

A.D. CHANDLER, JR. BRUCE MAZLISH, (eds.), *Leviathans. Multinational Corporations and the New Global History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, pp. XIV, 250.

A group of historians, economists, and more specifically, experts of "business history" and "multinational management", united their efforts in this volume trying to define from a scientific as well as a historical point of view (studying the structure of ancient companies in search of their origins) the nature of multinational corporations through the lens of a more general discourse on global society.

Since the 1990's globalization has given rise to a massive production of literature in different and contrasting directions. Among those published more recently: *Gli spazi della globalizzazione. Flussi finanziari, migrazioni e trasferimento di tecnologie* edited by Fabio M. Parenti (Reggio Emilia 2004) and *Clash, scontro tra potenze. La realtà della globalizzazione*, by Mauro Casadio, James Petras e Luciano Vasapollo (Milano 2004).

Yet this literature offered only general interpretations, biased by giving abstract definition of the phenomenon, such as the one given by Robbie Robertson (University of the South Pacific, Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance) in a recent work: (*The Three Waves of Globalization A History of a Developing Global Consciousness*, London, Zed Books, 2003): "If we simply focus on globalization as a modern strategy for power, we will miss its historical and social depths. Indeed the origins of globalization lie in interconnections that have slowly enveloped humans since the earliest of times as they globalized themselves. In this sense, globalization as a human dynamic has always been with us, even if we have been unaware of its embrace until recently. Instead we have viewed the world more narrowly through the spectacles of religion, civilization, nation or race. Today these old constructs continue to frustrate the development of a global consciousness of human interconnections and their dynamism".

By contrast, the essays edited by Chandler and Mazlish make an attempt to contextualize historically the development and the consolidation of the multinational corporation. In fact, Mira Wilkins (Florida International University), who has already offered some considerations upon this theme (*Emergence of Multinational Enterprise: American Business abroad from The Colonial Era to 1914*, 1970; *Growth of Multinationals*, 1991; *Free-standing Company in the World Economy, 1830-1996*, 1998), states in her contribution (*Multinational Enterprise to 1930:*

*Discontinuities and Continuities*) that: "Of the large chartered companies (...) only one (the Hudson's Bay Company) continued on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even most of the merchant houses of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries lacked continuity into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *although some that developed extensive multinational business did persist*", but she also adds: "I believe that to a significant extent there was a wide divide between the modern MNEs [Multinational Enterprises] and their many precursors".

Brian Roach (GDAE – Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University) argues that: "The modern multinational corporation (MNC) is an economic, political, environmental, and cultural force that is unavoidable in today's globalized world. ... However, it is important to recognize that the scope of MNCs extends beyond the economic realm" (*A Primer on Multinational Corporations*). Stephen J. Kobrin (University of Pennsylvania) echoes this idea, underlining how difficult is to define the concept of globalization: "It certainly transcends economic relations, including social, cultural, and political processes that are enmeshed in a larger "global" order—forms of social, political, and economic organization beyond the pale of the state" (*Multinational Corporations, the Protest Movement, and the Future of Global Governance*).

The boundaries of the state are overcome by the multinationals not only geographically: "The activities of MNCs, although not threatening the authority of states, do challenge their control" (Chandler-Mazlish, *Introduction*, p.11). A new Leviathan, more similar to the original monster of the Bible than to the absolutism personified by Thomas Hobbes, rises: not an organism *super partes* anchored by a social contract but a constellation of organisms in endless concurrence in a society and in a market undifferentiated.

Not surprisingly the conclusions of this book stress the invasive power of the multinationals: "Many students of the MNCs, as well as of globalization, wish to stop there with the economic factor. ... This is to mistake a part for a whole. It is to focus solely on the global economy and not on the emerging global society. In that global society... the economic is indeed extremely powerful. And as a part of that power we must recognize the centrality of the MNCs themselves".

The volume is divided into three parts: "The Scope of the Multinational Phenomenon"; "Cultural and Social Implications of Multinationals"; "The Governance of Multinationals". The contributions also include Geoffrey Jones (*Multinationals from the 1930s to the 1980s*); Sei Yonekura-Sara McKinney (*Innovative*

*Multinational Forms: Japan as a Case Study*); Neva Goodwin (*The Social Impacts of Multinational Corporations: An Outline of the Issues with a Focus on Workers*); Bruce Mazlish-Elliott R. Morss (*A Global Elite?*); Robert A.G. Monks (*Governing the Multinational Enterprise: The Emergence of the Global Shareowner*); Zhu Jia-Ming-Elliott R. Morss (*The Financial Revolutions of the Twentieth Century*).

As Chandler and Mazlish themselves recognize, the authors give the discourse "a new tone: looking at MNCs in a broad and interdisciplinary fashion that is infrequently encountered". Even though the editors argued in the introduction that it is not their intention to express value judgments, the structure of the volume seems to imply, whether nuanced or stated, a critical approach to the phenomenon of globalization.

The analysis by Kobrin, for example, recalls two milestones of the anti-imperialist thought, Hobson and Lenin, in order to renew the condemnation of the expansionism of capitalism as "a malfunctioning of the system". Somehow, emerges as a sort of common sense "that the global elite serves its own interest and not that of the majority of populations in the world". Going beyond the moral issue, and the influence superimposed on governments by MNCs "to obtain subsidies, reduce their tax burdens, and shape regulations", is the risk of a negative impact exercised by the multinationals on developing countries and newly industrialized countries (NICs).

