

PART I

THE END OF THE OLD REGIME



MAP 1.1 The world under the Old Regime, c.1750.



MAP 1.1 (Continued)



[1] *OLD REGIMES AND “ARCHAIC GLOBALIZATION”*

IN THE eighteenth-century world, political power and religious and cultural authority were highly variegated and intertwined in complex ways. Economies, however, were relatively simply, dominated by agriculture and still dependent on the seasons. The next four chapters attempt to explain how and why there occurred over little more than three generations a worldwide shift to political and cultural uniformity accompanied by the emergence of more complex and recognizably modern social and economic patterns. They will give prominence to the rise of European dominance across this world, while at the same time acknowledging the multi-centered origin of the shift toward this common, yet fiercely contested, modernity. The present chapter considers aspects of the ideology and political organization of the world in the early to mid-eighteenth century.

PEASANTS AND LORDS

In 1750 the largest part of humanity still lived within the domain of what historians have called “agrarian empires.” Agrarian empires were large, ethnically complex states which subsisted at their core by intercepting the surplus product of peasant producers. Strictly, peasants were farmers who cultivated small plots of land largely with their own family labor. Above peasants in social ranking were local elites, who might sometimes farm the land themselves but also took rents from other peasant-tenants. Below “peasants proper” were landless laborers who worked on the lands of peasants or the local ruling groups for wages or a portion of the crop. Culturally, though, local lords, rural tradesmen, and agricultural laborers were all intimately linked to the “peasant proper” and generally subscribed to similar values.

The agrarian empires of Qing China, Mughal India, Tokugawa Japan, Safavid Iran, Java, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Habsburg monarchy together must have accounted for at least 70 percent of

the world's population. Large parts of the Spanish Crown's territories in Central and South America were still farmed by peasant descendants of the original Amerindian populations. Societies which regularly grew crops were also scattered across Africa, subsisting in complex relationships with nomads and forest-dwellers. Peasants, broadly understood, must have accounted for 80 percent of that gross population, though in some areas the emergence of nodes of early capitalist commerce may have pushed the urban population to above 20 percent of the total. This appears to have been the case, for instance, in parts of northwestern Europe, maritime or riverine China, and coastal Japan.

The political and religious orders of these old polities continued to be fragmented and complex to one degree or another. Yet the societies and economies which maintained them were relatively simple by comparison with those of the later nineteenth century, which had experienced early industrialization and the growth of the state. Because most people living within them were peasants, agricultural laborers, or landholders and merchants dependent on agricultural produce, the quality of the harvests dominated everyday life as it had for thousands of years. Many western and southern European peasant-farmers were hardly wealthier than their Asian and African equivalents, and often had less ready access to plentiful food. John Komlos has argued persuasively that much of central Europe was suffering from a severe nutritional crisis during the eighteenth century.¹ Even culturally sophisticated France was plagued by constant *crises de subsistence* (subsistence crises) throughout the eighteenth century. Most Asian, African, and many European societies suffered debilitating scarcities or famines every 20 years or so. These scarcities were deepened by wars and foreign invasions, both by old-style bands of nomadic warriors sweeping in from the steppes or deserts and by new, European-style model armies.

Yet only in the broadest sense were peasants worldwide a single category. The life-styles of lords and peasants in different societies indeed bore a family resemblance to each other, but displayed many significant differences in detail. These differences depended to some extent on the different types of basic crops which they grew. For instance, rice-growing lands such as southern China, Southeast Asia, and the Indian river valleys required large efforts by local communities to maintain the irrigation systems which watered the crops. Intensive rice areas typically supported large numbers of tied laborers or very poor dependent peasants, who were needed to weed the crops and dig the ditches. North China, northern India, the Middle East, along with western Europe and the bulk of its American colonies were, by contrast, dry grain and pastoral areas where population was less dense. Here, farmers were often more independent, but often poor because they lacked irrigation or access to markets or were indebted to moneylenders and other magnates. Between these two poles were innumerable local combinations, in which the form of agriculture depended on the specific mix of crops or micro-ecology and the balance between agriculture, animal husbandry, and surrounding pastoralists. Even areas where peasants cultivated the same type of crops varied a great deal in social forms. Religious institutions and the pattern of organization of

political elites intervened to dictate the complex forms of land tenure and subordination which had developed within them. Peasants, in addition, were often part-time artisans, carriers, and soldiers, by no means tied to the land as earlier social scientists sometimes thought. Until the emergence of mechanized farming and scientific crop nutrition toward the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, there were intricate differences in the ways in which peasants and lords lived their lives and related to each other.

Peasants were not “boors” as some learned people of the time thought; nor, by contrast, were they charming inhabitants of an unspoiled arcadia, as many indulgent literati had begun to assert by the end of the eighteenth century. Nor again were they engaged in perpetual wars of resistance against landowners and states, as many modern radical historians prefer to claim. There were violent and determined peasant risings, of course, and the later eighteenth century was replete with them. Yet these rebellions usually reflected near-despair at the accumulation of abuses and imposts heaped upon rural people rather than any inherent tendency on their part to resistance or violence. Peasant communities did indeed have a strong sense of morality about the doings of their own members and the chicanery of outsiders. Yet most peasant families were quite entrepreneurial. They wanted more land, more money, and more honor. They would try to maximize their opportunities. This provided a huge fund of canny talent whenever and wherever the political order and economic circumstances were propitious. In many parts of the world, and especially in southern and eastern Europe and in Japan, it was to be the unlocking of the huge development potential of peasants, or, in the new worlds, transplanted peasants, which was to provide much of the economic dynamism of the nineteenth century.

Generally, social hierarchies in the old order were also more malleable than most commentators believed. The old regimes were bound by status, but they were not rigid. This was true even in China, India, Japan, and the Middle East, which eighteenth-century Europeans thought of as unchanging realms of custom and conservatism. New men from the middling strata, and even some rich peasant families, could and did make it into high office and secure land and privileges within a generation or two in most societies. There are even examples of people of poor peasant or low status rising to power. Yet the hierarchy *per se* was relatively simple: peasants, merchants, landowners, and aristocrats. Insofar as professions were beginning to form in some societies, they were still unorganized and tended to be hereditary in nature. Even the bodies of specialist Asian and west European artisans which dominated the growing intercontinental trades were still greatly dependent on the protection of petty rulers and the out-turn of harvests.

THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

In the 1960s several historians, led by Marshall Hodgson,² began to write of the early modern Islamic or “gunpowder empires” of the Middle East, India,

and Southeast Asia. Some authors extended the category even further, suggesting that the Chinese Qing dynasty (c.1644–1911) had gone through a rather similar evolution to that of the Ottomans (c.1326–1922), Safavids (c.1501–1736), or Mughals (1526–1858). They had all transformed themselves from the status of “great khans,” nomadic lords of herdsmen, horse-archers, and cossack-type soldiers, into dispassionate and enlightened emperors of broad agrarian domains.³ It was even suggested that the Russian tsars and, from some perspectives, the Austrian Habsburgs, represented a Christian version of the same sort of development. Historians of courtly display and “representations” of rule have also traced exhilarating parallels between the court ideology and ritual of Louis XIV, the Qian Long emperor of China (1736–99), and Peter the Great of Russia.⁴

Such broad “family resemblances” between many of the political regimes of Eurasia and northern and western Africa certainly need to be borne in mind. This is because these polities contrasted so sharply with the world of bounded nation-states and demarcated colonial provinces which was to be dominant a little over 100 years later. The most recent body of scholarship, however, has tended to stress the differences between the old regimes. Within the agrarian empires, and even in the commercially buoyant regions of western Europe, there was a great variety of political and ideological forms, many of which were to be suppressed or to begin to become more uniform over the next century. Italy and Germany, for instance, two of the next century’s new nations, displayed a degree of cultural and linguistic unity but were fragmented into a plethora of kingdoms, grand duchies, papal states, and, in the German case, attenuated imperial jurisdictions.

People are used to thinking of the France of the pre-revolutionary *ancien régime*, symbolized by the routine of the palace of Versailles, as a centralized, autocratic state where great royal officials intervened constantly in local society. In the same way, the idea of “oriental despotism,” an artefact of early modern Europe, hangs over the common understanding of the Qing Chinese or Indian Mughal empires. There were indeed aspects of social and economic regulation in which these emperors and kings routinely and purposively intervened, and these examples should not be discounted. For instance, William Beik⁵ has shown that the French monarchy in the eighteenth century was quite effective at bringing in taxation revenues, even in the Mediterranean south. It was much stronger around Paris and in the northeast. In Europe, before the nineteenth century, monarchs often had particular charge over roads, ports, and postal systems. Again, those parts of western Anatolia, northern Syria, and the Balkans within a thousand miles of Ottoman Istanbul were ruled quite tightly,⁶ at least by comparison with Egypt and the outlying Arab provinces of the empire, let alone Safavid Iran or Mughal India.⁷

Even in Persia and South Asia, the Muslim emperors were directly responsible for the maintenance of canal systems which watered the semi-arid areas of their domains. In China, similarly, the emperors directly managed the irrigation systems of the Yellow River and maintained the Grand Canal north of Nanjing which supplied grain to the imperial heartlands.⁸ With

these examples in mind, some European commentators developed the idea that these political systems were examples of “hydraulic societies,” in which the provision of water required the centralization of power. Large, directly managed royal estates were also a feature of these kingdoms, so that in Islamic and Arab domains a distinction was often made between the royal province, the *khalisa*, and less formally ruled areas. In China, Manchu Banner Lands and imperial hunting grounds had a similar status.⁹ In Africa too, several precolonial states also exhibited some centralized functions. The West African Asante kingdom (in modern Ghana), in particular, developed a form of bureaucracy, state trading organizations, and a common legal code.¹⁰ Its rulers carefully maintained the communications system and had a fairly clear idea of their own boundaries.

Yet these examples only serve to reinforce the general rule. This was that the old imperial centers and bureaucracies intervened in the working of society and the economy only in particular cases and in quite specific geographical areas. It was not the case that the old states were uniformly “weak,” more that they husbanded their moral and physical authority for specific tasks. Throughout the world, for instance, the majority of irrigation systems and roads were probably maintained by local communities or magnates. Where complex bundles of royal privileges and powers had come into existence, there was often a tendency for them to be broken up, becoming part of the patrimony of some other prince or noble. Kings and emperors often found it lucrative and convenient to “farm out” their rights to the highest bidder in order to raise money. Even in fiscally centralized France, the state widely handed out to revenue contractors in “farms” and to big magnates in privileges what it squeezed out of the restive peasantry. Here and elsewhere in Europe, it was often grievances against the extra imposts levied by such financial entrepreneurs, rather than royal taxation itself, which lay at the root of rural revolts. In the Spanish New World, successive attempts by the crown to centralize power were stubbornly resisted by local governors and mayors who made money not so much through the free market, as by forced sales of goods and the requisitioning of labor from the Indian peasantry. Not surprisingly, “tyrannical abuse,” as the Spanish officials termed it, sparked off numerous local rebellions.¹¹

The picture was similar in Asia. By 1800 in China, the royal granaries, the Grand Canal, and the Yellow River dike systems were in decay.¹² Other royal institutions were foundering. Initially, the emperors had been content to cede their power in one area in order to strengthen it elsewhere. In the longer run, however, the decay of these imperial functions gravely compromised the regime’s legitimacy. Recent work on the West African Asante has also shown that this aspiring centralized power was severely limited by local feudatories and lineage groups. Here, commoners developed trading contacts with the world market in spite of, not because of, the interests of the rulers.

