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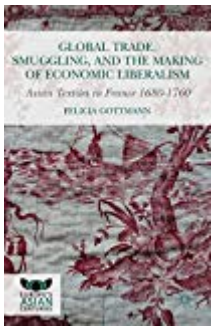

Felicia Gottman. *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France 1680-1760.* Europe's Asian Centuries Series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 288 pp. $85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-44487-5.

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Colonial expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was inextricably bound up with long distance trade in textiles. The French and English East India Companies carried large quantities of cloth, particularly Indian cotton textiles, from Asia to Europe partly for European markets and partly for reexport to Africa and America. Coinciding with this was the growth, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, of the calico printing industry in France and England. The import of a wide range of Asian textiles and the availability of relatively cheaper Asian fabric dyed and printed in Europe threatened traditional European textiles. Demands for state intervention to protect home industry overlapped with mercantilist concerns about bullion exports to make it seem worthwhile to impose restrictions on the trade in Asian textiles. In England, the 1675 petition of Gloucestershire clothiers against alnage duties marked the beginning of attempts to mobilize public opinion on the question of protection, culminating in a complete ban on calico imports in 1721. The opposition to Asian textiles, especially calicoes, was perhaps fiercer in France; restrictions were imposed much earlier (1686) and lasted much longer. Felicia Gottmann's study focuses on the seven decades or so during which the ban was in force. It examines the consequences of calico prohibition and the processes that led to lifting the ban in 1759.

Nurturing the French textile industry was central to the economic strategy pushed by Louis XIV's influential minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. While extending protection to French textile production, Colbert vigorously supported the French East India Company with the objective of creating a commercial empire in the Indian Ocean. By the time Colbert died in 1683 the perception in official circles was that it was difficult to reconcile the interests of the East India Company with those of French textile manufacturers. Marquis de Louvois, the principal minister of Louis XIV after Colbert's death, was instrumental in introducing strict regulations for preventing competition from Asian and Asian-style textiles. The import of Indian cotton textiles and Asian silk was prohibited,

as was the printing of calicoes in France. The ban was extended to wearing these textiles and using them for furnishing. Henceforth the East India Company was permitted to import cotton cloth for reexport only. The reexport branch of its commerce was essential for sustaining the slave trade. Besides, Asian textiles were bought at the company's auctions held at Nantes, and subsequently at Lorient, for European, African, and Caribbean markets. Of course the bulk of the supplies were sourced from India. In the 1750s (when the ban was still in force), nearly 120 varieties of textiles were being procured from producers in and around Chandernagore alone (p. 29). Gottmann notes that along with taking pride in the enormous diversity of the varieties imported, capable of catering to consumers at several levels of the international market, the company also took great pride in maintaining high standards in terms of the quality of its goods.

It soon became obvious that enforcing the ban was beyond the capacity of the Bourbon state. The involvement, on a large scale, of the French East India Company in the transportation of Asian textiles meant that prohibited goods were physically on French soil even if they were presumed to be in transit. This became one source of leakage. Then there was the special status of Marseilles as a free port. This was the main center of the Levant trade, over which the Marseilles Chamber of Commerce had an official monopoly. Indian-style textiles, such as ***chafarcanis*** produced in Ottoman Levant, were imported via Marseilles. More important, as the work of Olivier Raveux has shown, the port was emerging as a center of calico printing (and painting) in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Armenian specialists played an important role in helping to establish the industry and imparting knowledge of the requisite skills. There was a growing demand for locally printed varieties since these cotton textiles were much cheaper. Initially the 1686 ban was a setback for the textile printing industry of Marseilles, but some of the restrictions were gradually removed specifically in the case of the free port, so that by the 1730s not only had the industry revived but it was also actually thriving. Herein lay the roots of the popularity of Provençal ***indiennes***, Indian-style fabrics produced in Provençal. The typical "cheerfully bright designs" of the ***indiennes*** of Provençal continue to be popular in the region down to the present day, especially among tourists.[1] This was another important source of leakage. Finally, the multiplicity of tax and customs regimes rendered the prohibitions ineffective.

Rampant smuggling of Asian textiles throughout the period of the ban was made possible by the complete lack of acceptance of the restrictive measures among most sections of French society. It would appear that popular opinion regarded the ban as illegitimate. This was a view shared by the aristocracy. The violent means adopted by the state to enforce the ban in the early decades of the eighteenth century (execution, flogging, torture, and death on the wheel) failed to establish the criminality of either smugglers or those who chose to wear Indian calicoes. It needs to be underlined that to be dressed in clothing made from such material was a criminal act, as was using these fabrics as apparel in the privacy of one's home or for furnishing one's bedroom. The subjects of Louis XIV and Louis XV were unwilling, by and large, to concede the rightfulness of the ban. Surveillance by the state was so intrusive as to provoke ordinary people to resist violently. Crowds might gather spontaneously to prevent the authorities from carrying out searches of premises suspected of storing contraband textiles, as happened at Aix in 1736 when a crowd of nearly six hundred gathered to obstruct officials from taking action against a suspect and pelted them with stones (p. 100). Gottmann refers to several similar incidents. There grew up a "culture of smuggling" (p. 63), in which social banditry linked to smuggling of textiles and other commodities, such as tobacco, could be viewed sympathetically. The most well known of these bandits was Louis

Mandrin of whom a fascinating engraving survives, and is reproduced in the book (figure 2.1, p. 65). It depicts him heavily armed with a pistol, a musket gun, and a sword. In the background, several bandits are engaged in armed combat with guards, while Mandrin is shown with his illicit cargo of muslin and tobacco at his feet. When captured, armed smugglers were usually broken at the wheel (Mandrin himself was betrayed, captured, and executed).