Ludovica de Courten

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J.R. DÍAZ DE DURANA ORTIZ DE URBINA: *La otra nobleza. Escuderos e hidalgos sin nombre y sin historia. Hidalgos e hidalguía universal en el País Vasco al final de la Edad Media (1250-1525)*, Universidad del País Vasco, 2004, pp 366.

Today, it is commonly admitted that long-run economic growth rests not only on the interplay of the classic factors of production, but also on a set of complex political, social and cultural institutions and values. This approach, which characterises many recent and well-known books trying to explain the

course of the economic history of the world, has traditionally emphasized how, after the growth of the XVIth century, the economic and social development of Spain was hampered by a cluster of demographic, economic and cultural factors. Among the latter, the triumph of an aristocratic mentality to which praised such concepts as honour and racial purity (*limpieza de sangre*), simultaneously degrading manual labour, has usually been considered as one of the most relevant obstacles to the economic growth of the country, as may be seen in the works of scholars such as P. Vilar<sup>1</sup>.

Like many other things in Spanish history the seeds of this mentality were sown in the last centuries of the Middle Ages and in *La otra nobleza ...* J. R. Díaz de Durana analyzes one of the most interesting aspects of this question. The lesser local nobility was the hegemonic social group in the Cantabrian regions of Castile, and especially in the Basque provinces of Vizcaya and Guipúzcoa, where all the population was recognized as noble after 1526 (in Biscay) and 1610 (in Guipúzcoa); something exceptional in a country in which the nobility formed, as in most European areas, a small minority. What were the reasons for this extraordinary situation? This is the question J. R. D de Durana tries to answer in the book under review, and its relevance can be fully appreciated when we remember how the concept of *hidalguía universal* (closely linked with the idea of *limpieza de sangre*) has traditionally been the basic characteristic of Basque history during the early modern period as a rather surprising case of democracy and egalitarianism originating in the remote and legendary past.

The author places the origins of the *hidalguía universal* in Biscay and Guipúzcoa in a broader context, and this allows him to make some points frequently forgotten. First, the author reminds how, in other nearby Castilian regions such as Asturias, Cantabria and the northern parts of Burgos, an important section of the population was also noble, so the developments of Biscay and Guipúzcoa were not wholly exceptional. Second, although it is undeniable that all the inhabitants of both provinces were noble, this should not hide the fact that, in the other Basque province (Álava), the noble population was only a minority (25% of the total) and this percentage would have been even smaller if we had included other nearby areas, such as the kingdom of Navarre.

<sup>1</sup> See P. Vilar: "Le temps des hidalgos" in *L'Espagne au temps de Philippe II*, Paris, (Hachette 1965), pp. 29-61.

The points we have just emphasized are good evidence that the book is written with the idea of studying the origins of Basque lesser nobility and its *bidalguía universal* without falling in the sins of "exceptionalism". According to the author, the development of Basque medieval society followed the same lines as in the rest of western Europe and in this context he notes a third and basic point: as has been emphasized in recent decades by well-known scholars, such as Cortázar and Fernández de Pinedo, serfdom was more widespread in the Basque Country than it has been traditionally believed<sup>2</sup>. Once we admit this, it becomes clear that it is no longer possible to see in the *bidalguía universal* an eternal hallmark of Basque society coming from a distant and nearly legendary past, and it seems evident that it would be more appropriate to describe it, as the author does, as the result of the social and political trends developed in some Basque provinces (but not in all) during the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

Although there were relevant differences between Biscay and Guipúzcoa both provinces shared common points which led to a similar result. From a legal point of view, Biscay was a lay lordship and probably because of this the new taxes levied in the rest of Castile by the crown since the XIVth century were never introduced. As for Guipúzcoa, this province was born as the result of the union of a group of small villages (*villas*) which decided to join forces to resist the attacks and predations of the turbulent local nobility. Unlike Biscay, some of the new Castilian taxes imposed were collected (the *alcabala* being the most important for example), but, as the author emphasizes, the castilian kings granted generous franchises and exemptions to the province as a reward for its political stance against the nobility. All this means that, although in different ways, both Biscay and Guipúzcoa enjoyed a privileged fiscal status since the last medieval centuries, which was used as an springboard to obtain the *bidalguía universal*. After all, it was easy for the provincial authorities to suggest that their fiscal privileges were the best proof of the nobility of all the inhabitants of the two districts and there is little doubt that many crown officers became convinced of this, while many others simply tolerated the idea for reasons of political convenience.