So government in all these great states was often something of a trick of the light. State power was powerful and purposive in defined areas, though constant vigilance was needed to stop it seeping away to magnates and local

communities. Elsewhere, it was patchy and contingent. Over large areas it was deliberately not exercised at all. Rulers found it difficult to mobilize military forces quickly. In the monsoon areas of Asia where great kings vaunted their magnificence, warfare and tax gathering regularly came to a halt when the roads annually became impassable. The state could only deploy a small number of officials or exercise royal justice in particular cases. In general, rulers were only just beginning to find out who and how many people lived within their diverse territories, what languages they spoke or what religious rites they performed. Because of the history of religious persecution in Europe, most regimes even here avoided "making windows on men's souls." In Muslim and Asian societies a broad recognition of the supremacy of the emperor's cult, not uniformity of belief, was what was required. Everywhere, therefore, the panoply of state and imperial power rested in the longer term on the co-option and honoring of local elites or self-governing local communities. Rulers had to accept and make the most of the political forms and religious beliefs of the localities and leave them to their own devices.

The means of co-option varied widely. The two ends of the spectrum were analyzed by nineteenth-century social theorists, notably the German sociologist Max Weber. On the one side was the pattern of military aristocracy. Here the dynasties of great soldiers and controllers of land were allowed effective lordship within their domains, provided that they paid allegiance to the supreme ruler and directly or indirectly furnished the resources and manpower for wars of conquest and defense. This was largely true, for instance, of the Hungarian nobility within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The northwestern Indian territory of Rajasthan, controlled by local kings and nobles owing a broad allegiance to the Mughal emperor in Delhi, was not dissimilar in some respects. On the other side were the old-style bureaucracies. China had its elaborate hierarchies of civil magistrates trained in the Confucian classics through lineage and imperial schools and then sent to far provinces to create order and plenty through agrarian redistribution. They represented the ideal type of archaic bureaucracy. France, with its nobility of the sword, drawn from great families who had fought for the crown of St Louis since the Middle Ages, apparently lay at the other extreme. In practice, though, military aristocracies needed managers of paper and information, while in bureaucratic systems, officials nurtured their own power as land-controllers at the local level. So France, a society in which government needed to be literate and penny pinching, had its *noblesse de robe*: civil, bureaucratic nobility drawn from the lower-status commercial classes and lawyers. By contrast, in China, the ruling Qing dynasty had to allow the land tax to be fixed in perpetuity when it consolidated its power in the mid-seventeenth century. This meant that the scholar-gentry families from which the bureaucrats were recruited had accumulated further landholdings and the perquisites of commerce in their own localities, becoming a landowning and even a trading class in their own right. The pure scholar-gentry bent with the wind of local conditions. On the fringes of the Vietnamese state, members of its own Chinese-style mandarin state made multiple marriages with the Tay minority group in order to stabilize the dangerous border areas. In

reality, then, the distinct ideal types of bureaucrat, warrior-landholder, and man of religion merged into each other in complex patterns.

Even the most powerful of agrarian emperors, therefore, continued to deal with jumbles of rights, privileges, local autonomies, and “family circles” which had been inherited from the past or created through the very act of imperial or royal political consolidation. In the words of William Doyle, even over much of Europe, “[t]he reality of the ancien régime was intense confusion of powers and perpetual overlaps of unequal jurisdiction, in which the king, so far from imposing an unchallengeable authority, was constantly bargaining with his subjects at a number of different levels.”¹³ In the later eighteenth century, the authority of the supposedly absolute kings of France was still limited by regional courts or *parlements* with appellate jurisdiction and by “estates” invested with powers over taxation. Russia was an extreme case in “Europe” where the tsar’s theoretical autocracy was limited in practice. In 1763, the Russian government employed 16,500 officials, while Prussia, a mere 1 percent of Russia’s size, employed 1,400.¹⁴ In Russia, therefore, despite the fact that the landowners had never built up feudal privileges on the scale of western Europe, they effectively controlled this vast empire. Again, this was not simply a question of weakness. Monarchs could sometimes strategically deploy the resources of these different powers and jurisdictions to gain their political ends. The tsars could deploy formidable arbitrary powers if they wished. But it was not always in the interests of rulers to iron out these particularistic jurisdictions. The English kings and their ministers, for instance, found the separate status of Ireland and its patronage an extremely useful resource with which to oil the wheels of politics across the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

One feature of the old regimes on which historians have often remarked was their tendency to go through “developmental cycles” in which periods of relative centralization were followed by decentralization, and then sometimes by attempts at recentralization. In some cases, “imperial overstretch” had already become only too apparent by the eighteenth century, and the high kings and emperors had ceded most of the powers they had seized during periods of conquest. The Ottoman rulers in Istanbul had virtually relinquished command to powerful *ayan*, or regional magnates, in Egypt, Syria, Mount Lebanon, and North Africa by 1700, though their rule remained strong in the center of the empire. In India by 1720, the Mughal emperor could count on only a diminishing volume of revenue and public obeisance from his over-mighty Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh subjects, ranged in expanding kingdoms distant from Delhi. The Habsburg empire of Austria was a “conglomerate of separate territorial units, most of which had deep rooted and powerful individual identities,”¹⁵ and below the central level almost all authority was exercised by landowning nobles, the Church, and semi-autonomous cities, at least until the mid-eighteenth century. The German state-builders of the nineteenth century came to regard this image of decentralized, overlapping powers in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires as frustrating, verging on the ridiculous.

Ideological power within the old states was as segmented and complex as political power, and often intertwined with it. Far from being straightforwardly a “Buddhist,” “Confucian,” or even “Daoist” realm, the Empire of China was a cosmic spirit empire. The Qing emperors maintained close connections with the spiritual power of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas of Tibet and the shamanic holy men of Mongolia, as their steppe-raiding ancestors had done. Again, this should not necessarily be put down to the ideological “weakness” of these powers. On the contrary, a good case can be made that the great dynasties often promoted these very differences. The Chinese historian Pamela Crossley argues that the later Qing ruled by fostering separate ethnicities under leaders who were often also heads of cults.¹⁶ Qing imperial ideology, especially under the Qian Long emperor, elevated the emperor to a transcendent and dispassionate role. His very greatness was reflected in his universal monarchy as great Khan of the Mongols and Manchus and Confucian father for the Han Chinese (see illustration 1.1).

