ocean to include Europe was not a simple extension based on the finding of new markets for cotton textiles produced in India. In just three generations, Europe had effectively superseded its dependence on imported cottons and created a flourishing industry whose economic importance is well known. It had used products that were not part of its material culture to catalyse change, spark imagination, promote invention and foster fashion. By the 1760s, Europe had not just dutifully learned all techniques for fashioning textiles that were totally unknown a century earlier, such as block printing, painting, the use mordants, reserve and reverse staying. It had also built on these processes and modified them to produce new products, such as copper-printed textiles by combining knowledge of dyes and textile printing from Asia with the skills and European aesthetic

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91 Peter C. Floud, ‘The English Contribution to the Early History of Calico Printing’, *Journal of the Society of Dyers and Colourists* 76 (1960), pp. 344-9.

92 Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005). See also her ‘Quality, Cotton and the Global Luxury Trade’ (paper presented at the GEHN Conference on ‘Cotton Textiles in the Indian Ocean’, Pune, December 2005): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN/GEHNConference8Papers.htm>

vocabulary of printing and etching on paper.<sup>93</sup> Printing and dyeing on cloth was the most important area of eighteenth-century invention in Europe.<sup>94</sup>

The cotton printers and manufacturers of Lancashire, but also Catalonia, Orange, Joy-en-Jossa, Mulhouse, Nauchatel, Prague and many other cities and towns in Europe were developing new notions for cotton textiles.<sup>95</sup> Europe had not just been captured into a larger sphere of trade for this commodity, but had shifted its manufacturing core and altered the very nature of the product. But this would have been a rather small achievement if limited to just European consumers. The strength of the process of re-invention of cotton textiles in Europe did not rely on its domestic market, but on cotton textiles becoming a global commodity.<sup>96</sup> We are very much aware of how new technologies in spinning, weaving and finishing conferred a comparative advantage in manufacturing to Europe over India and other world cotton textile manufacturing areas.<sup>97</sup> But it would be a mistake to conceptualise the emergence of cotton textiles in Europe only as a switch from trade to manufacturing. The new manufacturing core could not thrive without selling its products well beyond its borders. The reinvention of cotton textiles was not just for Europe: this was a new commodity to trade in the Atlantic to West Africa, the North American colonies and Latin America.

The importance of finding consumers for European cotton textiles beyond Europe is now seen a necessary condition for the development of the sector. Import substitution at home would have not been sufficient to generate a phenomenon of the scale and nature that economic historians define ‘revolutionary’. Joseph Inikori argues that import substitution could not have supported the long-term development of cotton textiles and claims that ‘the growth of domestic demand for English cotton textiles after the completion of first-stage import substitution in the industry was decidedly slow’.<sup>98</sup> In his view foreign markets played a

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93 Riello, ‘Rise of European Calico Printing’.

94 Berg, ‘From Imitation to Invention’, p. 22; Id., ‘Quality, Cotton and the Global Luxury Trade’, in Prakash, Riello, Roy and Sugihara, eds., *How India Clothed the World*, ch. 15. See also Stanley D. Chapman, ‘Quality versus quantity in the industrial revolution: the case of textile printing’, *Northern History*, 21 (1985), pp. 175-192.

95 On calico printing in Europe: Stanley D. Chapman and Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Peel and Oberkampf* (London, 1981); Serge Chassagne, ‘Calico Printing in Europe before 1780’, in Jenkins (ed.), *Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, vol. I, pp. 513-27. On the aesthetic aspects of cotton textiles see Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros, ‘Indiennes et mousselines: le charme irréductible des cotonnades (1650-1750)’, in *Coton et la Mode*, pp. 46-63.

96 This is a point underlined by Berg from many of the goods produced in Britain in the eighteenth century. See Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, ch. 7.

97 Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta, ‘The Early Modern Great Divergence: Wages, Prices and Economic Development in Europe and Asia, 1500-1800’, *Economic History Review* 59/1 (2006), pp. 2-31.

98 Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study of International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 433.

substantial part in what he calls 're-export substitution' industrialisation. The trade of Asian textiles to Africa had already started in the fourteenth century and followed the same routes of luxuries and semi-luxuries such as beads, copper, Islamic earthenware and Chinese porcelain.<sup>99</sup> It is estimated that by the early-mid seventeenth century the Gold Coast of Africa purchased more than 20,000 metres of Indian and European cotton cloth each year.<sup>100</sup> From the middle of the eighteenth century West Africa became an important market both for East India cottons re-exported from England and for the growing English cotton industry. Between 1699 and 1800 'Guinea' cloth (cottons for the African markets) accounted for 68 percent of all commodities exported from England to Africa, 40 percent of which came from India.<sup>101</sup> Cotton did not become a global commodity because its production was mechanised and industrialised; on the contrary it became mechanised and industrialised thanks to the fact that it was a global commodity.