The peculiarities of their fiscal systems was one of the main arguments used by

<sup>2</sup> See, by example, J.A. García de Cortázar "El Señorío de Vizcaya hasta el siglo XVI" in *Historia del Pueblo Vasco*, I, (San Sebastián 1978), pp 223-267 and E. Fernández de Pinedo: *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales del País Vasco, (1100-1850)*, (Madrid 1974).

the provincial authorities to achieve their goals, but not the only one because, as the author stresses, the proximity to France and the linking of the *hidalgua universal* with the concept of *limpieza de sangre* were two other important tools. Particularly remarkable was the latter, because the early expulsion of the small groups of Jews (even those converted to christianity) and of the descendants of Muslims living in Biscay and Guipúzcoa was used to reinforce the idea of the nobility of the inhabitants of both provinces, and it is interesting to emphasize here that, as it was suggested by J. Juaristi in a well-known essay many years ago, the *limpieza de sangre* could well have been promoted by the provincial authorities with the idea of expelling the converts from the key bureaucratic posts in the Castilian government<sup>3</sup>.

Unlike Biscay and Guipúzcoa, only 25% of Alavese population was noble and this illustrates better than anything else the complexities of the Basque history of the period. In Álava the Castilian crown levied the taxes introduced in the rest of the kingdom after the XIVth century, a fact well known thanks to the classic works of L. M Bilbao. Simultaneously, the local nobility kept their control of the political life of the villages<sup>4</sup>. If, in Guipúzcoa, the villages had been the standard-bearers of a powerful antinoble front, something rewarded by the crown with generous fiscal franchises, this did not happen in Álava, so, as the author explains, the path followed by the Basque coastal provinces to the *hidalgua universal* was closed to this province, and this would explain the peculiarities of its development.

When we consider the evidence provided by the author it seems clear that the *hidalgua universal* was the result of the political and social evolution of the Basque coastal provinces after the late medieval crisis, and the importance of this achievement in the course of later Basque and even Castilian and Spanish history should not be overlooked. With the *hidalgua universal* and the early expulsion of converts, Biscay and Guipúzcoa set a kind of example to the rest of Castile, which tended to see in both provinces something like the ideal image of the original Castilian and Spanish society, isolated from any link with Muslims and Jews. Although the northern (and the basque) *bidalgo* was described in some famous episodes of Spanish literature from an ironic point of view, this

<sup>3</sup> J. Juaristi: *Vestigios de Babel. Para una arqueología de los nacionalismos españoles*, (Madrid 1992).

<sup>4</sup> L. M Bilbao: "Haciendas forales y haciendas de la monarquía: el caso vasco, siglos XIVy XVI" in *Historia de la Hacienda en España (siglos XVI-XX): Homenaje a Don Felipe Ruiz Martín*, Hacienda Pública Española, Monografías: 1, 1991, pp 43-58.

should not hide the fact that the belief in the nobility of the people of the Basque coastal provinces was accepted wholeheartedly by the rest of the country, so the strategy devised by the provincial authorities scored a resounding success.

During recent decades the books and articles of authors such as Cortázar, Fernández de Pinedo and L. M Bilbao, whose writings are basic reference for all those interested in the topic, have promoted an important revival of traditional Basque historiography. Thanks to them, today it is possible to say that the course of Basque history fits into the broader Spanish and European model, so it seems clear that there is little justification for seeing the Basque country as an area isolated in the Cantabrian coast which followed its own and peculiar path. As the rest of the continent, the Basque country felt the impact of the shockwaves sent by the big crisis of the late medieval period and, in line with this, R. D de Durana has explained the origins of the *hidalguía universal* as one of the answers adopted by some parts of Basque society to counter the troubles of that time. After reading the book and considering the convincing evidence provided by the author, it is clear that the *hidalguía universal* was the result of the strategy devised since the XIVth century by the sectors which controlled the political life of the provinces of Biscay and Guipúzoca. Far from be an originary characteristic of Basque society developed in a long and distant past, it would be more appropriate to rank it in the long list of invented traditions which have for long nurtured the consciousness of our historic past.

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AMARJIT KAUR, *Wage Labour in Southeast Asia Since 1840. Globalization, the International Division of Labour and Labour Transformations*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Present-day interest in South-east Asia, a geopolitical area which is closely monitored by international observers, is further increased by Amarjit Kaur's research on salaries from the colonial period until the present day, with an analysis which takes into account the impact of globalization and the current transformation

of the world of labour. Starting with the mineral and agricultural sectors, Kaur cleverly succeeds in covering a wide range of subjects connected with labour, such as female labour, the role of the state and the role of the trade unions.

In particular, Kaur starts with a consideration which might appear banal, but which is actually important: setting aside any rigid attempt at a scientific definition, the fact remains that South-east Asia is a complex world, made up of different states, each with its own historical, political and economic conditions, but a world in which common trends regarding the subject under discussion – the evolution of salaries – are evident.

This piece of research deals with two countries: Malaysia and Indonesia. Malaysia, rich in skilled labour but on the whole without much manpower, began to import labour in 1840 and today is still one of the main import markets in the whole of Asia. India, on the contrary, is a country without much skilled labour but with an abundant demand for labour, and may be labelled the manpower “tank” for South-east Asia. The other states (Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore) are half-way between these two extremes.

Kaur concentrates on certain factors to explain the causes of this situation. One is the cost of labour: the lower the labour costs, the more competitive and dynamic is the economy.