The fact that the nobility extended patronage to prohibited varieties of Asian textiles, at times allowing cloth to be produced or printed on their estates, reinforced the status of Indian cotton and *indiennes* as fashionable consumer goods. This by itself was good publicity. No wonder officials who were entrusted with the responsibility of stamping out the illicit trade were so critical of aristocratic defiance of the ban. At the same time, high officials who were connected to the royal court were rarely prosecuted. Gottmann points out that there was a clear class bias: "None of those convicted in Paris between 1727 and 1730 were above middle class. Most were artisans, shopkeepers, or lower down the social scale. The documents again list servants, bakers, butchers, innkeepers, a master mason, a master cobbler, laundresses, tapestry makers, a perfume maker, a clerk, and various shopkeepers" (p. 96).

By the middle of the century the consensus in official circles was that it was fruitless to continue with the ban. Policy was just beginning to be shaped then by a circle comprising, among others, Vincent de Gournay, Daniel-Charles Trudaine (the senior) and Trudaine de Montigny (the junior), André Morellet, and Vincent de Gournay's protégé, Ann-Robert Jacques Turgot. Charles Coulston Gillispie regards members of this circle as "Gallic Fabians of Free trade," who, like their "counterparts a century and a half later in Britain," were able to influence policy through their "expertness in detail, flexibility in tactics, administrative tenacity in the layers of the civil service below the surface of politics."[2] Gournay held the position of intendant in the Bureau du Commerce in the early 1750s, though his significance was more due to his ideas. For him and his ideological fellow-travelers, the state ought to refrain from arbitrary regulation of trade. The Gournay circle represented that trend in French economic thought, which had, in the words of Simone Meysonnier, the promotion of "egalitarian liberalism" as its main objective—a free market economy that was not entirely unregulated.[3] Most of Gournay's writings remained unpublished till very recently. These include his tract "Memorandum for the Lyon Chamber of Commerce" (1753). Gottmann discusses the memorandum at some length. The Lyon manufacturers were at the forefront of the campaign for more rigorous enforcement of the ban on Asian textiles. Gournay argued that the existence of guilds and absence of free competition was the main reason why the French textile industry was inefficient. High prices and low quality were responsible for stagnation. Furthermore, it was absurd to expect that consumers would not show a preference for the better quality products that could be obtained through smuggling. After all, it was "'delusional to think that one can make several million people constantly act against their self interest'" (p. 149). The self-interest of silk manufacturers, a small minority, could not be allowed to "impede the common good" (p. 151).

A few years later, another member of the circle, Morellet, whom Voltaire held in high esteem, published a tract in which he forcefully argued for liberalizing the trade in Asian textiles and manufacture and use of Asian as well as Asian-style textiles. On the one hand, it was impossible to stop smuggling and prevent people from wearing calicoes, and on the other, the French textile industry, which was in a position to produce these textiles (barring the most exclusive Indian varieties), was unable to develop. This was not in the interest of the majority of the people, in other words, it was against the common good. Despite the systematically organized propaganda of the

anciennes manufactures, a major shift was in the offing. Jacob-Nicolas Moreau had already, by the late 1750s, made a name for himself by launching an ideological offensive against the encyclopedists. His 1759 rejoinder to those who were advocating the removal of calico restrictions was an ultra-conservative defence of "'old values'" that were being undermined by proponents of free trade and liberty (p. 164). Gottman underlines the centrality of issues of political economy in debates between Enlightenment thinkers and their opponents.

In the long run, the import of Asian textiles and the development of calico printing had significant implications for the mechanization of the cotton industry in France. As George Riello has recently observed in the context of both England and France, cotton became "mechanised and industrialised thanks to the fact that it was a global commodity."[4] Somehow Gottmann does not pay adequate attention to the global dimension even though at the outset she states that her study is an attempt to understand the history of Asian textiles in France from the perspective of global history. There is occasionally some discussion of linkages with other parts of the world, as for instance the fascinating story of the Abbé Walle who during the 1750s compiled a huge amount of information on the production of cotton fabrics on the Coromandel coast and in Bengal combing this with ethnographic notes. This is relevant for the question of the manner in which knowledge and skills were acquired. However, the book mostly concentrates on France. It would have been worthwhile to have probed with a greater degree of engagement interconnections between developments in France and other parts of the world, particularly India and the Levant.

Notes

[1]. Olivier Raveux, "The Birth of a New European Industry: L'Indiennage in Seventeenth-Century Marseilles," in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Textiles, 1200–1850*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 291-306.

[2]. Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France: The End of the Old Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 9.

[3]. Simone Meysonnier, cited in Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 155.

[4]. Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 149.

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