British cotton producers and East India merchants could reap the profits from the African trade only by remaining competitive with other European traders and with direct exports from Asia to Africa. The mid-eighteenth century expansion of the African market enlarged the total number of firms in the industry, making it more competitive. It was also a major incentive for cost-reducing and quality-raising innovations. Inikori suggests that this served as an 'apprenticeship' for the successful engagement of English cottons in the European and Atlantic markets in the later part of the eighteenth century.<sup>102</sup> And it was not just England that traded heavily with Africa. From the 1730s Rouen combined the production of heavy brocaded

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99 N. Chittick, 'East African Trade with the Orient', in D.S. Richards (ed.), *Islam and the trade of Asia. A Colloquium* (Oxford, 1970), p. 103. See also John Vogt, 'Notes on the Portuguese Cloth Trade in West Africa, 1480-1540', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8/4 (1975), pp.: 623-651; Shri Pramod Sangar, 'Export of Indian textiles to Middle East and Africa in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of Historical Research* 17/1 (1974), pp. 1-5.

100 John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 49. These are estimates by the author based on the number of ships trading with the area. See note 22, pp. 49-50. This can appear a massive figure but accounted for not more than 2 percent of all cloth consumed in the area. For a more precise analysis of quantities see Inikori's book and my 'Cotton Before The Revolution: A European Perspective, c. 1200-1800' (Unpublished paper presented at the Economic History Seminar, London School of Economics, May 2004).

101 Herbert S. Klein, 'Economic Aspects of the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Slave Trade', in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 292. See also Judith Blow Williams, 'The Development of British Trade with West Africa, 1750 to 1850', *Political Science Quarterly* 50/2 (1935), pp. 194-213 and Joseph E. Inikori, 'West Africa's Seaborne Trade, 1750-1850: Volume, Structure and Implications', in G. Liesegang, H. Pasch and A. Jones (eds.), *Figuring African Trade: Proceedings of the Symposium on the Quantification and Structure of the Import and Export and Long Distance Trade in Africa, 1800-1913* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 49-89.

102 See also Joseph E. Inikori, 'Slavery and the Revolution in Cotton Textile Production in England', *Social Science History*, 13/4 (1989), pp. 343-79.



*chinés* and *lancès* with cheaper and lighter mix linen and cotton, in particular stripes, checks and other Guinea cloths to be sold in West Africa.<sup>103</sup>

Inikori's explanation puts forward not just the importance of African consumer markets, but also the development of an Atlantic triangular trade: cottons were exchanged for slaves who were transported to the American plantations to cultivate – among other commodities – the very raw cotton that was used to develop cotton textile manufacturing in Europe.<sup>104</sup> At present this remains a rather schematic, though suggestive, demand-led explanation that has still to identify precisely what types of cotton goods were exported to Africa, the terms of their exchange, who consumed them and how they interacted with an already existing tradition of production and consumption of cotton textiles.<sup>105</sup>

### 3.2. MAKING IT GLOBAL: THE AMERICAN MARKETS

Inikori's claim that Atlantic markets – and the West African one in particular – were an area of competition between different European nations forgets that no Indian or Asian trader was active there. Indian textiles suffered the disadvantage of indirect trade to the Atlantic, either through Europe or through a series of intermediaries in East and North Africa. Effectively the Atlantic was a protected area from world competition. Even more so was the Northern Atlantic area and the British colonies in particular. Here, as in the case of Europe, cotton textiles' popularity increased in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, not in spite of but because of their superior price compared to linens. Robert DuPlessis shows how the increasingly prosperous colonists actively sought more refined and expensive products. Imported cotton textiles, especially those from Asia, became an important new category within a material culture that had traditionally been dominated by fine woollens imported from England, and homespun coarse woollens and linens.<sup>106</sup> Already in 1700 the colonies in North

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103 W. Wescher, 'The 'Rouannerie' Trade and its Entrepreneurs', *Ciba Review*, 12/135 (1959), p. 14.