The state’s role is emphasised, because the ruling classes have been largely responsible for the Asian tigers’ economies becoming export-oriented, thus channelling the flow of manpower above all to those activities which proved highly productive for export. Kaur believes that globalization has led to an internationalisation of the workforce in South-east Asia, too, and so, just as in the developed countries, today’s Asian worker finds himself in an increasingly flexible market, characterised by temporary jobs which are highly specialised and for which continuous refresher courses are necessary, as in the “permanent training” formula.

The main effects of these factors are a lowering of the general level of poverty, an increase in domestic migration flows and an increase in labour protection legislation, with a continual strengthening of the role of trade unions and other labour associations.

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A. MALVOLI – G. PINTO (a cura di), *Incolti, fiumi, paludi. Utilizzazione delle risorse naturali nella Toscana medievale e moderna*, Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, 2003, pp. 302.

The use of natural resources has always characterized human labour, and this is the reason why uncultivated fields, rivers and marshes have been the distinctive elements of the coastal economy along the Italian peninsula over time.

The case of Tuscany, from this point of view, is particularly significant. The coast surrounding Grosseto, Lucca, Massa and Pisa, the area of Siena as well the Garfagnana and the Casentino, have been marked profoundly and in an indelible way by the exploitation of swamps and water resources. In fact, in a medieval economy, where capital is scarce, the possibility to acquire intensive production of labour is crucial.

As Giuliano Pinto (*Gli incolti nella storia della Toscana. Considerazioni introduttive*) stresses in the introduction to this volume – which contains the contributions of a meeting in June 2001 – marshes and swamps do not require regular human labour, yet they represent an economic resource for the local population. In fact, fluvial waters had been largely exploited both for navigation and irrigation purposes since the Roman Empire. The fragmentation of the administrative and political system, subsequent to the fall of the Roman Empire, did, nonetheless, profoundly change the landscape of the fluvial valleys of Tuscany. The work of regimentation of the waters and clearing the mouths of the rivers, had kept in being an efficient system of transport and had limited the stagnation of the waters. It is quite evident that this complex and expensive maintenance reduced the number of rivers and swamps and the floods that ravaged the cultivated fields.

Only with the medieval towns, as Leonardo Rombai, Paolo Morelli, Duccio Balestracci and Anna Maria Pult argue in their essays, the city administrations, sustained by the *consorterie* and the *corporazioni* of liberal arts, took action in diverting waters for industrial use (the activity of mills being necessary for the production of wool and grain) and clearing the mouths of rivers. It must always be remembered – as the volume emphasized – that inland waters, from the Middle Ages up to modern age, represented the best, sometimes the only, means of trade and communication, once the roads were partially destroyed or had

disappeared. The interest of the towns of Tuscany in navigable rivers is thus apparent.

The case of swamps has some similarity with that of the rivers, yet it differs because no human intervention was necessary to exploit them. The morphology of Tuscany, in relation to the swamps, changed radically between the medieval age and the present. A number of swamps and inland basins have disappeared from the coast, a phenomenon often due to the impossibility of the rivers reaching the sea. It may sound strange but, for many rural communities, marshes were able to supply fresh fish for their tables and for sale in the town market.

The essays by Leonardo Rombai, Paolo Emilio Tomei, Amleto Spicciani and Andrea Zagli are enriched by documents which provide clear evidence of the economic importance of marshes, providing a number of deeds of sale, and, at the same time, underlining the dominant role of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Moreover, the economic utilization of the swamps such as Valdichiana, Bientina, il Fucecchio and the coast of Pisa, is linked to the lack of public intervention (however the proprietor were obliged to pay the cost of maintenance), but also to the limitations of hydraulic technology.

It was demographic trends that characterized the expansion of cultivated fields, the disappearance of the swamps and the regimentation of the waters, thus reducing, in the long run, the areas of land or lagoon which were unusable for agriculture.

One last consideration about the uncultivated fields. It is widely demonstrated that the uncultivated fields represented a fundamental resource for the rural communities, not only in Tuscany. Uncultivated fields, often put aside for civic use and common fields, offering a supplementary income integrating the means of subsistence of day-labourers and shepherds throughout the Middle Ages and subsequently. This is a phenomenon on a European scale, which continues from the English common fields, subject to enclosures during the reign of the Tudors, to the French communal pastures, to the right of pasture of the peasant community in the south of Italy.

In Tuscany the uncultivated fields subject to town legislation, covered a vast area, hills and mountains in particular (the woods of Cerbaia for example), but, one should never forget the town rights over swamps such as Fucecchio.

The essays by Alberto Malvolti, revealing with great clarity the economic value of the uncultivated fields, analyses the revenue of the town of Fucecchio

linked to the ownership of woods and swamps, from which it gained revenue for the pasture, fishing, hunting, timber and the utilization of water-mills.

The essays in this volume bring to light different but complementary aspects of the basic relationship between Man and the environment, the responses which have determined human exigencies of survival and evolution.

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J. MOKYR, *The Gifts of Athena. Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy*, Princeton, Oxford 2002.

Joel Mokyr, Professor of Economics and History as well as Robert H. Strotz Professor of Arts and Sciences and President Elect of the Economic History Association, deals in *The Gifts of Athena* with some questions not yet answered: wide-ranging: Why did the Industrial Revolution happen in the Western hemisphere, why in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, and why in England some decades earlier than elsewhere? Additionally, why was the Industrial Revolution connected with ongoing processes generating technical invention, innovation, and accelerating growth creating more and more wealth and better health?