Similar arguments have been made for the Ottoman dynasty. The Sultan was an Ottoman khan, a Caesar, an emperor for the “Romans,” and later Khalifa, or successor, to the Prophet and a universal king in the style of Alexander.¹⁷ As a Muslim ruler, he could not head other cults, but he patronized Jewish, Druze, and Christian institutions. The Muslim Mughal emperor, regent of God on earth in succession to the holy Prophet, regularly cast his blessed gaze over the hordes of naked Hindu holy men who gathered on the River Jumna below his ramparts in the Red Fort of Delhi. This was despite the fact that they were the very embodiment of Hindu “polytheism.” It was in the emperor’s armies that were firmed up once-shifting social categories such as “Rajputs,”¹⁸ “Mughals,” “Turks,” and Persians. In some cases there is little doubt that local religious and “ethnic” communities were powerful enough to reject imperial ideology and policy. Yet these examples are a reminder that the old regimes had quite different ideals and cultural aims from those of most nineteenth-century nation-states and empires. They helped to create, even gloried in, complexity and difference.

Even in Christian Europe, where religion had already become more closely associated with the identity of states, rulers sought to reflect their power by patronage of different religious groups. After Peter the Great, Russian monarchs tried at the same time to represent themselves as enlightened embodiments of European reason, sacred kings of the Orthodox Christian Church, and great khans to their increasing numbers of Mongol and Muslim subjects. They had to deal with intransigent Old Believers among the Orthodox and, by 1800, Polish and Lithuanian Catholics and central Asian Muslims. In the Austrian and German lands, the “toleration” of diverse beliefs had been legislated for by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. On its eastern frontier of Austria, Vienna ruled over communities of Orthodox Christians and Jews. Whether they liked it or not, the Habsburg monarchs had to keep on board Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox and Uniate Christians, Jews, and even a few Muslim stragglers.

The relationship between the Catholic kings of western and southern Europe and the papacy remained complex and watchful. The Bishop of Rome across



ILLUSTRATION 1.1 Cherishing difference: Qian Long inspecting his troops, by Giuseppe Castiglione.

the Alps could still deflect a French sovereign’s power at the height of so-called enlightened despotism. Even in Britain, where Roman Catholics were debarred from holding most public offices, the monarch was the head of an Episcopalian church in England and a Presbyterian one in Scotland, though their clerics professed different and mutually antagonistic doctrines. By 1815, the English king ruled Roman Catholics in Quebec and Malta, Orthodox Christians in the Greek islands, and Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists in South and Southeast Asia.

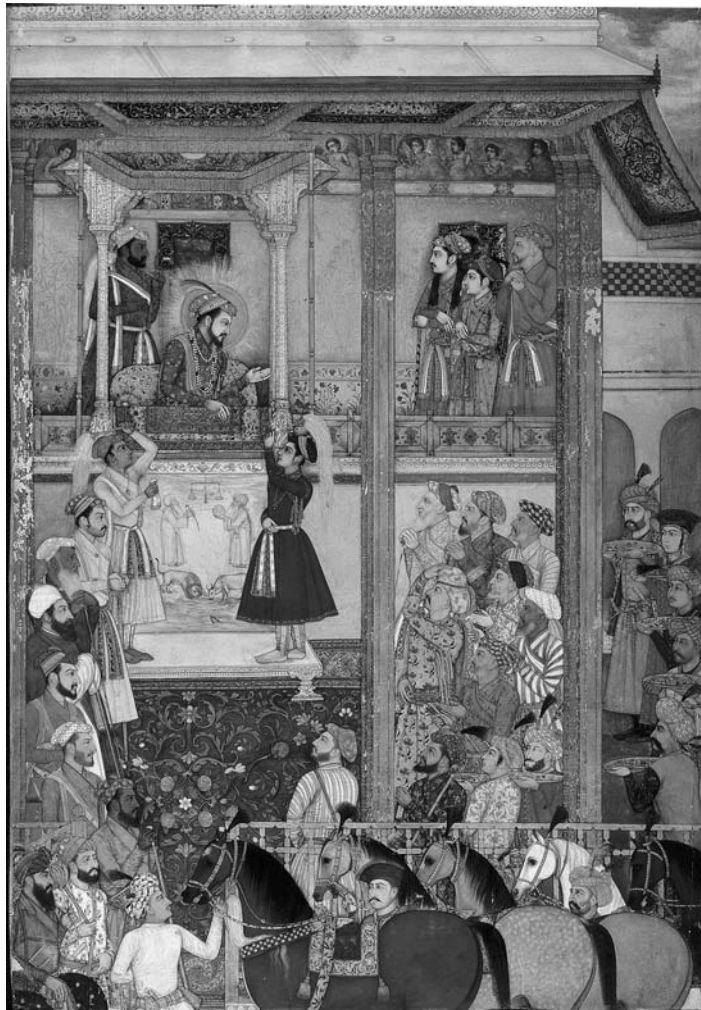


ILLUSTRATION 1.2 A multiethnic empire: Emperor Shah Jahan receiving Persian general Ali Mardan Khan, 1638. Mughal miniature.

All these features of the global “old order” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries emphasize the significance of the transformation which was to occur by the early twentieth century. The ideas of the state, the nation, the “ethnic minority,” science, and the professions emerged out of, or were to be imposed, on the more shifting, ideologically complex, yet economically simple world which preceded it.

POWERS ON THE FRINGES OF STATES

Just as the inner agrarian space of most eighteenth-century dominions was populated by powerful independent land-controllers, masterful bureaucrats,



ILLUSTRATION 1.3 Holy, Roman, bewigged, and emperor: Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, statue at Schloss Laxenburg, Niederösterreich, by Matthias Bernhard Braun.

and free-trading cities, so the outer perimeters were generally porous and undefined. Regimes survived longest if they incorporated resourceful soldiers and administrators from outside their realms. People from present-day Albania and Romania ruled in the Ottoman Empire and founded a new dynasty in Egypt as late as 1802. An Armenian dynasty ruled in what is now Iraq. The Chinese Empire was in large part a Manchurian domain which continued to incorporate Mongol, Uighur, and Tibetan tribal notables from beyond the Great Wall into its ruling group.¹⁹ The Qian Long emperor supposedly learned the Uighur language in order to converse more easily with his peripheral commanders. Cossack horsemen and “pioneer” peasants were only just being made reliable tools of the Russian Empire. But at its heart, many noble families traced their origins to Turkic or Mongol

enemies of old Muscovy, who had later been incorporated into expanding Russia.