104 Inikori, 'Slavery and the Revolution'. See also Id., 'Slavery and Capitalism in Africa', *Indian Historical Review*, 15/1-2 (1988-89), pp. 137-151

105 This hypothesis, suggestively supported by English export and re-export figures, is however insufficient to explain the role of England in a wider Atlantic context, or the relative position she enjoyed compared to other European nations. Inikori's model is underspecified and excludes important players such as European continental producers, and West Indian and North American consumers. Inikori's data exposes a consistent expansion of West African markets between 1750 and 1775 but this market's share of total exports of English manufactured cottons remained fairly stable at c. 35-45% during the entire period considered. In the case of printed cottons it was even lower and declining over time. On the latter point see Huw V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 238-9.

106 Robert DuPlessis, 'Cottons Consumption in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century North Atlantic', in Riello and Parthasarathi (eds.), *Spinning World*. DuPlessis' research shows how cotton textiles in the Atlantic

America were supplied with Indian calico quilts exported from London to places such as New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.<sup>107</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century various types of cotton textiles ('Blue', 'India', 'Negro' as well as printed and painted) were exported from England to the American colonies.<sup>108</sup>

It is difficult to underestimate the importance of cotton consumption in North America. This is what was in the mind of the anonymous writer of the *Observations on the Means of Extending the Consumption of British Calicoes* when he pointed out 'the absolute necessity of finding new channels of consumption, and of devising means by which a more extended sale could be promoted, so as to keep alive those powers of machinery which have been so beneficially disseminated all over the country'.<sup>109</sup> Britain was fast gaining position thanks to its new mechanical applications to the manufacturing of cotton textiles, but markets were difficult to find. However, America was seen as a solution.<sup>110</sup> In 1770, at the aftermath of Independence, American consumers still depended heavily on imported cotton textiles from Britain with nearly 60 percent of all cotton textiles exported from Britain destined for North America.<sup>111</sup> Still, in 1812, Sir Francis Baring, a leading London merchant, estimated that a quarter to a third of Manchester's trade went to the US and probably half of the cotton production of the town of Bury.<sup>112</sup> But by this date the US was importing cotton textiles directly from India. During the period from 1795 to 1805 the trade with India (mostly formed by cotton textiles) exceeded in value all trade with Europe.<sup>113</sup>

Cotton textiles were not popular only in the North American colonies. Latin America enjoyed high levels of consumption of all sorts of commodities imported via the Atlantic and the Pacific both from Europe and Asia in exchange for its abundant reserves of silver and other

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sphere were initially the preserve of men's apparel, not women's. In North America, as in Latin America, richly decorated textiles found their way into men's wardrobes more readily than then wives'.

107 Linda Eaton, 'Winterthur's Hand-Painted Indian Export Cottons – Winterthur', *Magazine Antiques* January (2002), p. 3.

108 F. Mason Norton, *John Norton & Sons, merchants of London and Virginia, being the papers from their counting house for the years 1750 to 1795* (Newton Abbott, 1968), pp. 22, 72, 103, 125, 150, 190, 218.

109 *Observations on the means of extending the consumption of British calicoes, muslins, and other cotton goods and of giving pecuniary aids to the manufacturers...* (London: n.a., 1788), p. 2.

110 For a comparative analysis of the textile trade of France and England, and the importance of North America for the latter see: Javier J. Cuenca Esteban, 'Comparative patterns of colonial trade: Britain and its rivals', in Leandro Prados de la Escosura, ed., *Exceptionalism and Industrialisation: Britain and Its European Rivals, 1688-1815* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 42-3.

111 Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 64.

112 Stanley David Chapman, 'Cottons and printed textiles', in *Textiles in Trade* (Washington, 1990), p. 33.

113 Susan S. Bean, 'The American Market for Indian textiles, 1785-1820: in the Twilight of Traditional Cloth Manufacture', in *Textiles in Trade*, pp. 43-4.

precious metals.<sup>114</sup> The area was located in a strategic position between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. From the Atlantic cotton textiles arrived with slave cargoes and directly from Europe. During the seventeenth century cottons from India and the Philippines, as well as Chinese silks and semi-precious stones from Southeast Asia found their way to Mexico via the Acapulco route.<sup>115</sup> Travellers and visitors to Mexico were impressed by the variety of dress worn by the various ethnic groups, but also by the riches commonly displayed by wide strata of society. The Spaniard Artemio de Valle-Arizpe reported that in eighteenth-century Mexico City ‘ordinary worn is a silk skirt or printed calico decorated with bands of gold and silver, with brightly coloured ribboned belts with their fringe of gold that tumble down behind and in front to border the skirt’.<sup>116</sup> Quito in Ecuador used both locally-produced cottons and the more expensive imported *ruán* cotton cloth, imported from Rouen in France.<sup>117</sup> Unlike North America, where calico printing and later a full-scale cotton industry developed by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Latin America’s cotton revolution only started later in the nineteenth century and on a smaller scale. In 1820 Britain exported to Latin America 56 million yards of cotton cloth, reaching 279 million yards twenty years later. This was equivalent to 10 yards per person, an indicator of the receptiveness of Latin America to imported textiles.<sup>118</sup>