To discuss these questions, Mokyr appreciates some scholarly explanations by stressing the institutional arrangements of national as well as nations' endowments of productive resources, and so on. Mokyr then identifies the expansion of useful human knowledge which underpins technical and economic progress as the final explanation for the onset and of sustainability industrial growth. Therefore, in the first chapter, Mokyr defines two categories of useful knowledge: The so-called propositional (or  $\Omega$ ) knowledge represents the stock of knowledge as well as beliefs about natural phenomena and regularities. Because  $\Omega$  knowledge contains practical informal knowledge, sometimes intuitive awareness, it is more than pure science or theoretical knowledge and can be enlarged by discoveries. The so-called prescriptive (or  $\lambda$ ) knowledge represents knowledge about techniques and sets of instructions or recipes using  $\Omega$  knowledge which creates inventions. After mapping  $\Omega$  knowledge in  $\lambda$

knowledge into a set of feasible techniques, a process of selecting the best-practice technique follows. Best-practice techniques then get diffused in the economic sphere.

What, however, is the unique link between mapping  $\Omega$  knowledge in  $\lambda$  knowledge at the beginning of Industrial Revolution? In chapter two Mokyr, therefore, introduces the term "Industrial Enlightenment", noting the intellectual developments during the XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> century characterised by a co-evolution of scientific mentality, and "open" scientific methods and cultures. The "Industrial Enlightenment", therefore, has not only expanded  $\Omega$  knowledge, but has also reduced the costs of access to it by popular lectures, encyclopaedists movements by (for example, Diderot) and so on. Now, the creation of useful knowledge does not only mean a mapping of  $\Omega$  knowledge into  $\lambda$  knowledge: additionally positive and self-reinforcing feedback loops occur; working  $\lambda$  knowledge became part of the stock of  $\Omega$  knowledge. And Questions concerning "how" a  $\lambda$ -technique works provoke  $\Omega$ -research and explanations concerning "why" it works. This process enlarges the bulk of  $\Omega$  knowledge and, consequently, creates further  $\lambda$  knowledge in other fields and in a systematic way. These feedback loops accumulate useful knowledge and make technological growth sustainable in general. If this knowledge gained by way of free or cheap access it is diffused to other nations which have positive attitudes to the "Industrial Enlightenment" and to institutions propagating technological progress. By offering prizes and/or patents granting temporary monopolies instead of rent-seeking attitudes defending old economic and social structures, knowledge and its industrial use disseminated.

Chapter three emphasises the relevance of this model for the two "classical" Industrial Revolutions, the first starting in England at the end of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century and the second after the 1860s in some others European nations. Using his model, Mokyr draws some provocative conclusions regarding the present day which is experiencing a further revolution by modern information and communications technology.

In chapter four, Mokyr shows the consequences of his model for the factory system of production in a plant which centralises workers with some special but tacit knowledge, routines and experience. By contrast, most of employees do not understand how the techniques they employ are functioning. These employees needs monitoring, utilising strictly time-based payment as well as

“team-work”. Some useful knowledge is not storable but it resides in the mind of one person from which it can be transferred to the mind of another person. Using the analogy of the modern plant storing and transferring knowledge, Mokyr draws further conclusions regarding modern information techniques for tele-working using the internet, for example.

In contrast to plants operating to maximize profits, chapter five deals with the expansion of useful knowledge in household production, stressing a neo-classical model with imperfect knowledge. How do households choose medical progress, and why was the germ theory accepted very slowly? In this chapter, Mokyr shows the relevance of paternalism, the propaganda use of communication channels, and the role of expanding statistical knowledge, which provided new insights about medical relationships.

In chapter six, Mokyr emphasises the well-known discrepancy between what is possible by exploiting the  $\Omega$  knowledge and what is really transformable by  $\lambda$  knowledge, leading to inventions. Furthermore, Mokyr discusses the selectivity of inventions and what determines whether they result in marketable products. In this chapter, some cultural characteristics of the process of the diffusion of new technologies following their innovation and invention are seen as decisive. Here, Mokyr identifies some kinds of potential resistance: one is the existence of private social groups which seek to maintain their rents through collective action by prohibiting technological change. Guilds have been a such as powerful example, modern social pressure groups as trade-unions are another. In Western democracies, however, well organised pressure groups have a decisive role in elections. This aspect is only an indirect part of Mokyr’s analysis, mentioned in chapter seven. Mokyr stresses, however, the different kinds of exploitation of useful knowledge by private and governmental interests. This leads to an analysis which concentrates on free-market societies versus centrally planned economies. Free markets, with a free flow of knowledge (what, in this case, is the role of patents?), are identified as a most efficient form of organisation in allocating the opportunities of an economy based on knowledge. The government, however, always pays attention and has financial influence over some institutions which generate useful knowledge. These influences by the state sometimes seem to be dismissed in trifling by Mokyr, especially in modern times: Military aspects of  $\Omega$  knowledge and mapping it into  $\lambda$  knowledge show a significant, perhaps decisive, role of government financial support concerning

the evaluation and creation of useful knowledge. The civil use of nuclear power following the Manhattan-project and the knowledge of radar-technology which has generated the microwave-devices in our kitchens are mentioned only as examples. However, beyond of national military uses of knowledge, Mokyr's analysis is generally justified.