Skilled and assertive minorities from outside the borders of states established circles of office holding. Baltic Germans ruled in Russia. Hanoverian Germans ruled in England, where they were joined in their military commands by Scots and Irish. Some of the fathers or grandfathers of these men had once been Catholic and “tribal” enemies of England. If many European and non-European societies saw a growth of patriotic display and sentiment, as we shall see, it was at least in part because they were ruled by outsiders. In India, people made a distinction between “locals” (*deshis*), “foreigners” (*bideshis*), and a category of “outsiders we know from just over the fuzzy border,” called *pardeshis*. Much of the world in 1780 was ruled by such “pardeshis.”

Most of the great empires also lived in symbiotic contention with varieties of commercial cities, maritime trading corporations, or seaborne states which controlled or “took a cut” from their external trade. Privateering still flourished in the Atlantic and eastern seas. In the Mediterranean, a motley group of ship-owning powers, ranging from the Knights of St John of Malta, through the Beys of Algiers, to the Republic of Venice, held sway. In eastern waters, the traders of Muscat and Oman cruised the African and Indian coasts, while the Bugis, a vast corporation of Southeast Asian port-princes and shipowners, struggled over the control of trade with the “Dutch” of Batavia and their mixed-race progeny.²⁰ Studies have found that even in the agrarian empires, powerful bodies of merchants and local gentry effectively controlled maritime cities which were formally dominated by imperial officials and soldiers. It was to avoid this kind of creeping autonomy and the rise of “King Silver,” or commercial greed, that emperors from the sixteenth century onward attempted to close down China’s maritime trades when they were not directly controlled by state trading corporations.²¹ It is, however, easy to underestimate the importance of these sea-borne supremacies because they had all disappeared or been beaten into submission by the mid-nineteenth century. Their final indignity was often to be castigated as “pirates” by the commanders of Britain’s Royal Navy.

Historians have traditionally viewed the world through the perspective of the great regimes and their chroniclers or the emerging nation-states of western Europe. But over recent years more attention has been paid to the large swathes of humanity who lived in neither of these contexts. Complex agrarian societies, such as the Oyo, Great Zimbabwe, or Asante empires, existed in Africa. Yet many other Africans, especially in the east and south of the continent, lived in what have been called state-less societies, and their livelihoods were made up from the exploitation of a range of agricultural, forest, and animal products.²² Cities were common in West and North Africa, but there were few in eastern and southern Africa, except where Arabs or Europeans had settled. The wheel and the plough were unknown, or at least unused, across much of the continent, and because land was plentiful, African hierarchies were more often constructed of age-sets and not, as in Eurasia, by differences in landholding and wealth.

Over much of Africa, as in the native American and Pacific worlds, the apparatus of “the state” therefore did not exist as a separate entity. These societies were regulated internally by lineage heads who represented the interests of different “segments” of society arranged in real or assumed kinship units. Many African “high kings” were constrained by the counsel of the heads of the great lineages. Their power was largely ritual, concerning mediation with the spirit world, rather than the exercise of power over resources. In these societies conflict was widely between different age-groups among the lineage leaders, rather than between classes or ethnicities.²³ Even in such societies dependent groups did exist, of course. Sometimes they were descendants of slaves, sometimes people whose parents had pledged their property in exchange for help during bad times. But such people were more like servants of the superior lineage than serfs or plantation slaves on the Caribbean and American model.

The same was true of the indigenous populations of North America and Australasia and the Pacific, which provide many examples of nomadic, forest-dwelling, and hunting populations. These were culturally sophisticated, linguistically diverse, but even more closely tied to the cycles of the natural and animal world than the populations of the agrarian empires. Social and religious life was not regularized or predictable. Gender was a powerful force shaping social relations. In the Polynesian Pacific, for instance, communities were bound together through the exchange of women, often over quite long distances.²⁴ But elsewhere, as among the Maori, groups led by bodies of male warriors contended fiercely with each other, forming the pattern of social life. Religious activity centered on cults and mysteries rather than on preaching and regular ritual. The cultural shock generated amongst such people by the sudden arrival of missionaries and European military units or administrations is difficult to exaggerate.

Even the great agrarian realms of Eurasia were fringed and internally complicated by diverse societies of this sort which lived within them in a symbiosis occasionally ruptured by war and invasion. Inland Eurasia supported nomadic polities. There were the still-powerful Manchurian herdsmen, who had long before spawned the world-conquering Genghis Khan. In Arabia there were the nomadic camel-keeping tribes who had once provided the warriors of the Prophet, and even in the eighteenth century were the bedrock of Wahhabi resistance to the Ottoman Empire in the name of pure Islam. In Persia during the eighteenth century it was families from the semi-nomadic tribal groups Zands and Qajars who came to power.²⁵ This was, however, almost the last generation in which tough nomads and desert-dwellers were able to break in to settled states to revive their governments and purge their religion in the classic historical process described by the great medieval Muslim thinker Ibn Khaldun. On the fringes of the European states of western Eurasia, Lap reindeer herdsmen or Kazak sheep herdsmen provided resources, but also irritants, for the settled kingdoms. Cossack pioneer peasants and horse-soldiers were a powerful interest on the fringes of the Russian Empire. When, in the 1770s, some cossacks revolted against the Empress,

the peasant armies of the pretender, Pugachev, who claimed to be Tsar Peter III, roamed across the empire for several years.²⁶

Forest polities, dependent on the animals and wood products or selling their skills as sappers, miners, and forest-men to the kings and officials of the settled, represented another distinct type of polity. Here again, scholars have recently demonstrated that as late as the eighteenth century forest- and fastness-dwelling chieftain marauders could still deal with the agrarian states of the plains on the basis of something like equality. This was true of the "tribal" forest-dwellers of India, Burma, Thailand, and the Indonesian archipelago, or even the Siberian frontier, where such peoples not only provided scarce resources and military skills but were also regarded with some awe as white magicians and healers. In North America, the historical record has been dominated by wars between settlers and Indians. But there were at least as many examples of cooperation and interpenetration, at least before more vigorous policies of discrimination were introduced after 1812.