### 3.3. CONCLUSION: FROM WEST TO EAST

By the third decade of the nineteenth century, Europe had become the undisputed global producer of cotton textiles. It had also replaced India as the leading exporter of this fabric after a period of more than five centuries. This shift – normally encapsulated under the label of the ‘Industrial Revolution’ – has been explained here by underlining the importance of consumer markets, the processes of re-invention of cotton textiles, or the re-alignment of consumer

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114 For a more detailed analysis of the cotton textile relationship between Spain and the Colonial Latin America see: Marta Valentin Vicente, *Clothing the Spanish Empire: families and the calico trade in the early modern Atlantic world* (New York and Basingstoke, 2006); and Id, ‘Patriotic Imitation: Fashion, Race and Cotton Textiles in Colonial Spanish America’, in Riello and Parthasarathi (eds.), *Spinning World*, ch. 11.

115 Abby Sue Fisher, ‘Mestizaje and the Cuadros de Castas: Visual Representations of Race, and Dress in Eighteenth Century Mexico’ (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1992), pp. 66-7.

116 Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, *Historia de la ciudad de México segun los relatos de sus cronistas* (Mexico, 1998), p. 173-4.

117 Ross W. Jamieson, ‘Bolts of Cloth and Sherds of Pottery: Impressions of Caste in the Material Culture of the Seventeenth Century Audiencia of Quito’, *The Americas* 60/3 (2004), p. 440.

118 Arnold J. Bauer, *Goods, Power, History. Latin America’s Material Culture* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 130. In the case of Peru, cotton textiles accounted for 95 per cent of all its imports in the first decade of independence of the country.

cultures and preferences. This is a case study that supports the wider case made by Maxine Berg ‘for a connection between global luxury, European consumerism and industrialisation in the eighteenth century’.<sup>119</sup> The implications were wide ranging not just in Europe, but also in the vast Atlantic area where cotton textiles developed markets in conjunction with the established woollen and linen trade. Cotton textiles sat at the centre of a new global economic system increasingly dominated by Europe – and Britain in particular. The Lancashire mills were now selling their products not just to Continental Europe, the Americas and Africa, but also to Asia, thus reversing a flow that had started two centuries earlier. Lancashire or Alsace were not just the new industrial cotton centres of Europe, but also among the most global places on earth.

Jeremy Prestholdt has recently suggested that ‘global economic systems are to a great degree determined by the cultural logic of the consumer demand’.<sup>120</sup> But what does it mean? The case of cotton textiles shows how the success of this commodity was not necessarily determined by its price as economists would suggest. Cotton textiles came to be widely used across vast parts of the globe. Their use and meaning was increasingly influenced by Europe, either in cultural terms as suggested by Prestholdt, or through new economic relationship between Europe, Asia, North America and Africa. The de-industrialisation of Indian cotton spinning and weaving is one of the best-known cases of such a novel economic relationship increasingly backed by the political force of Imperialism.<sup>121</sup>

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119 Berg, ‘In Pursuit of Luxury’, p. 85.

120 Jeremy Prestholdt, ‘On the Global Repercussions of East African Consumerism’, *American Historical Review* 109/3 (2004), p. 755.

121 See for instance Burton Stein, ‘Arrested Development: But When and Where?’, in Clive Dewey (ed.), *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimension* (New Delhi, 1988), pp. 50-7; Konrad Specker, ‘“De-Industrialisation” in Nineteenth century India: The Textile Industry in the Madras Presidency, 1810-1870,’ in *ibid*, pp. 341-5; P. Sudhir and P. Swarnalatha, ‘Textile Traders and Territorial Imperatives: Masulipatnam, 1750-1850,’ *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 29/2 (1992), pp. 168-9. For an overview: Ian C. Wendt, ‘The Social Fabric: Textile Industry and Community in Early Modern South India’ (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2005).