To sum up, Joel Mokyr, as one of the most important economic historians of our time, has written an instructive book about the knowledge-based origins of the rise and the future persistence of the Western World. He based his conclusions on the convincing idea that the systematic creation and exploitation of useful knowledge was and is, the best way to conserve our standard of living - but this is always a dynamic process. Mokyr identifies rent-seeking as a deadly danger. This book should be read not only by scholars, but also by politicians!

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R. I. ROTBERG (ed.), *Population History and the Family*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2001, pp.390.

Following its editorial as well as scientific tradition, with thematic issue on topics of general interest, linked to the social sciences in particular, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, collects in this volume fourteen essays published over the life-time of the *Journal*, and, as the editor states, "culled from a cornucopia of family and demographic riches".

This anthology follows, with thematic continuity, other two collections of essays, edited by Rotberg himself and Theodore K. Rabb, devoted to historical demography and to the sociology of the family, which appeared in 1973 and 1980 respectively: *The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays* and *Marriage and Fertility: Studies in Interdisciplinary History*. Moreover, this field of research does not lack periodicals: among them there are two internationally-recognised reviews: *The History of the Family* and the *Journal of Family History: Studies in Family, Kinship, Gender, and Demography*.

The contributions published here, which have appeared over the past twenty years offer a comparative and interdisciplinary framework to the fundamental structure of the social universe. Rotberg and Rabb themselves edited in 1986 a collection of essays devoted to *The new history: the 1980s and beyond. Studies in interdisciplinary history* (Princeton 1982). Not surprisingly, the authors are not only historians but also economists as well as experts in mathematical analysis.

In his introductory essay (*Recovering Lost Worlds: The Demographic Dimension in History*) Rotberg clearly states that the essays collected in this volume "are representative of the contributions that demographic... historians, using increasingly sophisticated and mathematically refined methods, have made over the past three decades to rewriting, reconceptualizing, and revitalizing ... interdisciplinary history".

The patterns of behaviour combined with the economic cycles, something on which Rotberg and Rabb focused their attention in 1986 (*Population and History from the traditional to the modern world*) following the example given more than forty years ago by William Goode (*World Revolution and Family Patterns*), are another theme of this volume. The different essays, "focusing chronologically on the medieval, early modern, or modern periods, or on Europe, Asia, or the Americas, ... demonstrate the critical contribution to understanding the dimensions of past time that has come in recent decades from the practitioners of family and population history".

Some of the essays are more specifically devoted to the historical evolution of family education and behaviour and to changes following the development of the liberal arts and the emerging industrialization in Britain (Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Childrearing among the Lower Classes of Late Medieval England*; Daniel C. Quinlan-Jean A. Shackelford, *Economy and English Families*; Michael R. Haines, *Fertility, Nuptiality, and Occupation: A Study of Coal Mining Populations and Regions in England and Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*).

The essay by Michael Craton (*Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies*) analyses, within the community of the African slaves in the British West Indies, the evolution of family patterns linked, in contrast to the long abused category of polygamy, to the nuclear family. It represents, as an element of stability in the context of captivity, "the response of African-born

first-generation slaves", and the "indelible impress of Africa", rather than the result of a superimposed pattern of European society and evangelization.

Similarly, the infanticide practised in Japan some two centuries ago (Robert Y. Eng-Thomas C. Smith, *Peasant Families and Population Control in Eighteenth-Century Japan*) is explained by the authors in terms of social survival, "as a product of social demoralization and the struggle of parents to keep themselves and favored progeny alive".

The Russian as well as the German cases are also discussed as part of the European scenario (Daniel H. Kaiser, *Urban Household Composition in Early Modern Russia* and W. R. Lee, *Bastardy and the Socioeconomic Structure of South Germany*). In particular, Lee stresses how the steady increase of bastards in Bavaria between 1750 and 1850 was "a social norm, not a threat to the existing family structure", because it "had been accepted into the framework of rural society in a way which made social controls unnecessary" ... Illegitimate children received their due share in family settlements".

A quite different approach is adopted for XVI<sup>th</sup> century Mexico, at the eve of the Spanish conquest. The two contributions (*Mexico's Population in the Sixteenth Century: Demographic Anomaly or Mathematical Illusion?* and *Revising the Conquest of Mexico: Smallpox, Sources, and Populations*), by Rudolph Zambardino and Francis Brooks respectively. Developing new statistical methods, they try to reshape the traditional story, told by the Franciscan Order, of the genocide of the Aztecs due to the "divine scourge" of the smallpox in 1520 and the "conquest" in 1521.

The last group of essays concerns the United States between the XVII<sup>th</sup> and the XIX<sup>th</sup> century (David Cressy, *The Seasonality of Marriage in Old and New England*; Darrett B. Rutman-Charles Wetherell-Anita H. Rutman, *Rhythms of Life: Black and White Seasonality in the Early Chesapeake*; Edward Byers, *Fertility Transition in a New England Commercial Center: Nantucket, Massachusetts, 1680-1840*; Maris A. Vinovskis, *Socioeconomic Determinants of Interstate Fertility Differentials in the United States in 1850 and 1860*).