HARBINGERS OF NEW POLITICAL FORMATIONS

Finally, consideration must be given to those polities that were to become so critical in the following 100 years at the international level and which are considered in more detail in the next chapter. These were the emerging commercial societies which were heavily concentrated in northwestern Europe, but had also established colonial offshoots in the Caribbean and North America. In economic activity, life-style, and attitudes, much of the population of northwestern Europe was not far removed from its peasant origins. The idea that western European development was wholly exceptional in world history is no longer fashionable. Yet in scale and style, it surpassed the growth of entrepreneurial societies which had come into existence in many other parts of the world. For a start, rural as well as urban societies in these regions were much more heavily specialized than even those centers of commercialization which could be seen in the central Yangzi valley, or in rural Bengal or in the hinterland of Istanbul. Only Japan and parts of coastal China really provide a convincing parallel.

Even in the seventeenth century, central Holland, which Jan de Vries sees as the first modern economy,²⁷ was importing more than one-third of its food from some distance. Well-developed regional specialization was also a feature of southern England, where London was a massive market, importing fresh fruit and vegetables from southern Ireland and coal from as far north as Newcastle in the eighteenth century. Financial and credit instruments were equally well developed, and capital was increasingly becoming transnational. So, for instance, Dutch financiers invested in the stock of the English East India and Levant companies and in the British Caribbean, even though Holland remained Britain's rival. In some ways, the most advanced form of economic specialization and the long-distance deployment of capital were the slave plantations of southern North America and the Caribbean. The violence

and cruelty of the slave trade and of the exploitation of slaves cannot obscure the fact that this was a flexible, financially sophisticated, consumer-oriented, technologically innovative form of human beastliness.

Where Europeans went overseas, they might have continued to operate according to older communal and religious norms, as did the Dutch farmers settled in southern Africa since the 1650s, for instance. But they rarely became a peasantry in the classic sense. Land was too plentiful in these settler continents. People had emigrated in order to acquire their own land rights, not to become a new peasantry dominated by large owners. Big pastoral and woodland landlords were, therefore, generally opposed in the New World, and later in Australasia, to sharecroppers and small owner-occupier farmers. Even on the Cape of Good Hope, the black population formed something more like a labor reserve than a peasantry cultivating its own land predominantly with family labor.

These modern-looking forms of labor, produce and capital markets in such global growth centers did not always overlap with polities in which state power was clearer and more delineated. Holland and England still had numerous subsystems of law and status, curious anachronisms which had sometimes even been strengthened by the growth of the market. Germany remained a patchwork of principalities, prince-bishoprics, free cities, and so on. In general, though, the more commercialized and specialized types of economy sooner or later became coterminous with more specialized and powerful states. The transparency of power was something that merchants and commercial landholders have always found attractive. Yet the yeast of commercial growth had still had only a patchy and limited effect, even in the core areas of western Europe and its North Atlantic colonies by 1780.

THE PREHISTORY OF “GLOBALIZATION”

One theme of this book is the growth of a more integrated international society in the course of the long nineteenth century, one which, in the medium term, was dominated by the West. For the nineteenth century we can certainly use the term “international.” This, above all, was the period of the “internationalization of nationalism,” when the ideas and practices of the nation-state became rooted among the elites in all major world cultures. It is important, however, to consider the nature of globalization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the high point of the nation-state. The world crisis of 1780–1820 was a climacteric precisely because political and ideological shock waves were passed backward and forward between the centers of a world which was already linked. In addition, the networks of what I am calling here “archaic globalization” and “early modern” globalization persisted under the umbrella of the nineteenth-century international system. At times they empowered it; at times they challenged it.

This section uses the term “archaic globalization”²⁸ to describe the older networks and dominances created by geographical expansion of ideas and

social forces from the local and regional level to the inter-regional and inter-continental level. As the previous pages have implied, archaic globalization had many centers. In its early stages, the “expansion of Europe” was simply one among several contemporary examples of globalization, rather than a world system in the making. Yet we can detect some common underlying principles in these patterns from classical antiquity through to the early modern period. Vast political and economic changes occurred during this era, of course. By the seventeenth century, the new cultural and economic network of the slave plantation system and New World silver had ushered in the era of early capitalist globalization in part of the Atlantic region. Nevertheless, the rationale underlying global networks of people, monetary transactions, and ideas for much of the population of Mediterranean Europe, Asia, and Africa in 1750 bore some similarities to that underlying those which had existed five or even ten centuries earlier.

People have always made long-distance contact with each other for reasons of profit, through the desire for power, and as a result of pure inquisitiveness. In the world of the old regimes, these drives took subtly different forms from those typical of the modern international system. Three general principles underlay archaic globalization: first, universalizing kingship; secondly, the expansive urge of cosmic religion; and thirdly, humoral or moral understandings of bodily health. These forces created some underlying patterns in the global exchange of ideas, personnel, and commodities.

First, the idea of universal kingship drove monarchs, their soldiers, and administrators over vast distances in search of individual and family honor, whether in the service of the Most Christian Spanish Empire or of Manchu Supremacy. As the previous section indicated, the courts of these world conquerors prized difference and “cherished men from afar.”²⁹ Their kings and administrators valued representatives of different peoples for their qualities: Turks for toughness, Christians for science, Persians for refinement, and so on. The great courts and their petty imitators down to the large villages also acted as magnets for honorific commodities drawn from distant lands. Kashmiri shawls, Chinese silks, Arab horses, and precious stones of all kinds were prized across huge distances, and were critical to the workings of long-distance trade links. Even in the more isolated cosmos of the Pacific chiefs, high kings sought exotic and charismatic objects or foods to embody and represent their greatness. Prestige trades of this sort fitted into a much broader pattern whereby social relations were constituted through the long-distance exchange of prized goods between different communities.³⁰ As the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins pointed out, this valuation of rare products predisposed Hawaiians to trade eagerly for commodities such as European and American cloth, Chinese porcelains, and prized sandalwood once “first contact” had been made.

The intelligentsias of the archaic globe transmitted mythologies and ethical systems which complemented these political ideologies. Along with the charisma of Rome or Rum, the story of Alexander was widely remembered across Eurasia and Africa. Seventeenth-century Mughal kings modeled their meet-

ings with Hindu renouncers on the reported deportment of Alexander before the ascetic Greek renouncers, the cynics, and self-abnegating Indian Brahmins.³¹ Even in the nineteenth century, British travelers penetrating into the high passes of Afghanistan looked for Greeks, throwbacks to Alexander’s army, among the tribal peoples.³² The philosophy of Alexander’s teacher, Aristotle, also retained its potency across a vast area of Christendom and Islam, even in the eighteenth century. Aristotelian ethics had passed through the hands of medieval Islamic writers into the everyday moral language of the Indo-Islamic world. Works of Muslim ethics patterned on Aristotle were read daily at the courts of many Islamic rulers. They informed the decisions of local judges.³³ Meanwhile, Aristotle and his followers remained an important element in the intellectual landscape of Europe and its colonies until the nineteenth century. As late as 1860, churchmen in Spanish- and English-speaking America were using Aristotle to justify slavery.

The idea of the “civic republican” tradition of thought has informed European and early American intellectual historiography since John Pocock’s seminal work in the 1960s.³⁴ According to this view, most thinkers still looked back to the ancient world, stressing sturdy virtues uncorrupted by the state or the market. Perhaps, however, we can also glimpse another, wider civic republican tradition which limited the power of kings in Asia and in North Africa. As in the European republican tradition, kings were supposed to rule well in order to preserve the balance of the ideal polity, preserving pious householders and balancing the interests of different professions. These common elements in the world mythology and political ideology provided points of contact between Europeans, Asians, and Africans up to the mid-nineteenth century, even in situations otherwise characterized by ruthless exploitation and religious conflict. This theme will be explored further in chapter 7.

Secondly, even after the growth of Atlantic slavery and migration, many of the greatest global movements of people still remained pilgrimages and the wanderings of seers in search of traces of God. These reflected the imperatives of cosmic religion. Jerusalem and Rome retained their magnetic attraction for Christians in the Age of Enlightenment. For example, Napoleon and the Irish revolutionary of 1798, Wolfe Tone, both took time off from more pressing engagements to consider how to bring the Jewish people back to the Temple in Jerusalem.³⁵ For Muslim rulers from Sumatra to Nigeria, organizing the pilgrimage to the holy places remained the prime duty of external relations. The expansion of the Sufi mystical orders within Islam, especially the movement of the “mystical” Chishti order, provided a religious analogy to the globalizing of great kings. Even in the Atlantic world, Christian belief established patterns of long-distance godly migration. The diaspora of the Franciscans and Jesuits, the expansion of the Mormons, or the regular wanderings of English and Irish Quakers across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century are cases in point.

Thirdly, bodily practice helped to provide the force behind archaic globalization. The transmission of ideas encouraged the movement of goods, which

in turn spread new ideas. The world's biomedical systems, from the Greek, Islamic, and Hindu through to Daoist and Confucian, overlapped. Specialists read each other's texts. They sought out similar spices, precious stones, and animal products which were thought to enhance reproduction, sex, and bodily health. Along with markers of royalty such as precious metals, weapons, and horses, the search for prized medicines imposed deep patterns on world trade and the movement of peoples.³⁶ They helped to create the archaic "ethnoscape," a global pattern of cultural mixing, to borrow a word from Arjun Appadurai again.³⁷ In the eighteenth century, for example, much of China's overseas trade was designed to capture life-enhancing products and tokens of kingship. It was as medicines that tea, then tobacco, and finally opium entered China. Each of these commodities became, first, tokens of leisure and then, in the nineteenth century, items of pathological mass consumption. To some degree, this was also true for western Europe and the Atlantic world.

Archaic globalization worked, then, in several different and mutually reinforcing ways. At the broadest level, there was the ideology and imagined community of the Old World constructed by universal kingship and cosmic religion. In the intermediate register lay the uneven patterns of diasporic trading, military, and specialist communities generated by these values. These were the links that scattered Armenian merchants from the kingdom of Hungary to the South China seas. Finally, in the register of bodily practice, the human being constructed global linkages through acts of bio-moral transformation of substances and goods. The logic of such consumption was strategically to consume diversity. This pattern of collecting charismatic goods and substances differed significantly from the market-driven uniformity of today's world.

ARCHAIC AND EARLY MODERN GLOBALIZATION

The inter-regional trades in tea, tobacco, and opium characterize the second level, transitional phase in the emergence of the modern international order. This was early capitalist expansion, beginning in the Atlantic in the seventeenth century and spreading to much of the rest of the world by 1830. This phase was associated with the growth of Atlantic slavery. It also saw the rise of the European chartered companies, arms of mercantilist state power, and the royal trading entities created in the Asian world to handle and control these burgeoning trades. Proto-capitalist globalization developed by filling out and becoming parasitic on, perhaps "cannibalizing," to use Appadurai's phrase again, the earlier links created by archaic globalization. For instance, the capture of slaves, once a strategy in the building of the archaic great household in Africa and the Ottoman world, became a brutal proto-capitalist industry.

These new globalizing entities tried methodically to subordinate and redistribute labor on a vaster scale. They tried, as the next chapter shows, to link

together and exploit the regional reorientations of production and consumption which de Vries called “industrious revolutions.” Still, the change was uneven. In the register of bodily practice and personal deportment, the transformation was particularly slow. In Europe and outside, the trading companies carefully maintained the cultural and bio-moral repute of what were originally charismatic products, substances which were thought to alter both a person’s body and spirit. So, tobacco was seen, and still is seen, as a stimulant to mental capacity. Aristocratic and burgher taste preserved the rituals of sociability and the aura of rareness surrounding what were now industrial goods, as far as production was concerned.