The scholars once again relate the economic determinants to the demographic variables and their development, naturally involving ancestral traditions as well as social habits. The conclusion of David Cressy is quite telling: "Accounting for seasonal patterns and variations requires a closer study of local

social, economic, and cultural history ... Analysis of the seasonality of marriage ... demonstrates the influence of different economic regions on demography, and also shows which communities adhered most to religious traditionalism”.

Ludovica de Courten

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P. SAAVEDRA FERNÁNDEZ: *Señoríos y comunidades campesinas. Aportaciones a la Historia Rural de la España Moderna*, Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2003, pp. 217.

The role played by peasant communities in the development of the early modern economy and the origins of the capitalism has long attracted the interest of historians and researchers. Although nobody would deny the convenience of having a general framework to interpretate the relationships between European peasant communities and the development of capitalism, the fundamental research carried out in the last decades has noted the limitations of these kind of global models, emphasizing the importance of local and even regional factors, so today it seems clear that studies based on local sources are particularly well suited to study these complex and fascinating questions.

In “Señoríos y comunidades ...” P. Saavedra analyzes the Galician peasant communities during the early modern period and their relationships with their ever-present counterpart, the local nobility. The book is a collection of five essays linked by the aim of using the Galician case as a platform for a better understanding of peasant communities in the rest of Spain, placing the galician experience within the broader context of Spanish economic and social history.

The book can be divided into two parts. The first part (chapters 1, 2 and 3) is focused on the analysis of Galician lordships. As the author shows (chapter 2, p. 69), Galician social structure was characterized by the presence of strong lay and church lordships. Older lordships derived from the privileges granted by the Crown to religious institutions and the archbishops of Santiago, while

newer ones originated during the last centuries of the Middle Ages, when Castilian kings awarded large amounts of land and rights to the new nobility created in the period. Thanks to this, the Galician nobility (both lay and religious) obtained an economic and social power preserved until well into the nineteenth century. Although it could have been expected that the judicial rights or the monopolies had a privileged role in the incomes extracted by the Galician lords from their peasants, P. Saavedra shows how tithes and long-run leases (*foros*) were the main basis of the economic power of this social group (pp. 93). This last aspect is fundamental because the *foro* was something more than an agrarian contract and, as Galician historians has always stressed, it deserves to be considered as one of the main pieces of the fabric of regional society, being in the centre of a long development accurately described by the author<sup>1</sup>.

During the whole period, and especially in the years between 1480-1520, many peasant communities asked the royal courts to withdraw many seignourial rights previously enjoyed by the lords. Thanks to his deep knowledge of the rich documentary sources filed in the local and general archives, the author has described how the policy adopted by the crown through the royal courts was twofold and benefited both sides. If, in many cases, the crown sanctioned, as requested by the peasants, the withdrawal of the hated seignourial rights, strengthening the independence of the peasant communities, in many others those same rights were incorporated in the *foro* in a silent but continuous process.

As a result of this, at first sight a contradictory situation characterised the Galician rural world at the beginning of the XVIIIth century. A powerful religious and lay nobility coexisted with a network of well-entrenched peasant communities which defended their rights in the royal courts with remarkable determination. Most Galicians lived in religious and lay lordships and it is interesting to note that in the last years of the *ancien régime* in Spain, after the Independence War, the economic situation of one religious lordship studied by the author, the monastery of S. Vicente de Carracedo, experienced a marked recovery from the problems suffered since the last years of the XVIIIth century. The way in which the religious lordships of Galicia faced their economic difficulties during this period has been analyzed by other authors and, as P. Saavedra remarks, the example of S. Vicente

<sup>1</sup> See, by example, R. Villares: *La propiedad de la tierra en Galicia, 1500-1936*, (Madrid 1982).

de Carracedo could be considered proof of the economic strength of this kind of institution<sup>2</sup>. If we also consider that lay lordships were experiencing a similar process of economic recovery in the same years (pp. 196-97), the end of the seignorial regime in Galicia after the well-known liberal reforms does not seem to be the result of an inevitable economic crisis, but rather the result of a political step which changed the institutional framework of regional agriculture; a good reminder of the importance of political factors in economic history.

The second part of the book (chapters 4-5) studies the other side of the argument: the Galician peasant communities. It has been traditionally thought that Castilian society was basically stable during the early modern period, but recent research has shown that this idea deserves some clarification. Certainly, there was nothing comparable to the famous French peasant revolts, and it could even be assumed that the famous *irmandiño* revolts were a distant memory for many Galicians, but this should not mislead us because, under a quiet and peaceful surface the royal courts were the main scenario of low-profile but continuous rivalries between the lords and the peasant communities. The remarkable perseverance of the latter in waging long and expensive lawsuits before the royal courts (the *Audiencia* of Corunna and the *Chancillería* of Valladolid) was an important factor in the consolidation of the peasant communities in which members of the lesser nobility (*bidalgos*), priests, clerks, well-to-do peasants and all those familiarized with legal procedures had a privileged role (chapter 4).

Behind the coexistence of strong lay and religious lordships with relatively powerful peasant communities, something which may seem surprising, were clear reasons of social and economic rationality. As the most part of their incomes came from the *foros* and, in general terms, from land rents, it is evident that the local nobility was interested in the preservation of the economic viability of its peasantry, and this attitude was reinforced by its deep respect for the rules of the "moral economy" of the time (chapter 5).

Thanks to his desire to place the Galician case in the broader Spanish context, P. Saavedra compares the Galician case with the developments in other regions,

<sup>2</sup> See O. Rey Castelao, "La crisis de la economía de las instituciones eclesiásticas de Galicia", in P. Saavedra and R. Villares, *Señores y campesinos en la Península Ibérica. Siglos XVIII-XX*, (Barcelona Crítica, 1991).

such as Old Castile, Aragón and Catalonia. Needless to say, each one of these areas had its own peculiarities but they shared some relevant aspects also. Particularly interesting is the fact that, in all the three cases, the cohesion of the peasant communities suffered, from the growth of a rural bourgeoisie which at the end of the eighteenth century posed a threat to the previously undisputed hegemony of the local nobility. Thus, it would not be unfair to say that lordship in these areas was facing growing problems. According to the author, the dynamism of the emerging groups in rural society and the parallel difficulties of a nobility trying to preserve its traditional control on the rural world helps us to understand the social tensions experienced in Valencia or even in Old Castile during the transitional phase from the *ancien régime* to the liberal period, but something different happened in Galicia where, although the political and institutional changes brought about by the liberal reforms were as important as in the rest of the country, the social structure developed during the early modern period around the powerful local nobility and the peasant communities showed enough resilience to survive these transformations.

The book of P. Saavedra is a new addition to a long list of works, thanks to which our knowledge of Galician rural history during the early modern period is fairly good<sup>3</sup>. In the five articles of "Señoríos y comunidades campesinas ..." the author studies basic aspects of Galician rural society during the early modern period and offers a detailed and convincing view of its evolution which will be a great help to all those interested in Galician and Spanish economic and social history. Simultaneously, P. Saavedra poses some problems which, as he remarks, deserve further research. Particularly interesting among them is the absence of a rural bourgeoisie during the XVIIIth century. When we consider how the growth of this group was one of the main causes of the dissolution of old type of society in other areas, the relevance of knowing what reasons led to its disappearance from the Galician social scene is evident, especially because the author reminds us that, at the beginning of the XVIIIth century, there had existed what could be defined as the embryo of a Galician rural bourgeoisie.

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<sup>3</sup> Among many others see, for example, A. Eiras Roel "Dime et mouvement du produit agricole en Galice, 1600-1836" in J. Goy and E. Le Roy Ladurie, *les prestations paysannes*, (Paris 1982), pp 341-58.

MIRA WILKINS, *The History of Foreign Investments in the United States, 1914-1945*, Cambridge – London, Harvard University Press, 2004.

In this book one of the foremost specialists in foreign investment in the United States, Mira Wilkins, deals with the evolution of such investment between 1914 and 1945, examining both portfolio investment (private and public) and direct foreign investment. By analysing the US entrepreneurial sector as a whole (from the chemical sector to the pharmaceutical, textile, insurance, banking, mining and oil sectors), Mira Wilkins evaluates both the importance of foreign investments in the American and the global economy during the thirty years examined, and the main trends in the economic policies which the US administration adopted to encourage long-term growth.

Wilkins begins with the interesting reflection that in 1914 the United States was the country having the biggest debt in the world whereas, only four years later, it was the country with the largest credit balance. Wilkins is convinced that foreign investment have been of fundamental importance in the American economy, being more important than the specialist literature has acknowledged. Therefore, the overall situation of the US market cannot be described without taking into account the total flow of portfolio investment and direct foreign investment flowing to and from the USA.

The leading position reached between 1914 and 1918 by means of the returns on American capital invested abroad (where profits were much higher than those earned by foreign capital invested in the US) enabled the US economy to pull through negative periods, like those between 1919 and 1923 (due to the 1920-21 crisis) and between 1929 and 1933 (due to the 1929 crisis) when there was a marked decrease in foreign capital investment in the USA. However, many international operators (especially British operators) decided not to abandon the American market, making their own direct foreign investments there and preferring the banking sector rather than the entrepreneurial sector. Wilkins points out that, especially between 1929 and 1933, the flow of foreign investment was determined by general financial conditions in the case of portfolio investments, and by the American administration's economic policies in the case of direct foreign investment.

The success of the American investment system was due to the banking and financial sectors' dynamism and to the international operators' confidence in

making both short- and long-term investments in order to obtain returns for their activities in the USA rather than elsewhere. The American economy thus became that "fertile garden" which attracted the principal enterprises and the big multinationals: they helped the American economy's technological development and its internationalisation. This, however, did not happen indiscriminately without any control: for example, between 1939 and 1941 the US Treasury's Foreign Funds Control carried out a real census of foreign investment in the USA (for the first time since 1853 by freezing European and Asian investments, these economies having been thrown into chaos by the Second World War. This census revealed that overall investment in the USA was greater than any estimate had led people to believe. Therefore, as Wilkins states, this is doubtless one of the possible explanations of US present-day financial supremacy.

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