The first age of truly global imperialism, 1760–1830, is discussed in chapter 3. It looked both backward and forward if we consider the forces promoting global interconnection. There were new elements emerging especially from the European-Atlantic economy. Here for the first time changes in the Americas directly affected Asia. For example, the American Revolution significantly altered trading patterns in Asia by forcing the English East India Company to redouble its purchases of tea in China, and eventually to introduce Indian opium into Qing territory. Yet, during this same period, the instruments of international statecraft and the ideologies which informed them retained archaic features.

At the ideological level, hybridity and mixing characterized these years. On the one hand, the French admiral Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729–1811) and Captain James Cook (1718–79), who explored the Pacific, used rationalistic and methodical methods of survey. The learned men of the British and French royal and oriental societies sought to make a “Map of all Mankind” by which all species, peoples, and products could be categorized.³⁸ On the other hand, archaic ideologies still prevailed. For instance, travelers in Egypt set themselves to tap the cosmic power of the pyramids. What modern Egyptologists call “pyramidiocy” has a very ancient pedigree. In the 1790s, an Anglo-German official in India believed he had found descriptions of the ancient British Isles of the days of Joseph of Arimathaea in the Sanskrit texts.³⁹ At this time too, a Scotsman became an Amerindian king in Honduras, and a British Indian officer carried floats of the Hindu deities around in his retinue. An Anglo-Irish British officer, Sir William Johnson (1715–74), learned American Indian languages, married Indian women, and became father of his people. Widely, religious practice remained both ritualized and flexible. In the British and American world, neither belief nor race but simple baptism widely remained the qualifier for public office. Even in the central lands of Islam, sultans made royal gifts to Christian monasteries and to synagogues.

At the level of bodily practice, the boundaries of the ethnic nation-state were not yet in evidence. Sexual relations were not heavily policed in practice. Large Eurasian, Afro-Asian, and, later, Euro-Australasian communities developed across the world. People used a wide range of remedies to strengthen and protect their bodies. Despite the beginning of a separate medical profession in Europe, most people still opted for a portfolio of different types of medical treatment, reinforced with prayer and magic. The consumption of

exotic and charismatic herbs and other products continued the exchange of bio-moral information at the global level. The smallpox variola traveled from Persia to England. From here it was disseminated by direct bodily contact back to European trading posts in India and the China coast, and on to the royal centres of the interior.

How were honor and value assigned to people in these patterns of global interconnection? Neither race nor nationality, as understood at the end of the nineteenth century, was yet a dominant concept. Rather, what characterized this period was a series of interlocking rankings of people in terms of their embodied status, their honor, or purity or lineage. This was a “caste system” in the original Portuguese use of the term. In this scheme, European aristocratic blood purity provided one pole of embodied status, and slave origins the other. As in the eighteenth-century Mexican manual of pedigree, *Las Castas Mexicanas* (“The Castes of Mexico”)⁴⁰ all other human groups could be intricately distinguished in a hierarchy stretching between these poles (see illustration 1.4). This archaic notion of caste, *casta*, or race (*raza*), prevailed in



ILLUSTRATION 1.4 Caste in the Old World: Mixed marriage. A Spaniard and his Mexican-Indian wife, and their child. Painting by Miguel Cabrera.

the Caribbean, Iberian, and English American worlds. This notion of caste also proved serviceable in the Muslim and Asian worlds, because it seemed compatible with current understandings of embodied status in these societies.

In the Indian world, prevalent ideas of purity and impurity could be fitted into the grid of caste in the towns of the west coast, where the Portuguese settled from the sixteenth century onwards. Muslims could loosely identify European “caste” with their own forms of status discrimination. These were based on humoral principles and historic closeness to the family of the Prophet. In turn, Chinese merchants in port cities adapted these Eurasian and Islamic categories to their own concepts of refinement and barbarity. As Frank Dikotter has shown in his book on race in modern China, classical Chinese bio-moral rankings assigned highest value to yellow races. Whites were associated with mental dullness, and blacks with uncontrolled passions.⁴¹ Caste as a global measure of embodied status remained the key discriminator in the interaction of peoples in the archaic and early modern diasporas. It operated at a deeper level than nationality, which remained a flexible and rather indistinct category at this period.

PROSPECT

These connections of ideas, faith, and material acquisitiveness operated to give form and structure to the old world order as it began to change more rapidly under the influence of Atlantic trade and the great world empires. Yet ideological movements, as much as sharp changes in material life, could also spread conflict and uncertainty. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, developing an idea of Jean Aubin, showed how sixteenth-century Christians and Muslims had been affected by currents of millenarian thought which could be used to justify political expansion, war, and conflict. Christians had been unsettled by the coming of the first millennium-and-a-half since Christ’s birth. The expectations of Muslims had been roused by the millennium of the Prophet’s message which came a few decades later. The ripples of these respective anxieties and aspirations flowed together into what Subrahmanyam calls a “millenarian conjuncture.”⁴² This is of relevance to the present book. For in the same way, Buddhist, Muslim, and Sikh millennial aspirations, flowing strongly after about 1720, were to act on, and interact with, the secular millenarianism which flowed from the French Revolution. This time, however, states and empires were both larger in scale and more embattled than they had been in the sixteenth century. The resulting political maelstrom surged on through the generations after 1780.

The effects of this latter “millenarian conjuncture” were very powerful, in part because the world in 1780 stood on the brink of what the Chinese historian Kenneth Pomeranz has called “the great divergence.”⁴³ The economic and social future of the human race was beginning to point in sharply different directions. The next chapter considers in greater detail the

accelerating divergences between the economic performance of different world societies, especially between western Europe and the rest of the world. It goes on to examine the much subtler differences which emerged in the organization of states and civil societies across the continents.